

# The Power of Incrementalism

Dub McClish

The following notice, titled "Euro-English," made the e-mail rounds some time ago:

The European Commission has just announced an agreement whereby English will be the official language of the European Union rather than German, which was the other possibility.

As part of the negotiations, Her Majesty's Government conceded that English spelling had some room for improvement and has accepted a 5-year phase-in plan that would become known as Euro-English.

In the first year, *s* will replace the soft *c*. Certainly, this will make sivil servants jump with joy. The hard *c* will be dropped in favour of *k*. This should klear up konfusion, and keyboards kan have one fewer letter keys.

There will be growing publik enthusiasm in the sekond year when the troublesome *ph* will be replaced with *f*. This will make words like *fotograf* 20% shorter. In the 3rd year, publik akseptanse of the new spelling kan be expekted to reach the stage where more komplikated changes are possible. Governments will enkourage the removal of double letters which have always ben a deterrent to akurate speling.

Also, al wil agre that the horibl mes of the silent *e* in the languag is disgrasful, and it should go away. By the 4th yer peopl wil be reseptiv to steps such as replasing *th* with *z* and *w* with *v*. During ze fifz yer, ze unesesary *o* kan be dropd from vords kontaining *ou* and after ziz fifz yer, ve vil hav a reil sensibl riten styl. Zer vil be no mor trubl or difikultis and evrivun vil findit ezi tu understand ech oza. Ze drem of a united urop vil finali kum tru.

I chuckle every time I read this piece. While whoever wrote it had to have "tongue" firmly "in cheek," it nevertheless demonstrates a very serious principle: the power of incrementalism. This is the way the devil generally works to conquer individuals, churches, schools, and even nations. He is a master at this strategy.

Satan is quite content to operate on a five-year (or even longer) plan, as long as he accomplishes his goal. He can be extremely patient—willing to take short steps—as long as he is moving men toward his goal of their eternal damnation. By this means he can succeed, whereas if he tried to accomplish his goal in one fell swoop, his aim would be too obvious, and he would fail.

Men and women who believed in God, Christ, and the Bible founded our beloved nation. Now, a large percentage of our fellow-citizens are not only ignorant of God and the Bible, but they despise everything pertaining to them. If these humanistic secularists have their way, they will remove every reference to God and the Bible from our national life and institutions. This drastic change has occurred in small steps over several generations.

Saints who turn their backs on the Lord and His church do not suddenly decide to become reprobates. Rather, their departure usually begins with seemingly “small” lapses. With each temptation to which they yield, they become more susceptible to the next, until they suffer spiritual collapse.

Congregations apostatize only one compromise at a time. The Change Agents have used this fact to their great advantage to corrupt countless churches. They have refined the process to a science: Introduce changes until they produce loud complaints, then back off. When the complaints dwindle, push for changes again, and push further each time. Most of the congregations that have been influenced by such evil men once stood staunchly for the Truth, but now they are practically indistinguishable from the denominational groups nearby.

Some of the strongest educational citadels of religious infidelity and political radicalism in our nation (e.g., Harvard, Princeton, Yale) began as religious schools to train preachers to preach the Bible. Though imperfect in their understanding and practice, their founders believed the Bible to be the Word of God. We have seen a similar phenomenon in the universities and colleges begun by brethren. Who would dare affirm that the most conservative of these schools is as strong as it was during the last half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century?

The number of new buildings erected, the number of PhDs on the faculties, the coveted accreditations received, the huge endowments, and the increased enrollments are only worldly benchmarks of success. The state universities and the Harvards, Princetons, and Yales, with predominantly atheistic, hedonistic, and/or Marxist faculties, can better all these claims.

The heart and soul of such schools operated by brethren—the purpose for which their dedicated and sacrificial founders gave them life—has been forgotten and abandoned. That purpose—first and foremost—was to educate and indoctrinate young people in the Bible so that they could take the Gospel Truth to a lost world. Unlike the administrators and their faculties in at least some of these schools today, their founders (and many of their earlier administrators) had no trouble distinguishing the church from denominationalism and the Truth from error. They were not ashamed of the church but exalted it before their charges as the glorious institution it is. It is evident that the modern upstart administrators (and the Boards that empower them) in many of these schools just do not care.

Somewhere along the way, schoolmen began to lower their standards and wink at things once deemed intolerable. I suspect that at least some (if not many) of these compromises

have occurred in the context of attracting financial contributions. An early obvious step involved invitations first to questionable men, then to outright false teachers, to speak on their lectureships, workshops, and seminars. Next, they began hiring such folk for their faculties. A response pattern to alumni and others who express concerns has emerged: initial denial of the obvious, followed by defense of the indefensible, followed by ignoring the critics.

Some schools are in full denominational mode and are proud of it. This includes turning denominational preachers loose on the student body in chapel (see below). Some of the universities have come full circle; they exist to tear down the kingdom of God which they were begun to build up. They did not come to this point overnight, but incrementally – inch by inch. Some schools now boldly flaunt their denominational bent.

An apt illustration is Abilene Christian University (ACU), which is in the lead of schools gone astray. At the time of this writing, its Website contained much information concerning the school. As early as 2003, the Websites included an “interesting” schedule of chapel speakers. It is fair to assume that these folk are indicative of what the administration (and the Board that employs it) wishes to emphasize to the young people in its care. Below are some notes on just three of the speakers:

**Tony Campolo’s** Website partially describes him as follows:

Dr. Campolo is an ordained minister, has served American Baptist Churches in New Jersey and Pennsylvania, and is presently recognized as an associate pastor of the Mount Carmel Baptist Church in West Philadelphia.

**Katie Hays**, West Islip, New York, was also slated to speak. The following was pasted from the West Islip Church of Christ Website at the time of this writing:

West Islip Church of Christ is lead [sic] by a group of gifted shepherds known collectively as the Council. The Council is currently composed of nine individuals: Don Bayer, Sue Bayer, David Fritz, Methel Gale, Hubert Gibbons, Julie Madsen, Barbara O’Connor, Donna White, and John White.

Our ministers, Katie Hays and Lance Pape, serve under the guidance of the Council.

Katie Hays serves the congregation through preaching, teaching, and pastoral care; her areas of special focus are service and outreach. Katie holds the M.Div. from Yale Divinity School and is currently a D. Min. candidate at Princeton Theological Seminary. Katie’s husband, Lance Pape shares in the preaching, teaching, and pastoral care; his areas of special focus are worship and fellowship. In his spare

time, Lance works to promote gender justice in Churches of Christ through his website. Lance holds the M.Div. from Yale Divinity School.

**Nino Elliott**, “Worship Minister,” Southlake Blvd. Church of Christ, Southlake (Ft. Worth), Texas, was also on the chapel calendar. At the time of this writing, this church’s Website was revealing. The Home Page sports a picture showing several worshipers with upraised faces and hands in typical Pentecostal style. The “Welcome Message” from Keith Luttrell, “Senior Minister,” reads:

Welcome to the community of Southlake Blvd. Church. We hope you get a sense of the heart and the spirit of who we are as you navigate through the different pages and discover the mission and passion of Southlake Blvd. Church, or as we like to say, SBC....

Looking back on 14 years of ministry, God has always used us to help those who seeking [sic] God but had given up on more traditional forms of church and worship. The stated purpose of SBC is to help seekers become just like Jesus. From the very beginning our message has been a message of grace and our community has been open to all who are on the journey to God.

#### **Joining Our Family:**

While everyone is welcome to enjoy all the services and worship opportunities we offer, we do encourage you to become a member of SBC. Membership is a voluntary covenant between each believer and our community of faith. To join the SBC family, the church only asks for three commitments.

1. A Commitment to Jesus Christ. We believe that eternal life is in Christ alone and that salvation is accessed by grace through faith and trust in Christ. We believe that faith in Christ is the only path to God. As a member of SBC, we ask you to become a fully devoted follower of Jesus Christ alone. "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life: no man comes to the Father, but by Me." John 14:6
2. A Commitment to this Body of Christ. While many churches are committed to Jesus Christ, no two churches are alike.
3. SBC is committed to bringing the message and love of God to the unchurched. We ask that you put this same desire in your heart and actively help us in this effort.

Note the descriptions of worship practices, terminology, and a “plan of salvation” that are denominational to the core.

The three chapel speakers described above are representative of several others of the same stripe on the calendar, including several from the ACU staff itself. It is difficult to

understand how Christian parents who care one thing about the spiritual development of their children would even consider sending them to ACU or a similar institution.

I understand I frequently criticize universities supported by brethren. I make no apology for doing so, and I will continue thus to do as long as these corrupt institutions remain breeding grounds for apostasy and error. What they are doing to thousands of precious young people—and to congregations that have been influenced and/or will be influenced by them, spurs my righteous indignation to a high level. If my comments serve to alert even one family to said dangers, my warnings will not have been in vain.

**[Note:** I wrote this MS, and it originally appeared in the March 2003 issue of *The Gospel Journal*, a 36-page monthly of which I was editor at the time.]

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