

IV. REACTIONS TO MODERN ECUMENISM IN ITS STRUCTURAL MOLD

We have been discussing the reactions to modern ecumenism in its theological mold or religious posture or whatever. Previously we defined the group and the idea and attempted to show on what it was based. The reactions appropriately are surveyed after we have seen the base. And then, having seen the theological picture and what reactions were created to or by it, we look to see the world structure (organizational ideal) and what reactions are caused by it. Just to keep you posted on where we are!

A. Conditioning Factors

The general class or reaction has been a "so what" sort of thing with a few notable exceptions. There certainly has not been a single-class reaction that could fit the total picture. The lack of unity in reaction has been striking. Some deny the problem, some compromise, some hide, some buy guns(!) but to a large extent the reaction has consisted mostly of assorted forms of anger in which the fire is either banked or put out. Those who have reacted openly have often done so with intemperance and have damaged their own causes irreparably in some cases. To explain this variety and rush of reaction is not easy but these conditioning factors have some merit as being considered causes for this situation.

1. The lack of unity among evangelicals

We are not talking about structure but emotional and spiritual unity. It includes a lack of goal and purpose far more than one of organization. Included is a lack of common cause in which the individual preacher-teachers, etc., see the large cause of the Gospel more than their individual reputations. This may be a bit harsh and maybe hard to prove as well...but it seems that way to me. Without preaching on it now...it seems more important that we each have our own show than that we should lose something by supporting one put together by someone else.

2. The lack of agreement about attitudes and issues

This can be seen in the varied opinions about ecumenical evangelism, the right to life issues, etc. Absolute agreement is probably not needed on every point but hostility of ideal definitely does not help.

3. The preoccupation with things of a secondary nature.

This, it has seemed to me, is a giant factor. While liberals burn the Bible, evangelicals burn one another over what version of the Bible they may read. It is true that in an age of conflict every issue appears to be one of force and merit. But we should learn to distinguish the relative merit of issues and capitalize on those that are chiefly in the major interest areas. Part of the problem is that what looks big to one looks small to another. I know of no way of ending that assessment but the difficulty is that we often do not so much as look at the magnitude of the entities.

4. The deep-seated distrust syndrome of fundamentalist ministry and mentality.