

August, 2006

Pause Ponder Profit

Happy Meal Churches

by Dean Sebourn

I don't know about most of you but I'm personally not that crazy about McDonalds' food. Their fries are ok, but I'd just as soon eat the biodegradable cardboard container as the burger that is found inside (well almost). While I'm not that crazy about McDonalds I do go there from time to time. Why you ask, because I have a seven year old son. It's not because he thinks their food is great. It's not because he thinks it is a good value for what you pay. It's not any of those reasons, there is just one thing that makes him like McDonalds so much. You get a "free" toy! Yes, McDonalds has made millions of dollars by bribing young children with toys. McDonalds' business paradigm in part is that if they can get children to like getting that "free" toy they will talk their parents into taking them there, which has obviously worked in part.

While there is nothing wrong with using such a tactic in seeking to run a profitable business many have taken to doing the same thing in religion. It is not uncommon to see churches devise and implement various social programs they feel will appeal to younger individuals.

Everything from fireworks to super bowl parties, dances to basketball, and much more have been used to entice the young. The problem with this is that none of these are authorized in God's word (Matt. 7:21; Col. 3:17). Furthermore they pervert the spiritual nature of the church (cf. 1 Pet. 2:5), by making it nothing more than a moral social club.

Making the church into a religious happy meal does not benefit our youth. First, even those that are young need to be won to Christ not picnics, mixers, and athletics. The Bible teaches that even in our youth we should be seeking spiritual wisdom (Prov. 8:17). Children need to be taught the word of God (cf. 2 Tim. 1:5; 3:15) while at church, not how to frolic and play.

Salvation By The Blood

Heb. 9:22

What Saves? <i>The Blood</i>	When Does It? <i>In Baptism</i>
Jn. 19:32-34	Rom. 6:3
Matt. 26:28	Acts 2:38
1 Jn. 1:7	Eph. 5:26
Rev. 1:5	Acts 22:16
Heb. 9:14	1 Pet. 3:21
Acts 20:28	Acts 2:41, 47
Rom. 3:25	Mk. 16:16



What Is Liberalism?

by Ron Halbrook

I have been asked to explain the meaning of the term "liberalism" as it has been used to describe problems and issues among churches of Christ since the 1950's. We are always glad to receive and answer questions from those who are "searching the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so" (Acts 17:11; 1 Pet. 3:15).

Two Attitudes: Conservative & Liberal

"Conservative" and "Liberal" may be used to describe basic attitudes toward any law, document, or standard of authority. Conservative a commitment to strictly follow, protect, or preserve the standard without changing its instructions, which is the spirit of Philippians 1:17 ("set for the defense of the gospel"), Jude 3 ("earnestly contend for the faith, which was once delivered to the saints"), and Revelation 22:18-19 (not to "add unto" or "take away from the words" revealed). Liberal means not strictly following the message or pattern of teaching, but allowing unauthorized changes to be made.

Social Activities

1. In the New Testament, the work of the church was limited to evangelism, worship (to glorify God and edify saints), and benevolence to destitute saints (1 Tim. 3:15-16; Acts 2:42; 20:7; 2 Cor. 9:1). In the 1950's, churches began to provide social activities such as social meals, parties, and ball games. Then, churches began to add to the church building special rooms called "fellowship halls" which were actually kitchens and dining rooms. Now, some of the big rich churches even build gymnasiums. Such social and recreational work is not the proper work of the church. This is one form of liberalism.

Centralized Organization

2. In the New Testament, each church sent support directly to the preachers in the field and also sent benevolent help directly to destitute churches (Phil. 4:15-17; 2 Cor. 11:8; Acts 11:27-30). There was no centralized board, bureau, or agency of any kind. In the 1950's, the "sponsoring church" arrangement provided a plan for many churches to send donations to a large church, which in turn oversaw the funds to send and support gospel preachers into the world and to send benevolent help to destitute churches. This has the effect of transforming a local eldership into a board of directors to oversee the work of many churches. This plan of centralizing the work of many churches under one eldership is liberalism, reflecting the centralization found in denominationalism and Catholicism.

3. In the New Testament, each church did its work of evangelism and benevolence without building and sustaining human institutions to do the work for the churches (Phil. 4:15-17; Acts 6:1-7; 11:27-30). In the 1950's, human institutions such as colleges, summer camps, childcare agencies, medical clinics, and retirement centers obtained donations from the treasuries of churches. These became church supported institutions, this is the same principle violated by the missionary society, centralizing the work of the churches through a human institution. This is a form of liberalism, reflecting the same centralization found in denominationalism and Catholicism.

Church Benevolence To Sinners

4. In the New Testament, local churches gave benevolent help from the treasury to needy saints, but not to sinners in the world (Acts 6:1-7; 2 Cor. 9:1). In the 1950's, some brethren advocated the church should give benevolent help from the treasury to sinners in the world. This is another form of liberalism.

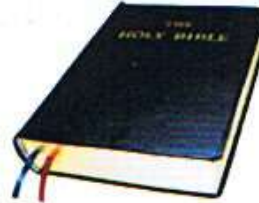
(What Is Liberalism? — Continued from page 2)

Spirit Of Compromise

Liberalism also has a spirit of compromise rather than a spirit of warfare against sin and error (2 Cor. 10:3-5). Many liberal churches try to preach a "positive" gospel setting forth the true plan of salvation and worship, but they avoid exposing false doctrines, false religions, and false teachers by name as was done in Bible days (Matt. 16:12; 2 Tim. 2:16-18). Some of these liberal churches try to preach a "positive" gospel about the need to live a pure and godly life, but they do not openly fight against worldliness and expose the sinfulness of social drinking, smoking, gambling, immodest dress, profanity, dancing, fornication, adultery, unscriptural divorce and remarriage, "and such like," (Gal. 5:19-21). Such churches do not practice discipline or withdrawal from unfaithful members (1 Cor. 5; 2 Thess. 3). This "positive" approach gradually allows the leaven of sin and error to work among God's people. Less and less direct teaching is done on more and more Bible principles. Fewer and fewer warnings are given against more and more forms of sin and error. The church becomes weaker, softer, and more open to false teaching and sinful conduct in many forms. Such churches will gradually lose more and more distinctive marks of New Testament Christianity and become more and more like modern denominations.

Brethren who embrace this liberal spirit of compromise are highly offended and embarrassed by strong gospel preaching which deals directly with sin, error, and false teachers. Such brethren become agitated against and alienated from strong preachers and plain preaching. In this way, Satan builds a wall which protects the liberal-minded church from hearing the full truth of the gospel. Those who "will not endure sound doctrine" turn to teachers who will tickle their ears with smooth, sweet, soft preaching — just as Paul warned in 2 Timothy 4:1-5.

In order to avoid liberalism in every form, we must preach "all the counsel of God" and "fight the good fight of faith" against every form of sin and error (Acts 20:27; 1 Tim. 6:12).



Holy Bible, Book Divine

Holy Bible, book divine,
Precious treasure, thou art mine;
Mine to tell me whence I came,
Mine to teach me what I am.

Mine to chide me when I rove,
Mine to show a Savior's love;
Mine art thou to guide my feet,
Mine to judge, condemn, acquit.

Mine to comfort in distress,
If the Holy Spirit bless;
Mine to show by living faith
Man can triumph over death.

Mine to tell of joys to come,
And the rebel sinner's doom;
Holy Bible, book divine,
Precious treasure, thou art mine.

— John Burton

The Evidence Of Silence

by James W. Adams

There is an old adage to the effect that "silence speaks louder than words." In the field of evidences of the deity of Jesus of Nazareth, we believe that the silence of our Lord's enemies when challenged by his questions constitutes one of the strongest proofs of his claim to deity. We have a particular occasion in mind. Jesus was engaged in a discussion with the Pharisees, the most religious and best informed, scripturally speaking, sect of the Jews. In the course of that discussion he challenged them with this question: "Which of you convicteth me of sin?" (John 8:46a ASV). This was the golden opportunity of the enemies of Jesus. One man stepping forth with proof of a single sinful act in the more than thirty years of the life of Jesus would have refuted his claim to absolute perfection and exploded forever his profession of deity. The pregnant silence of the Lord's inveterate enemies with reference to a refutation of this claim is the strongest possible proof of His sinlessness, and, therefore, irrefutable evidence of His profession of deity. No, our faith in Jesus as the Son of the living God is not blind, unreasoning faith, but faith based upon the strongest possible evidence.

We just finished a very fine gospel meeting with Lowell Blasingame.

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Bible Study 9:45 A.M.
Worship..... 10:45 A.M.
Worship..... 6:00 P.M.
Wednesday
Bible Study..... 7:00 P.M.

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