

CHAPTER XIV

20th Century Protestantism

Through the study of church history we discover that the majority of those Protestant churches that were started during, and as a result of, the 16th Century Reformation were formed as an effort to have and maintain pure doctrine from the Word of God in their worship.

Men such as Martin Luther were certainly great men of God, who stood firmly for the Word of God regardless of the terrible persecution they received. Ulrich Zwingli, John Calvin, and John Wesley were bold servants of the Lord who helped in leading the reform of the Christian church back to the fundamental teachings of the Word of God.

However, the doctrines taught when the various denominations were **STARTED** are not necessarily the doctrines taught in these same denominations today. There have been many splits branching from the main denominations, and it is difficult to correctly “label” a particular doctrine as being taught by any entire denomination for this reason.

To those churches and those pastors who have remained true to the Word of God despite the tremendous pressures put upon them by Satan, men, and organizations, we say **PRAISE GOD!**

It is our desire for you, as a soulwinner, to be able to recognize false doctrine whenever you hear it, and to know how to present the truth of that doctrine in an effective way. Often the errors will have a bearing on salvation, and thus are of vital importance.

It isn't our purpose to try to “knock” or degrade any particular church or denomination. Perhaps other churches bearing the same name would teach the doctrine correctly. It isn't even necessarily beneficial for you to connect automatically a certain error with a certain church, because the error may or may not be taught by a particular minister; also, the error may vary in form or degree from one church to another.

As an ambassador for Christ you should never take for granted that a person knows the Lord as his Saviour. Because he is a member of your church, a Baptist church, Methodist, Presbyterian, or Lutheran church, is no guarantee that he is saved.

In Paul's farewell address to the elders of the Ephesian church he told them, “I have not shunned to declare unto you **ALL** the counsel of God” (Acts 20:27). He then mentions that it is their duty, as Christian leaders, to **FEED** the flock and to **WARN** the flock, “For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock” (v. 29) . If you are in the position of leadership among Christians, not only is it your responsibility to build the believers up through the Word, but it is also your divinely-appointed task to **WARN** those in your care of **FALSE DOCTRINE**.

The Apostle Peter also spoke of the danger of false doctrine, taught by false teachers: “But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And **MANY** shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the **WAY OF TRUTH** shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they with **FEIGNED WORDS** make merchandise of you . . .” (II Peter 2:1-3).

Paul warned, “Now I beseech you, brethren, **MARK** them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the **DOCTRINE** which ye have learned; **AND AVOID THEM**” (Romans 16:17). You are not to: accept their sponsorship . . . you and your message are God-sponsored; or accept their money . . . God will take care of your financial needs; or have them on your platform . . . for what fellowship have you with Satan?; or support their schools . . . you would be perpetuating their errors; or send converts to their churches . . . babes in Christ need the **WORD!**

The Bible is unmistakably clear on this subject. “Be ye NOT unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial (Satan)? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?” (II Cor. 6:14, 15)

This verse isn’t speaking about people who don’t believe in God. It is speaking of those that do not believe that God took on flesh and made a complete payment for their sin. And verse 17 says, “Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye SEPARATE, saith the Lord....”

I’m sure you know Christians who, every time they hear a new preacher, say . . . “My, wasn’t he WONDERFUL?” The preacher may have been off on salvation, messed up the invitation, misused any number of Scriptures; yet if he was humorous, quoted from famous men, or spoke with words so large you couldn’t understand what he was saying, many people would think his message was WONDERFUL. The people may have been so taken by his “sincerity and spiritual tones” or his “vivid illustrations and sentimental stories” that they did not stop to see if this man’s MESSAGE was true to the Word of God!

Scripture exhorts us “That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro and carried about with EVERY WIND OF DOCTRINE, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.” What is a believer to do when he hears something taught that does not “ring clear” to him? How can we know what is Scriptural and what is not?

“STUDY to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, RIGHTLY DIVIDING the Word of truth” (II Tim. 2: 15) .

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for DOCTRINE, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (II Tim. 3:16).

Compare SCRIPTURE with SCRIPTURE, not preacher with preacher! “Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation” (II Peter 1:20). Scofield’s note says this means it is “not isolated from all that the Word has given elsewhere.” To understand the Bible properly, you must compare all the verses given on the subject under consideration. This takes study. As a soulwinner, you should know the Bible well enough to know IMMEDIATELY when you hear something contrary to God’s plan of salvation.

“Neo-evangelicals” call those preachers who don’t quite preach salvation the way the Bible says, “fringe friends.” Have you read Galatians 1: 8 recently? Did it say, “But though we, or an angel from heaven preach ANY other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be a fringe friend”? No! God uses strong language because that is how He feels about the matter. God says, “let him be ACCURSED.”

Please at this time go back to Chapter Seven and reread the reasons given for Galatianism being an accursed message.

It is a tragedy . . . but many Protestant churches today do not even believe the Bible is the Word of God. Some would say the Bible “becomes” the Word of God as an individual comes into “contact” with Christ. Others say the Bible “contains” the Word of God. Others come right out and admit that they do not believe the Bible is any more the Word of God than is the Koran or the Book of Mormon. They teach that any book a person finds uplifting to his soul, that book is inspired of God to him.

Around the time of 1910-1930, “Fundamentalism” or “Orthodoxy” was strong. This school stood for the Bible as the completely inerrant and inspired Word of God. R. A. Torrey, J. Gresham Machen, Robert Dick Wilson, and Benjamin Warfield—great defenders of the faith—were “Fundamentalists” of their day.

In time men arose, writing and speaking of their complete disbelief in the Bible as the Word of God, representing the left-wing, liberal theology of the day.

There was no spirit of cooperation among the “Fundamentalists” and the “Liberals” because their positions were (and are) complete opposites. The Bible tells us not to have company with those who deny the Word of God.

Today the problem seems to be with the ministers who take a position somewhere in-between the Orthodox and Liberal position. This school is called “Neo-evangelicalism.”

Dr. Charles J. Woodbridge, church historian and beloved expositor of the Word, made a study of Neo-evangelicalism and gave us much of the information presented here. The following four points are taken from his lecture delivered to the Florida Bible College student body in 1963. (The reason we go into all this detail in a book on personal evangelism is that so many dear, Christian people today do not even see the dangers of this Neo-evangelicalism—they do not see that the ideas supported by it are the cause of many people being blinded to the plan of salvation.)

1. There is a new attitude of scholars. Perhaps influenced by liberalism (while they received their education), they now have an emphasis on LOVE rather than on sound DOCTRINE. This sounds beautiful, but Scripture says believers are not to make common cause with the enemy. Love is no substitute for truth.

2. There is a new method. The ministers of this school have convinced themselves that the “end justifies the means.” They feel free to use any method, as long as their goal is all right. But the Scripture teaches us to act “princip’ially” (Dr. Woodbridge’s coined word) and leave the results with God. We should never do evil that good may come.

Moses disobeyed God in smiting the Rock in a way not prescribed by God. Did the water come out? God overruled Moses’ sin by His grace to meet the needs of the people.

Some would ask us, as they asked Dr. Woodbridge, “Don’t you want to see souls saved?” And our answer is the same. OF COURSE we want to see souls saved. But we should do God’s will GOD’S WAY if we are to receive God’s full approval of what we are doing. Noah preached for 120 years. How many souls did he lead to the Lord? Only seven? He left the results with God—Noah’s job was to preach what the Lord had TOLD him to preach.

Our responsibility is to make the gospel clear and understandable to the lost. God wants us to be FAITHFUL with His message (I Cor. 4:2). We can plant and water all we want to, but it is still God who gives the increase. Actually, “soulwinning” is a misnomer. We do not win the soul. God does this. We just give out the message.

3. There is a new theology. Those adhering to this Neo-evangelical theology often are the ones who are saying evolution and the Bible are compatible. Among them are those who deny the inspiration of II Peter, Esther, and parts of Genesis. They want to “re-define” inspiration.

As Dr. Woodbridge said, “How can you redefine ‘holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost’? Would you say:

- (1) holy means ‘unholy’
- (2) men means ‘women’
- (3) of God means ‘of the devil’
- (4) spake means ‘sang’?” etc.

Either the Bible is the Word of God, or the Bible is a complete hoax. THERE IS NO MIDDLE GROUND!

4. There is a new ethic. It allows the people to pretty much choose their own moral system. If it makes you happy, it must be all right. The Bible says, “There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death” (Prov. 16: 25) . There is no getting around “whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap” (Gal. 6:7) .

This Neo-evangelicalism is getting more and more popular across America today. Fewer and fewer pastors seem to realize its danger. It is fast becoming the “mode” of 20th Century Protestantism. Some independent, fundamental churches are awake. Perhaps more and more ministers within the framework of denominations will become awake . . . if you will faithfully give out the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. If you will study the Word so that you can “give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason

of the hope that is in you,” you will be doing much to stem the tide of Modernism.

Intricately interwoven into the fiber of modern-day Protestantism is what has become known as the Ecumenical Movement, and, as a soulwinner, you need to know how this movement is keeping the unsaved from trusting Christ as their Saviour.

The Ecumenical Movement is dangerous, first of all, because of its FALSE DOCTRINES. At the core of ecumenism is found the basic belief of the “brotherhood of man” and the “Fatherhood of God.” When a person believes that all people are brothers and that God is already the Father of everyone, he does not see his need of a Saviour.

Because of this, evangelism has become “passé” to an ecumenist. In its place is substituted the “social gospel” which is aimed at improving society in general, rather than at the salvation of souls.

Another danger of ecumenism is that it CONFUSES people, even many saved people, into thinking that nothing can be really wrong that talks so much about “love” and “brotherhood.” But love that leaves out TRUTH is not love. It is a counterfeit with no power to save or satisfy. Any teaching that is concerned only with man and his condition here on earth, with little or no concern for man’s future destiny, is not true to God’s Word and is not fulfilling Christ’s last and most important command to “preach the gospel to every creature.”

Avid ecumenists are growing in number throughout the various Protestant denominations and even including much of the Catholic Church. Obviously, almost 100% of these people are lost, without Christ as their personal Saviour. They are trying to do good by their brotherly kindness, and the truth of salvation by faith in Christ alone is completely foreign to them and, as they look on things, irrelevant. The spirit and doctrine of ecumenism have blinded millions into thinking “everything is fine.”

Remember, anything that is contrary to the Scriptures does not find any favor with God. Don’t play “patty-cake” with a movement which is against God’s Word and His will. God does not need unscriptural tools or movements in His plan of evangelism. What God is looking for is a dedicated child of His who is willing to do anything or go anywhere to reach lost souls with the gospel. By His grace, let us determine to be that person.

The great need of people today, including Protestants, is a clear understanding of the gospel. The main issue in witnessing to Protestants will be grace and works. To the Protestants who are liberal in their theology, you will also need to establish the fact that the Bible is the Word of God.

Your message to most Protestants will be essentially the material given in the first two chapters of this book.

Keep your message simple. Don’t take for granted that because a person goes to church he understands ecclesiastical terminology or Bible doctrine.

Start at the beginning . . . We are all sinners . . . The payment for sin is death . . . We must be perfect to have eternal life . . . We cannot earn this perfection by what we do . . . God offers His righteousness through the payment Christ made on the cross . . . Only belief in the Lord Jesus Christ will save . . . We can know we have eternal life once we have accepted Christ as our Saviour.

Resist the temptation to get off onto side issues and philosophical discussions. What is the power of God unto salvation to the Protestants? THE GOSPEL!

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