

Some Thoughts on Liberalism

Dub McClish

What is it? In asking this question, I am not so much concerned with the technical definition of liberalism as with its practical demonstration. *Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* gives the following definition as applied to religion: "A movement in contemporary Protestantism emphasizing intellectual liberty and the spiritual and ethical content of Christianity." It is apparent that *Liberalism* cannot be defined merely in terms of a list of theological positions, but that it is rather an **attitude** toward religion in general. Basically, this "ism" holds that commands, norms, patterns, laws, and standards are all beneath the human mind and spirit. The end of this attitude is to deny the inspiration of the Bible. The conclusion follows that if the Bible is not inspired, then it is not infallible, and it is therefore not intended to be a pattern for the church. Some brethren have already gone this far in print.

With little doubt, there have been those in the church in every age since Pentecost who have adopted a liberal stance toward spiritual Truth. At one time those who became disenchanted with sound doctrine and the restored church of the Lord would reveal their colors and find a group with which they were more compatible: "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us: but they went out that they might be made manifest that they all are not of us." (1 John. 2:19). While we could not appreciate their doctrinal stance, we could at least appreciate their honesty. It is not so now. The avowed tactic of some brethren (among whom are some "reputed to be somewhat" preachers [Gal. 2:6]) is to "restructure" of the church by boring from within. One has said:

We are not going to get out. There are a lot of us in the church and we are going to stay. We are not going to reveal ourselves but will stay in the church and work to make it what we think it ought to be.

Paul warns of such men in Acts 20:28-30:

Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.

I am not sure who is most responsible for the erosion of faith being caused by this element in the church. These who have embraced the liberal views and who are doing their best to lead as many as possible into a non-pattern, denominational view of the church will have much for which to answer. But what of those college administrators who encourage this philosophy by repeatedly providing a platform for false teachers in their lectureships and

workshops? What about elders who will not take a stand? What about those who would silence the exposure of unsound teachers? Have they no guilt?

[**Note:** I wrote this article for and it was published in the April 24, 1973, edition of *Sentinel*, weekly bulletin of the Sunset Church of Christ, Carlsbad, New Mexico, of which I was editor.]

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