

THE DANGER OF INTERFAITH

CHRISTIANITY is so fundamentally based and entrenched on established principles and doctrines that it cannot be blended or mixed with other beliefs without falling into the danger of corruption. This is what many people do not know.

Interfaith is a mixture of beliefs – that is, people of different faiths coming together in a sort of union to worship.

Ecumenism

Today the wind of ecumenism is blowing all over Christendom. There is a strong desire by many church denominations to unite with others notwithstanding their differences in doctrines and forms of worship. For this reason, certain churches have relaxed their rules which hitherto strictly forbade their adherents from having any form of communion with others.

In pursuance of this same objective for church unity, the former Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Geoffrey Fisher, and his successor, Archbishop Michael Ramsey, had paid visits to both the late Pope John XXIII and Pope Paul VI, respectively, at the Vatican City. As a result of the meeting between Pope Paul and Archbishop Ramsey, 10 Roman Catholic and 11 Anglican theologians met together at Gazzada in Northern Italy, in January 1967. They made recommendations for joint action on practical ways of removing tension between members of the two churches. A communiqué was issued after the talks which were described as the “first formal steps towards unity between the two churches in more than 400 years”. And the hopes of many people were raised!

But three days after the talks, Pope Paul stated that Christian unity “still presents grave difficulties, for the concept of real unity is not clear to all people.” He was speaking at his weekly blessing of pilgrims in St. Peter’s Square at the Vatican City. He said, “Some people consider that charity – which is certainly necessary – is enough for this unity without adhering to the unique truth of the faith.” (*Daily Times*, January 17, 1967)

Catholic Idea

The Roman Catholic idea of church unity is quite different from what others are thinking. While some are reckoning it in terms of equal partners, others are hoping that it is the coming back of the “separated brethren” to the one fold of the “Mother Church”.

A Roman Catholic newspaper, the *INDEPENDENT*, issue of June 25-29, 1968, published at Ibadan, Western State of Nigeria, presented the Roman Catholic view on ecumenism as follows: “The word *ECUMENISM* is, it must be admitted, a rather difficult term for the ordinary Catholic to fully grasp or understand But we must be clear, first of all, as to what Ecumenism does not mean. It does not mean Eucharistic unity (i.e. we cannot regard the Holy Mass and a non-Catholic Communion Service as equal and interchangeable).....It does not mean a whittling down of Catholic doctrines to achieve a common faith with non-Catholics, for that would mean unfaithfulness to the Catholic Church as the ‘pillar and ground of Truth’,” (Italics ours).

In answer to a question, the *INDEPENDENT* (June 20-27, 1964, page 5) stated: “Catholics ought not to attend non-Catholic religious functions. If they are present at public functions when non-Catholic prayers are said they ought not to answer ‘Amen’.”

There is every reason to regard all the noise about the unification of all the churches as a show of spiritual ignorance on the part of some and sheer hypocrisy on the side of others. We do not

see how genuine unity can evolve from the attempts being made when nothing is being done to remove the root of bitterness and the cause of the division among them.

In Amos 3: 3, it is written: "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" Certainly, they cannot. It is a known fact that great differences in doctrines, church organisation and worship, exist among the churches. These have always been the main cause of controversy. Any union formed by the churches, therefore, with eyes closed upon these facts, is a union of contraries – and it is unchristian.

Anglican Reply

The Anglican Communion knows that the Roman Catholic Church does not regard it as an institution founded by God. The proof of this is evident from an Anglican reply to Roman Catholic arguments published in a booklet, the INFALLIBLE FALLACIES. The Anglican priests stated that some people in their parishes were disturbed by the fact that the Roman Catholics regarded them as non-Christians yet to be proselytised or converted and also by the repetition of untruths about their church. They added: "These untruths are part of the Roman Catholic campaign of trying to gain Anglicans for their own Church. Some of the most frequent of them are that 'Henry VIII founded the Church of England'; that 'Anglican bishops and priests are not real bishops!; and priests' and that therefore 'the sacraments administered in Anglican Churches are invalid!..... We do not unchurch them, but they unchurch us. We regard the Pope as the lawful Bishop of Rome and their bishops and priests as properly consecrated and ordained, and their sacraments as valid. But they regard our bishops and priests as either deluded or deliberate impostors, and our sacraments as but imitations or mockeries of the divinely appointed channels of grace.'" (Page 4, emphasis ours).

No serious effort is known to have been made by the Anglican Communion to resolve or clear these GRAVE SPIRITUAL ISSUES before the efforts they are making WITHOUT REGARD FOR THE BIBLE – THE LAW AND GUIDE BOOK OF GOD – to get united with the Roman Catholic Church!

Importance of Doctrines

Another evidence of how strongly some people feel about the importance of doctrines in the worship of God was manifested when the Bishop of Rome declared the "bodily assumption of Mary" as an article of faith in 1950. It was reported that "nine British protestants wrote to Pope Pius XII offering to become Roman Catholics if he could produce a scriptural proof of the bodily assumption of the Virgin Mary." (*West African Pilot*, October 30, 1950)

So too, when the Swedish Church proposed to ordain women priests, the Church of England protested because it was considered to be scripturally wrong to do so. The then Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Fisher, sent a "personal and confidential" letter to the Archbishop of Sweden warning that "if Sweden ordains women priests, relations between the two churches will be broken off". (*Daily Sketch*, January 15, 1959, published in England.)

Yes, Dr. Fisher was right, for God has never ordained women to be priests. Even in the church women are commanded not to speak, or teach but "to be under obedience". – 1 Corinthians 14: 34, 35; 1 Timothy 2: 11-14.

The point is that all these go to emphasise the awareness of some of the churches about the importance of the doctrines on which the Christian Faith is based. And that was why an Anglican Chaplain, Rev. R. Earnshaw-Smith said that "unification of Protestant Church with the Roman Catholic Church 'is impossible' because there existed a number of fundamental doctrinal

differences between the Anglican Church and the Roman Catholic Church". He added, "There are such things as truth and error." (Nigerian Daily Express, May 16, 1962.)

"Credo"

Only recently, Pope Paul re-affirmed in his "Credo" the belief of the Roman Catholic Church in certain doctrines which have always been the bone of contention between them and others. The Pope stated: "We believe in the infallibility enjoyed by the successor of Peter...We believe that Mary is the mother, who remained ever a virgin...preserved from all the stain of original sin and filled with gift of grace more than all other creatures. We believe that the mysterious presence of the Lord (in the Eucharist) is a true, real and substantial presence...the bread and wine have ceased to exist after the consecration so that it is the adorable body and blood of the Lord Jesus." (*INDEPENDENT*, July 21-27, 1968).

Now there are several church groups that do not believe in the bodily assumption of Mary, her being a virgin forever or the "Mother of God"; they do not believe in purgatory, the celibacy of priests, man-made saints, baptism of infants, the bodily presence of Christ in the bread and wine, or hell being a place of literal fire, and so on. But the Roman Catholic Church believes in all these and some others also believe in some of them.

The obvious fact is that all cannot be right while they are opposed to one another. So if the claims of the Roman Catholics are true in the sense that they are founded on the authority of the Holy Bible, which all accept as the Guide Book, then others who disagree with them are false, and vice versa. And if some are true and others false, then there is no basis whatsoever for real unity.

Baptists' Stand

The stand of the Baptists is already known. Dr. William R. Tolbert, Jr., President of the Baptist World Alliance and Vice-President of the Republic of Liberia, stated: "Baptists are opposed to any church unity movement which would destroy their basic beliefs." He added that Baptists "would not associate with any movement to set up a hierarchy to control and influence individual churches." (*African Challenge*, No. 196, page 5).

Here in Nigeria, efforts are also being made towards a "United Church of Nigeria". The GKS is not a party to it PURELY on doctrinal and other scriptural grounds. Some church leaders of the Orthodox groups have asked that their churches should be counted out too. It could be observed that all the obstacles undermining these efforts very well spring from the same variances in doctrines and methods of worship.

In the October issue of the *Spear* magazine in 1965. The views of some of the religious leaders were published. Archbishop John Aggey of the Roman Catholic Church in Lagos said: "There will be more confusion if the Roman Catholic Church joins the union now because we have certain beliefs different from those of other sects. "

In the same issue of the *Spear*, Colonel John, the head of the Salvation Army in Nigeria, was quoted as saying, "We wish those who are planning to form the Union success. They think that it is the best thing for their churches, God bless them. The Salvation Army is not thinking about joining the Union at this stage because our constitution is different from those of other churches. For example, we have women as Ministers in our church while others don't..."

Now the Roman Catholic Church is not prepared to whittle down its doctrines and the Protestant groups also cannot budge in their beliefs. So any union of all these in the face of the vast differences is but a marriage of convenience to please the world.

Bible Standard

There is danger in interfaith because it is evidence of apostasy or departure from the Way of Life on the part of the true worshippers of God. The Bible standard is that the true Christian Faith must not be violated or compromised.

Any church group that does not preach the truth faithfully as contained in the Bible is false. "He that hath my word, let him speak my word FAITHFULLY", said God, "What is the chaff to the wheat?" – Jeremiah 23: 28.

Concerning this atomic space age, St. Paul stated: "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times, some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy;...forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats..." – I Timothy 4: 1-3.

For true Christians to pray together with people of various and wrong beliefs or have fellowship with those preaching the doctrines of devils is INTERFAITH; it is spiritual fornication; it is a sin. – I Corinthians 10: 21. 22; Matthew 6: 24; James 4: 4.

No Compromise

Jesus Christ whose example Christians are bound to follow (John 13: 15) did not compromise his faith with those of the Pharisees and other false religionists of his time. , Rather he exposed and condemned their errors and hypocrisy. He said: "... Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so, ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity..." – Matthew 23: 23-31.

Today, there are the counterparts of the Pharisees whose stock-in-trade is deceit: and hypocrisy – sometimes coined in a refined term as "religious diplomacy".

When the devil was to show up himself where Christ was doing the work of God, he (Jesus) told his disciples: "...For the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me ...Arise, let us go hence." – John 14: 30, 31. Christ did NOT COMPROMISE!

What is more, St. Paul stated: "DO: NOT UNITE yourselves with unbelievers; they are not fit mates for you. What has righteousness to do with wickedness? Can light consort with darkness? Can Christ agree with Belial, or a believer join hands with an unbeliever? And therefore, 'come away and leave them, separate yourselves, says the Lord; do not touch what is unclean (and lie is unclean being an abomination – Proverbs 6: 16-19) Then I will accept you, says the Lord, the Ruler of all being..." – 2 Corinthians 6: 14-18, New English Bible.

It is on this Christian principle that the God's Kingdom Society stands. Certainly, there is no agreement between light and darkness. Truth and falsehood can never harmonize. So we uphold the banner of truth at all times, and, like Saint Paul, "renounce the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God." – 2 Corinthians 4: 1, 2

God from time has been against interfaith and has never tolerated it. The Jews who practised it were severely punished. The instance of Solomon is always remembered by serious worshippers of God. "Did not Solomon King of Israel sin by these things? yet among many nations was there no king like him, who was beloved of his God, and God made him king over all Israel: nevertheless, even him did outlandish (unbelieving, strange) women cause to sin."- Nehemiah 13: 26; 1 Kings 11: 1-14.

For the details of how the Jews practised interfaith and how they were punished, read Psalm 106: 13-46.

Peaceful Co-existence

The GKS, though strongly opposed to interfaith, believes in tolerance and in peaceful co-existence with other religious groups until God's day of decision when the tares will be destroyed by Him.-Rom. 12:17-21; Matthew 13: 1-9, 36-43.

INTERFAITH IS DANGEROUS. Beware lest you fall victim and end up in destruction from God. One becomes a victim when one believes in "the doctrines of devils" and unites oneself with those "who are not fit mates" Yes, God says "Come away and leave them, separate yourselves".