THE END OF THE ROAD: APOSTASY OF THE NCC AND WCC

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Recently there has been a major move on the part of Evangelical leaders to join with the mainstream liberal denominations, particularly with the National and World Councils of Churches (NCC and WCC). In November Don Argue, an Assemblies of God minister and current president of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE), addressed the NCC General Assembly in Chicago. This is the first time a NAE representative has done this. Argue told how he now has a “good relationship” with NCC General Secretary Joan Brown Campbell, and said he does not know how future relations will develop between the NAE and the NCC. He recognized the NCC leaders as fellow Christians and distanced himself from “the more combative and anti-intellectual fundamentalists.” Argue was pleased to report later that the NCC delegates’ response to his speech “was overwhelming. . . . They gave me a standing ovation.”

It is no wonder the liberal church leaders of the National Council were happy that America’s top Evangelical official made this pilgrimage to their assembly. For many years now the popularity and influence of these ecumenical councils has been declining. Most of the mainstream denominations in the NCC are shrinking in membership, and many of the remaining members are upset by the radical stance promoted by these councils. Therefore, the NCC and WCC are desperately seeking an influx of support from churches outside their membership—particularly from the Roman Catholics and from Evangelicals. This is seen in the recent meeting mentioned above. Not only did the NAE president address the assembly, but he offered a prayer at a NCC ceremony honoring Roman Catholic Joseph Cardinal Bernardin. Later a delegation of twenty NCC leaders went to Holy Name Cathedral to offer prayers “in honor of” the cardinal.

Why are the NCC and the WCC seeking to include these others? One reason is that their own base of support is shrinking. At its last meeting in Geneva the Central Committee of the WCC heard from its general secretary Konrad Raiser that, in spite of “strenuous efforts to cut expenses,” the Council still faces a debt for next year of over one million dollars. The past seven years have seen “a decline in income of nearly 50 percent.” According to Raiser, “income is no longer sufficient to maintain the present level of activities of the WCC.” The Council is planning to reduce its full-time employee equivalent from 237 to 190 this coming year.

Some delegates saw the needed reorganization as an opportunity to tighten the grip of the leadership over the Council’s decisions. One delegate said,

We are hopelessly enmeshed in governing structures that call people together to make decisions that are neither clear nor well-implemented. Our decision-making structures should be small.

Radical in Politics
One reason for the financial problems facing the NCC and WCC is the way these groups promote a very liberal political agenda. Many individual members and churches resent these stances being taken in their names. Typical of many WCC leaders is Methodist Jose Miguez-Bonino from Argentina, a well known exponent of “liberation theology,” who served on the WCC executive committee for eight years. On a speaking tour in the US in 1988 Miguez said that

In some cases in the Third World countries, using Marxist principles is the best way to understand economic struggle. For example, Marxist analysis is helpful in understanding the world economic system, including the relationship between the United States and Third World countries.\(^4\)

Even such a politically liberal writer as Ronald J. Sider has noted this radical liberal agenda of the WCC. Speaking of their stance on ecology, Sider said, “the WCC drafters went overboard in their emphasis and failed to state what the Bible clearly teaches, that humanity has a special status in creation as bearer of the divine image. . . . It is both unbiblical and ridiculous to deny the special status of persons.” Sider also criticized the WCC’s concern about the fall of Communism in Europe and its “one-sided attacks on market economies,” accompanied by its “near silence on the evils of the Eastern block.”\(^5\)

An example of this one-sidedness in our own country was the refusal by the governing board of the National Council of Churches to participate in any official celebration of the 500th anniversary of the coming of Columbus to America. Declaring that Columbus “invaded” America, the NCC said he was responsible for inflicting “slavery, genocide, theft, and exploitation” upon the Indians.\(^6\) When asked by an Episcopal bishop to add a list of “positive” things about America, the NCC committee voted that idea down.

This radical attack in the political area is not letting up. In its latest meeting the Central Committee of the WCC proposed that the Council condemn the actions of the US in placing sanctions against Cuba as “economic aggression against the people of Cuba,” and also expressed its “concern” about US missile attacks on Iraq.\(^7\)

This is just a small sample of the types of actions the NCC and WCC have taken over the years. From supporting leftist terrorist groups to denouncing the very liberties that permit their own existence, these church leaders have been promoting a political agenda directly in conflict with God’s Ten Commandments and with established Christian ethics. The recent collapse of Communism in much of the world has not cooled their ardor.

**Radical in Religion**

Of greater significance is the stance these councils have taken regarding the Christian faith. Many of the member churches themselves are not biblical in their beliefs; for example, a constituent member of the NCC since 1966 is the Swedenborgian Church, which holds to an extremely allegorical interpretation of the Bible and denies many basic Christian doctrines. When the NCC and WCC first started in the 1940s, it was feared by many that they were seeking
to unite their member churches and eliminate denominational distinctives. They denied this. However, through the years that purpose has grown and become bolder. Not only do they seek to unite their members, but also they desire the union of the Protestant churches with the Orthodox churches and the Roman Catholic Church. Their ecumenical ambitions do not stop there either. Now the WCC regularly holds joint worship with other religions altogether. In the process of this drive for union, all loyalty to “the faith once delivered to the saints” must be abandoned. Evidence and documentation for this trend is voluminous. In this article a few typical examples will be given.

The World Council began including “dialogues” with people of other religions in their world assemblies in Nairobi (1975) and Vancouver (1983). The Vancouver assembly featured native American religions as a part of its program. In response to some criticism, the Council addressed the subject in its own publication:

Do they [people of other faiths] pray to the same God? Does the God whom we worship listen to the prayers of those who are not Christians--which must surely outnumber our own prayers? If God refuses to accept their prayers simply because they are incorrectly addressed--as many of us think--then what kind of a god is the Christian God?8

This article went on to declare that Christians need “a radical re-examination of some of our basic assumptions—theological assumptions—about other religions and their adherents.”

One leader in this dialog is Diana L. Eck, a professor at Harvard and moderator of the WCC’s ecumenical commission, the Dialogue with People of Living Faiths. Eck promotes Christians’ adopting what is good in other religions. She approves of Japanese Christians who now practice Buddhist meditation, learned from Buddhists. “Our God is the same God,” she says. She advocates this approach with all world religions, as Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs, and Moslems. In an interview held in our area in 1988, our local newspaper reported,

She added that some people--most notably Christian fundamentalists--want to “roll the clock back” and pretend they don’t live in a pluralistic society. This view represents an exclusivist attitude that maintains “we are the people who see things right.”9

Another example of this thinking is Robert Schultz, former professor of theology that the Lutheran Seminary in Columbia, S.C. Schultz declared that Christians should learn the techniques practiced in the New Age movement, “dimensions of life experience that the church doesn’t address.”10

As an expression of this new openness to other religions, the Seattle Council of Churches in 1988 held a joint ceremony with representatives of American Indian tribes, apologizing for past Christians who tried to convert the Indians away from their native religion. The Council recognized “Christian complicity in the destruction of Indian religions.” Indian leader Long Crane, a Sioux, said, “This here is to help smooth the way for Indians and to say our God is the
same as your God. Before, it was like a slap in the face. And now they’re saying they’re sorry.”

Similar sentiments abound in NCC and WCC circles. Dr. Wesley Ariarajah, director of the WCC’s Inter-Faith Dialogue said in Australia,

“It is inconceivable to me that a Hindu or a Buddhist, or anybody, is outside God. My understanding of God’s love is too broad for me to believe that only this narrow segment called the Christian church will be saved.”

The 1991 WCC assembly in Canberra, Australia, not only featured observers from these other religions, but incorporated native religious aboriginal dancing into its program:

Aboriginal men girded in loincloths and feathers, their bodies painted in tribal decoration, danced around an altar and beat drums in a traditional purification ceremony that opened the Seventh Assembly of the World Council of Churches here February 7. Standing near them at the altar were aboriginal women clothed in traditional black and red dresses and colorful aboriginal clergymen garbed in western vestments.

The WCC also is pursuing its union with the Roman Catholic Church. At its meeting in Santiago de Compostela, Spain, the WCC’s Faith and Order Commission’s worship service “began with processions from three sides of the Cathedral and the placing of two icons and the Bible on the altar. Roman Catholic Archbishop Antonio Mario Rouco Valera of Santiago de Compostela welcomed participants as the service began; and at the conclusion he gave the benediction.”

A well publicized American meeting was the “Re-Imagining” conference held in Minneapolis in 1993. About 2,000 people attended these meetings from most mainline NCC denominations. This conference included open denial of biblical teachings in many areas of doctrine and life, and openly engaged in worship of “the goddess Sophia.” In spite of many complaints by members, this conference has not been repudiated by any participating denomination.

This spirit of forsaking the exclusive claims of Christ for acceptance of all religions is stronger today. No longer does it cause raised eyebrows among most American churchgoers. One example is the Rev. Roy Wilson, half native American from the Cowlitz tribe and half white. He accepted both religions as a youth, and now, at the age of 68, is both a retired United Methodist minister and practicing Cowlitz “spiritual leader.” Wilson believes there are “similarities between the Indian practice of arranging stones for spiritual guidance and biblical theology.” He says, “For me the medicine wheel and Scriptures come together. I find no contradictions.” Apparently the United Methodist Church had no problem with one of its ministers practicing another religion at the same time.

Many of the scholarly leaders of the NCC are active in the Society of Biblical Literature and the American Academy of Religion, large academic organizations which hold their annual meetings jointly. The extremely radical, non-Christian nature of much of the thinking in these
groups is exposed in a recent article by Peter Jones. Jones summarizes the progress of heresy in the SBL: “In addition to the massive rehabilitation of the ancient heresy of Gnosticism as an authentic version of early Christianity, radical feminism and the homosexual movement find in SBL a willing platform for the spread of their agenda.” An example of the homosexual movement in NCC churches is found in the recent “same-sex union” celebrated in St. Mark’s Episcopal Cathedral in Seattle, Washington, this year. In attendance were the state governor and city police chief; the dean and pastor of the cathedral officiated. Now it’s socially as well as religiously acceptable to persist in open perversion.

On a more local note, this year’s annual Thanksgiving Eve Interfaith Worship service, sponsored by the Associated Ministries of Tacoma will meet in the First Christian Church. The advertisement for the meeting notes that participating groups include “Judaism, Protestants, Catholic, Latter Day Saints, Bahai’s, Islam, and Buddhism.” Now routinely God is only one among many in our NCC churches.

Is this “the end of the road”? Probably not. There are still believers who belong to the NCC or the WCC. Things can still get worse. Yet these church bodies plainly reveal themselves to be apostate by biblical standards. God commands his people to be separate from apostasy, and thus to “come out from among them.” The true worship of God cannot be accompanied with worship to idols. Let us build true churches that honor God and his Word!

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1 Tracy Early, Ecumenical News International, Nov. 25, 1996. For an analytic summary of the efforts of the WCC to work with Evangelicals, see David J. Bosch, “‘Ecumenicals’ and ‘Evangelicals’: a Growing Partnership?” The Ecumenical Review 40:3-4 (July-October, 1988) 458-472.
8 One World, Jan./Feb., 1987.
18 Ibid., p. 24.