

# The SHIELD OF FAITH

*"Above all, taking the shield of faith..." (Ephesians 6:16)*

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## DOCTRINAL DIFFERENCES OR PERSONALITY PROBLEMS?

*Bill Clayton (editor)*

### THE DIVINE MANDATE

The inspired Paul wrote:

"I CHARGE thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry" (2 Tim. 4:1-5).

#### Introduction

Here in the twilight years of this beloved apostle is the charge to "preach the word." Although he was near the end of his earthly journey (cf. 2 Tim. 4:6-22), preaching the word, not tickling ears, took precedent over the preaching of all other things. Surely the doctrinal import of the Psalmist, "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple" (Ps. 19:7), weighed heavily upon the heart of this aged apostle.

In his letter to Titus, Paul expressed profound concern for purity of doctrine. Some were unruly, vain talkers, subverters of the truth, and these mouths must be stopped (Tit. 1:9-11). "They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate. But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine" (Tit. 1:16-2:1). He later instructed Titus to reject the heretic (factious, ASV) after the first and second admonition (Tit. 3:10).

From the above contexts, it is evident that brethren would depart from sound doctrine. In what manner would they depart? They would seek to satisfy their own lusts, and they would seek after teachers who would make them feel good in what they were doing. They were high-minded, prideful, having the spirit of Diotrephes, and lusting after power and preeminence. Paul warned the elders of Ephesus: "Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples (the disciples, ASV) after

them" (Acts 20:30).

In yet another context, Paul "marveled" that some were so soon removed from the grace of Christ, into which they had been called, and now were "troubled" by those "perverting the gospel of Christ" (Gal. 1:6-7). Inspiration's strong condemnation of such perversion is clearly marked by the repetition of the word "accursed" in vs. 8-9. He then contrasts "a man pleaser" with "a servant of Christ" (vs. 10), and so will I.

#### The Cause Of The Clash

Opposing viewpoints would inevitably arise as those deviating into behavioral patterns of pride, self-will and "speaking perverse things" met with opposition from those upholding the truth. Conflicting personalities ALWAYS emerge when error or evil is PRO-posed by brother "A" and OP-posed by brother "B."

It must be acknowledged, however, that churches have been divided by nothing more than human pride and stubbornness. Such is tragic and sinful beyond excuse. It is also true that some have been ugly and hateful to others because of envy which generates contention and strife. Paul encountered such in a Roman prison. He said they so acted, "supposing to add affliction to my bonds" (Phil. 1:15-16). Such sinful motives and actions would surely engender personal tensions. It is, nevertheless, a fact that nearly all "personality clashes" occurring within the church have their beginning in genuine doctrinal discord.

It is identifying that which is of the faith (DOCTRINAL) as opposed to one's own self will (personal likes and dislikes, PERSONALITIES) that we now study. The following are concrete examples that I have known and/or observed.

#### Classic Cases Clarify

First, consider a situation where the biblical government of the local church is challenged. The detailed proposition submitted to the eldership stipulated an arrangement whereby the church would be directed/ruled by a system in which a committee would propose, promote and project rules and regulations for discussion and approval by the entire church.

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# THE SOCIAL GOSPEL

## From Man, Not God

Raymond Allen Hagood

Several reasons have already been set forth, demonstrating why the social gospel is contrary to the Bible. First, it teaches "social salvation" — "Change the economic environment, and man will be transformed." It changes the mission of the church and offers its own definition of sin and evil. Also, it promises an earthly kingdom of God — not the church of Christ, God's true kingdom — but a man-made utopia structured according to socialistic principles.

In the fifth place the social gospel is wrong, because it changes the relationship between God and man. Max Webber in his book *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* sets forth this change of relationship. Swanson in his writing summarized very well this change that Webber speaks of:

In Reformation Protestantism men were identified as God's creatures or dependents or servants or worshippers. The most dignified role allotted them was as God's images or as children in his household... New trends in [theology]...make another role the chief one, namely, the role of man as equally dependent with God in a common task.<sup>1</sup>

Swanson makes it very clear that in this new theology God and the individual are equal and mutually dependent upon each other. Of course, this violates every passage of scripture in the Bible which speaks of man's relationship to God. God and man are not equal; to teach that they are is gross error. Romans 6:22 is only one of many passages that expresses man's relationship to God as that of servant: "But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life."

In the next place the social gospel preaches and teaches the overthrow of nations by any means; in particular, it advocates the overthrow of America. George Bernard Shaw, one of the originators of the Fabian movement, said, in effect, "When we come to power, you will do what we tell you or we will shoot you."<sup>2</sup> Walter Rauschenbusch said in his book, *A Theology for the Social Gospel*,

It is hardly likely that any social revolution by which hereafter capitalism may be overthrown will cause more injustice, more physical suffering, and more heartache than the industrial revolution by which capitalism rose to power.<sup>3</sup>

The New Testament never teaches or advocates in any way that Christians ought to create a revolution against any government. Paul never held an anti-slavery meeting; Peter never made a public protest against the organized grafting in the Roman system of tax-farming.

While the Bible does not approve slavery, it certainly does not endorse the uprising of a servant against his master. "Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men: Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord,

whether he be bond or free. And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him" (Eph. 6:5-9). When this epistle was written, slavery was a legal institution. Millions of people were slaves, and some of these slaves were Christians. Yet, God's instruction was not revolution, but obedience.

Additionally, this false philosophy advocates the advancement of such atheistic political doctrine as communism. Socialism advocates the dialectical materialism that forms the theory of communism. Walter Rauschenbusch said this:

Thus the Three great institutions on which we mainly depend to train the young to a moral life and to make us all good, wise and happy, are essentially communistic, and their success and efficiency depend on the continued mastery of the spirit of solidarity and brotherhood within them. It is nothing short of funny to hear the very men who ceaselessly glorify the home, the school and the church, turn around and abuse communism.<sup>4</sup>

He further states: "It can fairly be maintained, too, that the State, another great moral agent, is communistic in its very nature."<sup>5</sup>

An even more revealing statement is found on page 396 of *Christianity and the Social Crisis*, from the last two quotations were taken.

Down to modern times, as we have seen, the universal judgment of Christian thought was in favor of communism as more in harmony with the genius of Christianity...Simultaneously with the rise of capitalism that conviction began to fade out...The question is now how quickly Christian thought will realize that individualism is coming to be an inadequate and antiquated form of social organization which must give place to a higher form of communistic organization.

Then he says further,

It would seem, therefore, that one of the greatest services which Christianity could render to humanity in the throes of the present transition would be to aid those social forces which are making for the increase of communism.<sup>7</sup>

Finally, though this does not cover all that is wrong, the social gospel sets up equality as the determining factor in morality. Rauschenbusch states, "The sense of equality is the only basis for Christian morality."<sup>8</sup>

Now, understand it — it is not God and His word that establish morality, according to the social gospel advocates — it is the "sense of equality." What do they mean by equality? Theirs is the same meaning as that of the Fabian socialists — everyone has the same amount of money, property, clothes, food and such like.

Now we understand Lyndon Johnson's "Great Society" and John Kennedy's "New Frontier." Both of these movements were strongly influenced by Fabian socialism and sought to create morality based upon equality. Listen to the way that they spoke of poverty. Poverty was a sin to them — a moral enigma.

Johnson declared a "War on Poverty." How was he to accomplish victory in this war? By taxing America greatly

After a series of committee and sub-committee meetings, followed by "OPEN: congregational meetings, the resulting decisions would be "presented to the elders for their review and approval." This would, of course, place the eldership in the unenviable position of approving the plans, or enduring the disappointment and vexation of both the committee (s) and the congregation in rejecting them. It actually was an attempt to place the local church in a position where all decisions of any import would be determined by a popular vote.

This matter definitely caused some "clashes" of major proportions within the eldership. Three important questions must be considered: (1) Were these "personality clashes?", (2) Were they "doctrinal clashes?" or (3) Was it a case of **Doctrinal** disagreements that led to personal conflicts?

If there is any clear teaching at all in the Bible, and there is, one of the clearest must be that the local church is to be overseen by a plurality of qualified men called elders or bishops. History has demonstrated over and over that many of the "personality" problems within the eldership of a congregation evolve from men who do NOT have the qualifications required by the New Testament.

**SECOND**, ponder a case of a false preacher/teacher putting forth, in a public discourse, the claim that the NT authorizes "solo singing" (1 Cor. 14:26) for use in a scriptural worship assembly. One elder clearly and publicly refuted this error immediately after it was taught. Others of the eldership manifested their displeasure with the false teaching being exposed, but did not make a definite attempt to actually uphold the error. This, however, did cause some tension and conflict. Question: Was this just **PERSONAL**, or was it **DOCTRINAL**?

**THIRD**, weigh the doctrinal differences that led to personal difficulties concerning the ungodly positions and practices emanating from one of "our" eminent "Christian" schools. One elder is totally adamant in upholding his old "Alma Mater," even in the face of ongoing evidence that this school is degenerating into liberalism. The infamous "**Abilene (water) Gate**" of a few years ago concerned the matter of evolution, and the charge of teaching raw evolution as a scientific fact was proven unequivocally. This has been constantly denied by this elder, even after these verbatim statements of Dr. Archie Manis were revealed:

"Evolution's history and methodology will continue to feed debates for generations, but the fact of evolution is beyond dispute. The concept is rational, scientific, and supported by an overwhelming mass of evidence from past and present."

And again, from his own handwriting,

"Our teaching at ACU has more presented evolution as an explanation for the world — it has been and is being presented as a body of scientific thought supported by a body of scientific evidence. As theory goes, there is no evidence against any of these viewpoints from science."

This is the same teacher who had written on the first page of God's revealed, sacred message that Genesis 1:1 is a "hymn" or "creation myth" (*Is Genesis Myth?* by Bert Thompson, pp. 1,26).

The elder under discussion just dismisses such facts with the terse statement that, "it didn't happen." This has been the ridiculous, simplistic handling of this serious problem from the president of the school all the way down to all who

put more credence in "myth" than in truth.

This man, who is still insistent upon being an elder, expounds in ringing tones his sound and firm stand for the faith. It seems to this writer that it would be difficult to correlate such bold claims with the fact that he dismissed a Bible teacher recently who, in a Sunday morning class, made reference to Archie Manis and his teaching evolution at ACU. Resentment, tension and opposition always result from such behavior. Is this because people have "personality" differences, or is it the case of genuine difference in sound doctrine?

**FOURTH**, examine the matter of the **ACAPPELLA VOCAL BAND**. One elder proposed that the young people be taken to see the performance of the **ACAPPELLA VOCAL BAND** at another congregation. After the discussion of the **UNscriptural** teaching and behavior that always accompanies their performance, the majority of the elders vetoed the proposal. Note, however, this headstrong elder went ahead and approved and encouraged the attendance, at that gathering, of several of the young people. This, naturally, generated "problems" within the eldership. Were these **PERSONAL OR DOCTRINAL**?

#### Self-Examination

Such questions have to be answered by each individual. This subject must be examined in the light of God's Word, especially in view of the division that results in the body of Christ. The sure and sobering conclusion is that all must stand before God in judgment (cf. Rom. 14:10-12; 2 Cor. 5:10). Remember, we will not be judged "as a congregation," but as "an individual" and according "to what is written." No one must "dare" go "beyond what is written" (cf. 1 Cor. 4:6; John 12:48).

#### Conclusion

Just as Demas forsook Paul, and, as Alexander did him much evil, the roots of the matter were **DOCTRINAL**. Demas loved the ungodliness of the world, and Alexander withstood the apostles' teaching. In like manner, when scriptural proclamations condemn the looseness of the liberalist, his ever-ready escape clause is an appeal to personalities or methodology. Accordingly, when those espousing positions of doctrinal error are faced with it, rather than own up to such error, they hide behind their smokescreen of "**PERSONALITIES**."

I hasten to add, that in no way does this writer seek to take from the value of love, faith, brotherly kindness, and the fruit of the Spirit, as "against such there is no law" (Gal. 5:23). However, brethren must open their eyes and see that this is **NOT A GREY** area, but one either of **TRUTH OR ERROR**, that is, **DOCTRINAL DIFFERENCES OR PERSONALITY PROBLEMS**.

Paul became weary of brethren turning against him and the inspired truth he taught, "Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?" (Gal. 4:16). Evidently, he knew the influence of their own wills deeply affected their personalities and how they acted toward the truth of God. Some today, like those of old, are trying to cover the **UNsoundness** under the guise of **personality conflicts**. May we forever love the truth enough to stand for it, to always let it, and it alone, be our standard, and never be "taken in" by this thing that is often termed as just a "personality clash."

enough to accomplish a redistribution of wealth which would make everyone equal. Long before America entertained the idea of an income tax, the Fabians advocated the idea and outlined the method of redistributing wealth by taxation. In fact, the income tax program in America was developed by the Fabian socialists.

Strong indictments against the social gospel have been presented. It teaches the "salvation" of man through changing the economic environment. It redefines sin and evil and the mission of the church. Its goal is a man-made utopia here on earth. It describes a different relationship between God and man. It advocates atheistic political doctrines such as communism and endorses the overthrow of nations by any means, especially America. It upholds equality as the basis of morality. This begins to paint the true picture of this false philosophy which masquerades as an "angel of light", offering hope and prosperity to the downtrodden, but delivering only slavery.

1. Guy E. Swanson, "Modern secularity; its meaning, source and interpretation." In *The Religious Situations: 1968*, edited by Donald R. Cutler. Boston: Beacon Press.
2. Rose L. Martin, *Fabian Freeway*, (Belmont, Mass.: Western Islands Publishers, 1966), p. vii.
3. Walter Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel*, (New York, New York: The Macmillan Co., 1918).
4. Walter Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis*, (New York, New York: The Macmillan Co., 1924), p. 391.
5. *Ibid.*
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 396-397.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 398
8. *Ibid.*, p. 247.

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## SOCIETY'S SHAM: The Church's Chokehold

David Lee Henderson

One has to merely watch the evening news to recognize the flaw in our society. We fail to blame blamable offenses, and criticize those who are trying to correct wrongs. We wonder aloud why the police do not do more about crime, then we read where a policeman is suspended and investigated for firing his gun in the line of duty, as though *he* were the criminal. We wonder aloud why the judicial system does not do more to put away criminals, then we hear the media and John Q. Public blaming Judges for *hardening* people by incarcerating young criminals, as though the Judges were to blame for crime. We live in a time in which a victim of a crime who defends himself, may very well be found guilty of transgressing the criminal's "civil rights", as though he were to blame for the crime in the first place. In this day and time, if an individual intends to right society's wrongs, he had best prepare to be accused of creating problems, as though he were the person doing wrong. We have very much

become like the drunk driver who blames the pedestrian for walking on the sidewalk, where the drunk driver likes to drive!

Unfortunately, Society's Sham is invading the Lord's church. We live in a day and time in which members of Christ's church falsely teach and preach that dancing and drinking are a satisfactory social outlet and the participating in such is a matter of personal judgment. There are preachers today who falsely teach that there are faithful Christians in some denominations. There are those today who advocate fellowshipping the Christian Church because of our common Restoration roots. There are those today who falsely teach that Jesus' doctrine that adultery is the only justifiable reason for divorce, does not apply to non-Christians. Indeed, "There shall be false teachers among you" (2 Pet. 2:1).

The worst part of our plight, is our people's reaction to those who expose false teaching. I know members of the church who teach against those who teach against error, who will only say negative words about negative sermons, who will only stand up to oppose those who stand up for that which is right, and who will only separate themselves from (i.e., "FIRE") those preachers who separate themselves from error and teachers of such. I once witnessed an informal debate between two fellow preachers. The subject at hand was whether debating was right or wrong. (If you think about this long enough, you may laugh as hard as I did!)

Brethren, society's sham of blaming society's troubles on our civil servants instead of on criminals is a *SHAME*, but worse yet, the church's chokehold of attempting to silence faithful preachers who are exposing erroneous teachings and practices, instead of separating from the sinners themselves, is a *SIN* (cf. Isa. 30:9-10; 2 Cor. 6:17; 2 John 9-11)!!!

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