

Ecumenism – The Generic Religion

In the 1970's supermarkets began carrying what was known as "generic products." The items included canned goods, coffee, tea, dehydrated soups, animal food, paper goods, and much more. The generic item was easily recognized by the plain, black and white label on the container it came in. The colorful packaging and distinctives of the brand name manufacturer had been discarded in the generic product line, leaving all generic goods with a look-a-like appearance. When the distinctive label was removed from the container, the brand name went into oblivion and all that remained was a common, indistinguishable item. To the generic line, distinctives did not exist. In the ecclesiastical realm, the ecumenical movement is to religion what the generic line was to consumer products.

Satan has always had one desire, one objective, and that is, to be God. Having failed in his self-exaltation, God expelled Satan from Heaven to a new domain called earth (Isa. 14:12; Ezk. 28:14-17). Even though Satan failed in his bid to become God, he has continued his efforts to thwart the work of God. Into what was once a perfectly created environment, Satan entered to sow his seeds of deceit in the heart of man, culminating with the most tragic announcement in the history of mankind with the fulfillment of Genesis 2:17, "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."

With the curse of sin and death on humanity, Satan continued to march on, ever seeking to further deceive man, and to intercept God's provision of a Saviour for His lost creation. Having been informed of the promise of The Messiah (Gen. 3:15), Satan commenced to do all in his power to prevent this from becoming a reality. He tried to destroy the nation of Israel through which Messiah would come. When this failed, Satan tried to silence the prophets who foretold Messiah's coming. Failing here, Satan sought to have Messiah killed by using his pawn, Herod the Great. During the years of the public ministry of Messiah, Satan sought on numerous occasions to discredit and/or have Him killed. Having failed in all of his attempts thus far, Satan made one last, great effort to destroy The Redeemer, The Messiah, by having Him crucified on the Cross, and the setting of the Roman guard of the tomb. Little did Satan realize that it was part of God's plan for salvation that Christ should shed His blood and die on the Cross of Calvary, and in doing so to be the propitiation for our sins. Alas, the grave could not hold the Son of God, for as the Scriptures record, "He is not here: for he is risen, as he said." (Matt. 27:6) Satan failed in all of his attempts to prevent Messiah, that is, Jesus Christ, from coming, dying, and shedding His blood on the Cross for our sins. Satan failed in his attempt to prevent the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ. To the glory of God, Satan failed! But, the battle rages on, for Satan has not quit. The evil one does not want people to repent of sin and by faith receive Christ as Saviour. Nor does he want them to go on and live their lives for the risen Saviour. In his continuing efforts to thwart the work of God and the effectiveness of God's local, New Testament assembly, Satan has devised a scheme to blend together the various religious beliefs, thus making it difficult, if not impossible to distinguish between fact and fiction, right and wrong, true and false. The ecumenical movement has been the perfect vehicle to bring us a **GENERIC RELIGION**.

Funk & Wagnalls defines generic as "(1) Pertaining to a genus or a class of related things: contrasted with a specific or varietal. (2) Having a general application; abstract; not concrete." The heart beat of the ecumenical movement is to bring together under one umbrella all of the world's religions. Spearheading this drive, Satan would have all religious labels and distinctives removed, save one, and that being the identification with the one world church — the **GENERIC RELIGION**. The ecumenical movement is not new, for it has been around for hundreds of years. During the twentieth century it gained momentum, and will continue to do so until culminating with the anti-Christ in the Revelation of John. The strategy of Satan is well mapped — moving ever so carefully he employs such movements as the charismatic, New Evangelical, and Promise Keepers. Men who once stood

for the fundamentals of the Word of God have since deserted the Biblical camp like rats from a sinking ship. Yea, men of the twenty-first century continue to follow this decline of contending for the faith once delivered unto the saints, of standing without apology for the Gospel of Jesus Christ, of expounding the whole counsel of God and exposing apostate individuals and movements. In defending their cowardly retreat from the face of the enemy, they do so claiming to have a love for God and a desire for Christian (religious) unity.

On the surface, the ecumenical movement may seem like a good idea; however, when we examine it **in light of Scripture** we soon find that it is another of Satan's schemes to destroy the effectiveness of God's churches. When writing to the Corinthian church the Apostle Paul said, "And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works." (2 Cor. 11:14-15). And in Jude 4 we read, "For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ." In his quest to usurp the authority of God, Satan has done his work well by recruiting people who call themselves ministers of God, when in reality they do not know the God of the Bible. Satan has also deceived true, born-again people through the New Evangelical movement and worldly "Christian" music.

When the New Evangelical movement began many years ago, its basic tenet was not one of separation, but of infiltration. As the movement continued to grow it began to evolve into another already existing form, that being the ecumenical movement. The changes were subtle, but wise men of God saw the hand writing on the wall and withdrew themselves while others would not heed the warning, but remained in the movement. This happened not only to individuals, but also to churches, Christian training institutions, and mission boards. On the whole, the New Evangelical movement has blended with, and become a part of the ecumenical movement. One of the first steps in becoming a New Evangelical is to be a passive fundamentalist (Biblicist). Generally speaking, **passive fundamentalism begins in the pulpit** and then, soon afterwards, it affects and infects the entire assembly. This means one is not contending for the faith in all areas, including ecclesiastical separation and holding to the position that the Authorized Version 1611 is God's preserved Word in English, and so by default, drifts into the New Evangelical camp. The drift is subtle, not necessarily a deliberate act, but it does happen. Given enough time, the next and ultimate step is into the ecumenical movement.

The heartbeat of the ecumenical movement is found in the National Council of Churches (NCC), the World Council of Churches (WCC), and many other movements. The Preamble of the NCC states the beginning as follows: "The National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA was created in 1950, when representatives of 29 Protestant and Orthodox churches merged 12 Interdenominational agencies into one body, stating: 'In the Providence of God, the time has come when it seems fitting more fully to manifest oneness in Jesus Christ as Divine Lord and Saviour, by the creation of an inclusive cooperative agency of the Christian Church of the United States'..." In the April 1974 issue of the WCC's "Ecumenical Review" was this statement: "The divided Christians must come so close to one another that they can recognize one another as belonging to one and the same communion. This means that the WCC must work toward its own demise. There cannot be — and never has been — any question regarding the fellowship as it now exists in the WCC as that one church which we want to see restored. The goal is to be united in the one holy Catholic and Apostolic Church." Individual religious identity is done away with in favor of the ecumenical umbrella. No matter what the religious persuasion might be, all are welcome in the ecumenical camp. Satan continues in his covert operations against Christ's church, and people are being drawn into his ranks for lack of obeying the Scriptures. God's Word very clearly tells us, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? (2 Cor. 6:14-15).

The mandate is clear enough and any born-again believer in the Lord Jesus Christ should be able to understand it. However clear as this mandate might be, still there are those who have not believed or obeyed the Scriptures. In some instances individuals, mission boards, churches, and religious training institutions have unwittingly been drawn into the ecumenical camp for lack of being taught about, and warned of it. Still, others have, by a direct act of their will, aligned themselves with the ecumenical movement, the **GENERIC RELIGION**. Christians need to be aware of, and informed about this menace. Pastors need to teach their congregations not only about the ecumenical movement, but also how to identify it and those involved with it. A failure on the part of pastors to adequately instruct their people on the Biblical doctrine of separation, and **SPECIFICALLY BY NAME** identify those individuals, religious schools, organizations, mission boards, etc., who are involved with the New Evangelical, charismatic, and ecumenical movements, has caused needless casualties among the fundamental Christian ranks. It is not possible to remain loyal to God and maintain an alliance with ecumenism, even if the intent is sincere and well meaning. Luke 16:13 tells us that it is impossible for a servant to serve two masters, for either he will love one and hate the other, or hold to one and despise the other. So too, a Christian cannot be obedient to the Scriptures and still fellowship with the ecumenical movement, the spirit of anti-Christ. In the midst of the ecumenical onslaught, Christians need to stand fast and contend for the faith once delivered unto the saints, realizing that it is not in our own might that we do this, but in the power of the Holy Spirit.

“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.” (Eph. 6:10-13). As we take our stand, we must be firm without allowing ourselves to become belligerent or arrogant, and this for the sake of the Christianity testimony for, “. . . we are ambassadors for Christ, . . .” (2 Corinthians 5:20)

BRETHREN, STAND!!

- Richard A. Ciarrocca©2014