

THE ASSEMBLY MESSENGER

Proclaiming the Timeless Truth of the Church to a New Generation of Believers

Volume 02-59

Dear reader,

Some readers may consider this issue to be too negative because it takes up some things going wrong in professing Christianity. Yet we are told to “have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them” (Eph.5:11). We are told to “Contend *earnestly* for the faith” (Jude 3) and to “*watch*, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong” (1 Cor.16:13).

Paul warned the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:28-31 to “*take heed to yourselves and to all the flock*” because “savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock,” and “also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.” Then he repeated the admonition to “*watch*.” At the end of his life Paul said essentially the same thing to Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:1-5. He charged Timothy to “preach the Word” and to “convince, rebuke and exhort.” Why? Because professed Christians would soon refuse sound doctrine and would “heap up for themselves teachers” and will be “turned aside to fables.” Fables sound good, but aren’t truth. Again, Paul said, “Be watchful.”

A scientist who exposed some dangerous contaminant in our food supply would be hailed as a hero, but when we speak out concerning spiritual contamination, we often are thought of as intolerant and spiteful even by those who should be most concerned and who are very knowledgeable of Scripture. But in this issue we want to show you a little of why you need to “watch” because the time has surely come when professed Christians almost everywhere are refusing sound doctrine and are being turned aside to every fable. It may sound good, but is error.

One of the big events of the future Tribulation is the formation of a so-called *world-church*, called “Babylon the Great,” and referred to as a harlot (prostitute) in Revelation 17-18 because she professes to be God’s Church, but is an unfaithful substitute for it, God’s true Church having been raptured to heaven shortly before. Although Revelation 17 and 18 indicate this false “church” will be loosely based on what we know today as *Roman Catholicism*, it seems to be comprised of all those religious people from so-called “christian” churches who were never saved and thus left behind at the rapture. This world-church is very political and is thus destroyed by the western world-dictator of that

time, God using this evil man to judge this evil “church.”

So it’s interesting to see how much of today’s amazing ecumenical movement is inclusive of Roman Catholicism. Essentially all the information herein is obtained from *Foundation Magazine* (FM), a publication of the *Fundamental Evangelistic Association*, and used with their permission, for which we thank them. All quotes (other than Scripture), unless stated otherwise, are from their articles. One of the purposes of this magazine is to expose what is going on unscripturally in the so-called evangelistic Christian realm. We have only quoted from issues written in 2001 and 2002.

The Global Pastors Network

By the time you read this there is expected to be an Internet-based *Global Pastors Network* (GPN) for training worldwide the pastors needed for the expected one billion (1,000,000,000) converts to Christianity during the next decade. It is based, according to a report by *Foundation* reporters, on the “synergistic church model” of ecumenical churches and ministries in which doctrinal issues are set aside and all work together for the gospel’s sake. It is intended to bring the *Church Universal* into functioning unity. Since doctrine is not an issue, basically every doctrinal error can be taught.

FM states, “As with all other ecumenical endeavors, the Bible’s requirement of separation from error and the errant is totally ignored.... Apostolic instruction for the New Testament Church never includes the concept of disregarding error for the sake of a common objective. False teaching is always to be exposed and opposed. This is not unloving; it is doing what needs to be done. If the Church is to be a vessel meet [fit] for the Master’s use, then separation from false teaching is absolutely essential (2 Tim.2:15-22).”

In the 5000 member conference to set up this network, Charismatics were well represented, who emphasized the need for the deeper spiritual life they proclaim. Ecumenicalism was stressed to the point that, it was implied, every church leader should join this effort or go out of business.

Roman Catholic Issues

Pope John Paul II, in a message sent to the plenary assembly of the *Pontifical Council for promoting Christian Unity*, recently said that ecumenical dialogue is an irreversible commitment of the Roman Catholic church and a priority of his pontificate.

FM reports, “Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant and Anglican churches in Europe have purposed to boost ecumenical relations and put their differences aside in order to work together for visible unity for the good of the continent. ‘We have established what we have in common and that we can live together, and this is a great step forward.’ Pope John Paul II wrote to the participants ..., ‘The unity for which the Lord prayed in the Upper Room is a condition for the credibility of Christian witness.’ ”

FM also reports that “Lutherans, Roman Catholics and Episcopalians in Northeast Ohio have joined together in a historic pact which *Religion Today* says would have been unimaginable a generation ago.” They “pledged to worship and pray together as a sign of Christian unity ... and place no impediment in the way of reunion.”

FM reports that “James Dobson and Charles Colson, two of the world’s most renowned Evangelical leaders, recently participated in a three day conference at the Vatican and met briefly with the Pope.” FM comments, “For many years, both Colson and Dobson have been instrumental in bridging ecumenical relations between Roman Catholics and Evangelicals. While Colson, the primary force behind the two *Evangelicals and Catholics Together* documents, has spent much time finding common theological ground between Catholics and Evangelicals, Dobson has unified Catholics and Evangelicals through social and political programs. Yet Bible-believing Christians must realize that the Roman Catholic Church continues to preach a false gospel, and to give any credence or viability to such a false religious system is displeasing to God. Christians must *separate from error* rather than attempt to find common cause with those who preach, teach or embrace false doctrine.”

I recently heard a Roman Catholic call-in radio program where a “church” spokesman defended a new “church” teaching that practicing Muslims can go to heaven because Christ died for them, if they truly show love and do good works. Several callers were incensed, and wondered what happened to verses that speak of faith in Christ as the only way to heaven.

Other Ecumenical Concepts

Many movements such as *Promise Keepers* commendably promote godly personal, moral and social issues. And their support is almost universal in especially the Christian community, although they are very ecumenical in character. An interesting FM quote on the subject says, “While it is true that more godly men are needed, they will not be produced by teaching men that they can disobey the Word of God as to theological matters as long as they try to give leadership in moral and social issues.”

When God’s omniscience was attacked by a group of leading evangelistic scholars, a resolution was passed (although by no means unanimously) within a group calling itself the *Evangelistic Theological Society*, stating, “we believe the Bible clearly teaches that God has complete, accurate and infallible knowledge of all events past, present and future....” Shouldn’t such a resolution have unanimous support? Leading men from both *Dallas Theological Seminary* and *Wheaton College* [once bastions for maintaining the truth of Scripture] spoke against the resolution. One said the Society should spend its energies on a lost world rather than on internal wrangles. FM states, “Such unbiblical advice and opinion ... reveals the extent to which *New Evangelism* has eroded into tolerance of blatant error ... that attacks the very nature of God as did the heresies in the early centuries of the Church.” New Evangelism is the movement in so-called evangelical Christianity of the past 45 years or so, that de-emphasizes doctrine for outward unity and brings in practices more appealing to the world and the old (sinful) nature.

A guest speaker at a major Southern Baptist pastors’ conference encouraged students and faculty to embrace an “evangelically ecumenical” view of Pentecostalism and to recognize both the strengths and weaknesses of the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements. FM states that contrary to [his] claims, “the Holy Spirit is not connected with ‘revelations, charismatic wisdom and prophetic utterings’ today, for God has already and finally spoken to mankind through His holy Word.”

Robert Schuller of *Crystal Cathedral* fame joined with Louis Farrakhan, leader of the *Nation of Islam*, in an interfaith event. Schuller reportedly said, “For decades he was a proponent of the kind of proselytizing that pushed Muslims to become Christians. Then he realized that asking people to change their faith was utterly ridiculous.” He went on to say, “The purpose of religion is not to say, ‘I have all the answers and my job is to convert you.’ That road leads to the twin towers.”

FM states in another article, “No, Christians and Muslims

do not worship the same God. Christians worship a God who has declared Himself to mankind through the Person and work of Jesus Christ, God manifest in the flesh. Muslims worship an impersonal god who is so transcendent that he is unknowable. They adamantly reject the fact that Jesus Christ is God. Christians worship a God who saves mankind by His grace through faith alone in the Person and work of Jesus Christ. Muslims worship a god who requires them to perform a wide variety of works, rites and rituals in order for them to even hope to experience a paradise in the life hereafter. Christians worship a God who indwells them in the Person of the Holy Spirit and keeps them secure throughout their lives. Muslims reject any god who indwells them and has such a personal relationship with mankind.”

FM reports that *The United Church of Christ* and the *Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)* have voted to join an ecumenical partnership with seven other denominations, including the *United Methodist Church*, the *Episcopal Church* and the *Presbyterian Church (USA)*. They “pledge before God to draw closer in ways of worship, ministry and mission.”

FM reports that “Lutheran and Episcopal Churches throughout the United States celebrated ‘Full Communion’ with one another during the first week of the new year (2001). ‘Called to Common Mission,’ the agreement reached between the Episcopal Church USA and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America was signed last year by both denominations. The agreement means that Lutheran and Episcopal churches can now share communion, exchange clergy and engage in other areas of common ministry.”

Billy Graham

Daring to question anything about Billy Graham, including his current actions and words, is, in the minds of most Christians, “fighting words.” I have no doubt that Billy Graham was God’s premiere evangelist for the last half of the 20th century. It may well be that God has saved more people through his preaching than through any other person in the world’s history. But the sobering fact is that Billy has changed, and is still changing, into an extreme ecumenicalist.

A newspaper article on Graham’s book, *Just As I Am*, said, “He [Graham] recounts how he broke with prominent fundamentalists to build a broad evangelical alliance that eventually would welcome Roman Catholics to his crusades.” For many years now, he has toned down his

ministry to get the support of the Roman Catholic Church for his crusades in which he reportedly has no problem in sending enquiring Roman Catholics back to the Catholic Church for spiritual help. FM reports his current practice as, “If a denomination such as Baptist or Catholic is checked, a church near the person is notified. Otherwise the names are divided among the estimated 600 churches that participated in the crusade.” FM continues, saying Graham advises those in attendance to get involved in “any church that proclaims Christ,” whether it be a Catholic, liberal or Charismatic congregation.

FM quotes a paragraph from *US News and World Reports*, which was later confirmed as correct by Graham’s staff. It says, “Ironically, as his appeal far outgrew the confines of evangelical Protestantism, Graham himself began to travel the very route into the mainstream of American culture that evangelicalism had once condemned. ‘World travel and getting to know clergy of all denominations has helped mold me into an ecumenical being. We’re separated by theology and, in some instances, culture and race, *but all of that means nothing to me anymore.*’ ” FM adds that “compromise ... always leads to a growing toleration of error.”

The Three Waves of Pentecostalism

FM reports on the Pentecostal/Charismatic movement’s three waves. What primarily distinguishes all of them “is the belief that the supernatural spiritual gifts evident in New Testament times ought to be practiced today, including tongues, miracles, healings and prophecy.” The first wave — *traditional Pentecostalism* — began around 1900. They held to “the inerrancy of Scripture, the deity of Christ, man’s sinfulness, Christ’s substitutionary death for our salvation, a dispensational and premillennial outlook on future events, and strict standards for holy and godly living.”

The second wave — *the Charismatic movement or New Pentecostalism* — began in the 1950’s with men such as Oral Roberts, Pat Boone, Pat Robertson, Jim Baker and Jimmy Swaggart. The major change was the emphasis on emotional religious “experience.” To various extents, experience replaced doctrine and holy living. It made startling inroads into many denominations, even into Roman Catholicism. Much of today’s Contemporary Christian and Praise and Worship music, and a large percentage of Christian publications, comes from the Charismatic “experience” movement or have great Charismatic influence. FM elsewhere writes, Such “music has been instrumental in removing the authority of

Scripture and reverential, Christ-centered worship from the congregation and replacing it with a greater emphasis on human emotion and entertainment.”

The third wave — *the Signs and Wonders Movement* — began in the 1980's with the “Vineyard Christian Fellowship Movement with the ministry of John Wimber in California.... Healings and especially the gift of prophecy are very prominent.” FM continues, “The supernatural sign gifts (given by the Holy Spirit in New Testament times) were intended by God for the Apostolic Age and were designed to be temporary.... The so-called Charismatic phenomenon is an experience which adapts to a wide spectrum of doctrinal views, including those of some of the cults.” Those experiences include being slain in the spirit and laughing uncontrollably. The sad thing is, what was once considered as “on the lunatic fringe” is now considered mainstream and loving and tolerant. And seeking to obey Scripture is now looked at as extreme, unloving and intolerant.

Summary

What we have reported herein is just the tip of the iceberg, as the saying goes. Virtually every prominent evangelical Christian leader has compromised his ministry to include (more or less) all forms of the Charismatic movement, Roman Catholicism and, in some cases, Mormonism. Especially since 9-11 it is considered wrong to speak publicly against Islam. Franklin Graham reportedly did so (he told the truth), but soon considerably toned down his remarks under media pressure, although he still speaks of the falseness of Islam. Many Christian “leaders” seem to think nothing of sharing the platform with those who teach every kind of evil doctrine. Their *associations* seem to mean nothing to them, nor do verses such as Romans 16:17.

FM states, “But are our associations important? Does it matter with whom we participate in conferences or share platforms? ... The Scriptures demand that we answer all these questions in the affirmative (Amos 3:3).... The motives of a speaker never justify compromise with error.... What should be the criterion used to determine associations and participation? The Bible alone! The adage, ‘A man is known by the company he keeps,’ certainly has biblical foundation (1 Cor.15:33).... The primary reason for separating from ecumenical evangelists is that they host and promote liberals, Catholics, etc. in their programs and on their platforms.... We take God’s Word for what it says. We refuse to unite with any who deny or attempt to distort what the Word of God has to say.” RPD

Letters

This comment came by phone so we can’t quote a letter. But a brother was disturbed at our comment on page 1 (and in the summary on page 4) of issue 00-36 on *giving*, where we said, “Whether the money is actually given weekly is not so important, but given or not, *it is to be laid aside as if already put in the collection basket!* It is the Lord’s money.” Some brethren reportedly used this comment as an excuse to not place their contributions weekly in the collection box.

We thought we were plain that the weekly collection (whether for a special cause or the general collection) was God’s primary way for a believer to give. But a person might be away, might be ill. Yet the money that normally would have been given is still the Lord’s and still needs to be given, not conveniently pocketed.

Perhaps the JND Bible is used as an excuse. His translation of 1 Corinthians 16:1-2 says, “put by at home.” I don’t know why he said this. It’s one of very few places I don’t agree with his very excellent translation because I can’t find support for that translation. The three Greek-English interlinear translations I have, use the terms “by him” or “beside himself” or “aside.” It seems to be a big stretch to make it aside from the meeting of the assembly — that is, at home. We have to understand that no matter how good the JND translation is — and I have no doubt it is the best English translation available — JND was not inspired, so there is no perfection. FWG says, “Put by him in store.” WK says, “Put by him, storing up ...”

On the other hand, we need to realize we are under grace, not law. So a person might be exercised to not give evenly each week so he or she could give a much larger amount, perhaps once a month. Or perhaps there had been a special personal exercise to meet some need in the Lord’s work. Yet all this does not change the general fact, by apostolic example and Scripture, that the weekly Lord’s Day collection is a form of worship and should be the normal means of giving to the Lord and supporting His work.

We apologize to the brother for the long wait to answer his question.

A second question or comment. Brother Eugene Vedder suggests an alternate interpretation (#02-57) from our comment that “later in life, even the great apostle Paul apparently couldn’t heal” (Phil.2:25-30; 2 Tim.4:20). He points out that “we have nothing in the scriptural record to

indicate that Paul healed any of his fellow laborers. His healings were always of others to whom he could then present the gospel. Since God often uses illness in His dealings with His own, brother H.L.Heijkoop felt that Paul respected this and never (at least as far as the scriptural record is concerned) interfered with God's dealings with His own by healing them. I personally would accept this thought rather than what you expressed, especially since Scripture tells us that the gifts and the calling of God are without repentance. A gift doesn't wear out after awhile."

We believe this is a worthy alternate explanation for your prayerful consideration. Although we believe the so-called "sign-gifts" ended early (1 Cor.13:8), what is perhaps not absolutely clear is whether they ended with the death of that first generation of believers who saw the Lord, or during their lifetimes. See Hebrews 2:3-4.

NOTE:

Before the end of the year we hope to have a new website up and running, thanks to my daughter — www.assemblymessenger.com. Look for it. All back issues, slightly edited if needed, will be available (the Lord willing) and may be read with Adobe reader (free) and printed, but not modified. Graphics are lost on two early issues. We trust this form of the *Messenger* will be of help to many more of the Lord's dear people. The *Messenger* is currently available on Randy Stephenson's website, www.inthebeloved.org. We thank Randy for his work.