

Our Heritage of Biblical Separatism

PART I

By Pastor Graham West

Introduction

Although this topic is not directly related to the topic of church music, it is foundational for a proper understanding of the current music wars that are raging within fundamental churches. Here we concern ourselves with modern church history. I wish I had understood this information thirty years ago, because it provides a most vital piece of the puzzle for those who are seeking, like I was, after truth in the midst of a very confused and confusing contemporary church environment.

When we know the historical background of any religious group – why and how they came into existence, what their goals were and are today, what is their theological agenda and how they seek to implement that agenda – we are in a far better position to evaluate them scripturally. The information contained here is designed to give you the necessary tools to make that evaluation for yourselves.

My hope and prayer is that it will help you differentiate between fundamentalism and evangelicalism and hopefully help strengthen your fundamentalist convictions. Beyond that, it will give you a bird's eye view of the steady march towards apostasy throughout church history. Hopefully, you will then be able to better understand the significance of the global music revolution that has within one lifetime taken both the secular world and the church by storm.

Satan is building a one world religion. It is a mixture of both nominal Christianity and paganism. However, he needs a tool that is powerful enough to forge a union between opposing religious ideologies. Music is that tool. The false prophets of our day are the musicians of the CCM movement who preach unity at any cost. The way of self-preservation is Biblical separation.

I. The Birth of Separatism

The values of fundamentalism are not recent developments in church history. Fundamentalism may be a relatively recent term, but it reflects the true church's response to corruption from ancient times. From the early centuries of church history, the church was split into two broad groups. There were those, such as the Montanists, Novatians and Donatists, who would separate from error and those who would not. The separatists were often despised, accused of being divisive, branded as troublemakers and, being the minority, they were often persecuted as

heretics for their beliefs which included their separatist convictions. ‘Separatists give priority to the holiness of the church; inclusivists, such as Augustine, give priority to the unity of the church.’¹ Inclusivists do not typically deny the existence of corruption within the church, but they differ with separatists over what is to be the right response to corruption. This was and has ever since been the dilemma.

In the days of the Donatists, the most popular answer to that question was articulated by the champion of the established Catholic Church, a very capable man, Augustine, Bishop of Hippo.

Whoever, therefore, shall be separated from this Catholic Church by this single sin of being severed from the unity of Christ, no matter how estimable a life he may imagine he is living, shall not have life, but the anger of God rests upon him.²

Again, in attempting to justify what Donald Durnbaugh called ‘The Catholic Church’s first great and inhumane persecution against other Christians’, Augustine says:³

Why, then, should the Church not compel her lost sons to return if the lost sons have compelled others to be lost? . . . Is it not part of the shepherd’s care when he has found those sheep, which have not been rudely snatched away, but have been gently coaxed and led astray from the flock, and have begun to be claimed by others, to call them back to the Lord’s sheepfold, by threats, or pain of blows if they try to resist? . . . As the Donatists . . . claim that they ought not to be forced into the good . . . the Church imitates her Lord in forcing them. . . .⁴

With respect to early conflict between the Donatists and Catholicism, Ernest Pickering evaluates the position of the Donatists:

They believed that men and women associated with a church should live exemplary lives. They believed that the state had no right to interfere in the church’s business. They denounced the apostasy and impurity which characterized much of the visible church in their day. Donatism represents an early example of separatism.⁵

The Donatist struggles were just the beginning of a long history of bitter persecution against those separatists who were deemed as heretics because they dared divide the body of Christ. Even before the Donatists there were the Novatians. Larry Oates, dean of Maranatha Baptist Seminary says, ‘[The] Albigenes and Waldensians were separatists’.⁶ He goes on to point out that ‘Charles Spurgeon was a separatist who had to stand nearly alone in the downgrade controversy.’⁷

Dr J.M. Carroll, in *The Trail of Blood*, documents other genuine New Testament movements that tenaciously resisted the Roman power during the 1200 years referred to as the Dark Ages:

¹ E Pickering, *Biblical separation: the struggle for a pure church*, Regular Baptist Press, USA, 1982, p. 20.

² *ibid.*, p. 21.

³ Pickering, p. 22; DF Durnbaugh, *The believers’ church: the history and character of radical Protestantism*, Macmillan Co, London, 1968, p.

⁴ Pickering, pp. 23-24.

⁵ *ibid.*, p. 24.

⁶ LR Oates, ‘Dispensationalism and ecclesiastical separation historically considered’, *Frontline*, July/August 2011, p. 8.

⁷ *ibid.*

Paulicians, Arnoldists, Henricians, Petro Brussians, Albigenses and Waldensians and, of course, the Anabaptists.⁸ Many of these were named by their leaders, and just because we do not hear much about them in church history is not necessarily an indication of minimal influence or lack of numbers in church history. These movements were fiercely persecuted, mostly by Catholicism but also by the Protestants, when the Reformation came, and they were slaughtered in such numbers that they had little time or resources to write their own history. Carroll suggests that during the 1200 years of the Dark Ages ‘they died faster than an average of four million every 100 years’.⁹ He goes on to say that it ‘seems almost beyond the limit of human conception.’¹⁰ So most of what we know of them who are actually our Baptist forefathers comes to us by way of their persecutors. The following words give insight into the influence of the Baptist movement during the Dark Ages. The statement was made by Roman Catholic Cardinal Hosius, the president of the Council of Trent in 1524.

Were it not that the baptists [*sic*] have been grievously tormented and cut off with a knife during the past 1200 years, they would swarm in greater number than all the reformers. (Hosius, letters, Apud Opera, pages 112, 113.)¹¹

Before the twelve centuries of the Dark Ages, it was Augustine’s ecclesiology (teaching on the nature of church) which laid the intellectual foundation for all of this. The Augustinian church model has affected all of Catholicism and Protestantism right down to our present day. This supposedly orthodox ecclesiology was put forward as the theological mandate for achieving unity by whatever means. I want us now to spend a good length of time looking at two ways in which Augustine’s view of the church has been used to promote unity at basically any cost for over 1500 years.

Firstly, Augustine was a Catholic and the word ‘catholic’ means universal. As a universalist, he believed that there could be no person saved outside of the universal *visible* body of Christ, the Catholic Church. To him, as to so many in the centuries that followed, corruption within the church was a problem that God would sort out on Judgment Day. In Augustine’s view, there was a biblical prohibition against causing divisions within the body on the basis of corruption. He found support for this understanding in the parable of the wheat and tares.

He deduced from this that since the Lord stated that the wheat and the tares should grow together until harvest (the end of the world), we had no right to try to separate them in this age, but rather let them grow together in the church until the Lord Himself would divide them.¹²

Using substantially the same reasoning, the Reformers came along after the Dark Ages and simply followed the Augustinian model to justify the indivisibility of their Protestant body. This immediately set them at loggerheads with the Baptists. Although Protestants and Baptists had many beliefs in common, including the way of salvation, there were also many serious areas of

⁸ JM Carroll, *The trail of blood*, Ashland Avenue Baptist Church Lexington, Kentucky, 1931, May 1980, p. 3.

⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁰ *ibid.*

¹¹ Carroll, p. 3.

¹² Pickering, pp. 22-23.

doctrine in which they differed, one of those areas being separation. Baptists would separate from theological error or moral corruption. On the other hand, the Reformers, who held to a version of Augustine's Roman Catholic model, were generally against separation. The Protestant version of Augustine's ecclesiastical model did not hold to the necessity for unity in a *visible* body, rather they stressed unity in relation to an *invisible* body of Christ. So in church history the Protestants are noted for their insistence on a universal invisible body of Christ.

Ironically, this universal invisible body of Christ was also believed by a minority of Baptists, though the majority disavowed or at least deemphasised it, preferring instead to emphasise the local body. In *The Anabaptist Story*, William Estep, under the heading, 'Visible and Invisible' writes:

The thrust of Anabaptist ecclesiology was towards the implementation in history of the visible church. Anabaptism was relatively unconcerned with the idea of the universal invisible church. This does not mean that the idea was foreign to Anabaptist thought, for such was not the case. The almost unanimous use of the Apostles' Creed in Anabaptist circles would attest to at least a tacit admission of the concept. There are many references to the invisible universal church in sixteenth century Anabaptist literature.¹³

With a focus on buttressing their local church ecclesiology, this meant that unity for the Baptists had application primarily on a local church level, which in turn, meant that the issue of unity at all costs did not press on Baptist consciences as it did, or supposedly did, on Catholic and Protestant consciences. Even those Baptists who did believe in the universal invisible church did not find unity with the Reformers nearly as pressing as the biblical injunctions to separate from their error (i.e. the Reformers' infant baptism and other Roman Catholic doctrines).

In my opinion, it is these clear commands of God given in His Word that constitute a far more compelling basis for separation from corruption and error, regardless of one's position on ecclesiology (local or universal church). No separatists deny that God is very concerned about church unity, the principle 'That there should be no schism in the body' (I Corinthians 12:25). However, we must always remember separation is not a contradiction to the general will of God. It is an exception to that general rule and exceptions to the rule are not logical contradictions to the rule. They come into force in exceptional circumstances and thus an exception actually 'proves the rule'.¹⁴

There were those from within the ranks of the Reformers who realised this. So, in spite of their basically inclusivist ecclesiology, not all of the Protestant Reformers were against separation. In England, during the second half of the sixteenth century, at the time of Elizabeth I's reign, the Church of England was exceedingly corrupt. There arose from within the Church of England a movement known as Puritanism, although the movement was not made up exclusively of Anglicans. Generally Puritans were highly educated. They were very concerned about corruption

¹³ WR Estep, *The Anabaptist story*, 3rd edn, WB Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1996, pp. 239-240.

¹⁴ FG Fowler & HW Fowler, *The pocket Oxford dictionary of current English*, 5th edn, Oxford University Press, Great Britain, 1973, p. 283.

within the established Protestant Church. ‘Puritans emphasised personal piety’.¹⁵ ‘The Puritans were people of the book. They prized the Bible’.¹⁶ ‘Most Puritans were Calvinists. These had imbibed largely of the theology of the continental Reformer, John Calvin.’¹⁷ ‘There were within the Puritan movement those who wanted to stay in the Church of England and reform it from within, and there were those who wanted to come out and separate from it.’

John Robinson (1575-1625) was one of the Pilgrim Fathers. ‘He was a man of spiritual depth and balanced leadership...and possibly attended Cambridge’.¹⁸ Being both a Puritan and a separatist, ‘he urged the members of his flock to immigrate to the new world.’¹⁹ Pickering writes of Robinson:

One of the most moving Puritan documents is the farewell message which he [Robinson] gave before the *Mayflower* set sail. In 1610 Robinson wrote *Justification for Separation*, in which he elaborated on the reasons for separating from the Church of England. One of his reasons was the fact that so many in the church were merely professors[.]²⁰

So although the Augustinian universal church model generally mandated unity amongst the Protestants, there were those earnest Christians within the reform movement who did separate on the basis of clear biblical injunctions to do so in exceptional circumstances.

There is a second, and I believe more damaging, theological error inherent within the Augustinian model of the church. Augustine was heavily influenced by Origen’s allegorical method of Bible interpretation. He took it further than Origen did and systematised it. It is beyond the scope of this paper to explore fully the seriousness and the repercussions of this error, however we will trace its influence as it relates to our subject.

II. Kingdom Views Affect Attitude to the World

In the field of eschatology (that is, the study of the events of the last days), the allegorical method gave rise to both amillennialism and postmillennialism. One of the points of commonality between these two systems of interpreting Bible prophecy is that they allegorise the repeatedly stated covenant with Israel’s patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, regarding Israel’s future inheritance of the land and the establishment of a literal kingdom in that land. amillennialism and postmillennialism effectively transfer all the promises and blessings of Israel to the church. This is called replacement theology and cannot, because of the nature of the promises and blessings involved, be transferred literally to the church. This is because the prophecies and promises given to Old Testament Israel do not make sense when transferred to the church literally in the manner which we would normally expect Bible prophecy to be interpreted. Therefore, in order to make sense of replacement theology, one must resort to

¹⁵ Pickering, p. 59.

¹⁶ *ibid.*, p. 58.

¹⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁸ *ibid.*, p. 62.

¹⁹ *ibid.*, p. 63.

²⁰ *ibid.*

spiritualising the prophecies, if they are to be made applicable to the church. So these difficulties are overcome only when the reader is permitted the freedom of allegorical interpretation or, as they say, spiritualising the text.

Both amillennialism and postmillennialism make use of the allegorical method to force the application of Old Testament kingdom prophecies, intended for Israel, to fit the church. In Paul Benware's *Understanding End Times Prophecy*, the author tabulates and compares the main beliefs of amillennialism, postmillennialism, historic premillennialism and premillennialism.²¹

In both Roman Catholic and Reformed doctrine the church inherits, and indeed becomes, the kingdom which was promised to Israel. Premillennial dispensationalists do not believe this. Taking their characteristic literal approach to Bible prophecy, they believe the millennial kingdom of Christ is yet in the future and will be established only when Christ returns. Contrary to Roman Catholic and Reformed views, dispensationalists believe all the historic earthly kingdoms that have been and continue to be are under the dominion of Satan and as such are destined for destruction, not reformation or renovation. Dr David Saxon, professor in church history, says:

Premillennialism, in general, and Dispensationalism, in particular, argue that Christ's return will be realised on this earth only during a future ideal kingdom. Believers should invest in earthly cultures with the constant mindset that the return of Christ is imminent and that this world will experience devastating judgments during the tribulation period.²²

This was one of the essential differences between our Baptist forefathers and their persecutors. Both Catholics and Protestant Reformers after them, as branches of historic Christendom, believe the church either actually to be the kingdom of God or the predecessor to it. When the church is viewed as the kingdom of God on earth, it will have a profound effect on the way the world is viewed and related to. Understandably, this in turn, affects the attitude to such things as biblical separation, levels of involvement with social relief work and the amount of effort to be invested in cultural engagement generally.

If you truly believe that through your labours as a Christian you are either contributing to God's kingdom that already exists or by your labours are responsible for somehow preparing this present world so that the kingdom of Christ will soon appear, then disengagement is not an option. Since Postmillennialism teaches this, it is little wonder there is a strong built-in resistance to biblical separation.

Dispensationalism, on the other hand teaches that the kingdoms of this world are Satan's domain and God's kingdom is yet future. In this paradigm of thought dispensationalists expect to be persecuted by this world. They see it as their enemy and the enemy of their God. In fact, Galatians 1:14 tells us, 'Having been saved', it is the 'will of God and [their] Father' to 'deliver [them] from this present evil world'. They also expect Christ, when He comes, to set up His

²¹ PN Benware, *Understanding end times prophecy*, Moody Press, Chicago, 1995, p. 133.

²² D Saxon, 'Why are most fundamentalists dispensationalists?', *Frontline*, July/August 2010, p. 13.

millennial kingdom, to judge this present world. Therefore there is little love lost between them and the world and that is how it should be, for both John and James also have strong words of condemnation for lovers of the world (James 4:4, I John 2:15-17). Thus dispensationalists are under no illusions of a false and forced obligation to maintain unity with this present world system on the grounds that this world is or is becoming or one day will be ‘the kingdom’. To them, the thought of this kind of unity with the world would be seen as a treasonous collaboration with the enemy.

Indeed, this has been the tragic result of replacement theology: capitulation to the world. It also accounts for why many contemporary Reformers, who profess basically sound doctrine, are so disinterested in the pursuit of holiness.

III. The Turbulent Birth of Fundamentalism

Because of accommodation on the part of conservative Bible believers, during the nineteenth century the American evangelical denominations were greatly influenced by liberalism. The Liberals achieved this by infiltrating. Pickering quotes new evangelical leader, Dr Harold Ockenga, as he reflects back on one hundred years of Liberal/modernist infiltration:

We evangelicals need to realise that the Liberals or modernists have been using this strategy for years. They have infiltrated our evangelical denominations, institutions, and movements and they have taken control of them.²³

At the end of the nineteenth century, conservatives were still in control of the mainline denominations, but the infiltration of liberalism was taking its toll while the conservatives continued to tolerate them ‘in the spirit of soul liberty’.²⁴ Then, in the first two decades of the twentieth century, battles began to erupt between conservatives and liberals. It was during that era that more and more conservatives began to recognise the biblical injunction to separate from error. It was also about this time that the term ‘fundamentalist’ was introduced.

The term “fundamentalism” arose from a series of booklets published in the first part of the twentieth century under the title *The Fundamentals*. (These have since been republished in two volumes.) Noted fundamentalist scholars and leaders wrote articles dealing with such great topics as the virgin birth, the beauty of Christ, the inspiration of Scripture and the bodily resurrection of the Lord. Those who held these doctrines to be essential became known as “fundamentalists.” . . . [Some] fundamentalists were not separatists . . . [.] However, the definite tendency on the part of those who embraced fundamental views was to separate . . .”²⁵

Larry Oates gives us a snapshot of this turbulent period of church history when fundamentalism was born.

After the fundamentalist-modernist controversies of the early 1900s, fundamentalism became increasingly prone to fracture . . . [.] In the 30s and 40s turmoil reigned. Fundamentalist organisations rose and fell. T. T.

²³ Pickering, p. 121.

²⁴ Oates, p. 8.

²⁵ Pickering, p. 113.

Shields abandoned US fundamentalism and retreated to Canada. J. Frank Norris and John R. Rice battled over Rice's defection from Norris's camp. The Presbyterians defrocked J. Gresham Machen in a travesty of justice and the spirit of rancor. The spirit of ecumenism reflected by the National Council of churches eventually held sway in the great denominations of the North and in the eyes of the public, while the southern Baptists in Southern Presbyterians retreated into a tenuous attitude of tolerance.²⁶

²⁶ Oates, p. 8.

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PART II

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IV. Dispensationalism: Vital to the Survival of Separatism

As we follow the rise of fundamentalism during these turbulent years, we will see how men's ecclesiological and eschatological views directly affect their positions on separation. We will briefly outline the influence of one of the leading Presbyterian separatists of his time. J. Gresham Machen, a Reformed theologian, was reluctant to be called the fundamentalist largely, I suspect, because of his aversion for Dispensationalism. We will see how his Reformed theology limited his understanding of, and ultimately his obedience to, Biblical separation.

J. Gresham Machen was a good man. In the forward to the British edition of Machen's *The Christian View of Man*, John Murray gives us an insight into the character of this brave fundamentalist, so 'Valiant for truth'.²⁷ Murray points us to two books authored by this man as an index of his character.

These two books are an index to other phases of Machen's character and witness. Masterful scholar as he was he was no recluse. *Christianity and Liberalism* shows his burning zeal to vindicate the distinctive character of the Christian faith against all counterfeit. . . . His devotion to Christ and his profound jealousy for Christ's honour in the church made it morally impossible for him to stand aside and be a spectator in the areas of practical life in the church. . . . [W]hen great issues were at stake the claims of truth and of Christ his Lord left no other alternative. Without any wavering or relaxation of effort he gave himself with his whole soul to those causes designed to preserve and proclaim the truth of God's Word in its integrity and to maintain the Church of Christ in its purity and glory.²⁸

We see from the example of Machen's life that if we are to be kept safe from apostasy, then it is not enough to be a courageous defender of the gospel and a lover of the truth. Right doctrine is also required to keep us safe. Machen was a Reformed theologian who believed in replacement theology. This ultimately affected the strength of his position on separation and hence his defence against the infiltration of error. Ultimately, if you do not believe in the prophesied apostasy of the church at the end of the age, then you will not be on the lookout for error, and this in turn will have an effect on your readiness to separate. Larry Oates says:

The expected apostasy of the institutional church was an important factor in dispensational thought and in the separatism of the Fundamentalists. Schofield believed that the "Judaizing" of the church had destroyed

²⁷ JG Machen, *The Christian view of man*, 1st British edn, The Banner of Truth Trust, London, 1965, p. 10.

²⁸ *ibid.*, pp. 8-9.

her spirituality. This he viewed as the Catholic and Reformed position of using Old Testament Scriptures to refer to the church.²⁹

In the early days there were many Reformers like Machen who stood shoulder to shoulder with the dispensational fundamentalists in the culture wars with theological liberalism/modernism that took place during the 1920s. They were quite prepared to stand with them against the humanistic philosophies that came along with advancing modernity, things like ‘naturalistic evolution, materialism, pragmatism and other philosophies that appeared to be gaining the ascendancy in the West in the early twentieth century’.³⁰ After those battles were lost in 1930, the Reformers withdrew their support from fundamentalism.

Reformed Christians, many of whom were willing to ally with dispensational fundamentalists in the culture wars of the 1920s, saw no further value in working with dispensationalists after 1930. Their commitment to Reformed orthodoxy and the Westminster standards were so far more important to most of them than the separation issues that came to define the fundamental movement.³¹

So as time progressed through the twentieth century after 1930, the numbers of Reformers found within the ranks of fundamentalism began to dwindle. It came fairly quickly to the place where most fundamentalists were, as they are today, both premillennialists and dispensationalists by conviction. Because of this fact and that there was a growing tendency for fundamentalism to be marginalised as extreme in the eyes of the general public, many Bible-believing evangelicals, now cut off from dispensational fundamentalists’ teaching, became heavily influenced by Reformed theology.

Although some of the early new evangelicals came out of a dispensational background and carried some dispensational thinking with them, new evangelicalism as a movement was heavily influenced by covenant [Reformed] theology.³²

Generally speaking, dispensationalists have different priorities and therefore a different agenda to those who take the other eschatological views which involve replacement theology. On the one hand, premillennial dispensationalism has purity of doctrine and holiness as its priorities. Therefore, it will cheerfully obey the Scriptures that teach separation from error in order to protect that priority. ‘Such *separation* flourishes when the kingdom is viewed as primarily *future*. Fundamentalists are not trying to build a kingdom now...’³³ There are a few exceptions but generally speaking ‘*Social consciousness* flourishes when the kingdom is viewed as having primary reference to the *present*.’³⁴ Larry Oates writes:

The rejection of dispensational ecclesiology seemed more connected to the social activism of the new evangelicals than to any doctrinal problems. For instance, Ockenga declared, “the social theory of the

²⁹ Oates, p. 11.

³⁰ Saxon, p. 14.

³¹ *ibid.*

³² Oates, p. 10.

³³ Saxon, p. 15.

³⁴ *ibid.*

fundamentalists is governed by eschatology. It was believed that conditions would grow worse and worse so that until Christ came again the only effective application of the gospel could be to the individual".³⁵

V. The Rise of Neo-evangelicalism

For this reason, '[d]ispensationalism has often been accused of having a basic pessimism about contemporary culture.'³⁶ Dr David Saxon writes: 'Carl Henry's *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism* (1947) explicitly linked premillennarian "despair over the present world order" with fundamentalist loss of "social passion"'.³⁷ Basically, Mr Henry gave four pieces of advice. The first three had to do with the need for Christians to wake up to the relevance of the gospel to the global predicament, the need for evangelicals to meet the challenge of the global predicament with a united world front and the need to get rid of any thinking which stood in the way of a healthy Christian compassion.³⁸ When Carl Henry suggested these things he was speaking about cultural engagement on a level that previous Bible believers had not contemplated.

To restudy eschatological convictions for a proper perspective which will not unnecessarily dissipate evangelical strength in controversy over secondary positions, in a day when the significance of the primary insistence is international.....³⁹

This whole business of restudying and rethinking theological convictions to arrive at a 'proper perspective' betrays an allegiance to a religious agenda more than a love for God and His Word. From the point of view of Carl Henry, he was simply applying the Augustinian Reformed doctrine of the church to his contemporary setting. This allowed him to stress the need for cultural engagement even if it did mean the restudying of 'eschatological convictions'. However, for many dispensationalists this new call to *unity at all costs* was too high a cost.

We have already shown that 'New Evangelicalism as a movement was heavily influenced by covenant theology'.⁴⁰ Contemporary conservative evangelicals have largely had their thinking shaped by the Protestant Reformed theology which includes Calvinism and replacement theology. The Reformed postmillennial view very well facilitates the goals of new evangelicalism. Paul Benware mentions two new branches of postmillennialism which deserve a mention here as they are relevant to our times. The first is dominion theology.

Dominion theologians believe that it is the clear responsibility of the church to move beyond the matter of individual salvation and holiness and actively enter into the realm of public and social responsibility. Christians are to become activists and "promote and enforce obedience to God's laws in society."⁴¹

³⁵ Oates, p. 11.

³⁶ Saxon, p. 15.

³⁷ *ibid.*

³⁸ *ibid.*

³⁹ *ibid.*

⁴⁰ Oates, p. 10.

⁴¹ Benware, p. 128.

The second branch of postmillennialism found in our times is associated with the charismatic movement. This new postmillennialism is:

[s]ometimes referred to as “Kingdom Now” theology, it maintains that Christians are “little gods” who can, by the authority of Christ, exercise Dominion over the earth. Through faith, what is confessed will come to pass.⁴²

So this basic idea of the church being a present earthly kingdom has had a fantastic scope. It has come down through history from Augustine to our day and is still the most popular model of ecclesiology amongst both Catholics and Protestants. With unity as its highest value, even at the expense of purity and doctrine, it will live happily with gross error. In my opinion, the promotion of this doctrine will lead, in the end, to the formation of the harlot church of Revelation 17. I believe we are seeing that happening in our day. This corrupt body still has many true born-again believers within its bowels and to them is issued the same call that was issued to their forefathers before them in church history: ‘Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues’ (Revelation 18:4).

VI. The Influence of Harold Ockenga in Neo-evangelicalism

The whole evangelical world, as well as a lot of the fundamental movement today, has taken on a method of Scripture interpretation, a biblical hermeneutic, which was popularised in the 1940s when the evangelicals departed from their fundamentalist forefathers and started neo-evangelicalism. To some at least, the doctrinal changes did not seem that significant, but the end results, seventy years down the track, have proven disastrous.⁴³ Harold Ockenga, Carl Henry, Harold Lindsell, Wilbur Smith and Edward John Carnell were amongst the foremost leaders of neo-evangelicalism during the 1940s. These men became dismayed with what they perceived as ‘the growing militant isolationism of the fundamentalists’ in their battles with the religious liberals of the day.⁴⁴ They considered their fundamentalist forefathers’ handling of the confrontation with the unbelieving Liberals too heavy-handed. They wanted a softer approach. In his day, Harold Ockenga made a defining statement about the direction of neo-evangelicalism in his now famous address delivered at Civic Auditorium in Pasadena.⁴⁵ Commenting on that address after the occasion, Dr Ockenga said:

Neo-evangelicalism was born in 1948 in connection with a convocation address which I gave in the Civic Auditorium in Pasadena . . . While reaffirming the theological view of fundamentalism, this address repudiated its ecclesiology and its social theory. The ringing call for a repudiation of separatism and the summons to social involvement received a hearty response from many Evangelicals. . . . It differed from fundamentalism in its repudiation of separatism and its determination to engage itself in the theological

⁴² *ibid.*

⁴³ F Schaeffer, *The Great Evangelical Disaster*, Crossway Books, Illinois, 1984.

⁴⁴ Christian Web Foundation, *Harold Ockenga*, Christian Web Foundation, viewed 17 December 2011, <http://www.theopedia.com/Harold_Ockenga>.

⁴⁵ *ibid.*

dialogue of the day. It had a new emphasis upon the application of the gospel to the sociological, political, and economic areas of life.⁴⁶

Notice that although Ockenga's Pasadena address reaffirmed 'the theological views of fundamentalism', at the same time it 'repudiated its ecclesiology and its social theory'. Ockenga is concerned here about the link between ecclesiology and social theory. In his view it is the responsibility of the church to Christianise the world. It is seen as the church's mandate to convert the world and incorporate it into the kingdom of God. In fact, the world in this view is seen as a long lost friend who needs the Christian to come alongside and coax him back onto the path.

In my opinion this is a very serious error because it cannot help but lead ultimately to the place where believers make a friendship with the world. The Scripture teaches that whoever is a friend of this world is the enemy of God.

Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.⁴⁷

This passage and others like it summarised fundamentalism's attitude to the world in general. This is why Ockenga despised the dispensationalists' belief in a literal future millennial kingdom. He thought it only bred, as he saw it, an unnatural, even unchristian, disdain for the world. To make matters worse, according to dispensational ecclesiology a counterfeit church was also destined to be raised up in the last days and would join hands with the world and be destroyed along with it. Further to that, dispensationalism taught the true church was to be raptured out of the world, leaving the present world order to face the most terrible judgments the world has ever seen. Dr Ockenga simply could not accept this scenario. Larry Oates, dean of Maranatha Bible Seminary cites three other premillennial authorities, CI Schofield, Ernest Sandeen and Timothy Weber in the following quotation:

When Ockenga decried the ecclesiology of fundamentalism, he undoubtedly had reference to the premillennial, dispensational ecclesiology so common to the movement. While not all fundamentalists were thoroughgoing dispensationalists, the movement drew support from the premillennial pessimism about the future of the church. Historians generally agree that the teaching of dispensationalism regarding the apostasy of the church was critical in the development of fundamentalist views of the church. Fundamentalism generally taught that apostasy had set in early in church history. Passages such as 2 Timothy 3:1-7, interpreted from a dispensational point of view, taught that the last days would be preceded by a large-scale apostasy, led by the Antichrist who would use apostate churches and denominations to carry out his purposes. The fundamentalist viewpoint required the fundamentalists to separate from the apostate church and preserve the purity of the true church until the Lord returned. An emphasis on personal holiness, predicated by the dispensational view of an imminent second coming, demanded removing oneself from worldly practices on a personal level and from doctrinally corrupt churches and denominations on an ecclesiastical level.⁴⁸

Dr Ockenga's Pasadena address involved not only a repudiation of the ecclesiology of fundamentalism. In that address he also repudiated the separatism of fundamentalists. His 'determination to engage . . . in the theological dialogue of the day' meant, of course, that the

⁴⁶ *ibid.*

⁴⁷ James 4:4.

⁴⁸ Oates, p. 9.

plain old Scriptures about separation from error and from the world would have to be reinterpreted or discarded in order to harmonise with the new methodology. Today, I think they would call that ‘thinking outside the box’. Sometimes boxes are good. Sometimes, to our surprise, their edges, that we find so restrictive, may be found in the long run to be ancient landmarks placed there by wise and godly men for our protection (Proverbs 22:28).

VII. Evangelicalism’s Gospel of Social Work

Fifty years on after Harold Ockenga and the establishment of neo-evangelicalism, JI Packer, one of the world’s leading evangelical theologians, shocked even the evangelical world by signing the now famous ‘ECT’ (Evangelicals & Catholics Together) document. In the 12 December, 1994 edition of ‘Christianity Today’, Packer wrote in defence of his signing of that document.

Though Protestant and Catholic church systems stand opposed, and bad – that is, unconverted – Catholics and Protestants are problems on both sides of the Reformation divide, good Protestants and Catholics are, and know themselves to be, united in the one body of Christ, joint-heirs not only with him but with each other.

Now, this mutual acknowledgment brings obligations, and one of these is observance of the so-called Lund principle, formulated decades ago in light of Jesus’ high-priestly prayer for the unity of all his disciples. This prayer clearly entails the thought that God’s family here on earth should seek to look like one family by acting as one family; and the Lund principle is that ecclesiastically divided Christians should not settle for doing separately anything that their consciences allow them to do together. The implication is that otherwise we thwart and grieve the Lord. Where there is fellowship in faith, fellowship in service should follow, and the cherishing of standoffishness and isolationism becomes sin. So togetherness in mission is appropriate.⁴⁹

Having refused simple obedience to the plain biblical teachings about separation, it seems this evangelical has lost his way. Without God’s purpose and direction, evangelicals must manufacture a purpose and direction of their own. Increasingly that purpose and direction has become social work. We have seen preachers, missionaries and theologians like Packer place more and more emphasis on social work than on the heart of the gospel itself. That is not to deny the fact that there are many evangelical organisations preaching the gospel as well, but where the gospel is being increasingly eroded by compromised doctrine, practically the scales begin to tip in favour of social work. Once the church has lost its supernatural gospel message, then all it has left is good works.

Now, I believe social work, particularly as it ministers to the saints, is part of our biblical mandate (Deuteronomy 15:7, Proverbs 21:13, I John 3:16-17). It is the practical demonstration of the love of God to the needy. Jesus went about healing people. James tells us that the essence of pure religion is ‘to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep [oneself] unspotted from the world’ (James 1:27). Giving to the poor was part of the Jewish obligation under the old covenant. So, I believe there is biblical support for social relief work, a place for churches to be charitable, particularly, but not exclusively, to other believers. I think we see the apostles strike the right balance between the preaching of the gospel and the necessity of compassionate deeds in Acts 6:2-4.

⁴⁹ JI Packer, ‘Why I signed it’, Christianity Today, 12 December, 1994, viewed 24 December, 2011, <<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/1994/december12/4te34a.html?start=1>>, p. 3.

Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.

However, having said all of that, there is a balance in this thing. Charity is not the church's primary emphasis. Social work is not the main reason for the church's existence. If the church is seen by the world as just another charity then the church is sending the world the wrong message. The church's main function, its main purpose, is to be conspicuous as the 'pillar and ground of the truth' (I Timothy 3:15). That is what it is to be reputed for: the declaration of biblical truth, God's truth. And that truth will be despised in this world, as will we, if we 'will live godly in Christ Jesus' (II Timothy 3:12) while proclaiming it.

When I recently went online, under the 'Latest News' column on the homepage from BIOLA University's website, it was significant that the first three headlines relate to social work. 'BIOLA Students Celebrate Christmas with Orphans Mexico, Student Use Art to Help Homeless Man, Students Bless the Homeless During Thanksgiving'.⁵⁰ I am tempted to think this is just good PR for the university with an eye to funding. I might be wrong, but I wonder would the editor of the website have deemed the column so effective if those first three headlines were related directly to the priority of the church's mission, establishing churches, evangelism, building up of the saints and the preaching of God's Word?

We do not face the same temptation today to preach circumcision in order to be socially acceptable as did the early Christians in the midst of a predominantly Jewish culture. However, we have our own enticements to soften the offence of an offensive message. It can seem a very attractive prospect to the would-be disciple to immerse himself in social work and avoid the 'offence of the cross' (Galatians 5:11) altogether. If for no other reason, he knows the world will applaud him for his social work. Witness the response to the Salvation Army when they go into the pubs collecting money for the Red Shield appeal.

In any case, as an evangelical leader Packer has made a serious error in judgment in suggesting that Protestants and Catholics overlook their differences in such critical areas as salvation in order to work together on the social front. This is typical of the contemporary evangelical mindset that would set aside the plain command of God for the sake of expediency.

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? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you.⁵¹

Packer goes on to advise us about a proposed joint effort between Protestants and Catholics to re-Christianise North America.

⁵⁰ BIOLA University Inc, BIOLA University Inc, viewed 30 December, 2011, <<http://www.biola.edu/>>.

⁵¹ II Corinthians 6:13-17.

Again, it is the theological conservationists, and they alone – mainly, Roman Catholics and the more established evangelicals – who have resources for the rebuilding of these ruins, and **their domestic differences about salvation** and the church should not hinder them from joint action in seeking to re-Christianize the North American milieu [emphasis added].⁵²

I do not doubt that throughout history and still today there are Roman Catholics dotted here and there across the world who are genuinely saved, but they are not saved because of the teaching of the Roman Catholic system they remain under. Rather, they are saved by the grace of God, and that in spite of the Roman system. Furthermore, born-again Roman Catholics are under obligation to obey the clear biblical injunctions to separate from error rather than to be '[mingling] among the heathen and [learning] their works', for also in the New Testament, it remains true that 'evil communications corrupt good manners'. The Scriptures even contain a warning lest we be deceived on this point (Psalm 106:35, I Corinthians 15:33).

⁵² Packer, p. 4.

Our Heritage of Biblical Separatism

Part III

By Pastor Graham West

VIII. Ockenga's Ideas Permeate Christian Education

In the late 1940s Harold Ockenga was seeking deliberately to direct conservative Christianity away from what he saw as the anti-cultural and anti-intellectual tendencies of the fundamentalists.⁵³ In furthering that cause, he was one of the prime movers in the founding of Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California. The seminary promulgated the theological fabric, supporting his objectives. From a chapter entitled 'Fuller Seminary – Exhibit A', on The American Presbyterian Church website, we read: 'If I understand Dr. Ockenga's mind aright, Fuller Theological Seminary was Exhibit A, the piece de resistance, of new evangelicalism. The school was carefully premeditated to represent the new ideology'.⁵⁴ All the faculty members of the new seminary, though they came from professing fundamentalist backgrounds, were carefully chosen for their adherence to the neo-evangelical ideology of neutralism. This quote from the above-mentioned website explains Ockenga's strategy.

One of the first battles of neutralism concerned the admission of Fuller Theological Seminary professors to the Los Angeles Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A. [*sic*] This arose out of the ethos of neutralism. Since they came from professed fundamentalist backgrounds, as the early Fuller professors did, they knew the apostasy of the Presbyterian Church. Yet, in true neutralist style, they wanted to have one foot in fundamentalism and the other in apostasy[.] They desired to make certain that the door was open for Fuller Seminary graduates to enter the ranks of the U.S.A. Presbyterian Church, so that it might be reformed from within. If you recall Dr. Ockenga's "re" statement, quoted some pages earlier, it included "*the recapture of denominational leadership.*" This was to be done by infiltration, the offensive tactic of neutralism. Consequently[,] various Fuller Theological Seminary professors of Presbyterian background applied to the Presbytery for admission or transfer of papers from other presbyteries. Among these were Dr. Gleason Archer, Dr. Wilbur M. Smith, Dr. Everett F. Harrison, Dr. Bela Vasady, and Dr. William LaSor. The latter two men had impeccable credentials for the approval of apostasy. Bela Vasady[,] a Hungarian, had a record of ecumenical participation in Europe and was a founder of the World Council of Churches. William LaSor had proven his denominational loyalty by serving on the judicial Commission of Presbytery which suspended Carl McIntire from the ministry for his continuation on the Independent Board of Presbyterian Foreign Missions. Despite these credentials, the Los Angeles Presbytery would have none of the Fuller professors.⁵⁵

This 'ethos of neutralism', (a flat refusal to take a stand on any critical issue, preferring rather to engage in dialogue about it at an academic level) was simply the practical outworking of Ockenga's non-confrontational approach.⁵⁶ By the method of 'infiltration' the plan was to recapture the apostate liberal denominational leadership by seeding them with future graduates

⁵³ Christian Web Foundation, *Harold Ockenga*.

⁵⁴ The American Presbyterian Church, *Chapter 4 Fuller Seminary – Exhibit A*, The American Presbyterian Church, viewed 31 December 2011, <http://www.americanpresbyterianchurch.org/?page_id=642>.

⁵⁵ *ibid.*

⁵⁶ *ibid.*

from Fuller, but the plan backfired. Instead of having strong young men who would win back the apostate institutions to a position of biblical truth, those promising young men were undone by their compromised, ostensibly fundamental professors at Fuller Theological Seminary.

In 1987, George Marsden wrote *Reforming Fundamentalism*. In it he documents the results of a Fuller alumni survey regarding views about biblical inerrancy:

Three fourths of the students coming to Fuller in its earliest days, graduating classes of 1950 to 1952, came with a solid belief in inerrancy. At the time they left Fuller about sixty percent of them still remained firm in this view, while almost all of the rest held something like a limited inerrancy view. By the 1960s, on the other hand, limited inerrancy was the overwhelmingly dominant, though not undisputed, view. Less than half the students entering Fuller held to strict inerrancy and only about one-fourth left with the view intact.⁵⁷

Then, a little later on Marsden writes. ‘Predictably, commitment to the inerrancy of Scripture continued to drop, so that by 1982 only about 15 percent of students held that view.’⁵⁸

As we trace the meteoric rise of Dr Ockenga’s influential academic career through history, we come to the formation of yet another evangelical school, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, founded in 1969. The front man was Billy Graham who provided leadership as a high profile evangelical figurehead. Dr Ockenga was the school’s first president and Mr Pew, former businessman and prominent philanthropist provided much of the early funding for the school.⁵⁹

Ockenga’s ideology of neo-evangelicalism was successfully woven into the theological fabric taught at Fuller Theological Seminary, and later at Gordon-Conwell, and that ideology has continued to guide the broad movement of mainstream evangelicalism ever since. In an article taken from *Calvary Contender*, 1 April, 1989, David Cloud quotes Dr Bolton Davidheiser, from a six-page letter in which he outlines the reasons why he resigned the prestigious BIOLA University.⁶⁰

All Christian schools, as they begin the road to apostasy, deny it vehemently. By the time they no longer deny it, it is too late for any effective action. Those who point out what is going on are called troublemakers. They are said to be hindering the Lord’s work. It is considered unethical to discuss these matters with anyone except the person next higher in the scale of hierarchy. But those who are promoting the changes have freedom to carry out their plans without criticism.⁶¹

Dr Davidheiser earned a PhD in zoology at Johns Hopkins University. He later went on to work there in cancer research. Along with Dr Henry Morris, Dr Davidheiser is considered one of the early pioneers of the creationist movement who stood against evolution in the 20th century. In 2007, when Ken Ham read out a tribute to the life of Dr Davidheiser’s at his funeral, Ham stated that in the 70s, when he was just starting with the Creation Ministry in Australia, he found Dr

⁵⁷ G Marsden, *Reforming fundamentalism*, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1987, p. 246.

⁵⁸ *ibid.*, p. 268.

⁵⁹ Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, 2012, viewed 30 December, 2011, <<http://www.gordonconwell.edu/about/Our-History.cfm>>.

⁶⁰ BIOLA University Inc.

⁶¹ D Cloud, ‘6-page letter’, *O Timothy*, May 2011, p. 1.

Davidheiser's book 'Evolution and Christian Faith' very helpful.⁶² Dr Davidheiser was particularly concerned about the compromised beliefs of many Christians with regard to creation in the Genesis account.⁶³ By contrast, it is instructive for us to take note of Harold Ockenga's influence in the creation and evolution debate.

David Cloud quotes Harold Ockenga.

Neo-evangelicals emphasized the restatement of Christian theology in accordance with the need of the times, the REENGAGEMENT IN THE THEOLOGICAL DEBATE, THE RECAPTURE OF DENOMINATIONAL LEADERSHIP, AND THE REEXAMINATION OF THEOLOGICAL PROBLEMS SUCH AS THE ANTIQUITY OF MAN, THE UNIVERSALITY OF THE FLOOD, GOD'S METHOD OF CREATION, AND OTHERS [emphasis his].⁶⁴

It seems obvious that Dr Ockenga did not share Dr Davidheiser's concerns about the encroachment of evolutionary compromise in evangelical Bible colleges and seminaries. It is interesting to note that Ockenga, the prime mover and shaker who was looking for compromise in so many of the practical ways Christianity engaged the world around it, was also looking for compromise at a far deeper theological level. He wanted compromise between what he saw as the scientific explanation of our origin and the biblical doctrine of a literal seven-day creation. If, right at the outset, the founder of evangelicalism demonstrated that truth was not his priority, then why would we be surprised that the movement as a whole today ridicules those who have scruples over far more subtle things, like music?

IX. Neo-evangelicalism, Evangelicalism and Fundamentalism

Ernest Pickering observed: "Part of the current confusion regarding New Evangelicalism stems from the fact that there is now little difference between evangelicalism and New Evangelicalism. The principles of the original New Evangelicalism have become so universally accepted by those who refer to themselves as evangelicals that any distinctions which might have been made years ago are all but lost. It is no doubt true to state that 'Ockenga's designation of the new movement as *New or Neo-Evangelical* was abbreviated to *Evangelical*. . . . Thus today we speak of this branch of conservative Christianity simply as the Evangelical movement'" (*The Tragedy of Compromise*, p. 96).⁶⁵

Pickering wrote this book in 1994. Yet now, seventeen years later, we have an even more serious issue to contend with. This generation of fundamental preachers is a generation whose distinctives as fundamentalists (things that should distinguish them from evangelicals) are practically nonexistent. They have been unwittingly eroded away through teaching they received or more likely did not receive, in the supposedly 'fundamental' institutions they have attended. I believe the term neo-fundamentalist may be appropriate to describe these men. For I think a very large percentage of them have unwittingly imbibed much of the hermeneutic that Harold

⁶² M Looy & K Ham, *Tribute to Dr Bolton Davidheiser*, 27 August, 2007, viewed 28 December, 2011, <<http://www.answersingenesis.org/articles/2007/08/27/tribute-to-bolton-davidheiser>>.

⁶³ *ibid*.

⁶⁴ D Cloud, *Harold Ockenga and the new evangelical movement he founded*, Way of Life Literature, 7 July, 2009, viewed 28 December 2011, <http://www.wayoflife.org/files/33b21b071cdf321981cb365b2c0b2668-363.html>.

⁶⁵ *ibid*.

Ockenga promoted through neo-evangelicalism seventy years ago. That hermeneutic has now come down through evangelicalism and right into most of our fundamental churches.

In recent years some conservative evangelical leaders have begun to wake up and warn their own people of the serious repercussions of the new hermeneutic of historic neo-evangelicalism. They want to turn the ship around. Philip Graham Ryken is one such evangelical leader. He is senior minister of 10th Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia. In 2003 he published a book called *City on a Hill*. In that book Ryken warns of the dangerous direction that his own movement has taken. In a section headed 'The New Evangelicalism' he says:

The winds of doctrinal change are already sweeping through the Evangelical Church. Some colleges and seminaries are heading in the direction of what has been termed "post-conservative" evangelicalism. The new Evangelicals move beyond the boundaries of the historic confessions, in some cases by introducing post-modern perspectives to Christianity.⁶⁶

He then goes on to list the doctrines that are 'coming under attack': the doctrine of Scripture, the doctrine of God, the doctrine of Christ, the doctrine of sin, the doctrine of salvation. In each of these areas he gives a brief summary of how the particular doctrine is being undermined.⁶⁷

If even conservative evangelicals like Philip Ryken can see the devastation caused in these areas of vital doctrine, why are not more fundamentalists sounding the alarm bells about the increasingly aggressive pragmatism being evidenced amongst some of our leaders who are drinking deeply from the wells of neo-evangelical unbelief?

X. One Hermeneutic for Evangelicals and Fundamentalists

At this point, I would like to clarify the meaning of a particular term. That term is 'hermeneutic'. It refers to a system of biblical interpretation, a way of interpreting the Bible. The Dictionary of Theological Terms has: 'Greek *hermeneuo*, "to explain, interpret"; the science of Bible interpretation'.⁶⁸

More and more Bible institutions that have had a reputation for theological soundness are teaching a subtle hermeneutic which accommodates doctrinal corruption and worldliness in ways which would not have been tolerated in those same institutions only a few decades ago.

The influence of the new evangelical and now evangelical hermeneutic is huge. It encompasses all of evangelicalism and now most of fundamentalism as well. I do not think it would be melodramatic to say the change constitutes a massive paradigm shift in historic theology. That

⁶⁶ PG Ryken, *City on a hill*, Moody Publishers, Chicago, 2003, pp. 38-39.

⁶⁷ *ibid.*, pp. 38-42.

⁶⁸ A Cairns, *Dictionary of theological terms*, 2nd edition, Ambassador Emerald International, Northern Ireland United Kingdom, 1989, p. 173

shift has been accomplished in just a little over half a century. 'Truly, we live in 'perilous times' (II Timothy 1:3).

In the latter months of 2011, Pastor Buddy Smith from Malanda in North Queensland, Australia, published a very interesting series of articles which focused on exposing some of the areas in which biblical interpretation is typically distorted in the new theology. His concern is that this softer hermeneutic is being adopted by the new generation of fundamentalists. Pastor Smith's ongoing feature article in his e-magazine, *Heads-Up*, during this period was entitled, 'Why Reproof is so Important'. Below is a summary of the biblical territory he covered in the last months of 2011.

Myth #1 – Reproving others is unspiritual, unloving and unkind[;] Myth #2 – It is wrong to reprove anyone outside your local church[;] Myth #3 – Words of reproof must never be spoken to or about "God's Anointed Ones"[;] Myth #4 – Reproof always involves judging and judging is sin[;] Myth #5 – It is always wrong to reprove anyone in public. It must always be done in private[;] Myth #6 – Only a fruitful Christian is qualified to reprove error[;] Myth #7 [-] "Only an 'apostle' was ever called by God to keep watch over, and to warn of impending danger with regard to the spiritual safety of the flock."⁶⁹

Contemporary Christianity, including much of fundamentalism, is creating and believing a caricature of the Almighty which, to one degree or another, is idolatry. At varying levels, all of us believe wrong things, 'myths', about God. That is not a good thing and should be minimised as far as possible by an intelligent study of Scripture. However, being frail and fleshly, even the most saintly and scholarly believer is subject to error. Hopefully, most of this error is *unintentional*, but when men have so little fear of God that they will knowingly trade the truths of Scripture for some putative benefit to *the heavenly work*, that is simply tragic compromise.

I believe it was Francis Schaeffer who called the *intentional* realigning of neo-evangelicalism's theology in relation to the world, 'accommodation'.⁷⁰ This intentional realigning necessitated a very deliberate reinterpretation of Scripture to justify the 'accommodation' that Francis Schaeffer spoke of. After seventy years of realigning fundamental theology in most schools and seminaries, there has been fleshed out a pretty robust hermeneutic, much of which appeals to evangelicals and, now, fundamentalists alike.

To say that the new theology does not encourage spiritual discernment is an understatement. Spiritually discerning people make distinctions, and distinctions are awkward, whether they are made by evangelicals or fundamentalists. They are apt to cause division and according to the new hermeneutic, we are told divisions in the body of Christ are always bad. However, I notice the Scripture allows for them when necessary. In I Corinthians 11:19 it is stated, 'There must be also heresies [divisions] among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you'. Division is never a pleasant thing. God hates it, just as He hates sending people to hell, but sometimes it is the only course of action that is just and, in the long run, loving.

⁶⁹ B Smith, 'Why reproofs are so important', *Heads Up!*, November 11, 2011 p. 1.

⁷⁰ Schaeffer, p. 37.

Let me say this: Separation is to be avoided if possible. However, it would seem to me, both from past experience as an evangelical and more recently, in the last twenty years as a fundamentalist, that most Bible-believing Christianity, both evangelical and fundamental, has a procrastinating, cowardly, unbelieving spirit that shrinks from the thought of obeying the principles of biblical separation. (In my opinion, that accounts very largely for why Ockenga's ideology has been and continues to be so successful.) True, separation is not always the answer, but before we get too comfortable with that concession, let us remember it is also true that when separation is called for, it will usually be very distasteful to the flesh, costly to the reputation and profoundly inconvenient. However, that is reality in the battle for truth, and if we are not experiencing that then what does it indicate, but that we stand exposed as cowards, shrinking in fear at the thought of contending for the Master's honour where the battle is hottest.

Conclusion

Over the last half a century or more the re-indoctrination process has met with little resistance to the point now where it has become recognised almost as orthodox. This new, respectable, softer approach to Christianity has been eagerly adopted by the vast majority in the evangelical community. Their seminaries, Bible colleges, Bible institutes and Christian schools have been very effective vehicles in disseminating it over the last seven decades. Sadly, religious institutions seemed to slip so naturally into this comfortable new compromise, almost with a sense of relief. I suppose, to be frank, it was easier, but also, it was seen by many Christians at the time when it was first introduced, as not so dramatically different from fundamentalism. Still, I think that if many of the Bible believers who followed Harold Ockenga with such enthusiasm in the 1940s could have seen Packer signing the 'ECT' document in the 1990s, they would have thought twice about where their Pied Piper of neo-evangelicalism was leading them. That early generation had no idea where the good ship Ockenga was going to end up. Of course, that generation is off the scene now, and, generally speaking, contemporary evangelicals either don't have any way of comparing, or are not interested in comparing their type of Christianity with that which their forefathers lost.

But the reality is, within the space of half a century, the new hermeneutic of evangelicalism has revolutionised the way most professing Bible believers think about and live out their Christianity. In the name of reaching the world, most have become so much like the world that hardly anybody can tell them apart. Now I know that is not true of all evangelicals, but it is true of a great many.

Evangelicalism is in a state of free fall with respect to practical holiness and genuine repentance from sin. Along with the rethinking of theology there is also a rethinking of the application of that theology. There is diminishing effort to pursue godliness in those areas that are not mentioned specifically in Scripture, in spite of a clear biblical mandate to do so (1 Thessalonians 5:21, Philippians 1:9-11, Hebrews 5:13-14). In fact, some would strongly oppose the idea, saying that to do so will bury us under a legalistic pile of manmade rules. It seems the only hard and fast

rules according to the new hermeneutic are that we should not be judgmental, that we should be tolerant, loving and kind, supposedly, just like Jesus.

With such shallow theological depth and lack of definition, evangelicalism is flexible enough to stretch its veneer of cowardly counterfeit love to embrace all kinds of heresies and 'isms', but in doing so is driven to the position where it is fraught with logical inconsistencies in its biblical thinking. In seventy years, the increasing fragmentation of doctrine has taken its toll. Evangelicalism has gotten very fuzzy around the edges. As a result, evangelical Christianity today has become very confusing to those who are genuinely seeking after truth. On the other hand, the world is filled with sinners that want their hurts healed only slightly, who welcome the message of the soft prophets who will cry, 'Peace, peace; when there is no peace' (Jeremiah 8:11). The new hermeneutic of evangelicalism will prove to be perfectly accommodating to these kind of sinners.

I say it again. Truly we live in 'perilous times': times that demand genuine faith, times that challenge our courage, times that call us to love the Lord our God 'with all [our] heart and with all [our] soul and with all [our] might'. Only when we do these things will we be strengthened to 'war a good warfare; Holding [both] faith, and a good conscience' in the stress of the battle. Be encouraged. If we are prepared to 'fight the good fight of faith' then our spiritual victory is sure. As 'good soldier[s] of Jesus Christ' in these last of the last days, we have the promise from God: 'that which ye have already hold fast till I come'. 'And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations' (II Timothy 3:1, Deuteronomy 6:5, Titus 1:18-19, I Timothy 6:12, II Timothy 2:3, Revelation 2:25-26).

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