

"... Hereby know we the spirit of truth and the spirit of error"

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THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT DURING THE LATTER DAYS

Prof. John E. Dahlin, Editor

There is a great deal of confusion and mis-information on the matter of ecumenicalism. I am aware, however, that many people of good-will and with the best of motives are inclined to support the present-day ecumenical movement. By means of this article, I hope that a number of people will arrive at a better understanding of this matter, and hence steer away from the whole program involving external church union. The word "ecumenical" when religiously used, means a world-wide or all-inclusive program for achieving unity within the domain of Christianity. When only casually considered, such an objective may seem highly desirable. It is well, however, to give this whole matter the careful consideration that it deserves.

Those of us who hold a separatistic position are usually regarded by the ecumenical crowd as being devisive and guilty of promoting fragmentation within the sphere of the Christian religion. Let me point out at the outset that I am not going about in the country seeking to splinter denominations. On the other hand, I believe in co-operation among Bible-believing groups. From time to time I conduct union services where a number of evangelical churches unite for such a series. And I have a feeling of oneness and the desire to fellowship with

all sound evangelical groups. It is well to recognize there is such a thing as religious bigotry and unwarranted narrow-mindedness. But when ecumenicalism is considered, as represented by the majority of the religious denominations of our time, I feel we need to take a firm opposition to it. The present-day ecumenical movement is altogether different from a cooperation of Bible-believing Christians as the practice has been over a period of many decades. This distinction should be made in a forthright way. Let us now consider the significance of the ecumenical movement of our time.

WHY THE OPPOSITION TO IT IS NECESSARY

First of all, I am opposed to the program of unification of all groups within Christendom, because it necessitates major compromises with many unfortunate consequences. You cannot federate and merge religious groups on a large scale without making many major compromises on essential matters. These concessions usually involve Bible doctrine. No strong doctrinal position can be taken when the overriding purpose is to achieve external church union. In order to broaden the program of church union these accommodations and compromises are the essential

steps. This in turn weakens the bodies which come together. Whenever you proceed to generalize and de-emphasize important Biblical doctrine, you weaken the spiritual position of the participants in the external church union program.

Moreover, such a broad church union leads to an expanding apostasy. Every New Testament writer warns us against the oncoming apostasy which will characterize the latter-days. From Genesis to the Book of Revelation God's people are warned against intermingling with the unworthy elements. We see, e.g., what happened to the descendants of Seth when they fused with the ungodly people who had Cain as their progenitor. This intermingling of the two streams brought on God's judgment, namely, the flood. It swept away that entire generation with the exception of Noah and his family. The Biblical position in this regard stands out very clearly and we read such statements as the following: "What fellowship has righteousness with unrighteousness? What communion hath light with darkness . . . ? Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" (II Cor. 6:14, 17-18). In a later writing, Paul makes the exhortation very emphatic in this regard with the words, "From such turn away" (II Tim. 3:5). Within the last few years the National Council of Churches has accepted well known cultic groups into membership of that body. The Swedenborg cult was admitted a few years ago, and early this year, The Re-Organized Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints (a Mormon body) was granted membership in the National Council of

Churches. Actually there are no Biblical standards maintained, either in The National Council of Churches or The World Council of Churches, on the matter of membership. Not only do the Greek Orthodox and the Russian Orthodox Churches have membership in these bodies, but they hold also a decisive leadership of The World Council of Churches. It is well known that the latter is definitely tainted with Communism. In addition, overtures are made continually to the Roman Church. And for two decades the leaders of the World Council of Churches have sought a consolidation with the largest wing in Christendom, that is, the Roman Catholic Church with its 550 million people. A consolidation, such as we have mentioned, will bring on the final apostasy referred to in the Scriptures.

POPULARIZATION OF RELIGION

The forces of ecumenicalism are seeking to popularize the Christian religion with its program which involves massiveness and ornamentalism. This is a clear circumvention of the Scriptures. The Word of God exhorts us strongly to move in a different direction: "Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach" (Heb. 13:13). And our Lord also said, "In the world ye shall have tribulation" (Jn 16:33). James uses still another expression: "Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (James 4:4). Those who are directing the ecumenical movement are seeking continually to popularize and stream-line religion in order to gain wide public support.

RECASTING THE PRESENT WORLD ORDER

Not only do the ecumenical forces seek to popularize religion, but they are also committed to the objective

of changing the present world order politically, economically and socially. All kinds of panaceas are sought in order to cure what are considered to be the ills of society. Both the World Council of Churches and The National Council of Churches have coined a key expression, namely, "involvement." This pertains to an active entrance into the main areas of earthly activity among the nations. The Fourth Assembly of The World Council of Churches spent most of the time during the sessions at Uppsala, Sweden, in seeking to achieve certain economic and social goals. By the many pronouncements made we are enabled to see clearly the objectives of The World Council of Churches in that regard. Openly it was advocated to take away money from the rich nations in order to provide a better standard of living among the poor nations. In fact, many socialistic goals were embraced and proclaimed by resolutions adopted at these sessions. Mr. Baldwin, a literary genius, but a well known infidel, was asked to address that great conclave at Uppsala. He openly proposed the destruction of the Church as a **must** step in order to bring about a better world. The arrangement to have this man speak demonstrates how far the apostasy has permeated The World Council of Churches. What we have in The World Council of Churches is virtually a man-made program in order to create a better world. It is not to be achieved through the Gospel, but rather by means of numerous panaceas. This is clearly a repudiation of the Great Commission of Christ stated in the words: "Ye shall be witnesses to me, both in Jerusalem, and in Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). The goals of Christ were to be achieved through the proclamation of the Gospel. The goals as advocated

by the World Council of Churches were unknown to the leaders of the New Testament Church. Truly it can be said the early Church majored on the subjects of sin and salvation. In other words, the conversion of the individual was the primary objective. On the other hand, the program of the World Council of Churches is the conversion of society. This great conclave at Uppsala never offered a word of opposition to Communism and the Liquor traffic, the two great evils which stand in the way in bringing about a better world as they advocate. Thinking people ought to be able to see that the present-day ecumenical program, or dream, is a circumvention and a contradiction of the Scriptural blue-print for the age.

POWER AND DOMINANCE SOUGHT

Those who have studied the ambitious efforts of The National Council of Churches know that it is continually seeking to curtail all religious leadership except its own. We see e.g., that it seeks to silence all independent Radio Broadcasting activities representing Bible-believing groups. They must go off the air; dissent is not an acceptable principle with The National Council of Churches.

Moreover, The National Council of Churches seeks to paralyze our government in the conduct of its foreign policy. It has promoted and actually sponsored giant demonstrations against the government's policy in East Asia. Not long ago 900 Protestant and Catholic leaders picketed the Pentagon, and thus sought to interfere with the operation of The Department of Defense. The leaders of The National Council of Churches have intervened frequently on the side of draft-dodgers and traitors. In addition, it has supported many of

the left-wing extremists. The National Council of Churches has advocated the recognition of Red China, and the admission of that Communist land into the United Nations. Castro's Cuba has often been encouraged by the same misguided leaders within the National Council of Churches. A few years ago the Executive Committee of The World Council of Churches met at Tulsa, Oklahoma. The program was pro-Communist in pattern. Later a Hemispheric Conference was held at Montreal. The purpose of that conclave was to seek to find a way to end the war in Viet Nam. It was reported that 1800 delegates were present, one half of whom were Americans. Honored guests were representatives from North Viet Nam and also representatives of The National Liberation Front (the Viet Cong) people. American imperialism was condemned. Warm greetings were sent to the gathering from Dr. Sloan Coffin and Dr. Spock, who were at that time on trial for encouraging draft dodgers. Mrs. Martin Luther King and Senator Eugene McCarthy sent their greetings to that gathering of extremists.

The work of initiating opposition to free governments is in direct violation of the Scriptures. The New Testament specifically points out the duty of Christians toward governments and those who are in authority. Paul writes, "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinances of God, and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works but to the evil . . . For he is a minister of God for good" (Rom. 13:1-4).

THE GREAT HARLOT DEPICTED IN REVELATION

In chapters 17 and 18 of Revelation, the end-time religious octopus is depicted, and in these chapters the massive ecclesiastical system is portrayed as "Mystery Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots, and the Abominations of the Earth" (Rev. 17:5). This is the universal ecclesiastical system which will exercise power and domination on the earth during the time of Antichrist. This apostate system is now rising out of liberalism, and it will reach its maturity after the Rapture of the Church has taken place. In dealing with the end-time apostasy, the message from the Book of Revelation is couched in words of urgency: "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not her plagues. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities" (Rev. 18:4-5). Every writer of the New Testament deals with the great apostasy of the latter-days.

Throughout the ecumenical movement, we see a clear pattern, and this development will expand phenomenally until it reaches a universal status. It is impossible for us to wish it away, or seek to sweep the fact of the present-day apostasy under the rug, as it were. We are confronted with the greatest ecclesiastical apostasy in the long history of Christianity. In His reference to the climactic condition of the final period, our Lord raised the pertinent question "When the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?" (Lk. 18:8)

We are witnessing the rise of a one-world religious system, not God like, but rather beastlike-humanistic in nature, theology and worship. It is

seen coming up out of earth, that is, earth born, not heaven sent. It will have the power to dictate worship. In fact, it will operate under the banner of Christendom. It is apostate and anti-evangelical. We find the trends moving rapidly in that direction these days. According to a survey of a meeting of the NCC at Miami Beach, Florida a few years ago, one third of the delegates did not subscribe to a belief in God—in other words, they were out and out atheists. Seventy-five percent present rejected the “miracles” of the Bible. Eighty-seven percent rejected the cardinal teachings of the Scriptures that man is born in sin. The majority believed that the love of one’s neighbor was more important than a “belief in Jesus Christ as Saviour.” At this conference the NCC stated that non-Christians had just as much hope for salvation as members of Protestant churches, and this doubtlessly im-

plied other groups also, even the Communists.

External religious consolidation is scheduled for the end-time by the prophetic Scriptures. The merger of great religious bodies continues, and the union of the many religious groups into one massive organization will pave the way for the super-church which will come to universal power during the final period when antichrist will assume world-wide leadership.

Unity in Christ is a priceless blessing, and all born-again believers should strive to maintain it. But when principles and doctrinal positions are compromised for the sake of achieving external unity, then we must courageously resist such efforts. This can produce only an artificial unity which has no Biblical base. The ecumenical movement of our time is simply conditioning the world for the time of delusions under antichrist.

CONTROVERSY MAY BE A DUTY!

By the Late Bishop J. C. Ryle of Liverpool, England

Controversy in religion is a hateful thing. It is hard enough to fight the Devil, the world, and the flesh, without private differences in our own camp. But there is one thing which is even worse than controversy, and that is false doctrine tolerated, allowed and permitted without protest or molestation.

It was controversy that won the battle of the Protestant Reformation. If the views that some men hold were correct, it is plain we never ought to have had any Reformation at all! For the sake of peace, we ought to have gone on worshipping the Virgin, and bowing down to images and relics to this very day!

Away with such trifling. There are times when controversy is not only a duty but a benefit. Give me the mighty thunderstorm rather than the pestilential malaria. The one walks in darkness and poisons us in silence, and we are never safe. The other frightens and alarms for a little season. But it is soon over and it clears the air. It is a plain scriptural duty to “contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints” (Jude 3).

ORTHODOXY VERSUS NEO-ORTHODOXY at it concerns the doctrine of the Holy Scriptures

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For some time a controversy has been raging in the Christian Church concerning the doctrine of the Word. We shall, therefore, according to the ability God has given, in as brief a manner as possible, seek to set forth the contrast between the orthodox view and the view of modern contemporary theology.

THE ORTHODOX VIEW OF THE WORD

The Bible teaches that holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. (2 Pet. 1:21). That the holy writer is not referring just to what these men spoke but also to their writings is evident from the context: "Knowing this first, that no **prophecy of the Scripture** is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will men, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." (1 Pet. 1:20-21). From this it is evident that the apostle had the written Scripture primarily in mind when he quoted these words. Likewise, the Bible tells us, "All Scripture is given by the inspiration of God." (2 Tim. 3:16). This implies that every word of Scripture (Old Testament is here referred to) is "God-breathed." As the trumpet player determines the very notes which come forth from the trumpet into which he breathes, so God by His in-breathing determined the very words which were written by His instruments, the prophets. God, Who cannot lie (Tit. 1:2), moved and inspired also the apostles and evangelists not only to speak and record His thoughts

but also His very words: "Which things also we speak, not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth." (1 Cor 2:13). Therefore every word of the Bible is inspired by God.

INSPIRATION IS REVELATION

In orthodox Bible language inspiration is revelation. Not all revelation is inspiration, but all inspiration, as this word is used in a Biblical sense, is revelation. God revealing Himself to Abraham and talking to him about the destruction of Sodom would be classified as revelation but not as inspiration. However, whenever the Holy Spirit inspired one of the prophets to speak or write God's Word that is not just inspiration but also revelation, e.g. Gen. 1 and 2. Thus the canonical books of the Bible are the revealed Word of God. **The Bible is revelation.** The holy writers did not always understand the meaning of the truths that the Holy Spirit moved them by inspiration to write as is evident from 1 Peter 1:10-12: "Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister these things, which are now reported unto you by them that they preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven."

THE BIBLE

THE INERRANT WORD OF GOD

Since the Bible is the revealed Word of God which was given by divine inspiration it follows that it is the Truth and is without error or contradiction. This is true not only of the message of the Scripture in general but of each and every statement of the Bible. Jesus speaks of the writings of Moses as the Word of God (Mark 7:10-13. St. Paul speaks of the word of the apostles as the Word of God. (1 Thess. 2:13). Jesus, therefore, not only consistently showed that he took the Old Testament writings as being perfectly authoritative and without mistake but even made such a statement regarding one word from the Psalms which might be considered hard to accept: ". . . and the Scripture cannot be broken." (John 10:35).

THE HOLY SPIRIT WORKS THROUGH THE WORD

Jesus prayed in His high priestly prayer: "Sanctify them through Thy Truth, Thy Word is Truth." (John 17:17). Three verses later He adds: "neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their (the apostles') word." St. Paul writes: "He called you by our gospel." (2 Thess. 2:14); and again: "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Rom. 10:17. Also, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth." (Rom. 1:16); and also: "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost." (1 Cor. 12:3).

From the foregoing passages it is evident that the Holy Spirit calls people to faith through the Gospel, the word of the apostles and prophets, the Word of God. From Acts 8:30: "Understandest thou what thou readest?" it is evident that this working of the Holy Ghost through the word of the

apostles and prophets isn't in some mechanical or magical manner (ex opere operato) but the Spirit of God works through the intellect and understanding of the hearer or reader of God's Word.

COPYISTS AND TRANSLATORS NOT INSPIRED

Orthodox Christians believe, according to the clear teachings of the Scriptures, that the holy writers of the Bible wrote by inspiration so that they only wrote down what is God's Word and God's Truth when they wrote the original manuscripts. Orthodox Christians, however, do not hold that the copyists and translators were inspired to make no mistake. Because of some errors of copyists the original text of a few passages cannot be definitely established. For this reason such passages are not used to establish doctrine. For this reason, e.g. 1 John 5:7 is not commonly used to set forth the doctrine of the Trinity even though the passage may appear to be the most apropos. This doctrine, however, is clearly taught in other clear passages of Scripture where the text has been definitely established from the many copies of the early manuscripts that are available. (cf Matt. 28:19; Deut. 6:4; 1 Cor. 8:4; Matt. 3:16-17).

Likewise, orthodox Christians recognize that there are mistranslations of isolated words and even passages in various translations. Even such a good translation as the King James version has a few words that have been mistranslated or have become obsolete. However, orthodox Christians rightly believe that an accurate translation is as good as the original. The mistranslation of isolated words does not throw doubt on those words and passages that have been correctly translated. In the case of a good translation like the King James version we are not aware that the mis-

translation of any word affects a doctrine of Scripture. We realize that this cannot be said of some other versions. It is for this reason that many churches have always stressed the need for their pastors to become acquainted with the Greek and Hebrew languages so that they can study the Bible as it was originally written by inspiration of God. In this connection we should not forget the Lord Jesus' promise: "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." (Matt. 24:35; cf. Mk. 13:31; Luke 21:33; Is. 40:8; 1 Peter 1:25). We know that Jesus does not lie (Titus 1:2). Therefore, we have complete confidence in the established text as God's Word.

THE NEO-ORTHODOX VIEW OF THE WORD

In contrast to the orthodox view which holds that the Bible is the revealed Word of God, the **neo-orthodox view is that the Bible is not a revelation**. On the contrary, they maintain that the Bible is merely a human record or witness to revelation. They say that God has revealed Himself in His mighty acts and then the writers of the Bible gave their interpretation of this revelation. This they claim the writers did by inspiration. However, by inspiration the neo-orthodox do not mean that the Holy Spirit moved the Biblical writers to write the very Words of God but rather that they wrote under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to the extent that they were able to witness to Christ and call Him Lord. (cf. 1 Cor. 12:3). We would have to say that if we should use the term inspiration in such a sense, then every present-day Christian is just as inspired by God whenever he testifies to Christ as were the writers of the Holy Bible. This makes the Bible a human, fallible witness to God's revelation. This leaves it up to each individual to try to sort out from the

Bible what he thinks is God's Word and revelation.

ACCORDING TO THE NEO-ORTHODOX THE BIBLE CONTAINS ERRORS, MISTAKES, AND DISCREPANCIES

With their view of the meaning of the word inspiration the neo-orthodox manage to claim that the Bible contains mistakes, inaccuracies and contradictions. This they do in spite of the fact that some maintain that they believe that every last syllable of the Bible is inspired.

These men also hold that the writers of the Bible used the stories that were current in "the community of God" at the time and wrote them down to present some certain divine truth. e.g. The writer of Genesis 1 and 2 was, in their view, concerned with giving his interpretation of how things came into existence and he therefore put into writing the stories which were current at that time which explained these things and he, therefore, set forth the divine truth that God is Creator and Preserver. The rest, according to their view, is merely a report of the current alleged myths of how this creation took place. One of their proponents in describing the writings of Gen. 1 to 3 states: "He wrote it as a tale, as a poetic piece, to set forth the truth of that which he believed to have happened, using materials available to him from the storytellers or from written documents. This is to say, these accounts propose to speak of real events describing man's creation and fall as well as the making of His world, but in language that is largely symbolical, or mythical, and is to be so understood." Likewise this same author wrote, "For that reason Bultmann can quite rightly say that the only historical statement in the Apostle's Creed is the sentence, 'He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died

and buried.' The rest of the Creed uses a different kind of language from the third dimension of life, from the level of revelation and **not necessarily of factuality.**" (Emphasis added) He wishes to imply that the facts as recorded in the Gospels did not happen as these facts are recorded there as is also evident from his claim that he finds a discrepancy between the ascension accounts as they are recorded by St. Matthew and St. Luke. He maintains that St. Matthew "unmistakably suggests that Christ ascended from a mountain in Galilee" (cf. Mt. 28) but that Luke places the ascension as taking place from the Mount of Olives (cf. Acts 1:12). It does not seem to bother this author that Matthew never mentions a word about the ascension.

TRUTH IS NOT IDENTIFIABLE WITH FACT IN NEO-ORTHODOX LANGUAGE

Whereas in orthodox language, as Dr. C. F. W. Walther puts it: "Everything which is presented as factual is factual." Conversely, the neo-orthodox do not want to identify truth with fact. On the contrary, according to them much that is presented in Scripture as fact is not supposed to be factually correct and yet it is supposed to be the truth. For example, the statement of fact that over 600,000 Israelite men left Egypt at the time of the Exodus is regarded by one of their proponents as being a "beefed up" account, an exaggeration which is supposed to magnify God for His great power.

The same writer states on the previous page of the same essay: "We need to keep in mind that it is a modern heresy to identify truth with fact." Just ponder for a moment this man's definition of heresy. This same writer claims to find much evidence

of contradictions, historical errors, and other mistakes in the Scriptures. He also regards the clinging to the factual side of the creation account "as an exceedingly subtle strategem sometimes employed by the Evil One." This professor appears to call us victims of Satan's lies when we cling to the belief that God has by inspiration revealed to us in Gen. 1 to 3 the facts as they actually occurred at the beginning of time. It appears that he would also call us heretics for doing so. What happens if we apply this principle to all the facts recorded in the Bible?

ACCORDING TO THE NEO- ORTHODOX THE BIBLE IS NOT A REVELATION BUT A RECORD, WITNESS AND MEDIUM OF REVELATION

Rather than regard the Bible as revelation the proponents of the new theology call it a "medium" of revelation. They hold that as man studies this Bible of myths, legends, and inaccuracies, God "confronts" or "breaks through to" the individual with His claim upon him and they thus experience an "encounter" with God. The neo-orthodox theologians appear to believe that God (Holy Spirit?) may reveal Himself in His person to the person who studies or hears the Bible, and the individual may be led by God to understand what is the Truth and can sift it from the error that is allegedly in the Bible. The Bible is supposed to reveal all that is necessary for salvation inerrantly.

Just how much of the Scripture this is supposed to be we are not told. Apparently the facts of the stories of the Creation and the Fall are not included. This naturally is a puzzle to the orthodox Christian who cannot understand how there can be, or even needs to be, any salvation if the

story of the Creation and the Fall are not to be regarded as factually correct. How these things are not supposed to be factually correct and yet are supposed to teach the positive truth that God is the Creator and to teach the positive truth of the Fall is truly a mystery which is difficult to comprehend. One might wonder if these aren't the "good words and fair speeches" which deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting, concerning which the Apostle Paul wrote in Rom. 16:18. The issue that faces us is that if the account of the Creation and Fall in Genesis 1 to 3 is not supposed to be factually correct, why should we believe that God is the Creator and that man fell into sin?

DOES THE HOLY SPIRIT WORK THROUGH THE WORD?

It appears that here we have an unexpected danger point in the neo-orthodox theology. The adherents of neo-orthodoxy appear to propose that the Holy Spirit works without means (or God reveals Himself immediately today as He did in Bible times to the prophets and apostles) and this in a mechanical or magical manner in **connection with** the Word of the Scriptures rather than **through** the Word as it is comprehended and understood. It appears that a bit of Roman theology concerning the means of grace is here being advocated and is being accepted by some. This brings about a softening up process. Once a person has been led to believe that the Holy Spirit works without means and mechanically merely in connection with the Word, then he is soon ready to accept the attitude that the denial of the inerrancy of Scripture is, after all, not such a serious matter. Then he is soon ready to make the next step of denying the inerrancy itself. Another softening-up process is accomplished by the continual em-

phasis on the teaching that as long as a person holds to the material principle (Justification by faith) he is a Christian even if he does not hold to the doctrine of the Verbal Inspiration and Inerrancy of Scripture. This argument ignores the fact that we cannot have a building without a foundation. Destroy the foundation (the formal principle) and you cannot erect a proper building, and if you have one it is doomed to certain collapse.

WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE?

The neo-orthodox have undermined the very foundation of the Christian faith. "Built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets." Eph. 2:20. The Bible is the (Word) writings of the apostles and prophets upon which the church is built.

Dr. C. F. W. Walther wrote: "Whoever thinks he can find one error in Holy Scripture does not believe in Holy Scripture but **in himself**; for even if he accepted everything else as true, he would believe it not because Scripture says so, but because it agrees with his reason or with his sentiments." (Emphasis added).

Man makes himself his own authority in religion. He tries to build his faith on the baseless foundation of his own reason and sentiments.

THE CHRISTIAN FAITH ITSELF IS SHAKEN

One young minister recently stated to the writer that his faith in Jesus was stronger now that he had accepted the tenets of neo-orthodoxy. We naturally ask. "What Jesus?" The Jesus who put His stamp of approval on all of the Old Testament and referred to it as the Word of God (Mk. 7:10-13) and never spoke a word against its absolute inerrancy?

The Jesus who when in a dispute quoted from the Psalms and when referring to one word that might be difficult to accept, stated: "The Scripture cannot be broken?" If that is the Jesus he believes in, he is believing in a Jesus that is either an outright liar and deceiver if he didn't mean what he said, or he is an ignoramus who was himself deceived into believing that he was the Son of God, when in reality he was nothing of the kind. The scribes and the pharisees in the days of Jesus also believed in a Messiah, a Christ of their own imagining. However, when the true Messiah did come and reveal Himself, these men would have nothing to do with Him because He did not fit the preconceived notions which they had of such a Messiah. Is this perhaps also true of these modern neo-orthodox theologians? Are they manufacturing for themselves in their imaginations a Jesus Christ which does not exist except in their own preconceptions?

WITH THE ACCEPTANCE OF NEO-ORTHODOX PRINCIPLES ALL DOCTRINES OF SCRIPTURE BECOME UNCERTAIN

When a person follows the principles laid down by the neo-orthodox, then the Bible, in the final analysis, is man's word and it is up to the interpreter to find in the Bible the truth of God. Each theologian can sift out what he wants to take and reject what is not pleasing to him. In doing this he may also change the doctrines which he teaches from time to time even as the notorious Dr. Karl Barth

has also done. In that case doctrinal discipline becomes a thing of the past. No one can be accused of teaching contrary to Scripture because the theologian can always hide behind the claim that he does not regard a certain statement of Scripture as correct because it is, after all, merely man's record and response to revelation and may well be mistaken since all humans are subject to error.

WHAT IS THE GREAT APPEAL OF NEO-ORTHODOXY?

Our sinful flesh does not want to be bound to God's Word and is by nature rebellious. It wants to be free to believe and do as it pleases. One professor reveals to us his personal feelings about accepting the tenets of neo-orthodoxy: "Basically a question of adequate elbow room to proceed with the task of presenting the multi-varied grace of God to our particular generation." This is often referred to as "academic freedom" which means freedom from the restrictions of God's Word.

The appeal is the same as that which Satan used in the Garden of Eden. "Yea, hath God said?" (Gen. 3:1.) Our sinful flesh would love to see God discredited. Thus our flesh hopes to elevate itself. It is the same appeal to pride: "Ye shall be as gods." (Gen. 3:5). The neo-orthodox makes himself his own authority and thus, in reality, his own god. He becomes guilty of "self-deification," or "Ego-theology." "Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." (Prov. 16:18).

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THE PRESENT STATUS OF THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

by Prof. John E. Dahlin

There have been glowing reports of recent fundamental changes within the historic Roman Catholic ecclesiastical system. Some are led to believe that a thorough reformation has been accomplished, and that the position of the Roman Church is changing so rapidly that the gap between it and Protestantism is being bridged. There is an incredible amount of misinformation circulated with regard to the status of the largest religious organization on earth.

The last decade has witnessed unprecedented pressures and tensions in human society on a global dimension. It is understandable that even the largest and the most durable religious system in the world would also be involved in the current clamor for change and modification in the various areas of Catholicism. We must recognize that the tension and restlessness within the Roman Catholic Church is substantial. This includes a considerable number of the clergy, and it also involves some areas of the Catholic laity.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

Since the time Pope John XXIII arranged the Second Vatican Council, less than a decade ago, it served to open a window, as it were, and it brought some light into a medieval system which had remained inflexible for centuries. At no time since the Second Vatican Council has the pressure for change been allowed to go any farther than providing some minor changes in the historic church. It should be pointed out that those changes which have been introduced are within the secondary areas, and

not in the primary positions maintained by the church. The excessive use of Latin in the church services, e.g., has been curtailed in recent years. Moreover, the manner in which the nuns have appeared in dress has witnessed some modification which has been long over-due. In other words, medievalism has given way for a semi-modern, or a more realistic pattern. Protestants are no longer branded as "heretics" and this historic identification has been changed to "separated brethren." Catholic scholars have displayed a real interest in joining Protestants in the preparation of a "Common Bible." Catholic and Protestant clergy have begun a limited intermingling, and in some churches services have been conducted together. An exchange of professors among a number of Protestant and Catholic institutions have been arranged. Protestant and Catholic clergymen have jointly participated in some wedding ceremonies. Protestants who marry Catholics are no longer required to sign a written agreement that children from such a union will be reared in the Catholic faith. But the oral agreement or pledge to follow such a procedure will be maintained. This meaningless concession by the Catholics should not be considered as being important by Protestants.

The present-day tensions and dissatisfaction within wide areas of the Roman Church should not be ignored, however. It is a known fact that a number of priests have broken their vow of celibacy, and a considerable portion of the clergy has left the priesthood. And prominent Catholic

bishops have registered opposition to the papal encyclicals involving celibacy and birth control. In addition, a larger role and participation in the policy making area of the Roman Church by the Bishops have been demanded, and these demands have been directed to the Vatican.

DOCTRINAL POSITIONS AND PAPAL SUPREMACY REMAIN

Those who believe that a twentieth-century reformation has taken place within the Roman Catholic Church might well read up on the History of the Protestant Reformation. It appeared at that time that the Medieval Church was coming apart in the seams, and that it would eventually disintegrate. But the Counter Reformation, which was engineered at that epoch of history, brought about a greater unity and inflexibility of the church than that which existed before the Protestant Reformation. One needs to realize that the Catholic Church is a hierarchy and the authority is arranged from the top, that is, from the Pope to the local parish priest. It is exceedingly difficult to drive a wedge into this pyramid which has such a fixed authority arranged at every level.

This writer is not aware of a single change in fundamental doctrine of the Catholic Church during this time of so-called upheaval in that system. The centrality of the papacy is maintained, and it remains unaltered. The three vital proclamations of the Pope during the past century remain intact. They are: The Papal Infallibility, the Immaculate Conception of Mary, and the Bodily Assumption of Mary into heaven. They are still key positions held by the Church. The celibacy of the priesthood is tenaciously held by the Pope, and the Apostolic Succession is unchanged. The present Pope is the 263rd in the line of suc-

cession since Peter, as claimed by the Church. The doctrine of Purgatory has not been altered. The Seven Sacraments of the Church have not been recinded or abridged. The election of the Pope by the College of Cardinals has been further strengthened by adding additional Cardinals to serve as the Princes of the Church. In no previous period has the College of Cardinals been as large as at the present time. Parochial education for the Catholic children is being pursued wherever it is financially possible to maintain these institutions. And great pressure is exerted upon both the Federal and State Governments in every Catholic Diocese by pleading for more aid in the operation of these many institutions of the Church. The power of excommunication by the Church is held, and this serves as a whip to keep the disloyal people in line. This overhanging threat is a very great fear among Catholics and it sobers those who are dissatisfied from straying away from the Church. The Catholic Church holds that tradition is equally authoratative with the Bible. And since the Bible is not self-interpretative, it simply means that tradition becomes the more important of the two concepts. Mariolatry is deeply entrenched, and Mary perhaps has never been higher recognized than at present. The recent proclamation of her bodily ascension into heaven demonstrates that there is no modification with reference to Mary in Catholic theology.

It might be well that those who believe there are such remarkable changes taking place in the Catholic Church, take a closer look into the matter. Any change, however minor, in this authoritarian system should be welcomed. It is unfortunate, however, when people read into the present-day developments more than what is actually true within the Ro-

man Catholic Church. In those areas of the world where that church is dominant no full religious freedom prevails for non-Catholics. It is unlikely that changes within the Roman

Catholic system will go beyond the fringes or the secondary areas. This is all we have witnessed during the past decade.

Prof. John E. Dahlin

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PERTINENT QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Prof. John E. Dahlin

QUESTION . . . Does the intermingling of Protestant and Catholic clergy, which is so popular in our time, produce good results or is it a mistake?

ANSWER . . . The historical record of the Roman Catholic hierarchy is one which has lacked spirituality, and its unscriptural claims should be well known by the Protestant clergy. Its traditional positions have nullified the Scriptures. It is completely wrong to accommodate the Catholic clergy by giving any kind of recognition to such an apostate system. There should be no intermingling of Protestant pastors with the Roman Catholic clergy.

QUESTION . . . Does Neo-Orthodoxy have more in common with the liberals or the evangelicals?

ANSWER . . . Neo-Orthodoxy, when carefully considered, is a refined method of rationalization of the Word of God and this is precisely the position of the liberals. Neo-orthodoxy represents an unusual way of manipulating the Scriptures. The only similarity is that the Neo-orthodox adherents use evangelical phrases and terminologies and this is a deceptive procedure. The view of the Neo-orthodox theologians concerning the inspiration and the infallibility of the Scriptures is quite similar to the position of the liberals. Both reject the authority or supremacy of the Scriptures. Those of the Neo-orthodox persuasion part company with the evangelicals on fundamental Biblical theology.