

PROFITABLY UNDERSTANDING TRAGICALLY MISUNDERSTOOD BIBLE PASSAGES
Part VIII: Understanding Christ's John 10:16 "One Fold" View In Reference To Religious Ecumenism
(John 10:16 with John 17:9-23)

I. Introduction

- A. The Roman Catholic Church's Vatican II council issued a "Decree on Ecumenism" and a "Decree on Eastern Catholic Churches" declaring other groups in Christendom to be "separated brethren" with whom Roman Catholics were to have dialogue toward "the unity of all those who should believe" in Jesus Christ as revealed in "John 17:20-26," (R. C. Broderick, ed., The Catholic Encyclopedia (1987), p. 182.
- B. Since then, Evangelicals have had friendly dialogue with Catholics: in 2002 at Wheaton College, Illinois, theologians from Catholic and Evangelical traditions, including evangelical J. I. Packer, met for dialogue, cf. "Evangelicals & Catholics: The Next Generation?" by T. A. McMahon, The Berean Call, 6/02, p. 1-2.
- C. Well, it **IS** true that Jesus prayed that believers ". . . all may be one" (John 17:21a), and that He predicted "there shall be one fold, and one shepherd." (John 10:16). **However, though such verses have been used by those involved in the "ecumenical movement" such as Evangelicals and Catholics Together, Paul wrote that believers are to anathematize those who proclaim a false faith PLUS works gospel, Galatians 1:8-9 with Galatians 3:3; 5:1-2, a gospel a number of groups in Christendom proclaim!**
- D. We thus study John 10:16 and John 17:9-21 in their contexts to see what Jesus meant by His "one fold":

II. Understanding Christ's John 10:16 "One Fold" View In Reference To Religious Ecumenism.

- A. When Jesus declared in John 10:16 that He had "other sheep" that were "not of this fold" whom He would bring into His current fold to make "one fold" with "one shepherd," He was speaking during His earthly ministry when the Church did not yet exist, and He was ministering to believers in Israel who were **Jews**.
- B. Thus, the "other sheep" are **Gentiles** who were outside Judaism, cf. Leon Wood, The Gospel According To John (NICNT, 1979), p. 512; Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 310. [See Ephesians 2:11-22 on this truth.]
- C. Now, these "other sheep" were **not** to be people who **upheld key UNBIBLICAL ERROR** as we can note from Jesus' words in John 17:9-23 (as follows):
 - 1. In His great intercessory prayer of John 17:1-26, Jesus **consistently** distinguished His **true** flock from the **world** that did not believe in Him, cf. John 17:9a, 12, 14 and 16.
 - 2. Then, Jesus prayed that His flock would be sanctified, or **separated** from error and evil "through the truth," and that this "truth" was the "word" of God the Father, John 17:17! (Ibid., Wood, p. 730)
 - 3. Thus, Christ's request to God the Father that His flock "may be one" (John 17:21-23) was a request for a unity **within** the **boundary** of the **TRUTH of the WORD of GOD!**
- D. However, such a unity is **IMPOSSIBLE** throughout Christendom in general since much of Christendom is **NOT** aligned with even acceptable boundaries of the truth of God's Word (as follows):
 - 1. The Roman Catholic Church's Vatican II council upheld its gospel that was defined in Session 6, Canon 9 of the Council of Trent, and it states: "If anyone says that the sinner is justified by faith alone, meaning that nothing else is required to cooperate in order to obtain the grace of justification . . . let him be anathema." (cited in The Berean Call, 10/99, p. 1, "Why It Matters: Part I" by T. A. McMahon)
 - 2. Also, various Protestants adhere to various gospels of justification by faith **plus** water baptism or **plus** speaking in tongues or **plus** a sustained human faith or **plus** holy living, etc. rather than by **faith alone!**
 - 3. However, Paul's claim at Galatians 1:8-9 counters such beliefs: Paul there claimed that if he or an angel from heaven were to preach any other Gospel than what he had taught of justification by faith alone (cf. Rom . 3:23-26; Eph. 2:8-9), he was to be anathematized! (cf. Gal. 1:8-9 with 3:3; 5:1-2)
- E. Accordingly, **with Christ, we hold to a need for UNITY among TRUE Christians, but a UNITY that is BASED on a MUTUAL COMMITMENT to the TRUTH of the WORD of GOD in SCRIPTURE!**

Lesson: (1) Christ taught and prayed to the Father for the unity of His followers that was a **HOLY** unity, one that was **SEPARATE** from evil and error by its **ADHERENCE** to God's **TRUTH**. (2) As broad religious ecumenism does **NOT** consist of such a unity, we do **NOT** participate in it, nor do we promote it! (3) Yet, we gladly fellowship with those of like precious faith!

Application: (1) May we **UPHOLD** a select unity, one that is based on loyalty to God's truth! (2) May we **AVOID** a corruptive unity, and even withdraw from it, 2 Corinthians 6:17-18.