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WHERE DO WE STAND?

In this day and age within Christendom we are confronted with denominations and bodies which would be too numerous to list, all of them having a following in varying degrees.

In the main it would be true to say that some hundred or more years ago each denomination had its own particular creed or articles of belief (written down or otherwise) to which in very large measure the members would subscribe; if not, then they would be disciplined accordingly.

To-day, however this is not the case. We now see differing beliefs, all manner of practices, and divers interpretations of the Scriptures within all sections. Even the historical stance of denominations is effaced, let alone the Biblical. This levelling out, and shading of black and white into grey has brought to the front many theological tags or definitions, some Biblical, some historical and some modern.

There is the Evangelical, The Fundamentalist, The Reformed, The Orthodox, The Charismatic, The Neo Orthodox, The New Evangelical, The Modernist, The Liberal, The Heretic, The Apostate. There are more, but these in particular, we should be acquainted with and know something about, for many companies to-day are made up of combinations of these things, hence the confusion.

EVANGELICAL AND FUNDAMENTALIST. For the purpose of this article, we link these together, for in their REAL and PUREST sense they are synonymous. Evangelicalism is true Protestantism; it means "according to the Gospel" or "pertaining to Biblical Truth". An Evangelical or Fundamentalist is, a person who:

- (1) Is truly born-again of the Holy Spirit
- (2) Maintains an immovable allegiance to the Holy Scriptures, holding them to be verbally inspired, inerrant and infallible.
- (3) Brings all things to the touch-stone of The Word of God.
- (4) Affirms the Foundation Truths - The doctrine of The Trinity, The Incarnation, The Virgin Birth, Vicarious Atonement, The Bodily resurrection of Christ and ascension into heaven, The historical fall of man and his consequent death by sin, Justification by Faith, The personal return of Christ, The resurrection of the saints unto life eternal, The resurrection of the unjust unto judgment and perdition.

- (5) Earnestly contends for the Faith by militating against error, and separating from compromise and apostasy.

THE REFORMED. In the sense in which this is used today it is comparatively new, (this term is not to be confused with United Reformed Churches). It means to reform according to the scriptures, to get back to Biblical and true historical Christianity, giving the great Doctrines of Grace held by the Reformers and Puritans their place once again, Doctrines which due to the great wave of Arminianism that has engulfed the Church for many a generation, have almost been lost sight of – The Sovereignty of God, The Total Depravity of Man, Election, Effectual Calling, etc. Basically, it is a return to evangelicalism in its true sense.

THE ORTHODOX. Historically this was used of those who tenaciously clung to the early creeds, but today is mainly used to describe such bodies as The Greek Orthodox Church, The Holy Orthodox Apostolic Church, etc.

THE CHARISMATIC. These claim to the revival of apostolic gifts - Tongues, prophesies, miracle working and further revelation a neo form of Pentecostalism which has infiltrated into almost every section of Christendom from Brethren to Roman Catholicism. A leading charismatic recently said “to be a charismatic one must be ecumenical”. The World Council of Churches has estimated that by the year 2000 one half of the world’s population will be non-white and charismatic. At present this is sweeping Christendom like a forest fire. (It is the writer’s firm belief that this movement is the master strategy of the adversary to bring to fruition the dream of ecumenism).

THE NEO ORTHODOX. This new orthodoxy whilst reacting to blatant modernism does not return to historic Christianity. Such use evangelical and Biblical terminology but define it in a totally different way. For example, they will talk of all men being lost, but in no way do they mean “Total Depravity”. The Bible to them contains the Word of God but is not of necessity all the Word of God. The Bible becomes the Word of God when it speaks to them. They also accept higher critical conclusions with respect to the inerrancy of Scripture.

THE NEW EVANGELICAL. This is an awning which covers a multitude of folk in a variety of religious bodies. It is far removed from TRUE evangelicalism. It does not separate from error, or militate in defence of Truth it is marked by progressive compromise.

This new evangelicalism does not identify any specific theological position, therefore, it carries with it little, if any, reproach. One can find

those in most denominations who would lay claim to this title – even in the church of Rome. It emphasizes the need to re-state Christianity in accordance with the need of the times, to engage in theological debate and to re-examine the problems (so called), such as, The Antiquity of Man, The universality of the Flood, the Method of Creation, etc. Generally speaking, it stands for what they term “Progressive Creation” or “Theistic Evolution”. The New Evangelical tends to disparage preaching and is given to dialogue: to him Truth is debatable, whereas, to the Historic Evangelical, Truth is Final.

THE MODERNIST. A modernist is one who rejects the historic faith and true Biblical Christianity. He repudiates Verbal Inspiration, he scorns the miraculous, both in the Living Word and in the Written Word. He rejects the Virgin Birth, Vicarious Sacrifice and Atoning Blood. He proclaims only The Universal Fatherhood of God and the Common Brotherhood of man.

THE LIBERAL. This is one who ceases to be dogmatic and soft-pedals on the Fundamentals repudiated by the modernist. Liberalism is the high road to modernism.

THE HERETIC. Heresy – “a chosen course of thought or action” – “Departure from a revealed truth”. A heretic is not an apostate. He is one who has chosen a course which is a departure from full revelation. This can be through ignorance (Acts 19:1-6), or deception of the Adversary (2 Tim 2:25-26). Such an one is to be prayed for and admonished, but if he refuses to accept the whole truth after counsel, then he is to be rejected (Titus 3:10-11).

THE APOSTATE. Apostacy – “A falling away” – “Defection”, “The action of a PROFESSED Christian who knowingly and deliberately rejects Truth”. As already stated, heresy can result through ignorance or falling into the snare of Satan, but apostacy is to deliberately depart from the faith, yet still maintain an outward profession of it. Examples in the Bible are numerous – Cain, Esau, Judas Iscariot, Hymenaeus, Alexander. Apostacy is irremediable and awaits judgment. (Ezek. 18:24-26, Matt. 13:20-21, Heb. 6:4-7, Heb. 10:26-29, Jude 4, 6, 11, 2 Pet. 2:15-22).

Being confronted with this conglomeration of the Neo-orthodox, Charismatic, New Evangelical, Liberal, Heretical, etc. all in the same local company, fellowshipping with all and sundry, and the ministry so often in the hands of men who are known to be of this ilk, how is the true evangelical to act? How can the Truth be maintained in clarity?

What is the God-honouring thing to do? The word of God alone can guide us in this, and here lies the test of TRUE EVANGELICALISM: “To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them” (Is. 8 v. 20).

Regarding those whose walk and teaching is not according to the apostles’ doctrine, we are to withdraw. (2 Thess. 3 v. 6, 1 Tim 6 v 5, 2 Tim 3 v. 5, Rom 16 v. 17). We are not to remain in fellowship with a heretic indefinitely. (Titus 3 v. 10-11).

Anyone who is not four-square in doctrine is not to occupy our pulpits, should not be supported by us, neither can we bid him God-speed (2 John v.10-11). The liberal will say as of old, “This is a hard saying; who can hear it?” (John 6 v. 60 and cf. v. 66) . The true evangelical will not be governed by what he wants to do, or by the general trend, but by what the scriptures command.

Some argue by saying that they know that we live in a day of compromise and mixture, but their role is to move amongst it and preach the gospel, (by the gospel they invariably mean a formula for salvation). This is unsound reasoning. Nowhere do we find such a command; we are to preach the gospel, but this is also to “Preach the word ... reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine (2 Tim. 4 v. 2).

Each local church is responsible and answerable to Christ its Head. Therefore, we must as elders, with the deacons, together with the church, be reforming and bringing ourselves into ever closer alignment with Biblical Precept. For a church which is content to muddle along with many shades of thought within her walls, and will also fellowship with folk of any persuasion and little conviction, will in the end become apostate.

W.H.M.

NEVER LET US BE GUILTY OF SACRIFICING ANY PORTION OF TRUTH UPON THE ALTAR OF PEACE. LET US RATHER BE LIKE THE JEWS, WHO, IF THEY FOUND ANY MANUSCRIPT COPY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT SCRIPTURES INCORRECT IN A SINGLE LETTER, BURNED THE WHOLE COPY RATHER THAN RUN THE RISK OF LOSING ONE JOT OR TITTLE OF THE WORD OF GOD. LET US BE CONTENT WITH NOTHING SHORT OF THE WHOLE COUNSEL OF GOD.

J. C. RYLE

THE CHRISTIAN SABBATH - 6

by John Thackway, Devizes

It must ever be borne in the mind that the sabbath does not belong to the other days of the week at all. The only thing it has in common with them is that it is called a "day". In every other respect it is set apart and on its own. It is essentially a spiritual and heavenly thing. It had its origin in the garden of Eden, and will have its consummation in the Paradise above. Meanwhile, it is to be as a remnant of the one, and a foretaste of the other. If this is to be so in our experience and enjoyment, then it stands to reason that we cannot approach it as we do any other day of the week. We must see it for what it is, and respond accordingly. This means that we will have 'to strive after the greatest degree of spirituality on this day. The apostle John did this, even on the lonely Isle of Patmos. He was "in the Spirit on the Lord's day" Rev. 1: 10. This probably means that he had received an unusual measure of the Spirit of God, and was enjoying the delights of heaven in consequence. He had sought and found, "those things above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God". His affections were "upon things above, not on things on the earth" Col. 3:1, 2. This is the frame our heart, soul, and mind should be in continually on the Lord's day. It is the only condition that is appropriate for it. There is a "fault" that is often talked about in Christian circles, that of being, "so heavenly-minded that we are of no earthly use". To listen to some, you would think it was the world's worst crime. Perhaps on any other day of the week it is. But it may be indulged with impunity on the sabbath. May God give us multitudes of such criminals on his day! All too often the reverse is the case, and we are "too earthly-minded to be of any heavenly use." And if we are found continually in this state on the Lord's day, may God forgive us. For if we cannot be spiritually-minded on the day which is especially for this, how shall we be so the rest of the week?

The duties incumbent upon us for the sabbath have been helpfully classified into three: Public, private and secret. The first refers to our attendance at the Lord's house and upon his ordinances; the second, to our duties at home or in our families; the third, is our times of prayer and meditation by ourselves. At this point, we take up the first, our public duties. In this connection it is interesting to notice that in Lev. 23:3 the Lord says that his day is "the sabbath of rest, an holy

convocation” (see also Deut. 16:8 and margin; Ezek. 46: 3). This implies that an integral part of our duty on this day is the gathering of ourselves together for public worship, prayer, hearing the word, fellowship etc. Acts 16:13; 20:6,7; 1 Cor, 16:1,2; Heb. 10:25. in fact, so closely has the Lord united his day to his house that he says: “ye shall keep my sabbaths, and reverence my sanctuary, I am the Lord” Lev. 19:30. Therefore, “what God hath joined together, let no man put asunder”. We should esteem attendance at church to be one of the main ways in which we “remember the sabbath, to keep it holy”, and the highest means whereby this is done. As his praises are sung, his face sought, his word received and his people fellowshiped with, we keep the Lord’s day par excellence. So let us as we anticipate Sunday, say with the psalmist: “Blessed are they that dwell in thy house ... For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand” Psa. 84:4,10. And follow the example of our Lord, who “as his custom was, went into the synagogue on the sabbath day” Luke 4:16. George Swinnock shall close this point for us: “Esteem the public ordinances the chief work of the day, and let thy private and secret duties be so managed that thy soul, may be prepared for them, and profited by them. Duties in thy family and closet are of use and have their blessing; but to put God off with these, and neglect the public worship, is to rob God of a greater sum to pay him a lesser. The sacrifice of the Jews on that day was double: they offered sacrifices in the Tabernacle, besides their lambs for the daily sacrifice. Everything is beautiful in its season. Private and secret duties are beautiful and in season every day, but public ordinances are never so lovely and beautiful, because never so much in their prime and season, as on the Lord’s day”.

to be continued.

The religious observance of the Sabbath is a main prop of the religious character of a country. From a moral, social, and physical point of view, the observance of the Sabbath is a duty of absolute consequence.

Wm. Ewart Gladstone

On the week-days every man riseth early to his trade. On the Lord’s Day, when the business of the soul is specially in hand, men usually sleep their fill.

Thomas Adams

ANNOUNCEMENTS and INFORMATION.

The severe weather and sickness affected our numbers during January and February. However, we have much to thank God for, and it is good to see those who have been unwell and kept in back with us again to share in the joys of corporate worship and witness.

We have known great help in the ministry over the weeks which has been of profit and blessing to us all. To Him be all the glory.

Four of our brethren engaged in the work of visiting houses in the immediate neighbourhood of the Chapel speaking with the folk and leaving an attractive coloured "Church Bulletin" containing a short message. On the whole this was well received. These houses will be visited every two months in future. We should be much in prayer for this aspect of the work.

The "Drive-In" Church will be commencing on Sunday 17th June God willing not quite as early this year, due to the fact that few visitors are around early in the season and the weather often not too good. ... Mr. D. Millar of Bristol will be with us for the three services on that Sunday.

The regular ministry will continue this quarter with "The Life of David" on Sunday mornings. "The Attributes of God" on Sunday evenings and "the Prayers of the apostle Paul" on Thursday evenings. In addition to this, we look forward to the ministry of the following visiting preachers:

Sunday	Morning & Evening	15 th April	Mr J. Birmingham	Tiverton
Thursday	Evening	19 th April	Mr D. J. Hayman	Bow
Thursday	Evening	3 rd May	Mr A. Toms	
Sunday	Evening	20 th May	Mr T. Fitzgerald	Bradninch
Thursday	Evening	24 th May	Mr F. Stanbury	Bow
Thursday	Evening	31 st May	Mr W. Bennett	Bideford
Sunday	Morning & Afternoon	19 th June	Mr D. Millar	Bristol
Sunday	Morning & Evening	24 th June	Mr B. Werner	Smeatharpe
Thursday	Evening	28 th June	Mr F. Stanbury	Bow

Book Room and Cassette Tape Ministry.

The Book Room has now become an established feature of our activities and many are finding it a definite aid in their spiritual pilgrimage, not only in a devotional sense, but also as a means of extending their knowledge of the Scriptures and of Church history.

It is therefore our aim to press on and extend the availability of the Book Room, bearing in mind that in this, as in all else, our whole hearted desire is for the glory of God and to magnify the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

As well as contemporary writers, godly men of by-gone days who diligently searched the Scriptures, left in their writings many great and noble works, some of which are being reprinted to-day. These can provide us with much joy as well as being very rewarding.

Arrangements are also in hand to make more readily available, cassette tape recordings of sermons and expositions which are a regular feature of our ministry, and to which reference has already been made. We are aware that there are those of our own fellowship who, for various reasons, are unable to attend the services regularly and we should like to feel that they will benefit from this. In addition, it occurs to us that others outside our own fellowship might like to share-with us and we should be pleased to supply further details if you would care to contact the undersigned or any of the elders or deacons.

L. W. Gee.

Faith

Faith is the assurance that the thing God has said in His Word is true, and that God will act according to what He has said in His Word. This assurance, this reliance on God, and this confidence in His Word – this is faith. Faith deals with the Lord alone ... and not with circumstances or impressions. Probabilities are not taken into account. Many people are willing to believe regarding the things which seem probable to them. Faith has nothing to do with probabilities. The province of faith begins where probabilities cease, and sense and sight fail. Appearances are not to be taken into account.

George Muller

All God's providences, though, like bees, they fly in different directions, yea, one contrary to another, so that thou thinkest it impossible to trace them, yet everyone is at work for thee, and thy soul is the hive, wherein they will unlade the sweet fruit of their labour.

Wm. Gurnall