

Special Study

ON CLOUD NINE

“Man, you are really out there on cloud nine!” This is one of the favorite “slanguage” expressions used by some to categorize ideas which they believe to be unrealistic, unreasonable and irrational. Over the years liberal theologians and liberal preachers have built up and bowled over their straw-men of conservative-Christianity. They have relegated all fundamental, historical views of the Bible, God, Christ, man, conversion and the church to “cloud nine.” Conservative Christianity, they say, is too much concerned with doctrines to be realistic or relevant.

We believe that the opposite is true. We believe that liberalism (even in its latest form—Neo-orthodoxy) is “out there on cloud nine.” We believe that history, reason, experience and revelation all combine to prove that liberal theology is unrealistic and irrelevant.

Both the apostles Peter and Jude state unequivocally that any theology which denies that the written record contained in the Bible is a God-breathed, historically infallible, revelation of the supernatural redemption in Christ is “cloud nineism.” Any such theology is like a cloud without water . . . it is unrealistic and irrelevant. II Peter 2:17-21, “These are springs without water, and mists driven by a storm; for whom the blackness of darkness hath been reserved. For, uttering great swelling words of vanity, they entice in the lusts of the flesh, by lasciviousness, those who are just escaping from them that live in error; promising them liberty, while they themselves are bondservants of corruption; for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he also brought into bondage. For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the last state is become worse with them than the first. For it were better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after knowing it, to turn back from the holy commandment delivered unto them.” Jude 11-13, “Woe unto them! for they went in the way of Cain, and ran riotously in the error of Balaam for hire, and perished in the gainsaying of Korah. These are they who are hidden rocks in your love-feasts when they feast with you, shepherds that without fear feed themselves; clouds without water, carried along by winds, autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the root; wild waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, for whom the blackness of darkness hath been reserved for ever.”

FIRST CORINTHIANS

It is unrealistic to attempt a complete rebuttal of liberalism in so brief an essay. Nevertheless, the following outline will hopefully produce enough light to show the irrelevancies and irreparable weaknesses of an unrealistic liberal theology.

Antecedents of Liberalism

1. *Rationalism*: Rationalism had its modern birth as reaction against the extreme dogmatism, anti-intellectualism and authoritarianism of the medieval Roman Catholic Church. This philosophical revolution brought about the Renaissance with its extreme swing to rationalism and freedom from all authority. This resulted in the "autonomous man." Man's ability to reason became the sole criteria of judging a thing to be true or valuable. All that is non-conceptual, or empirically non-repeatable is untrue, according to rationalism.

2. *Materialism or Empiricism*: Materialism or Empiricism says that all we can know is sensory knowledge or all that is, is matter. It denies the supernatural . . . it denies miracles and arbitrarily assigns them to the realm of superstition; it denies spirit. Man becomes a creature and captive of environmental influences and may be conditioned or manipulated by empirical stimuli. This philosophy is far from being dead. Behavioristic psychology is founded upon it. It is being taught in the majority of our state colleges and universities.

3. *Evolutionism*: All life originated by chemical processes . . . that which is organic came from inorganic. This is the only recourse for man in explaining his being and the universe when he refuses to have God in his knowledge—he can only worship the creature and the created if he rejects the Creator. Evolution is irrational, unscientific, unrealistic. It creates hundreds of unanswerable questions, problems and inconsistencies. Evolution solves no real problems and answers no real questions! Evolutionism did not start with Charles Darwin. It started as far back as the ancient Greeks, Aristotle, Democritus and perhaps even earlier (cf. Romans 1).

4. *Scientism*: "It seemed that science was always proved right and religion wrong. The idea began to arise that science could solve all of man's problems, that it was only ignorance and inertia, particularly the ignorance and inertia of the Churches, which were holding back the forward march of science, the new savior."¹

1. *A Layman's Guide to Protestant Theology*, by Wm. Hordern, p. 47.

SPECIAL STUDY: ON CLOUD NINE

This is scientism, the worship of science. Science became the sacred cow! Natural law (which is only man's description of what he has observed) became God!

Nietzsche, the German philosopher, said, "God is dead!" With such a "philosophical annihilation" of God came the death of all moral standards and out of Nietzsche's teachings came Nazi Germany under his most infamous disciple—Adolf Hitler.

5. *Humanism*: "Scientific Humanism is the doctrine that men, through the use of intelligence, directing the institutions of democratic government, can create for themselves, without aid from supernatural powers, a rational civilization in which each person enjoys security and finds cultural outlets for whatever normal human capacities and creative energies he possesses."² Without a supernatural standard just who is going to decide what are the "normal human capacities" and the "creative energies," who is going to decide what "security" is and who is going to decide between "cultural outlets" and non-cultural outlets? With only relativistic standards society must ultimately either become completely subjected to dictatorship of the most powerful or it must end in chaotic anarchism.

Humanism is an unrealistic "optimism in man's ability to provide for himself all that is needed to have a life that is consistent with his being." All this actually results in determinism and mechanistic materialism or anarchism, and neither determinism nor anarchism is freedom!

6. *Subjectivism*: Some humanistic theologians found such strict materialistic and animalistic views to be inconsistent with man's real nature. Materialism led only to an incoherent, unrealistic outlook and practice of life. So the theologians, acceding to the so-called scientific destruction of the historical accuracy of the Bible, attempted to base religion on subjective feeling alone . . . value and truth was to be felt and not arrived at from the facts.

They said science knows that the Bible is untrue, but that has nothing to do with truth . . . for truth or value has to be felt! And although the Bible is inaccurate and full of superstition, God can speak to us through it.

"In Schleiermacher religion found an answer to many of the problems of his age. For one thing religion was made independent of

2. *Living Issues of Philosophy*, by H. H. Titus, p. 216.

FIRST CORINTHIANS

philosophy and science. Religion, based on the individual's personal experience, had a realm of its own; it was its own proof; it bore its own validity. Furthermore, the center of religion is shifted from the Bible to the heart of the believer. Biblical criticism cannot harm Christianity, for the heart of the Bible message is that which it speaks to the individual, and it speaks even more clearly because the critics have enabled us to understand it."³ Could there be any philosophy more unrealistic, unscientific, unreasonable?!

And so, modern liberalism in the form of existential neo-orthodoxy, seeking to reconcile "lies" as truth, seeking to get answers from a book they admit is full of error, is more unrealistic and incoherent than all its predecessors!

Results

1. *Agnosticism*: Unbelief—no eternal verities or values. Truth is "becoming" . . . man is making truth as he experiments. Truth is created pragmatically. That is, if an action works it is true; if not, false.

But again, who's to be the judge as to its workability? What's workable for one may not be for all, or, what's workable today may not be tomorrow.

If man is the result of accidental inorganic chemical clashes, if God is dead, if there is no truth except what is rational and empirical, then there is nothing eternal and nothing valuable but animalistic satisfaction of the flesh!

2. *Socialism*: The governments of men become the Beneficent Father . . . the Savior of the race. Men's philosophies (outlook on life) permeate every avenue of their existence. Religious philosophy and political philosophy cannot be separated. You cannot compartmentalize life! All that you think affects your whole life. Religious liberalism has brought on political liberalism and socialism. It has placed *worshipful* emphasis on material results in the assumption that a particular standard of living brings "salvation" and governmental paternalism brings the "kingdom of God" upon earth. Statement after statement by the liberals to this effect may be found in the little book, so vehemently denounced by the religious liberals themselves, *None Dare Call It Treason*.

3. Hordern, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

SPECIAL STUDY: ON CLOUD NINE

All the evils of immorality, greed, kick-back, favoritism, paternalism, waste, exploitation in big government are a direct result of the religious philosophy of liberalism which says man himself and his material well-being . . . is heaven: the philosophical or political method of bringing this about is their "God."

3. *Immorality*: If there are no eternal values, no God, no here-after, how can there be any morality? All good is relative only to individual desires or the desires of one who can, by force, control thoughts and deeds through fear or brain-washing. This is why we have "sun, suds and sex" on the Florida beaches. This is why we have cheating on television quiz shows. This is why we have more divorce and adultery than ever before. A liberalism which says there is no God, no true Bible, no heaven, no hell, that a great society may be built without them is "cloud nineism"! Such a philosophy is unrealistic, irresponsible, demonic!

4. *War*: The liberal theological schools of Germany taught philosophies which spawned Marx, Lenin, Hitler and many of the present and past leaders of American education and politics. When there is no God and when the Bible is renounced as merely the invention of ignorant, fallible men, then all values are relative. The values of a man like Hitler become relative to building the Third Reich. Marx's values were relative to the glorification of the State. Liberal theology breeds greed, lust for power, prejudice, exploitation of humanity, and war.

5. *Eclecticism*: Syncretism in religion, ecumenism of the World Council of Churches, one world governmentalism is another result. Liberalism reduces Christ to a mere human in whom may be found the highest human attainment of what is good and right. Christ becomes a mere teacher of ethics . . . simply another religious philosopher or prophet like Mohammed, Buddha, or Confucius. Such a religious philosophy absorbs all which is supposed to be good and valuable from each of the "great" world religions. How can truth, *absolute truth* (that is what Christianity claims to be), absorb that which is not true either historically or pragmatically? Christianity and all other religions are diametrically opposed.

It is totally unrealistic to build one's religious beliefs and philosophy of life upon a conglomeration of teachings which are contradictory! Pessimism or a schizophrenic fear and anxiety follows from such a "mixed up" religion.

FIRST CORINTHIANS

This pessimism and anxiety is not only evident by the living of many people today, but it is stated in our songs, art, literature, and contemporary philosophers.

History and reason demonstrate that liberalism, anti-supernaturalism and unbelief are responsible for our sensual, schizophrenic, suicidal society!

Peace, joy and fruitfulness which are absolutely necessary for a balanced life are all based upon trust and faith and a coherent philosophy of life. The only coherent philosophy of life is one that is centered on and saturated with the love of God demonstrated in history in Christ (God Incarnate) and experienced by a personal fellowship with the Holy Spirit as He lives in men through His Word!

Yes, liberal theology is unrealistic. It is worse than that! It is ungodly, impotent and damning!

Answers

1. *Know the truth:* Every Christian must know why and what he believes. The study of evidences for belief in Christ must not be reserved for only a few of the so-called "theologians." The apostles and Christians of the first century made this the bed-rock basis of all they believed, taught and practiced. Every sermon recorded in Acts is built upon historical evidence for the deity of Jesus Christ.

All of life's motivations have their origins in either truth or lie. If we desire to move men to live true to God's purpose for them we must know God's truth and why it is true, and be able to present it to others. Parents should be teaching their children NOW why they believe. Men and women should be steeping their own minds and hearts in evidences for belief.

2. *Preach the truth:* Let the church and Christians be more concerned with revealed truth than with programs. Let the church be more concerned with regenerating the hearts of individuals by the power of the Holy Spirit through His Word rather than with social reform or raising living standards, and the slums will disappear. Let the church and Christian people have the courage to preach the truth with their lives. Let them live up to what they teach in their Sunday School classes on Sunday, letting Christ live His life in them, and racial injustice will cease.

3. *Pray daily:* We do not really believe in prayer per se as the psychologists do for a "release" but we believe in the Lord Jesus who

SPECIAL STUDY: ON CLOUD NINE

promised to answer prayer. But we really do not act like we believe in the Lord who promised or we would pray more! It is the Lord's will that truth be victorious over lie . . . liberalism is a lie, pray that it may be defeated on every hand.

4. *Send laborers*: Support colleges and churches which train men and women to declare the truth. I never cease to be amazed at parents who look down their noses at the Bible Colleges. They act as if life consists in just a living. And of course, in order to learn how to make a living one must go to a college where atheistic, Communistic, immoral teachers teach infidelic philosophies. God have mercy upon us.

5. *Warn people*: Romans 16 tells us to "mark those who cause divisions and disputings among us." The Scriptures are emphatic in their exhortations to warn people, to point out *by name and doctrine* those who are contrary to revealed truth. John says that the only way we know the Spirit of Truth and the spirit of error is to compare all that is taught with what the apostles recorded in the New Testament.

LIBERALISM IS CLOUD NINEISM. IT IS UNREALISTIC IN:

1. *Its approach to or view of God*. Nature proves God exists. Men must deny reason to deny the *facts* connected with the revelation of God in Christ.

2. *Its view of man*. Man is more than flesh and bone. Man is a spirit . . . he is a person. But not if the liberal view is to be accepted.

3. *Its view of sin*. Sin is more than the unfortunate conditioning of an unfortunate environment. Sin is of the will, and of the heart regardless of ones environment.

4. *Its view or approach to salvation*. It has no supernatural power. Why strive for social improvement if there are no eternal verities, no Almighty Judge, etc.

5. *It is even unrealistic in its view of social reform*: Without divine power of regeneration there is no lasting social reform.

Any religion that does not answer the human predicament is worse than useless. Death, and the sin which causes it, is the human predicament. There have been many religious and metaphysical theories for its cure, but only one way of fact! This was when God entered history, time, and space, and said, "This is what I have done with sin and with death . . . I punish sin upon the cross in My Son . . . I conquer death in the resurrection of My Son from the tomb."

FIRST CORINTHIANS

Purposes

(Why bother with a polemic against Liberalism?)

1. *Men are lost in it.* There is futility and hopelessness in this life without Christ. There is no hope of eternal life in a Christless Liberalism.

2. *Men and women are seeking to be loosed from its tyranny.* Many people thirst for the historical Christianity. People are beginning to awake to the tyranny and hopelessness of Liberalism. Many unbelievers use the unrealistic and contradictory nature of Liberal Christianity to scoff at all religion. They do not know there is a real Christianity of fact and life in the Holy Spirit.

3. *We have the power.* What has been said before is sufficient to show that the battle is basically a battle of ideas. What we believe will ultimately control and direct what we do. Paul says, "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh (for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but mighty before God to the casting down of strongholds); casting down imaginations, and every high thing that is exalted against the knowledge of God, and bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ"; (II Cor. 10:3-5). Peter points out that through a knowledge of Christ we have granted unto us the divine power of God which gives us all things that pertain to and are relevant for life and godliness, (II Peter 1:3-4).

Christianity is more than a way of life. It is the only coherent, consistent, realistic and relevant life possible! The divinely inspired Christianity of the New Testament in all its pristine purity is intensely practical. It is intensely relevant and contemporary to all men in every situation and forevermore. But it is all of this only if it is historically and infallibly true. It is true! Its truth makes all other philosophies of life inconsistent, irrelevant, powerless and untrue. The most insane, incoherent, schizophrenic existence that man can bring upon himself is to attempt to live a coherent life which is based upon an incoherent philosophy. Any philosophy of the universe and man's purpose and destiny which is bereft of divinely revealed truth is powerless and insane. Paul says that the power and relevance of Christianity is due to its divine truthfulness and this divine truthfulness was demonstrated when God intervened in time and space and history and by the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ showing that the supernatural is just as real, if not more real, than the natural.

SPECIAL STUDY: ON CLOUD NINE

Hear, then, the conclusion: "Wherefore my beloved brethren be ye stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord for ye know that your labors are not in vain in the Lord" (I Cor. 15:58).