

GLEANINGS — February 28, A.D. 2016
Institutional Backsliding, Part Four

The fatal human tendency to apostasize which we traced in the sacred record from the time of the Biblical judges on through the prophet Jeremiah's day has not ended. Jesus and the apostles dealt with the Sadducees, who "...say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit: but the Pharisees confess both" (Acts 23:8). Down through Church history to the present, there are the Pharisee type heresies wherein many of the cardinal, heavenly doctrines of the Bible are confessed but legalism or other problems exist.

However, there are also the Sadducee type heresies, where the satanic strategy seems to be to set up a form of godliness, but deny the power thereof (2 Timothy 3:5). The first type of error self consciously distances itself from historically orthodox (which means true glory) Christian bodies, claiming that "the truth is with us only!" The second type of error usurps the place of historic orthodoxy within Christian bodies, hence effectively neutralizing it. Theological liberalism is rightly categorized in the latter group.

Perhaps we can further expose liberalism by considering some of its fruits. Let's return to the example of evolution. What has accomodating this evil, anti-Christian system of thought brought about?

First, it allows people to reason that they are only animals; a particularly bright species of primates. Some animals kill and devour other animals. Some animals abandon their young – or devour them! Animals heed only their instinctive sexual drives when it comes to mating, no higher morality is involved. Why then should we be surprised if children kill other children, if parents abort their babies, if promiscuity and associated evils like pornography and the "sex industry" proliferate? Why marvel when one ethnic group asserts its supremacy over another? Perhaps they reason that they are entitled to do so, as the more highly evolved version of humanity!

The Church is called to be preserving salt and exposing light in the corrupt, dark world. When she believes in the Biblical truth that man was specially created in the Divine image, a rational and spiritual being as far above the animals as the heavens are above the earth, she can powerfully proclaim, "thus says the Lord" to them who knew themselves to be His creatures, accountable to Him. What does the theologically liberal preacher say against adultery, abortion, and murder? "You shouldn't do those things because they are icky, OK?" Or "just say NO - because...because...well, just because!" Can he effectively oppose racism when his own doctrine provides an (erroneous) rationalization for its legitimacy?

Another fruit of liberalism is the way it changes people's view of the Bible. If the Bible is inaccurate about the nature of creation, the miraculous birth of Christ, the historicity of the Exodus, etc. how can we trust it on anything? At 1 Thessalonians 2:13 we read, "For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe."

Instead of such a high view of Scripture, theological liberalism allows the (practical, if not confessional) position that says, "I'll take 7 out of the 10 Commandments that seem plausible to my ultimate judge, i.e. my own mind." Like Thomas Jefferson, theological liberalism cuts out of the Bible those parts which don't have what it considers the feel of authenticity. When subjective "inner light" usurps the place of objective revelation from on high, the "search for the historical Jesus" is underway. Although the Jesus of the Bible IS the historical Jesus, theological liberalism's false wisdom asserts that much of what the Gospels attribute to Him He could not possibly have said..."not MY Jesus..."

to be continued...