

COMPROMISE

Throughout the Protestant world a cancer has crept into the Temple of God. Under the guise of advanced methods of evangelism (marketing) and seeker sensitive programs (secularism), churches have compromised reverence and truth. Nearly a decade ago a wise observer, Ernest Pickering, foresaw what is occurring today. We feel deeply convicted that a few of his thoughts would be provocative and of interest to our readers:

All over America and the world at this hour there are churches that are drifting into New Evangelicalism without the remotest knowledge that they are doing so. They are being carried along with the shifting winds of compromise and have long since departed from the solid biblical position established by their predecessors. Young pastors, many without firm doctrinal underpinnings, have led their churches to believe that in order to reach the masses they must abandon the strict biblical principles of yore and embrace more fluid and attractive positions. Many saints, firmly indoctrinated by former pastors in clear and uncompromising positions, are now bewildered and drifting from church to church seeking some stability.

Some fundamentalists have become disturbed by the fact that their circle of fellowship is considerably narrowed due to their strict position. They meet winsome, pleasant personalities from the New Evangelical camp and wonder why they cannot fellowship and work with them even though there may be important theological and methodological differences. New Evangelicals, in their fellowships, cross many denominational and theological lines and this freedom of movement seems attractive to some fundamentalists. A noted itinerant Bible teacher was asked by a friend of mine why it was he never spoke on the issues of separation or the New Evangelicalism in the large conferences he addressed. The man replied, It closes too many doors. New Evangelicals have many doors of opportunity opened to them simply because they do not address publicly sticky issues that are likely to cause these doors to close. Loyalty to the truth can put one in a very lonely position. Paul, disturbed in his soul, said, All men forsook me (2 Tim. 4:16).

New Evangelicals have bombarded fundamentalists with the accusation that the fundamentalist position is too narrow and that it repels rather than attracts the people of the world. Those who are paraded before us as the role models of success in church growth are almost all of the New Evangelical persuasion. It is no wonder that young fundamentalists question whether they too should adopt the New Evangelical position, since it certainly seems to work. Preachers must ever remember that their task is not to be popular or successful, but to be faithful. The popular view among many (even fundamentalists) is the concept that if one is truly filled with the Spirit, one will build a large and successful work. While, in God's providence, some may do this, not all will. Scripture is replete with examples of people who faithfully followed their Lord but were not successful by human standards.... We should never compromise God's truth in order to try to be something that God does not want us to be. We should labor for God's glory alone without thought to our self-aggrandizement.

One young man who had been for years a member of a fundamentalist church suddenly left it to join a New Evangelical congregation. Upon enquiring as to the reason, the pastor was told that the New Evangelicals were more loving than the fundamentalists and that the young man was attracted to them for this reason. None of us can claim a corner on love, and no doubt it is true that many fundamentalist congregations could greatly improve in their love toward the Lord, toward one another, and toward the world in which they live. However, what some perceive of as love is, in reality, compromise. Many confuse a broad acceptance of various doctrinal positions, lifestyles, musical tastes, and methodologies as a demonstration of Christian love. In other words, if one is broader and more lenient, one is more loving. But this concept is not grounded in Scripture. Truth and love are not to be divorced. They walk together and are in perfect agreement. Some believe that if one is truly loving, one will not denounce error nor evaluate in a negative way the positions of others. Since New Evangelicals do not do this, they are perceived to be more loving than fundamentalists, to be kinder, more gracious, and more tolerant.

New Evangelicalism can slip in the back door of church fellowships on the coattails of pleas for a tolerance

of diversity. Those calling for a more strict adherence to biblical standards are solemnly warned that to do so would be to violate soul liberty or church autonomy. Some church fellowships that historically have stood strong for biblical separation have had their moorings undermined by just such arguments as these. Those who harbor New Evangelical concepts and practices (even though they may not call them such) are allowed to remain within the fellowship, and, even more serious, are placed in positions of leadership from which they may infect others. When critics of an organization point out the inconsistencies of some brethren within the group, leaders of the group issue a warning against wounding our own soldiers.

Unwarranted assumptions often weaken groups. Because they were founded upon separatist principles, many groups assume that all of their present members understand and accept those principles. This is not always the case. Diligent and continuous instruction is required in order to inculcate truth into the minds of succeeding generations. God was very emphatic with the children of Israel that they should see that each generation was taught the Word of God Lord: "And thou shalt teach them diligently unto they children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up" (Deut. 6:7). Surely this admonition applies to instruction in separatist principles as well as to all other truths of the Word of God. Some have the notion, however, that the battles for the faith are over and that we can now go on to other things.

Fundamentalist pastors, goaded by their desire to see numerical growth, visit growth seminars, almost always manned by New Evangelicals. In the process of supposedly learning how to grow their church, they also imbibe the philosophies of New Evangelicalism. They see no problem, however, because it works.

Perhaps nothing precipitates a slide toward New Evangelicalism more than the introduction of Contemporary Christian Music.... This inevitably leads toward a gradual slide in other areas as well until the entire church is infiltrated by ideas and programs alien to the original position of the church. – Pickering Ernest, *Tragedy of Compromise* (Bob Jones University Press, Greenville, SC 29614), pp. 155-169 selected).

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