

„Freedom and Fellowship in Christ”

The Berlin Declaration on Ecumenism 1974

(Concised Version)

On the celebration of the Ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ, we as Christians from different European Churches, have gathered in Berlin. We are cognizant of our spiritual unity with all brethren and sisters in the whole world who call on His name.

Together we confess: God has raised His Son from the dead, who because of our sins gave His life on the cross as a propitiation for us, and “set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion ... not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church” (Eph 1:20-22). Jesus will come again, just as his disciples saw Him taken up into heaven (Acts 1:11).

Today the biblical message is being subjected to attack and change, not only from without but also from within Christianity itself. This calls us to vigilance and discernment of the spirits:

I. The Time for Winnowing of the Ecumenical Movement

“Because thou hast kept the world of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth” (Rev 3:10)

1. The New Humanism as an Antichristian Temptation

Our Time is a time for winnowing Christianity. An ungodly humanism that deifies man has slipped into the worldwide Christianity in the cloak of pseudo-Christian theology and is undermining the profession of Christ in the Church.

*Jesus said: “If another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive”
(John 5:43 b)*

2. The New Polarization as an Unavoidable Division in the Churches

On the basis of the contradictory evaluations of this pseudo-Christian humanism, a real division runs through the present-day denominations. On a world-wide basis the antithesis emerges between fellowship in the biblical profession of Jesus Christ and a secularist Ecumenical Movement.

*“Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life”
(John 6:68)*

3. The New Call to Act as Watchmen

Disturbed by the threat to the biblical faith in the Ecumenical Movement, bowed down under our common guilt in this development, and distressed by the confusion of numerous Christians who are looking in vain for shepherds, we are called upon to fulfill the duty of watchmen in the Church. If we keep silent, we would face the judgment of God.

“Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me” (Ezekiel 3:17)

II. The Liberation Program of the Ecumenical Movement

“I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ” (Gal 1:6-7)

4. True Freedom is Revealed in the Scripture Alone!

One main conflict between the Gospel and present-day ecumenism arises with the question, “How does salvation in Christ relate to the liberation movements?” Only obedience to the Word of God protects us from falling prey to a politically perverted gospel.

“But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of who thou hast learned them; and that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (II Tim 3:14-15)

5. True Freedom was Provided by Jesus Christ Alone!

Ecumenical leaders suggest that today Jesus Christ works in the revolutions and other religions to bring salvation to the world. They attempt to prove this false teaching from the Scripture. With this, the World Council of Churches is on the way to substituting Jesus Christ with his antichristian counterpart.

“Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today and forever” (Heb 13:8)

6. True Freedom is Dispensed in the Gospel Alone!

For years there has been the tendency in the WCC to supplant the unassailable heart of the Gospel, the forgiveness of sins, with the call for social-political liberation. With this the Gospel is perverted to an antichristian ideology, even when reconciliation with God is talked about as a prerequisite.

“But God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we are yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him!” (Rom 5:8-9)

III. The Vision of Unity of the Ecumenical Movement

The other conflict between the Gospel and the Ecumenical Movement comes to the fore with the question, ‘What is the relation between the true oneness in Christ and the world unity which is sought?’ We oppose the false doctrine, that the unity of the Church is only a step along the way to an all-encompassing unity of all mankind. This teaching blots out the line of demarcation between the Church and the world and confuses the kingdom of God with a humanistic-formed world fellowship.

“Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word: That they all may be one; as thou Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me” (John 17:20-21)

“And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet, but receive power as kings one hour with the beast. These have on mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast. These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of Lords, and King of Kings” (Rev 17:12-14).

7. No United World Super Church!

Because the Ecumenical Movement of Geneva has not been able, up to this point, to unite the confessions on an apostolic basis, it is attempting today to bring about an inter-church unity in a mainly organizational way. The question of confession or truth is either pushed to the side or passed over by vague formulas. Jesus’ disciples, however, are cognizant of the unity in the spiritual membership of His body.

“Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bound of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and in you all” (Eph 4:3-6)

8. No United World Religion!

The World Council of Churches stands at a fateful turning point: The original Ecumenical Movement of Churches is being threatened today to become the ecumenicity of religions. We are warning against the danger of an all embracing syncretistic world religion.

“But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written, eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him” (I Cor 2:7-9; Isa 64:4)

“But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with the devils” (I Cor 10:20)

9. No United World Community

The guiding ecumenical idea reaches its peak today in the “Utopic Vision” of a world community of peace, accomplished by the united human efforts and composed of all races, religions and ideologies. This is a misunderstanding of the biblical statements concerning the coming of the Kingdom of God through the history of salvation. A worldly-dominated church, which desires to autocratically preempt this gift of the coming of Christ with a premature fulfillment, will pave the way for the Antichrist.

“Jesus teaches us to draw a line of distinction: “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s and to God the things that are God’s” (Mark 12:17)

“My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight ...” (John 18:36)

IV. The Influential Power of the Ideological Ecumenical Movement

“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world” (I Pet 5:8-9)

10. Ecumenism as a Spirit of Confusion

The ‘Utopic Vision’, which enchants many in the Ecumenical Movement, is not only a false doctrine – dreamed up by man – it is also a spiritual force (Luke 4:4-8). It infects each one, who becomes involved, and almost unnoticed, it changes one’s spiritual consciousness.

“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (Eph 6:10, 12)

11. Ecumenism as a Conquering Strategy

The ideologized ‘gospel’ is being spread about with great craftiness among all churches and Christian communions of the world. The “Utopic Vision” demands, that they all be won over to the enrollment in the Ecumenical Movement as preparation of their united world community. The methods, which can be observed on all the continents, appear as part of a total plan which stretches across the world.

“That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and from and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie I wait to deceive” (Eph 4:14)

V. The Confessing Church answers the Ecumenical Movement

“Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown” (Rev 3:11)

12. Discernment of Spirits and Resistance; Gathering and Witness

With immovable confidence in the great promises of our Lord in respect to the Church which remains true to Him, and with a sober view in respect to the severe threat by a false spirit, we call to our brothers and sisters in the whole world:

Read your Bible, - so that from day to day you will be rooted in Christ through the word of truth!

Recognize the spiritual danger which in this present day approaches you through the estrangement of the Gospel even in the form of the Ecumenical Movement.

Challenge your churches and mission headquarters to publicly oppose this distortion of the faith.

Unite in a world-wide fellowship of faith, prayer, and witness.

Proclaim to the world by word and deed the true Gospel of Jesus Christ until he comes again (Matthew 24:14)

In this drawing together – in giving heed to the Word, in prayer, and love, in suffering – we wait with joyous expectation for the coming Lord.

HE is true, HE will strengthen you, and keep you from evil (II Thess 3:3).

HE will come as the true Shepherd to gather together His one flock out of the dispersion.

To HIM be praise and glory forever! Amen.

On the Day of Ascension of our Lord, Berlin, 23rd May, 1974.

N.B. This **concised version** is an extract of the complete text of the Berlin Declaration on Ecumenism. The **comprehensive version** is a much larger document. It consists of the 12 main affirmations as stated above, enlarged by a detailed argumentation and by extensive quotations from recent ecumenical writings to prove the theses. It has been published in several countries and languages. The Berlin Declaration has been prepared by the European Conference of Confessing Fellowships in cooperation with Christian leaders throughout the world. In Germany a large volume has been published in May 1975 which gives documentary evidence for the ecumenical views and practices, refuted by the Berlin Declaration: *Walter Künneth and Peter Beyerhaus, Editors, "Reich Gottes oder Weltgemeinschaft? Berliner Ökumene-Erklärung 1974", Bad Liebenzell 1975*