

STUDY PAK 22

NEW EVANGELICALISM

“The New Evangelicalism is a pragmatic, evangelical movement which seeks to win the respect and friendship of the world by its avoidance of the offense of the cross, by its tolerance of worldliness and doctrinal error, and by its repudiation of Biblical separation. (It is an embryonic stage of apostasy.)

~~David Cummins~~

I THE NAME

The National Association of Evangelicals was formed by staunch fundamentalists like Bob Jones, Sr., John R. Rice, Charles Woodbridge, Harry Ironside, David Otis Fuller, and R. G. Lee. The NAE was opposed to _____.

- A. The NAE did not show tight doctrinal lines.
- B. It soon abandoned its staunch anti-modernist position. The NAE began to look for common ground with other religious groups.

II. THE ECUMENICAL EVANGELISM OF BILLY GRAHAM

- A. Young Billy Graham held citywide crusades like those of D. L. Moody, Billy Sunday, Bob Jones, Sr., etc.
- B. Leading modernists wanted to “soften” their image. They began to “support” such crusades rather than oppose them.
- C. Some leading fundamentalists and evangelicals were afraid of appearing harsh by not responding to these new offers of cooperation.
- D. Some evangelicals wanted to distance themselves from the perceived harshness of fundamentalism. Warnings from more staunch fundamentals went largely unheeded:

- 1. James Stewart (Scottish evangelist) warned of what he called “potpourri evangelism.

“We must be more afraid _____ than persecution. Read the pages of Church History. Persecution never did the Church of God any harm, but compromise with the world has always robbed it of the power of its purity. ...

“Potpourri Evangelism’ consists of two features: mixed evangelistic campaigns and mixed Christianity. By mixed evangelistic campaigns I mean the alliance of Modernistic and Evangelical churches together in an evangelistic effort. ...

When religion gets up a revival, it must have from five to twenty churches of heterogeneous creeds and sectarian bodies to go into a great union effort; it must have a mammoth choir with great musical instruments, and many preachers and multiplied committees, and each committee headed by some banker, judge, mayor, or millionaire’s wife. It signs cards as a substitute for the broken-hearted cry of scriptural repentance. It must count its converts by the hundreds in a few days’ meeting. It must apologize for natural depravity. ...

Human religion’s enterprises have an atmosphere of earthliness about hem. It despises the day of small things and scorns little humble people and lonely ways. It is eager to jump to the height of prosperity. its music has no pathos in it, its laughter lacks divine cheerfulness, its worship lacks supernatural love, its prayers bring down no huge answers, it works no miracles, calls forth no criticism from the world, and has no light of eternity in its eyes. It is a poor, sickly thing, born of the union of the _____ – a mongrel, bastard thing with a backslidden church for its mother and the world for its father. Oh, my dear brother and sister, never forget that this unnatural monster will be destroyed at the coming-again of our Blessed Lord Jesus Christ. (James Steward, *Evangelism*, Asheville, NC: Gospel Projects, pp. 25-28)

2. Warnings from earlier generations were forgotten.

a. Charles Haddon Spurgeon

“It is impossible but that the Church of Rome must spread, when we who are the watchdogs of the fold are silent, and others are gently and smoothly turving the road, and making it as soft and smooth as possible, that converts may travel down to the nethermost hell of Popery. We want John Knox back again. Do not talk to me of mild and gentle men, of soft manners and squeamish words, we want the fiery Knox, and even though his vehemence should ‘ding our pulpits into blads,’ it were well if he did but rouse our hearts to action” (C. H. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, Vol. 10, pgs. 322-3).

b. G. Campbell Morgan

“A man must be true to his own conscience. I have been asked if I would not go to some meeting at which representatives of other

religions were to speak – Mohammedan and Jewish. No. I will respect the Mohammedan, and I will respect the Jewish rabbi,

They are joined to false representations of God. If someone says he is not sure about that, I shall reply, then he is not sure about Jesus Christ, not sure about His finality. So long as we are prepared to compare Him, we are something less than Christian. So long as we put Him into comparison with others, it is because we have not risen to the height of intellectual comprehension concerning Him, to say nothing of volitional surrender to Him. Until we see Him alone as “the Image of the invisible God,” fill all the horizon to the uttermost bound, we have not really seen Him at all, and our relation to Him lacks the uttermost of devotion. The hour is coming, nay, the hour is here, when loyal souls ought at least to stand separate from all complicity with _____, even though the form be some new presentation of Jesus that denies the things of Revelation. There must be no compromise.

It may be objected that to insist upon that will be to thin the ranks of the Christian Church. So much the better for the enterprise of God in Christ. The Church today, alas, has passed under the blight of a passion for statistics. I tremble sometimes when some of my brethren tell me they have the largest Church membership in the city or the State. They are in danger! I would like to be allowed to have the privilege of revising their Church rolls! It would be of value to know how many of those enrolled really represent vital Christianity! The sifting of the ranks oftentimes is the strengthening of a campaign. Ephraim is joined to his idols. Judah, the spell of idolatry is upon Israel. She is cursed, dazed, drugged. She is deluded, she is doomed, Judah, stand away! No alliance with her! Stand away, as you value your own soul! “_____.”

Finally, let it be recognized that this call to separation does not include bitterness towards those from whom you separate; but a great love and compassion and courtesy.”

E. A call was issued for new evangelicalism

1. The term was coined by D. Harold Ockenga: December 8, 1957
“The New Evangelicalism is the latest dress of orthodoxy, as Neo-Orthodoxy is the latest expression of theological liberalism. The New Evangelicalism differs from Fundamentalism in its willingness to handle the social problems which Fundamentalism evaded. There need be no dichotomy between the personal gospel

and the social gospel. The true Christian faith is a supernatural experience of salvation and social philosophy. Doctrine and social ethics are Christian disciplines. Fundamentalism abdicated leadership and responsibility in the social realm and thus became impotent to change society or to solve social problems. The New Evangelicalism adheres to all the orthodox teachings of Fundamentalism but has evolved a social philosophy.”

Dr. Ockenga continues: “The New Evangelicalism has changed its strategy from one of separation to one of infiltration. Instead of static front battles the new theological war is one of movement. Instead of attack upon error the New Evangelicals proclaim the great historic doctrines of Christianity. The results have been phenomenal. The New Evangelical is willing to face the intellectual problems and meet them in the framework of modern learning. It stands doctrinally upon the creeds and confessions of the Church and grants liberty in minor areas when discussion is promoted on the basis of exegesis of Scripture. The strategy of the New Evangelicalism is the positive proclamation of the truth in distinction from all errors without delving in personalities which embrace the error. The evangelical believes that Christianity is intellectually defensible but the Christian cannot be obscurantist in scientific questions pertaining to the creation, the age of man, the universality of the flood and other moot Bible Questions. The evangelical attempts to apply Christian truth to every phase of life. Since I first coined the phrase ‘The New Evangelicalism’ at a convocation address at Fuller Theological Seminary ten years ago, the evangelical forces have been welded into an organization. First, there is the National Association of Evangelicals which provides articulation for the movement on the denominational level; second, there is World Evangelical Fellowship which binds together these individual national associations of some twenty-six countries into a world organization; third there is the new apologetic literature stating this point of view which is now flowing from the presses of the great publishers, including Macmillans and Harpers; fourth, there is the existence of Fuller Theological Seminary and other evangelical seminaries which are fully committed to orthodox Christianity and a resultant social philosophy; fifth there is the establishment of *Christianity Today*, a bi-weekly publication, to articulate the convictions of this movement; sixth, there is the appearance of an evangelist, Billy Graham, whom the mass level is the spokesman of the convictions and ideals of the New Evangelicalism. The strength of this movement is recognized by the *Christian Century*, America’s leading theologically liberal magazine, by its expression of fear that this movement may challenge the religious scene and change the religious climate in

this nation. The New Evangelical believes that Christ is the answer; that He must be understood in a Biblical framework and He and His teachings must be applied to every realm of societal existence.”

- F. Billy Graham Crusades formed a prominent home for this new movement. Soon modernists were aggressively supporting Billy Graham Crusades. Then Roman Catholicism endorsed the ecumenical evangelism of Billy Graham. Then cults like Seventh Day Adventism and Mormonism found Billy Graham Crusades a way to join public respectability. They were all welcome.
- G. Anyone who refused to support Graham crusades was slandered as bitter, resentful and unkind. Billy Graham, endorsed by leading American newspapers and many Hollywood celebrities, became the public representation of evangelicals in the U.S.
- H. Graham in order to keep his popularity began a downward spiral theologically. He first denied _____, then _____ and finally _____.

III. MANY FUNDAMENTALISTS WARNED OF THE DANGER OF WHAT WAS HAPPENING

Dr. Charles Woodbridge, a professor at Fuller Theological Seminary in its early days, a founding member of the National Association of Evangelicals, and a friend of men such as Harold Ockenga and Carl Henry, rejected the New Evangelicalism and spend the rest of his life warning of its dangers. In his 1969 book, *The New Evangelicalism*, he traced the downward path of New Evangelical compromise:

“The New Evangelicalism is a theological and moral compromise of the deadliest sort. It is an insidious attack upon the Word of God. ...The New Evangelicalism advocates _____. It is following the downward path of *accommodation* to error, *cooperation* with error, *contamination* by error, and ultimate *capitulation* to error!” (Woodbridge, *The New Evangelicalism*, pp. 9, 15)

Toleration of error leads to accommodation, cooperation, contamination, and capitulation.

In 1958, William Ashbrook wrote *Evangelicalism: The New Neutralism*, which began with the following warning:

“This is the age of ‘isms,’ some good, mostly bad! One of the youngest members of Christendom’s fold is called The New Evangelicalism. It might more properly be labeled The New Neutralism. This new ‘Evangelicalism’ boasts too much pride, and has imbibed too much of the world’s culture to share the reproach of fundamentalism. It still has enough faith and too much understanding of the Bible to appear in the togs of modernism. It seeks neutral ground, being neither fish nor fowl, neither right nor left, neither for nor against – it stands between! ...

“Bible-believing Christians would do well to beware of the New Evangelicalism for four valid reasons. First, it is a movement _____.
Second, it is a movement _____.
Third, it is a movement _____;
and finally it is a movement doomed by the judgment of God’s Holy Word.”

In *A History of Fundamentalism in America*, George Dollar observes:

“It has become a favorite pastime of new-evangelical writers, who know so little of historic Fundamentalism, to call it offensive names, as if to bury it by opprobrium. The real danger is not strong Fundamentalism but a soft and effeminate Christianity – exotic but cowardly. It is sad that these men would not heed the warning of W. B. Riley about the menace of ‘middle-of-the-roadism’” (Dollar, *A History of Fundamentalism in America*, 1973, p. 208)

Pastor Rolland Starr, who in the 1960’s wrote *The New Evangelicalism: The Deadliest Ism of All*, warned that “Apostasy Avenue is a one way street and it is all downhill.” The history of New Evangelicalism has demonstrated the truth of that simple statement.

IV. NEW EVANGELICALISM HAS BECOME VERY WIDESPREAD AND POPULAR

The New Evangelical leaven spread rapidly. New Evangelical philosophy has been adopted by such well-known Christian leaders as Billy Graham, Bill Bright, Harold Lindsell, John R. W. Stott, Louis Palau, E. V. Hill, Leighton Ford, Charles Stanley, Bill Hybels, Warren Wiersbe, Chuck Colson, Donald McGavran, Tony Campolo, Arthur

Glasser, D. James Kennedy, David Hocking, Charles Swindoll, and a multitude of other men. New Evangelicalism was popularized through pleasant personalities and broadcast through powerful print, radio, and television media. *Christianity Today*, for example, was founded in 1956 to voice the new philosophy. Through publishing houses such as InterVarsity Press, Zondervan, Tyndale House Publishers, Moody Press, and Thomas Nelson – to name a few – New Evangelical thinking was broadcast across the world. New Evangelicalism became the working principle of large interdenominational organizations such as the National Association of Evangelicals, National Religious Broadcasters, Youth for Christ, Campus Crusade for Christ, Back to the Bible, Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship, World Vision, Operation Mobilization, the Evangelical Foreign Mission Association, World Evangelical Fellowship, the National Sunday School Association, etc. It was spread through educational institutions such as Fuller Theological Seminary, Wheaton College, Gordon-Conwell, BIOLA, and Moody Bible Institute. Historian David Beale observes that the New Evangelical philosophy “captured many organizations, fellowships, associations, and denominations that originated as strictly Fundamentalist groups” (Beale, *In Pursuit of Purity*, p. 263). Countless conferences have been organized to promote New Evangelicalism.

V. NEW EVANGELICALISM HAS ENTERED THE INDEPENDENT BAPTIST MOVEMENT THROUGH THE ENDORSEMENT OF JERRY FALWELL