

What Is the “Radical Right”?

Dub McClish

We have a strange, self-contradictory element in the Lord’s church today. They pretend to despise what they describe as *labels* and those who are “guilty” (as they view it) of “labeling” their brethren. They say that such labels as *liberal* and *conservative* unfairly categorize and polarize brethren. They further say that such labels create unnecessary prejudices against brethren. I am willing to grant that such is true if a label is incorrectly applied. However, if a descriptive or identifying term (Webster’s definition of *label*) is correctly applied, we fail to see what is wrong with using it.

The argument is often offered that we do not have the terms *liberal* and *conservative* in the Bible and we therefore ought not to use them. It is true that these specific words may not be found in the sense that they are commonly used today to identify one’s doctrinal or moral stance. However, the ideas inherent in these words are most definitely in the New Testament. When Paul wrote that we should “learn not to go beyond the things which are written” (1 Cor. 4:6), he was in effect saying “Do not take liberties with the written Word, rather conserve the things taught in it,” Likewise, 1 Thessalonians 5:21, 1 Timothy 1:3, 2 Timothy 2:2, Galatians 1:6-9 and many other passages teach us to conserve the revealed Truth and to oppose any liberal handling of it. I am not the least bit ashamed to be called *conservative* in this Biblical sense. In fact, I would be ashamed to be given any other label. A liberal and loose handling of Divine Law is always condemned in Scripture. It is worthy of note that conservative brethren don’t mind being so labeled. It is almost always those who are of the liberal bent toward Scripture and doctrine who prate against labeling. I don’t blame them. Knowing what the Word says about such an attitude, I would not want it noised abroad that I possessed it, either. If brethren don’t want to be called *liberals* let them leave their liberalism and it will make the Lord and all other conservatives happy.

The liberals are great labelers themselves. Their favorite label at present for those who are determined to stand fast in the faith is “those of the radical right.” That sounds rather bad. The ironic thing about it is that some of those who are using this term to damage others were themselves, 10 or 15 years ago, right where those of whom it is used are now. In fact, what some doctrinally soft brethren are now calling the “reactionary and radical right” is where all but a

tiny handful of liberal misfits were 20 years ago. Just where was that? Right on the solid rock of Truth! Would to God that all who have left it would come back.

[**Note:** I wrote this article for, and it was published in *The Edifier*, weekly bulletin of Pearl Street Church of Christ, Denton, TX, July 3, 1986, of which I was editor.]

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