

# THE UPWARD CALL

*Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet;  
but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,  
I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God*

**IN CHRIST JESUS.**

(Philippians 3.13-14 NASB)

#02-0818

MARCH 28, 2008

## ***EVERY TRIBE, TONGUE, PEOPLE, AND NATION —LOVE!***

In previous issues, I have written about *isms* and how Christians are being distracted from the one message that we have that is the only answer to the many problems that mankind faces. The only answer is **Jesus, the Savior of the world.**

It seems that many Christians have joined and are joining with some of the many *isms* that mankind has created and over which mankind has divided. In previous issues, I made the point that today we find believers embracing environmentalism and political conservatism. These are but two examples in a long line of *isms* that are distracting the ecclesia, which is the body of Christ, from its purpose on earth in this day. As a reminder, an *ism* is defined as “a system or theory.” Christianity is not an *ism*; rather, it is a relationship with a personal and living God and Savior. *Isms* can also refer to religions; but Christianity is not a religion; again, it is a relationship. *Isms* can also become institutions or organizations modeled after some system of man; but Christianity is not an institution; it is an organism of living members joined to a living Head who is seated among the celestials, far above all power and authority.

It is not my intent to be critical of any brethren in Christ but simply to offer some observations. It seems to me that what many call the “church” of our day is in a state of confusion, as if wandering in a wilderness and not knowing which way to turn. They have lost their compass (the leading of the spirit of God), or sight of the sun (the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ), or are blinded by a dust storm (blinded by the god of this age). Let me state my concern another way. *Isms* may have some value to mankind, and individual believers may be engaged in some aspects of these *isms*. After all, we are called to be witnesses, and if we are isolated from the world, then it is very difficult to be a witness. However, the ecclesia, which is the body of Christ, a spiritual organism joined with a spiritual Head, is not called to be engaged in the affairs of the world. We are in the world (physically) but not of it (spiritually). We are to present to the world the affairs of God, which are all centered on the Person of our Lord Jesus. We are to be giving forth the very life of Christ, not embracing that which lies in the power of the evil one. Be assured that all the *isms* of the world lie in this power. Let us not forget that the devil tried to tempt Jesus in the wilderness with a view of the glory of the kingdoms of this world (Luke 4.5-8). All the *isms* of the world lie within these kingdoms.

The church of our day has enough division within it over doctrine and various emphases that we don't need to further divide ourselves over man-created issues. Christ has been parted! Let's turn back to the oneness that we have in Christ! There is only **one body, one Spirit, one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all** (Ephesians 4.4-6). And I must declare: **There is only one Love!**

Now, I want to briefly mention two more *isms*.

The first one is called **humanism** or **secular humanism**. Webster's Dictionary defines *humanism* as “any system or way of thought or action concerned with the interests or ideals of people,” or “the intellectual and cultural movement that stemmed from the study of classical Greek and Latin literature and culture during the Middle Ages and was one of the factors giving rise to the Renaissance; it was characterized by an emphasis on human interests rather than on the natural or religion.” Very simply, *humanism* is about man's thoughts, not God's thoughts. It is *man*-centered, not *God*-centered. Man's

interests or ideals are what matter, not God's interests or ideals. Although the definition excludes religion from *humanism*, this is far from the truth, for *humanism* has become a religion of its own. It places man as his own god and the center of the universe. *Humanism* has grown into a form of *spiritualism* that declares: "All religions worship the same god. There are many ways, not one way, to god. We all have this god within us." We must guard ourselves from falling into such thinking. Unfortunately, some churches have unwittingly embraced humanism for the sake of unity and peace. Others have openly embraced it as they have moved away from the truth of God's word. One example is those who deny the resurrection of Christ; they are more like humanists who are embracing a false spirituality.

There is another *ism* that is being embraced by some churches, and it is called ***multiculturalism***. I spent some time searching for a definition and understanding of this term. At its core, it means that every culture has the right to exist. But *multiculturalism* means more than this, for it implies that society (or a nation) should [must] embrace and include distinct culture groups with equal cultural and political status. To many, it is about justice and equality. On one end of the spectrum, some hold that cultures should be allowed to co-exist in a society without any overarching thread holding them together. This has been tried in Europe with disastrous results, which some nations are trying to reverse with what some call *monoculturalism*. On the other end of the spectrum, which is the most common view today, many hold that cultures should happily co-exist in a society (or nation) but with a common thread holding all society together. Of course, some use the term for a political agenda that inevitably leads to the opposite result of justice and equality. Others see it as a way to reverse racism and discrimination. It is about embracing diversity without discrimination.

Well, why does *multiculturalism* appeal to some churches? It appeals because the body of Christ is often divided along cultural or racial lines. In our area alone, we have white (Anglo-Saxon) churches, African-American churches, Chinese churches, Korean churches, and Hispanic churches, to name a few, and this does not include the many other divisions along doctrinal lines. I must confess that I would love to see the Lord's people from all races and cultures gathered together as one in Christ. If this is what *multiculturalism* would produce in the body of Christ, I would be all for it, but I do not see *multiculturalism* as defined by man as the solution. Again, we must be very careful not to embrace *isms* of the world, even if they have some light to offer. The Holy Spirit has a better way.

Recently, I read of a local church that is embracing *multiculturalism*. One pastor was quoted: "*When all the different culture groups come together it is a little taste of heaven on earth because in heaven we are not going to have denominations.*" I must say amen to this (even though I most likely see heaven differently from this brother). After all, Scripture says that **the Lamb of God purchased for God with His own blood a people from every tribe and tongue and people and nation** (Revelation 5.9). What concerned me in the article I was reading was a quote from a professor of Christian education: "*We will have to see what role all the different racial and ethnic groups will have in making decisions about liturgy, Christian formation, community service and pattern of community life in such a church.*" Immediately, my red flag went up as I sensed theology, institution, and man-made organization. It must not be about liturgy or pattern; it must be about the leading of the spirit of God and the love of the brethren. The most telling point in the whole article was a quote from a brother in Christ from Guatemala. He said: "You feel that you belong. **You feel the love.**"

Love sums up the whole matter. It is not about *multiculturalism*; it is about **the body of Christ**, the many from every tribe and tongue and people and nation coming together in **the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace** (Ephesians 4.3), joined together in Christ, the Head of the body, and **the building up of itself in love** (Ephesians 4.16), **the love of God that was poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit that was given to us** (Romans 5.5).

Dear beloved, **love binds every tribe, tongue, people, and nation in Christ. Love is not a system or a theory. It is the reality! Let us not embrace *isms*; let us embrace *love*. God is love!**