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Thank you, Dr Murray!!

The article entitled "Jesus the Ecumenical Separatist" was written by Dr David Murray. He is a close colleague and associate of Dr Joel Beeke. The article appears on **his blog**.

Now I feel thankful to Dr Murray for writing this article for the simple reason that in it he sets down the unscriptural philosophy which he and Dr Joel Beeke espouse.

Dr Beeke is frequently on platforms with New Calvinists, Ecumenists, Roman Catholic and Orthodox priests, Charismatics etc. Dr Murray has been known to likewise share platforms with those from whom he should be separated.

It has been impossible to get Dr Beeke to commit himself to giving an explanation in writing of the position he takes. Though his activities have been challenged on a number of occasions, Dr Beeke has not stated why he believes he can act so. He has declined to commit to writing any response to the challenges mounted.

Now, thanks to Dr Murray, we have their position expounded.

I am thankful to Rev Stephen Hamilton for his examination of Dr Murray's article and that examination follows below.

It should be noted that Dr Murray, in promoting this new, but not so new philosophy, does not quote one verse of Scripture! That is because there are no verses in God's Word which support the stand he takes. Rather, the whole spirit of God's Word is opposed to Dr Murray's thesis.

It is time for the Free Presbyterian Church of North America and the Free Presbyterian Church of Ulster, not to mention quite a few other fellowships and individual pastors, to awaken as to where they are being led by their association with Dr Joel Beeke, who is nothing short of a Dr Billy Graham Mark II.

Rev Stephen Hamilton's article may also be **seen online here**.

(Ivan Foster, Editor, 9th March 2013)

Jesus - an "Ecumenical Separatist"?

Friday March 8th, 2013

Posted by: Lehigh Valley Free Presbyterian Church (Rev. Stephen Hamilton)

Some time ago I read a blog by a reformed minister entitled: "Jesus the Ecumenical Separatist". Notwithstanding his choice of the word "ecumenical", which in itself is legitimate but might be considered unwise in the current religious climate, I believe the writer to be mistaken in a number of his assertions and conclusions.

Whilst agreeing with the statement, "In the Bible, God provides us with commands and examples of both unity and separation and calls us to exercise rigorous and prayerful discernment about what route to take on each occasion", I completely disagree with the following assertion: "It's probably God's plan that some churches and ministers have a more separatist role in his Kingdom, and others have a more ecumenical and bridge-building role." I find no support at all in scripture for the notion of "different roles for different people" in regard to separation from evil.



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The pathway for ALL God's people is clear. It has to do with God's command. Such portions as 2 Corinthians chapter 6 v.14-18 are unequivocal and unambiguous, and are addressed to the entire church in all ages. "Come out", for example, does not mean for certain people "stay in". And "touch not" does not mean, for some in different circumstances, "embrace".

The opening paragraph of the aforementioned blog asks this question: "...How much will we unite with Christians who are different from us in some areas, and how much will we separate from them?" The issue being addressed seems then to be fellowship or separation from fellow-Christians. But, later the writer - presumably in order to justify the "ecumenical" approach to fellowship with certain Christian brethren or churches - switches the application of his argument by speaking about evangelism and gospel preaching. In particular he writes: "... the separatist risks hiding the Gospel by not communicating it, for "how shall they hear without a preacher?" He then invokes the example of Christ by stating: "...the separatist cannot claim Jesus either, because he associated with sinners, dined with a Pharisee, and even preached in the Christ-denying, soon to be Christ-crucifying, synagogues of his day." He does this in the context of defending the right of certain high-profile preachers to go wherever they choose to speak with, and for, other pastors.

Here is that quote: "God has also given some Christian leaders a much wider platform - national or even international. They have been given the opportunity to influence other pastors and churches for good. What may be appropriate and even a God-given duty for them, may not be appropriate or wise for others on a local level. Different times and different contexts may also be factors that influence our decisions."

That sounds a bit like "situation ethics" - a practice may be right or wrong according to the circumstances prevailing at the time. This is really a rather feeble attempt to defend the practice of preaching alongside, and in association with, men who are involved in compromise and in some cases linked in fellowship with denominational apostasy. To use the example of our blessed Saviour going in and out among sinners, bringing them grace and deliverance, and urging them to repentance, in order to justify fellowship with compromised preachers and ministries is both reprehensible and foolish. As for the practice of Christ in going to the synagogues and preaching, there is no parallel to be found in the compromising policy of the "Christian leaders" today, whether national or international.

The Lord Jesus was not sponsored by the Pharisees and Sadducees when he spoke in the public forum of the Jews in His day. Furthermore, His preaching was both pointed and scathing of their sin and wickedness. Our Lord was certainly NOT engaged in a joint enterprise with those doctors of the law when He expounded the scriptures. He was not preaching "for" or "with" them. It should be noted also how His message was received. In the famous incident, recorded in Luke chapter 4, the result of His preaching in the synagogue of Nazareth is clear to see: They rose up in wrath against Him, and would have killed the Lord by casting Him down headlong from the brow of the hill. Obviously, if our Lord was there as an "ecumenist" his hearers did not share in His view of ecumenism! The same approach, when observed in the ministry of the Apostle Paul, produced the same kind of reaction. The utter rejection and reproach suffered by Paul when he preached the truth in the synagogues is enough to prove that neither he, nor His Lord, were at all "ecumenical" in those circumstances. This is all a far cry indeed from the scenario presented in "Jesus the Ecumenical Separatist". How many of those "Christian leaders" that he mentioned have elicited such a response from their hearers at their national/international gatherings?

As to the matter of such leaders being "given the opportunity to influence other pastors and churches for good. What may be appropriate and even a God-given duty for them, may not be appropriate or wise for others on a local level", this could be construed as an argument for the kind of compromising policy employed by Dr. Billy Graham at his crusades. Is the "opportunity to influence other pastors and churches" to be the only consideration for Christian leaders? And can it really be argued from scripture that what is "appropriate" or a "God-given duty" for one preacher could actually be "inappropriate" and "not wise" for another, according to the circumstances - the circumstances only being different in that in one case it is a national/international forum, while in the other it is merely at a "local level"? It is hard to believe that such an argument could be seriously postulated by a student of the Bible!



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The only consideration for a child of God to make in ANY situation or set of circumstances is this: What is the will of God in the matter? I do agree with the closing statement in the said blog: "We would prefer to please God and men. But if we have to make a choice, the choice is clear."

Indeed it is. "We ought to obey God rather than men." Yes, love of our Christian brethren is commanded by the Lord Himself. Love to God however - and such will be proved by our keeping of His commandments - is the first and greatest commandment. Our obedience to God can never be trumped by a desire to be "ecumenical".

As someone once said: "From unity bought at the expense of truth, good Lord deliver us!"