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LIBERALISM IN CONTRAST
 TO THE BIBLICAL FAITH
 A Thesis presented to the
 Faculty of Concordia Theological Seminary
 in partial fulfillment of the
 requirements for the degree of
 Bachelor of Divinity

by

William P. Grunow
 Concordia Seminary,
 April 15, 1940

Approved by

J. T. Mueller

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INTRODUCTION

Liberalism is a contemporary movement in the Protestant church which is of vital concern to true orthodox Christianity. The reasons for this concern are twofold: Liberalism teaches false doctrine; and it does so under the guise of orthodoxy. The Church has always had to battle against heresy, but because of the pernicious mendacity of Liberalism, "the Church is weaned away from the ancient body of faith." * "The great redemptive religion which has always been known as Christianity is battling against a totally diverse type of religious belief, which is only the more destructive because it makes use of traditional Christian terminology." ** "By means of counterfeiting and camouflage it has gained access into not a few professedly orthodox pulpits and churches. Many a theological student has been deceived by the orthodox appearance of the more moderate type of modernist theology." *** For this reason, it is also difficult to determine whether a writer is a liberalist. Leaders do not seem to be willing to label themselves, but on the contrary, often go to lengths to give the appearance of orthodoxy. They may refer to themselves as representatives of the "new orthodoxy", although even

* Problem of Lutheran Union, etc. Theo. Graebner, p.199

** Machen; Christianity and Liberalism, p.2

*** Horsch; Modern Religious Liberalism, p.3

Unitarians declare that "the 'new orthodoxy' has nothing in common with what was formerly cherished under that name". * This paper is a study of the doctrines of Liberalism. By being thoroughly familiar with these doctrines, the student will not be misled by the sheep's clothing of orthodox phraseology which Liberalists often employ.

Some writers maintain a distinction between "Liberalism" and "Modernism";

Religious liberalism is the Social Gospel. Religious modernism means the attempt to domesticate within the Christian movement of thought and practice new ideas and values as they become dominant in the non-religious culture of which Christianity is a part. **

Such authorities as John Horsch and J.G. Machen ignore this distinction. Machen writes; "This modern non-redemptive religion is called "modernism" or "liberalism"." *** There is, however, a difference between the two.

E.E.Aubrey suggests, "Modernism is a method, not a creed. Modernists are unified by their approach to theology, not by their theological conclusions." # However, during the past decade, "modernism" has come to refer to a more or less definite system, while "liberalism" has received a wider connotation so that it includes modernism as well as other movements. This wider field of "liberalism" shall furnish the subject-matter for this paper.

This present age is witnessing a flood of religious literature which is absolutely unparalleled

* Christian Register, 2/20/19 p.183
 ** Journal of Religion, vol.15, p.165
 *** Machen; Op. Cit. p.2
 # Aubrey; Present Theological Tendencies, p.25

in history. The bulk of these periodicals, books, and articles are written by liberalists. We shall quote only those writers who may be considered representative by virtue of their position in Protestant churches as prominent preachers, professors, or editors of religious organs.

Liberal theologians feel that their approach gives them a superiority over the "old religion", but they seem to be unaware of the fact that they are placing man on a pedestal in opposition to God.

Orthodox Christianity, with insights and perspectives in many ways superior to those of liberalism cannot come to the aid of modern man partly because its religious truths are still imbedded in an outmoded science, and partly because its morality is expressed in dogmatic and authoritarian moral codes. It tires vainly to meet the social perplexities of modern complex civilisation with irrelevant precepts deriving their authority from their...sometimes quite fortuitous inclusion in a sacred canon. *

Liberalists are earnestly striving for an ideal. They feel that it is one on which their convictions can ultimately rest with absolute certainty.

As a theological religion based on magic is rapidly giving way to a philosophy of religion based on realistic experience and hypotheses, so in time may we not expect to achieve a science of religion based on a tested biological, psychological, social, and ethical science or sciences? **

This paper shall also endeavor to show how, in this process, every doctrine which affects man, his origin, morality, salvation, and his future is invested in modernistic

* Niebuhr; An Interpretation of Christian Ethics, p.4
 ** LL.Bernard; Journal of Religion, vol.18, p.18

or liberalistic teaching by an anthropocentric theology at the expense of theocentric orthodoxy. The statement is still true, made by L.T.Hobhouse; "The first article of the liberal creed is, 'I believe in man'." *

The doctrine of God naturally precedes the doctrine of man. In the first place, if there is a creation, there must be a Creator, or if there is any other origin of man, this First Cause must be established if possible. In the second place, any radical error in this doctrine inevitably affects all other doctrines which logically are subsequent in any theology.

THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

The existence of God is not only evidenced by the works of creation and by man's conscience, but is taught wherever God is named and His works are mentioned in Holy Writ. * On this point there is no controversy among true Christians.

Modern persons seem to think that if they are to know anything about God, they must discover God for themselves. ** Here the "inevitable logic" of liberalism fails. "A divine being that could be discovered by my

efforts. * W.L.Sperry; Christendom, vol.5, No.2, p.183

to me and to others would be a mere name for a certain aspect of man's own nature. A God that we could find within us, or else, at best, a mere passive thing that would be

* A.K. Gracner; Doctrinal Theology, p.16

** Machen; Christian Faith in the Modern World, p.16

MAN'S ORIGIN

THE DOCTRINE OF GOD

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"Modern persons seem to think that if they are to know anything about God, they must discover God for themselves." ** Here the "inexorable logic" of liberalism fails. "A divine being that could be discovered by my efforts, apart from His gracious will to reveal himself to me and to others would be a mere name for a certain aspect of man's own nature, a God that we could find within us, or else, at best, a mere passive thing that would be

* A.L.Graebner; Doctrinal Theology, p.16

** Machen; Christian Faith in the Modern World, p.13

subject to investigation like the substances that are analyzed in a laboratory." * But this fact presents no dilemma for a liberalist. He "looks to Jesus in order to discover God." Dr. Fosdick explains:

We may deduce God from the vastness and order of the external universe, we may philosophize about God until we are intellectually convinced that theism is true; we may accept the creeds of Christendom as supernaturally deposited; but in no such way shall we reach Jesus' characteristic idea of the Divine. Like Millet, the painter, who picked up Normandy peasants that nobody had thought worth painting and in his Angelus and Gleaners made them strong and beautiful so that we cross the sea to look at them, so Jesus habitually treated human personality. Let us start with that spirit and then rise from his care for men and his faith in them to think of the Eternal as the Goodwill behind his goodwill, the Purpose behind his purpose, and thereby he has gotten at the distinguishing attribute of Jesus' God. To God through love of man was the road by which the Master reached his unique heights of spiritual vision. **

Here the writer seems to take the existence of God for granted. The word is used. It is properly capitalized. "But as a matter of fact, when men say that we know God only as He is revealed in Jesus, they are denying all real knowledge of God whatever. For unless there be some idea of God independent of Jesus, the ascription of deity to Jesus has no meaning." *** So we see a vicious circle in action. One may object that these two quotations do not belong side by side: Dr. Machen does not take the phrase, "know God only as He is revealed in Jesus," in the same sense as illustrated by Dr. Fosdick. To this objection we reply that the word "Master" is significantly

* Machen; Ibid. p. 14

** Fosdick; Adventurous Religion, p. 40

*** Machen; Christianity and Liberalism, p. 55

capitalized in the quotation above.

It appears that some scholars become tired of attempting to "prove" the existence of a concept which does not fit into their system. Then we have sentiments as the following expressed:

Even if one were to admit this precarious argument (the objective reality of God) from a single product of nature to the character of the whole, the question remains: What practical difference does the existence of such a "god", or of such a tendency in nature make to us? That is, does he or it anywhere or in any way supplement human efforts? For if God, having once produced man, does not now do something additional, if he strives toward moral ends only through man's thought and work, what does such a diluted theism state that is not contained in the humanist's simpler statement; that man, now that he is somehow here, can use his power for the discovery and achievement of his good? In either case, it is in the human realm that moral good is to be attained; the fact is little affected by saying "through man" instead of "by man." *

Others agree that it "is unnecessary to have a 'concept' of God," ** as though this tremendous question were adia- phorous. "Certainly it does make the greatest possible difference what we think about God; the knowledge of God is the very basis of religion." *** Of course, Liberalists realize that. They must have a god or else surrender theo- logy and adopt pure psychology. The substitute for God is found in "Divine Immanence", which shall be continually referred to. But the name "God" is still used.

Liberal theologians have emphasized the immanence of God and have said that all events are supernatural since all are produced by, or are particular expres- sions of, the immanent God. The difficulty of this procedure is, however, that in thus preserving the

* Eldred C. Vanderlaan, Journal of Religion, v.15, p.226
 ** Machen, Op. Cit. p. 54
 *** Ibid., p. 55

right to use the word "God" that it becomes of little value as a religious conception. *

Man, however, occupies the chief attention of liberalists. Man must "discover God" for himself. The idolatrous heathen has discovered God to be just and fearful. But the liberalist's God is comparatively weak. Using the Bible, liberalists have been blinded by an imperfect understanding of God's love. God's mercy is inscrutable. The modernist turns from the glare and looks to man; "-so Jesus habitually treated human personality: Let us start with that spirit and then rise from his care for men and his faith in them - "; "- man, now that he is somehow here, can use his power for the discovery and achievement of his good -". ** Truly, when they look up to God, they are blinded, they shrink, they stoop and grope for man.

THE PERSONALITY OF GOD

God is not a power subsisting in, or exerted by a material being or number of beings, nor a material being endowed with, or exerting power, nor a being composed of a material nature and a spiritual nature, but a spirit complete and subsisting in Himself. *** This fundamental tenet of Christianity is denied by liberalism in order to exalt man. "When they speak of God, they evidently mean either a blind cosmic energy, or a mere concept of the mind." # God's spirituality is not denied. Indeed, they

* R. H. Dotterer, Reformed Church Review, 1917, p. 546

** Fosdick, Loc. Cit.,

*** Graebner, Op. Cit., p. 17

Horsch, Op. Cit., p. 144

spiritualize Him out of existence. Wieman defines God as "that interaction between individuals, groups, and ages which generates and promotes the greatest possible mutuality of Good." * This statement is comparatively clear. It requires real intellectual acumen to follow the verbal contortions of other writers and determine just what they mean by "god".

Here are Dewey's own words: "There are forces in nature and society that generate and support the ideals.- - it is this active relation between ideal and actual which I would give the name of "God" (Dewey does not attribute personality to God.) **

Another example:

Our position tends to remain one which finds God in the double movement of "the divine aggression" and human aspiration. ***

Invariably liberalists heroically defend monotheism.

The development of monotheism parallels in its motives and desires the development of modern science: Both display the same passionate wish to organize the world. #

Monotheism is extolled as the one contribution made by the Hebrews. But sometimes we see through the smoke-screen and find that plain materialism lies behind the verbiage.

Some drift close to pantheism:

While the Ritschlians think they find God within themselves, the most advanced representatives of the historical method have a pantheistic conception of God. ##

Rather than defend such aberrations, they resort to generalities:

Enough for us is the simple truth of the fatherhood of God, and its corollary, the brotherhood of man. ###

* Cited by Aubrey, Op. Cit., p. 182

** Wieman, Journal of Religion, v. 15, p. 14

*** R. W. Frank, Religious Digest, 12/39, p. 12

Fosdick, Op. Cit., p. 54

Horsch, Op. Cit., p. 60

Machen, Op. Cit., p. 59

That "the modern doctrine of the universal fatherhood of God is not to be found in the teaching of Jesus,"* does not influence the liberalistic theologian. Whether it is the same God as revealed in Scriptures, or any god for that matter, is not fatal to his system. "Liberalism is building a religion that would not be shaken if the very thought of God were taken away."** In God's place, liberalism sets up man. That is not Christianity. "At the very root of Christianity is the belief in the real existence of a personal God."***

THE UNITY OF GOD

"God is one, inasmuch as He cannot but be what He is; and there never has been, nor is, nor ever will, nor ever can be another being like Him."# This truth is uniformly held by liberalists, but it is completely vitiated by ignorance of "what He is". Thus Wilhelm Pauch writes:

God is the unified and unifying background of all processes of integration. Wherever perfection is achieved, there God is revealed. He lives in the soul of every striving man. History discloses the gradual manifestation of the divine in the human life. The highest point in the historical development of perfection has been reached in Jesus of Nazareth, in whose prophetic personality the divine has found clearest and most challenging exhibition. He is, therefore, both the revelation of God and goal of man's longing for salvation.##

* Machen, Op. Cit., p. 60
 ** Curtis W. Peace, Unity, Aug. 12, 1920, p. 328
 *** Machen, Op. Cit., p. 58
 # Graebner, Doc. Theol. p. 18
 ## Journal of Relig. v. 15, p. 152

THE TRINITY OF GOD

"The Christian knowledge of God, which we obtain from Scripture, and from no other source, is not only theistic, but also Trinitarian."* Obviously, any system which predicates to man the right to "discover god for himself" can know nothing of the trinity.

ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

"The attributes of God are indivisibility, immutability, Infinity, Life, Intelligence, Wisdom, Will, Holiness, Justice, Truth, Goodness, and Power."** Because the very existence of God is at issue, any agreement with liberalism as to the attributes of God is only apparent. It is common to find the attributes confused with the essence of God. Thus "Life", (more commonly, "life-force") may be a definition of God. But any such definition is meaningless when God's personality is denied. Thus A. Eustace Haydon states:

Mr. Dewey makes a concession to the modernist by using the word "God". It is true that his god is not supernatural. He is not personal. He has none of the attributes which characterize the working gods of the folk-religions.***

Christian theology teaches the immanence of God as the Absolute.... yet without denying His transcendence by which He is Creator distinct from the universe.†

* J. T. Mueller, Christian Dogmatics, p. 146
 ** Graebner, Op. Cit., p. 23
 *** Journal of Religion, v. 15, p. 24
 † Popular Symbolics, p. 431

"In modern liberalism, on the other hand, this sharp distinction between God and world is broken down, and the name "God" is applied to the mighty world process itself."* "The doctrine of Divine Immanence has served to bridge the old chasm between nature and the supernatural, and to make them completely one."** Yes, God has been shorn of His attributes. Now man can dictate. "Religious democracy demands that the ruler, - God - must be democratized."*** In His helplessness, "the worst thing that could happen to God would be to remain an autocrat while the world is moving toward democracy."#

ACTS OF GOD

"The acts of God are of two kinds: internal and external."## Not knowing a Godhead of three persons, modernism is oblivious to the internal acts of God. "The external acts of God are either immediate or mediate."### Modernism finds a use for God in these immediate external acts. "The immanence of God means that God is in character not distinct from the world, but a part of the world--the force or energy which has developed the world through the natural process of evolution."*# It is debatable whether

* Machen, Op. Cit., p. 62
 ** McGiffert, Am. Journal of Theology, 1916, p. 323
 *** Horsch, Op. Cit., p. 140
 # W. Rauschenbusch, A Theology for the Social Gospel, p. 178
 ## Graebner, Op. Cit., p. 41
 ### Ibid., p. 46
 *# Horsch, Op. Cit., p. 62

this act of God should be classed as immediate or mediate. Since a deistic concept of God is implied, I prefer to place it under the former. Beyond this act, God is practically extinct. "The God of modernism is not the real power controlling the universe. God is considered a mere idea, a symbol of certain facts of human experience."*

God is not disproved; he is displaced... Creation is all of one piece, a seamless garment. And if, now in this indivisible and law-abiding world we can get what we want by learning laws and fulfilling conditions, why should it not be true that 'God becomes progressively less essential to the running of the universe'?**

Sometimes it seems that modernists predicate great feats of God today. On closer examination, it will be seen that nothing is left to God's sphere of activity beyond the mediate external acts of God which fit into deism. Everything else is left to man whether it is predicated of "God" or not. Thus Walter Marshal Horton:

The God of the pioneer is not only the God of his fathers, but even more truly the God of his sons and grandsons, to whom he entrusts their incalculable future. America has always looked westward, to unsettled land and untried experiments, for her visions of the New Jerusalem: communities such as Oberlin, New Harmony, Salt Lake City, were typical experiments in radical Christian Utopianism. In spite of all disappointments, these experiments have left in the American mind a strong conviction that God is a great Adventurer, engaged in carving out a better future for the human race than anything that could be inferred from traditional precedents; so that if all sacred books were burned, and all holy traditions destroyed,--even the evangelical tradition which has meant so much to America--God might yet be rediscovered tomorrow by some bold pioneer pressing westward.***

* Horsch, Op. Cit., p. 72

** Fosdick, Op. Cit., p. 138

*** Contemporary Continental Theology, p. 232f (Horton)

THE DOCTRINE OF CREATION

"The creation of the inanimate and irrational world was begun and completed by the triune God within six consecutive days.."* "On the sixth day of creation, God created man in His image, forming the body of one mature male, Adam, of the dust of the earth, and breathing into his nostrils the breath of life, and making one mature woman, Eve, of a rib taken from Adam."**

The scriptural account of the origin of the cosmos and of man is clear-cut. But "Modernism in theology endeavors constantly to remain in closest touch with the findings of the two great modern sciences which deal with the highest forms of the phenomena of history, biology and psychology."*** That explains why liberalism adopted evolution in contradistinction to creation. "The movement from Charles Darwin to Herbert Spencer was the movement from evolution as a modest biological theory to evolution as a grandiose philosophy of inevitable progress."# The new naturalism was attractive, so religious leaders followed. This theory exalted man: "Evolution is the progress of man onward and upward forever."## "Courageous Christian

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- * Graebner, Op. Cit., p. 47f
 ** Ibid., p. 55
 *** Dau, C. T. M. vol. 3, p. 88
 # Aubrey, Op. Cit., p. 42f
 ## Horsch, Op. Cit., p. 227

Note: For a more complete study of the "Bearing of the Theory of Evolution on the Christian doctrine of Man," consult the thesis of that name, by T. A. Martin.

thinkers like Dean Inge, who dared to flout this optimism, were disposed of with ridicule as "gloomy".* The fact is that "the religion of the evolutionist is not that of Scripture, but 'unbiblical and antibiblical'.**"

That liberalism accepts evolution hardly requires proof. One who denies evolution simply cannot be a liberalist. "Modernist theology is not rooted in Scriptures but in naturalistic theories.*** Again,

The many varieties of modern liberal religion are rooted in naturalism--that is, in the denial of any entrance of the creative power of God.†

By accepting evolution, liberalism has, scorpion-like, stung itself. "The theories of evolution reduce existing things to so small beginnings that the creation of them seems unworthy of the supreme being.##" "The consequences of the evolutionary point of view is the elimination of that quest of finalities and absolutes which is characteristic of the older theological method.### Just as modern science considers the universe as it exists today the result of evolution, so modern theology believes the Christian religion, as well as all other religions to be also the product of a natural evolutionary process.†† The implications are astounding. Perhaps the severest blow is struck against Scripture itself:

* Aubrey, Op. Cit., p. 43
 ** Keyser, The Problem of Origins, p. 161
 *** Horsch, Op. Cit., p. 225
 # Machen, Op. Cit., p. 2
 ## Horsch, Op. Cit., p. 224
 ### Ibid., p. 225
 *# Ibid.

There is no peace for religion in its relationship with science until we recognize that, of course, the Bible is not an inerrant book. As far as the physical universe is concerned, all the writers of the Bible supposed that they were living in a flat earth covered by the solid firmament of the sky, with heaven above and Sheol beneath, and fiery bodies moving across the face of the sky to illuminate man... When, therefore, the Bible is set up in opposition to evolution, the whole issue is ludicrously false. The Bible knows nothing about evolution, just as it knows nothing about automobiles and radio. It knows no more about Darwin and his mutation of species than it does about Copernicus and his revolution of the earth. The Bible antedates all that. The first chapter of Genesis simply took the old Semitic story of creation, purified it of mythology, made it monotheistic and set it in majestic language. It is the noblest narrative of creation in any literature. But it has no possible connection with evolution, for or against... And the absurd attempt to make Genesis mean evolution by stretching the days into eons never was dreamed during the long centuries of the Bible's existence... (It is) a desperate device to insinuate geological ages into Holy Writ.*

In dealing with the origin of man himself, the same author declares that the special creation of man need not be held.

What difference does it make to religion whether God out of the dust of the earth made man by fiat, or out of the dust of the earth made him by gradual processes? No matter by what route he came, man is what he is, with his intelligence, his moral life, his spiritual possibilities, his capacity for fellowship with God.**

Yes, what difference does it make as long as man is exalted as a good and capable being?

* Fosdick, Op. Cit., p. 96

** Ibid., p. 132

THE NATURE OF MAN

"Man as created by his Maker, was an intelligent and moral being, consisting of body and soul united in one complete person."* Liberalism rejects these truths.

Haeckel, a simple evolutionist, said:

The human soul is not an independent, immaterial substance, but like the soul of all the higher animals, merely a collective title for the sum total of man's cerebral functions.**

Being shot through and through with evolution, liberalism accepts this statement, but it is seldom so blunt. As a matter of fact, many liberalists balk at the implications of carrying evolution to its logical conclusions.

The soul is the citadel of religious conservatism in the face of scientific advance; and its supernatural quality is insisted upon by many who have abandoned supernaturalism in all others areas.***

Others cold-bloodedly attempt to reconstruct the origin of the modern idea of a soul.

The new anthropocentrism was different from that of the Bible which located man at the center of the cosmos and of God's concern. This had been replaced by Newtonian physics. While the center of the universe had by Copernicus been shifted from the earth to the sun, and thus man had become decentralized in the cosmos, Newton destroyed any vestiges of divine favor for the human race by his insistence that the laws of gravity operated uniformly throughout the universe. But a new human center of gravity was discovered in the intellect.#

Gaius Glenn Atkins tells us:

Intelligence is a fundamentally spiritual quality... Rodin's "Thinker" is the bronze symbol of the cave man beginning to be spiritual and finding it hard work... Any kind of right creation, from hammer to the hammer-built cathedral is a spiritual enterprise.##

* Graebner, Op. Cit., p. 96
 ** Gibbs, Evolution & Christianity, p. 7
 *** Aubrey, Op. Cit., p. 14
 # Ibid., p. 40
 ## Christendom, vol. 3, 1938, p. 32

Very few are brave enough to say that man has no soul, and that in some respect it is not immortal.

To tell men that they are accidental collocations of physical atoms; that they have no spiritual source, no abiding spiritual meaning, no spiritual destiny, and no control over their own character or development--that is sheer irreligion.*

At this one point in the whole system of modernism we may say that man is degraded. No longer is man in a category infinitely superior to all other creatures. He is definitely superior to only inanimate matter, as we infer from the statement of G. K. Robinson:

Spiritual life in the more general sense denotes a quality or group of qualities possessed by man in distinction from inanimate objects. If other creatures may be said to manifest spiritual life at all, it is nevertheless found preeminently in human life. In terms of behavior, spiritual life is life that is regulated to a degree by plan.**

One step more makes man's soul "the quality of his habitual adjustments to this world,"***--a quality which any animal has.

GOD'S PROVIDENCE

As God has created the world, so He also sustains it and continually cares for all His creatures, particularly man.† But modernism teaches that God has effectively withdrawn from His "creation". Of course, He has been identified with everything from the life-giving pulse beat to such abstractions as ambition, or perfection, but there is

* Fosdick, Op. Cit., p. 27

** Journal of Religion, vol. 15, p. 42

†** J. T. Mueller, Christian Dogmatics, p. 189

*** Aubrey, Op. Cit., p. 172

no justification in looking to Him for benevolent assistance in distress.

The call for a modern religious leadership that will cease misusing trust in God is acute and clamorous. We cannot trust God to keep a ship off the rocks when the mariner has missed his reckoning. We cannot trust God to save a railroad train from wreck when the engineer has run past his signals. We cannot trust God to keep us in health when we break the laws of health. We cannot even trust God to make our children Christians if we neglect their religious education... In particular, we cannot trust God to save any society or nation or civilization whose members are not exercising intelligent public-spirited, sacrificial consecration in the solution of its problems.*

No, we can rely only on man.

* Fosdick, Op. Cit., p. 298

THE DOCTRINE OF REVELATION

The sole, proper, adequate, and ordinary source of theology and of the Christian religion is the divine revelation contained in the Holy Scriptures; or, what is the same, the canonical Scriptures alone are the absolute source of theology, so that out of them alone the articles of faith are to be deduced and proved. * But Liberalism rejects this doctrine, claiming that religious democracy can not accept "beliefs or practices imposed from above." ** (note)

The concept of revelation which is defended by orthodoxy must be rejected because it is based upon supernaturalist metaphysics which justify miracle and magic, but the idea of revelation which is implied in this inadequate concept must be taken much more seriously than liberalism has done. ***

So liberalism has cut loose from the moorings of certainty found in divine revelation. Liberalism does not hold to the truths of God's Word to guide it. Instead they offer the following:

Upon this three-fold mystery; the world's cause, the world's goal, and the world's meaning, rests the perpetuity of religion. #

We might say that liberal theology is thus figuratively left in the sea of confounded doctrine without adequate means of navigation.

* Quenstedt, I, 53

** G.B.Smith, Biblical World, 11/19, p.637

*** W.Pauch, Journal of Religion, v.15, p.153

Fosdick, Op.Cit., p.176

Note; For what the liberal theologian thinks of Verbal Inspiration, see C. T. M. VIII p.343f & 455f.

The representatives of modern theology reject the inspiration and authority of Scriptures. Insofar as they teach theology, they do not have an adequate foundation for it.*

Brunner does not think that his theology need be based on either reason or revelation. "This alternative disappeared with the Enlightenment."** Ritschel based his religion on experience. So the modernist proceeds:

An "Absolute" definition of the essence of Christianity is, of course, impossible, for whatever a member of a new age declares it to be will depend upon the relativity of his understanding of the needs of his age. The individualistic, subjective nature of their definition of Christianity is indeed readily admitted by the liberal theologians. They point out, however, that the arbitrary element in this subjectivism is checked by reference to the historical character of the Christian religion, represented not only by the historicity of its founder, but also by the historical continuity of the Christian fellowship.***

The modernist charts his course according to history.

History is something more than the actions and reactions of men. It is the Shekinah of God which appears in both clouds and light.†

Instead of reckoning by the stars, the liberalist has, figuratively, chosen the shifting planets for his guide. He admits that his course must be continually changed.

Doubtless, a theology guided by the question of our historical existence will transform step by step the static individualistic concepts of theological traditions. The transformation may reach the very center of religion; the belief in God...##

To the onlooker, the admission that guiding doctrines are in a state of flux might be disturbing, but the liberalist views it as a symptom of growth rather than instability.

* Horsch, Op. Cit., p. 100

** Aubrey, Op. Cit., p. 96

*** Pauch, Op. Cit., p. 152

Frank, Op. Cit., p. 11

Paul J. Tillich, Relig. Dig., 5/39, p. 46

The question of how we shall test the validity of our beliefs is fundamental. Only as theologies and philosophies or religion agree here can there be any secure and growing agreement on findings. If what I take to be evidence is not evidence for the other, and if the method I use to reveal error is not accepted by the other, all our agreements are accidental, transitory, and insecure. We have no common basis of reference. On the other hand, when we do agree on what constitutes evidence and what are the tests of truth, our very disagreements become creative of further truth, our errors become fruitful and our findings cooperative and cumulative.*

It is not difficult to see that in the final analysis, "the Bible is not looked on as man's judge, but man is supposed to judge the Bible."** Even, more, MAN is practically the norm by which all theology is judged. The "idea of revelation" is left to something that goes on in his head. The contention that history is the norm of doctrine is pure camouflage. Consider, for example, the attitude expressed concerning tradition:

Says the (theistic) naturalist; Seek all the truth you can regardless of how it may seem to conflict with the ancient tradition--because the living communion (Church) is not a matter of forms and ceremonies, but of dynamic interaction with men and things; it is not necessary to understand a tradition in order to be shaped and made by it, but rather, he who is most completely created by it is likely to understand it less than an outsider who can view it from the point of view of an alien.***

Again,

The past is certainly important, but not as a way of entering into the living communion which transforms us and which reaches us from Christ. This living

* Wieman, Christendom, v. 3, 1938, p. 80

** Horsch, Op. Cit., p. 23

*** Wieman, Op. Cit., p. 80

communion is here and now amongst men and is not in the past as a saving power for us. It is not the past as a saving power for me, because I am here and it must be here where I am. I cannot possibly get back into the past and so cannot find any power back there which can save me now.*

These may seem to express an extreme view. It is hardly that. The liberalist feels that he has not postulated enough authority for himself.

We have lost faith also in ourselves. When Copernicus persuaded men that they were not at the central point of the universe; when Newton convinced men that the reign of law was the same for other planets as for our own; when the industrial revolution subordinated man to the machine, and culture to commerce,--then the human race suffered a serious deflation of its self-esteem. The climax came when, in the wake of Darwin who had found man a place among the animals, the psychology made thought an instrument of the organic drives. Then we suffered a fundamental loss of confidence in thinking... Not only, then have we lost faith in the accepted ends of life, but we have lost faith in our ability clearly to formulate the ends of action for ourselves.**

Having arrogated to himself the ability and authority to judge and rule over Scripture, the liberalist seems to "yearn for more worlds to conquer." The Rev. Dr. Theodore C. Speers declares:

If there is any one characteristic of our contemporary life that is clear for all to see and for all to know, it is our dismal lack of confidence in ourselves as human beings.***

Mirabile dictu!

* Ibid.
 ** Aubrey, Op. Cit., p. 8
 *** N. Y. Times, 3/25/40

MAN'S MORALITY

THE FALL OF MAN

Before the conception of their first offspring, our first parents, Eve, tempted by Satan, and Adam, voluntarily transgressed a commandment of God, and by this sin, they fell from their primeval state, lost the image of God, became entirely depraved in spiritual death, and obnoxious to temporal death and eternal damnation.*

This fundamental doctrine of the Bible is summarily dismissed as a fairy-tale.

The myth of the Fall is made into an account of the origin of evil, when it is really a description of its nature. The orthodox doctrine of original sin is an effort to extend the history of sin from its origin through successive generations of mankind. It therefore becomes a doctrine of an "inherited corruption", the precise nature of which could significantly never be found by theologians, but which they most frequently identified with sexual lust, attendant upon the process of generation. **

The author does not mean to deny that there is something wrong with man. Niebuhr says that "the conviction that man is bad is one of the fundamental principles of the Christian interpretation of life." *** Yet this evil is not inherent, but caused by external factors.

That it is of essential importance (the doctrine that man is evil) and that its abandonment involves the perversion of the remainder of Christian theology and faith needs to be emphasized. #

* Graebner; Op. Cit. p.59
 ** Niebuhr; Interpretation of Christian Ethics, p.90
 *** Niebuhr; Journal of Religion, v.15, p.272
 # Ibid, loc. cit.

ORIGINAL SIN

Original sin, or the state of depravity which followed Adam's transgression and which now inheres in all his posterity embraces a) hereditary guilt, and b) hereditary corruption. *

This guilt which the Bible constantly pins on man is a pet grievance of the liberalist. He cannot bring himself to believe that the man living today can be held responsible for any act of his ancestor regardless of what the Bible says on the subject. Hereditary guilt is positively excluded from the liberalistic system. "A general sense of religious guilt is...a fruitful source of a sense of moral responsibility in immediate situations," ** In other words, guilt is no more than a psychological or psychopathic experience. Even at that, it has little value today;

Doubtless the sense of guilt played its important role for early Protestants and for evangelicals, but it has become a barrier to the modern man's understanding of the gospel.***

Hereditary corruption has few friends among liberalists.

The doctrine of creation is the presupposition of the doctrine of sin. The latter doctrine implies that man's fundamental nature, obscured and corrupted though it is, is perfect. His perfection as a creature, or his health is not a far-off achievement, a more or less remote possibility which future generations may realize after infinite effort; it is rather the underlying datum of life. #

* Mueller, Op. Cit. p.216

** Niebuhr, Op. Cit. p.272

*** Ibid. p.272

Ibid. p.273

So man is intrinsically not very bad. He is merely susceptible to error. Scratch the surface and you will find a perfect being. Of course, this argument is based entirely on logic;

If original sin is an inherited corruption, its inheritance destroys the freedom and therefore the responsibility which is the basic conception of sin... Original sin is not an inherited corruption, but is an inevitable fact of the human existence, the inevitability of which is given by the nature of man's spirituality.*

This "inevitable fact of human existence" which "has no history", is more clearly described by Aubrey;

Man is caught in a struggle between rival and contradictory tendencies in himself which he can not clearly understand. Impotent to affect a solution, he loses confidence; at that point he may offer a blanket disability in "original sin".**

So original sin is more of an excuse than an actuality. But as an excuse, it assumes embarrassing concreteness and must be decried as something that is real. When speaking of "the spiritual infirmity whose gloomy theological name is original sin," R.W.Frank admits, "here is something one does not slough off at the center of one's being, as one improves, enriches and cultivates its margins." *** Yes, there is something bad in man, but don't say that he is corrupt. You might say he suffers from moral inertia.

Its (historical Christianity's) doctrine of man has been an effort to show that man is so constituted that he can apprehend the meaning of the world and ally himself with the forces that seek to achieve the good, though he suffer from moral inertia and selfish pride.†

* Niebuhr, Interp. of Christian Ethics, p.190

** Aubrey, Op.Cit. p.173

*** Religious Digest, 12/39 p.12

Aubrey, Op.Cit. p.15

You might even call him a sinner, provided this word is not used to degrade him.

To say, then, that man is a sinner does not mean exactly the same thing as to say that he is morally wicked.*

There is disagreement as well as unclarity among liberalists regarding corruption of man, but the fundamental trend is patent in the products of all authors, namely, that man's shortcomings may be admitted, but they must not be interpreted as indicating any inherent corruption of his nature. He has not reached perfection because the process of evolution is not yet complete.

Whatever man may become in due time, he is not yet the sort of being presupposed by the orthodox liberalism and democracy of a century and more ago. Men have not vindicated the vote of confidence then given them.**

This imperfection is only of a minor nature, and "we need not become pessimistic about either single individuals or society." ***

To cease to say "I believe in man" would be near-blasphemy and infidelity, if such silence were taken to imply that we now conclude that man-as-he-is, let alone what we hope he may become, does not warrant our initial faith in him.†

Niebuhr sometimes makes statements that sound as though he believed in man's corruption:

The facts make the judgment inevitable that man is bad, disloyal to God, the source of all life and all good; and that he is bound to take the consequences not because God is angry, but because He is God. ††

At other times he rules out this possibility;

* Niebuhr, Journal of Religion, v.15, p.276
 ** Sperry, Christendom, v.5, number 2, p.184
 *** Ibid. p.186
 † Ibid. p.183
 †† Niebuhr, Op.Cit. p.278

The statement that man is a sinner, disloyal to God, and therefore involved in evil consequences of a moral, physical, and social nature may be taken by us today as a general law, perhaps in a statistical sense only. We do not begin with the universal man, nor with a doctrine of original sin, though we may need to use the latter ultimately for purposes of explanation. *

The explanation is simply this that Niebuhr holds society, in which man must exist, is bad. Thus man's environment holds man down and makes him do wrong despite his inherent goodness. The only solution is to improve society. That is the object of the social gospel.

ACTUAL SINS

By actual sin, we understand all lawlessness which is done or committed. ** The liberalist does not understand it in the same way.

At the very root of the modern liberal movement is the loss of the consciousness of sin. Characteristic of the modern age is supreme confidence in human goodness. the religious literature of the day is redolent of that confidence. Get beneath the rough exterior of man, we are told, and we shall discover enough self-sacrifice to found upon it the hope of society.***

When the liberalist speaks of sin, it is not always easy to tell what he means. Niebuhr says; "The concept of sin as a concept of the religious reason is not reducible to moral terms." # Perhaps a clearer idea of the modern view of sin is the following;

The ill of frustration and conflict due to multiplication of responses has been called sin. It is failure to make that adaption to God which the growing life requires. ##

* Niebuhr, Journal of Religion, v.15, p.276

** Mueller, Op.Cit. p.224

*** Machen, Op.Cit. p.64

Niebuhr, Op.Cit. p.275

Wieman, Journal of Religion, v.7, p.263

The following is an illustration of sin:

When a young man or woman leaves home to enter business or college, he must make a rather radical change in his habits. He is impelled to leave home by that surplusage of responses which we have described. He may even go so far as to leave home, but may shrink from the venture and thus incur the ill which we are studying. But if he does venture forth, he enters an environment which requires re-adjustment of his old habits. This is one of those difficult situations, those problems of life, which lead to "sin", or larger life, according as one adjusts himself.*

The consequences of sin as thus defined can hardly be the abiding wrath of God. Man bears the penalty for his sin, his mistakes, here and now, and, in the main, that is the end of it. The exception is this that the community may share the consequences of such sin.

Every sin of mine is like putting poison into the public reservoir from which all the people drink.**

An interesting account of the origin of the modern naive view of sin is given by A. C. McGiffert:

Characteristic of religious liberalism in America since the time of William Ellery Channing has been an intense concern for human welfare. On the basis of his "respect for the human soul," Channing set in motion philanthropic movements in behalf of prisoners in jail, temperance, peace, the elevation of the laboring classes, slaves, and the slum-dweller. He believed that the progress of society was "retarded by nothing more than by the low views which its leaders are accustomed to take of human nature." He objected to traditional Christianity on the ground that its theory of human nature made for self-contempt and the contempt of the race and the consequent inhuman treatment of people.***

But the belittling of sin and man's sinfulness is rooted far deeper than that. "It is the result of the substitution

* Ibid., p. 265

** Fosdick, N. Y. Times, 3/18/40

*** Journal of Religion, v. 15, p. 162

of paganism for Christianity as the dominant view of life...*

As orthodoxy is left behind, there is a gradual increase in the spiritual competence assigned to man and a gradual decrease in the part assigned to the saving power of God until we pass into what is almost pure moralism, in which the name of God is little more than the reminiscence of past development.**

A virtual confession that it is not a humanitarian interest in our fellowmen which explains liberalism's light view of sin is made by H. N. Wieman:

(Sin) is failure to make that adaption to God which growing life requires. Human nature ventures into a way of life which only God can sustain. Hence when man misses God, he is lost. This follows from our definition of God as "that object, whatsoever its nature may be which will yield maximum security and abundance to all human living when right adjustment is made."***

Basic is a false conception of God. "If God alone is, and everything is God, vice is as divine as virtue, sin has no meaning and goods no worth.†

The existence of sin is admitted, but by minimizing its seriousness, man has been hoisted unto a shaky pedestal, and as a result, "civilization faces a grave crisis in the matter of morals.‡‡

* Machen, Op. Cit., p. 65
 ** Horsch, Op. Cit., p. 113
 *** Journal of Religion, v. 7., p. 263
 † Horsch, Op. Cit., p. 116
 ‡‡ Ibid., p. 121

DIVINE LAW AND SIN

Since sin is "lawlessness", it is necessary to know what law Scripture means when it describes sin as a "Transgression of the Law."* "The only inerrant norm by which God's immutable will may be known with certainty is Holy Scripture, which contains a complete revelation of the divine law."**

The need of a standard by which to judge the rightness of an act is strongly felt. This standard cannot simply be morality.

To define sin in terms of morality is to ignore this fact that morality without presuppositions is impossible, that it lacks the finality which is claimed for it.**

Machen rightly says: if we take the Bible as the Word of God, then the Bible becomes our standard of truth and life.† But the liberalist does not accept the Bible as the Word of God in the sense which we mean it.

A prominent modernist of Germany writes: We deny the authority of Scriptures; we see in Scripture both truth and error. It goes without saying that we do not consider ourselves under duty to abide by the teaching of Scripture.††

The automatic process which occurs when the Bible is lowered is that man is raised in proportion, for he becomes more important than the Bible.

The Bible "had no right to rule over man. Man was the book's judge, the book was not man's judge."†††

* J. T. Mueller, Christian Dogmatics, p. 211
 ** Ibid., p. 213
 *** Niebuhr, Journal of Religion, vol. 15, p. 275
 # Machen, Christian Faith in Modern World, p. 73
 ## Horsch, Op. Cit., p. 12f
 ### Ibid., p. 25 (quote G. B. Foster)

"The fact is they (the liberalist theologians), like the pope, substitute their own authority for that of Scripture."*

When man assumes the authority to judge morals we have a variety in the resultant standards. "Many persons, for example, are taking human experience as their standard."**
First of all, man decides that there can be no absolute norm.

Religion has no essence, no real, absolute truth, either as concerns religion or morals.***

Each situation demands that he determine this norm for himself:

God's will cannot be prescribed by any set of principles laid down prior to the concrete and unique situation in which you act. God will guide you in face of the concrete situation if you act in obedience of faith, seeking with all your heart the very best you can find. But such action can never be duplicated. It is unique--the Will of God for that time and place. For that very reason, it cannot be put into a system, (therefore, an ethic cannot be divine). The divine enters in only when the Christian has dealings directly with God in the existential situation where he must act. No one can know what should be done until he stands face to face with the fullness of unprecedented actualities. He must then act in faith and learn what to do in the process of doing it under the direct guidance of God.†

The author does not lean toward "Schwaermerei", but identifies the "Will of God" with what man judges to be the best interests of all concerned. That any decision under such circumstances is bound to be subjective only emphasizes the fact that man is hardly qualified to set

* Horsch, Op. Cit., p. 100

** Machen, Op. Cit., p. 76

*** Horsch, Op. Cit., p. 54

† Wieman, Christendom, p. 69, vol. 3

standards. Yet liberalists cling to this prerogative and resolutely identify theirs as the will of God. An example of an arbitrary interpretation of God's will: by E. L. Allen:

The will of God in our generation is that we make a just society in which the demons of suppression are cast out. Subjection to the will of God will give us freedom. God will only draw near to us when we remove the barriers between ourselves and our fellowmen.*

A popular term, based on John 10, 10, identifies the will of God with "the life abundant". But "Christian people have never been able to reach an unanimous agreement as to the meaning of the life abundant, nor as to the way such a life is to be attained. There is no single idea or way of salvation that alone deserves the name of Christian."**

The doctors disagree. They sometimes contradict one another.

Ultimately morality is always driven back to the acceptance of a standard which is given to it, without which morality would be impossible, but which is itself prior to morality. The source of that standard is always religion, not morality. It depends upon what man finds to be wholly worshipful, intrinsically valuable--in other words, upon the nature of his god or gods. The "chief good" of man is not the object but the presupposition of his moral choices, and his possession of a chief good is the presupposition of all moral judgments which he or another passes upon him.***

As far as this writer has been able to determine, Niebuhr does not offer a constructive suggestion as to what that standard is. Other writers who deny the "chief good of man" as the object of moral choices seem also to avoid committing themselves to a standard, with the exception of the

* Religious Digest, 7/39 p. 76

** A. C. McGiffert, Journal of Religion, v. XI, p. 56

*** Niebuhr, Op. Cit., p. 273

third alternative, which "is to take for authority 'the spirit of Jesus'."*

Despite critics within their ranks, liberalists will not so easily give up their "pragmatic" standard of morality which fits in so well with the social gospel.

E. C. Vanderlaan eloquently defends it as a working system:

If human experience does not persist beyond death, we are told, we are left with no motive for anything but swinish indulgence. Now this is curious reasoning, however plausible at first hearing. Nothing gives moral values greater importance than just the fact that they are a human concern. If they mean nothing to the solar system, how does it follow that they do not mean tremendously to us? Or is justice, for example, so foreign to normal human desires that only a superhuman command could make us care about it?

To be sure, there are certain traditional 'duties' whose only basis is a supposed command of God, and these, under naturalism will fall away. To this class of obligations belongs the Catholic opposition to contraception. But any "duty" which has no basis save a supernatural one, which has no bearing on human happiness, or is even hostile to it, is a superstition, for whose passing we should be grateful.

But these moral imperatives which spring from innate impulses like the love of justice and the hate of suffering, need no superhuman support, nor could they be more commanding if uttered by a voice from Sinai. It is needless to inquire why we ought to care for our neighbor or about future generations. The fact is that normal humanity has these interests. If altruism formed no part of our natural constitution, it could be no more binding on us than it is on stones. But the fact that sheer brute selfishness does not satisfy our full body of desires forms an adequate basis for morality, regardless of academic questions about the universe.** (Including, I suppose, the hereafter.)

* Machen, Op. Cit., p. 81

** Vanderlaan, Journal of Religion, v. 15, p. 227f

The "spirit of Jesus" as a norm for morality will not be treated extensively here because it fits better under "Salvation", and "Christology", which occur later. It may be noted in passing that this norm also has its critics. It must be modernized to fit our times.

The ethics of Jesus cannot be had for any pragmatic social ethic (today).*

This writer does not find in the Galilean's teachings ethical norms for every age in history.... They are pitched 'in an ancient pattern'.**

* Niebuhr, Comment, Summer number, 1934, p. 440

** Stewart G. Cole, Journal of Religion, v. 15, p. 287

THE FREEDOM OF THE WILL

The term free will is used in a twofold meaning. In the first place it denotes the faculty to will, by which man is distinguished from all irrational creatures.* Modernists of all kinds admit that man has free will in this sense.

The term "free will" has been used also in the sense of "spiritual power," by which corrupt man can desire that which is spiritually good, prepare himself for divine grace, fulfill the divine law out of true love for God, accept and believe the Gospel, and convert himself. When the term "free will" is used in this sense, we, on the basis of Scripture, emphatically deny that man has a free will.** Our confessions admit on the basis of Scripture that the will of natural man is free in worldly affairs even to some extent in the exercise of civil righteousness.

There is little agreement among liberalists on this doctrine. The tendency is to ascribe greater freedom of the will than the Bible allows.

(Introspection) discloses possibilities of both good and evil which in one moment seem to be alternative forces within the self and in the next are recognized as forces which transcend self... The full dimension of the self includes, on the one hand, possibilities not present in the world of actuality at all, and on the other hand a "dark and cavernous background in which the perspectives of the self's living past merge insensibly with the fact shapes of physical nature.***

* J. T. Mueller, Op. Cit., p. 236

** Ibid., p. 237f

*** Niebuhr, Interp. of Xian. Ethics, p. 80

According to Wilhelm Pauch, about the only thing man cannot choose for himself is the standards of truth, beauty, etc., which idea seems to be borrowed from Kant's categories rather than theological speculation:

We, too, say that man is created free. He alone among the creatures is endowed with the possibility of controlling his being. He alone among all creatures can make decisions for his life... Now it is a fact that as soon as man awakens to the realization that he is free, that he can decide about the norms, the laws which shall determine his life, "that he is autonomous," that he discovers that he is unfree... He is part of a physical and spiritual universe. He can, therefore, exercise his autonomy only insofar as he decides to obey the physical and spiritual laws which govern the life on the universe. He cannot choose to live on the moon, he is bound to the earth; he cannot choose what shall constitute the nature of truth, of beauty or goodness, he must submit to their objective normativeness. He, therefore, recognizes that in order to fulfill his destiny he must use his freedom for the purpose of becoming what he ought to be.*

As far as "desiring that which is spiritually good" goes, there is little that the liberalist does not claim.

Human nature has capacities that inspire and awe as well as terrify and confound; for men can respond to love and mercy, to goodness and to God.**

The one drawback in claiming complete freedom of the will, is that, in the eyes of the modernist, it makes him completely responsible for the evil he does. For that reason, the freedom of the will is denied only to such an extent as it excuses man from moral responsibility for an act.

(Cf. p. 25f; corruption is denied):

It is human freedom, in other words, created by the transcendence of reason over impulses, which makes sin possible. Therefore, if man is totally corrupt,

* Journal of Religion, p. 158, v. 15

** R. W. Frank, Religions Digest, 12/39, p. 12

he is not sinful at all. At any rate, sin has been stripped of the connotation of guilt, or guilt has been divested of the implication of moral responsibility.*

A different escape from responsibility is to deny that the will controls man's actions. In that case, his good or evil action is due to too much uncontrolled spiritual energy.

Human nature is God-bent. It is also hell-bent, and for the same reason. It is plain that all sorts of maladjustments and perversion may arise in behavior which includes such a throng of unorganized and newly rising responses as the growing life of man requires. Man would not persistently strive toward a fuller life, and so be religious if he did not have this surplusage of responses which may produce all sorts of trouble. The lower animals are not so afflicted in this way--nor so glorified. Their chance for gain and loss is not nearly so great. They have a contentment and stability in their living which humans never have unless they deny that in their nature which gives them religion and sin.**

Much as man is elevated, the consensus seems to be that there is yet a limitation; the will requires aid of some sort to assist it toward good, especially toward conversion:

(Moralism's) savior is the will; every problem is solved by an appeal to the will. But there is no such thing as free will in this sense. The will is always committed, or it is no will at all. It is either committed to God or to one of the gods... (The idea is that, if the will is committed to God, it cannot change to committing itself, for example, to self-interest, otherwise, it is not committed to God in the first place.)***

Man's ability to effect his own conversion will be treated later.

* Niebuhr, Op. Cit., p. 91

** Wieman, Journal of Religion, v. 7, p. 263

*** Niebuhr, Journal of Religion, v. 15, p. 279

CHRISTIAN LIFE

Sanctification is the inward transformation of the believer through the Holy Ghost, by which he is removed from the service of sin and made fit for the service of God in a new spiritual life.* To lead the Christian life does not involve an inward transformation, according to the liberalist. This is due, in the first place, to the fact that he denies that man is naturally depraved and in the service of sin. (Refer to p. 25f.)

Liberalism may be defined as "respect for the worth of the individual..."**

This form of sanctification is foreign to modernism in the second place, because the liberalist denies that man requires supernatural power to achieve a new spiritual life.

One might say that not supernatural regeneration, but natural growth; not divine sanctification, but human education; not supernatural grace, but natural morality;... that all this and such as this, is the new turn in the affairs of religion at the tick of the clock.***

(See also under "Conversion".)

Finally, the liberalist points to external improvement in man:

The highest spirituality requires a study of physical and social conditions that make for the increase of good and a manipulation of existence to that end. The greatest good may involve not merely the harmonizing of desires, but a transformation of these desires, and an altering of the social structure.†

* J. T. Mueller, Op. Cit., p. 382

** Aubrey, Op. Cit., p. 36

*** G. B. Foster, A Guide to the Study of the Christian Religion, p. 736, in Horsch, Op. Cit., p. 15

† G. K. Robinson, Journal of Religion, vol. 15, p. 50

This stress on external improvement, or the social gospel, is the reason the word "Sanctification" occurs so very seldom in liberal theological literature. In the following quotation it is called "the overcoming of evil":

The overcoming of evil which is already a part of our experience takes two forms. The first is the social meliorism by which the suffering of this present time gets part of its meaning from its consequences for good for the future... The second form of overcoming evil which we experience is in the individual life... Those who make the right adjustment to God, who by faith and loyalty and humility escape from cramping self-concern, do find evil a means of blessedness.*

In its narrow sense, sanctification denotes the inward spiritual transformation of the believer which follows upon and is inseparably joined with justification.** This strict sense of sanctification is utterly unknown to the liberalist. He too, thinks that distinction should be made between works performed by a "christian" and those of the non-Christian, but it has nothing to do with his being justified:

By the Christian ethic I mean no mere ordinary humane decency, loving those who love use, but rather the radical, sometimes incredible, demands of Jesus that we love our enemies, that if smitten on the one cheek, we turn the other also, that we do good to those who hate us.***

Good works do not precede faith, neither does sanctification precede justification.† But, the liberalist holds that "no belief in a deity, no dogma, no authority, is held superior to living the ethical life.†† That "nothing

* J. C. Bennett, Journal of Religion, pl 419f, v. 18
 ** Mueller, Op. Cit., p. 384
 *** Fosdick, Religious Digest, 7/39, p. 67
 # Mueller, Op. Cit., p. 385
 †† Horsch, Op. Cit., p. 114

is superior to living the ethical life", means to deny the central article of the Christian faith and to base salvation on work-righteousness. So "modern Christianity" becomes like any other religion and it is no wonder that "the social message of Christianity is strikingly in accordance with the best of Chinese tradition."*

According to Scriptural doctrine, "God works in the believer sanctification as the fruit of faith."** But "a cardinal doctrine of modern liberalism is that the world's evil may be overcome by the world's good; no help is thought to be needed from outside the world."***

The Bible tells us that the means by which the old man is mortified and the new man is strengthened is the Gospel.† "According to modern liberalism, faith is essentially the same as making Christ the master in one's life; at least it is by making Christ master in one's life that the welfare of man is sought... Salvation is thought to be obtained by our own obedience to the commands of Christ. Such teaching is just a sublimated form of legalism.##

The Grace of God is rejected by modern liberalism. And the result is slavery--the slavery of the law, the wretched bondage by which man undertakes the impossible task of establishing his own righteousness as a ground of acceptance with God. It may seem strange at first sight that "liberalism", of which the very name means freedom, should in reality be wretched slavery.###

* Horsch, Op. Cit., p. 176
 ** Mueller, Op. Cit., p. 386
 *** Machen, Op. Cit., p. 136 (Christianity & Liberalism)
 † Mueller, Op. Cit., p. 389
 †† Machen, Op. Cit., p. 143
 ††† Machen, Op. Cit., p. 144

God demands perfection of men. The Christian realizes his inability to reach the God-appointed ideal, but is constantly endeavoring to approximate it. It may seem that the liberalist, too, is modestly conscious of his limitations since he rejects perfectionism, yet he is truly haughty, for he claims to be able to improve himself.

We must deliberately conspire to keep ourselves aspiring, else we shall quench the inner impulse to grow. *

The fallacy lies in the idea that man is able to lift himself, as it were, by his own bootstraps. Another fundamental error in the liberal view is due to the false value placed on good works. The Christian views them as an end in itself;

The performance of good works is the real objective of the Christian's life on earth...God wants his saints to live on earth for a while in order that they may serve Christ, publish His Gospel, and perform many good works to the praise of His name. **

But for the liberalist, they are a means to an end.

The aim of Christian ethics is to secure a collectivism based on a dynamic interrelation of human striving through common devotion to God. ***

It is quite clear that that end is not theocentric, but anthropocentric in the highest degree. But the pity is not only that the proper honor is not bestowed on God, but that it is impossible for such unbelievers to become true Christians as long as they hold to their anthropocentric views.

Let us be very frank. The great body of Christians believe in an attitude of life which Jesus Taught and in which he believed so firmly that he faced the cross for it. His life among other things was characterized by a certain humaneness and unselfishness, personal purity and

* McGiffert, Journal of Religion, vo.11, p. 59
** Mueller, Op.Cit. p.419
*** Aubrey, Op.Cit., p.149

MAN'S SALVATION

NATURE OF SALVATION

But these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that, believing, you might have life through His name.* The purpose of Scriptures, of Christianity, of all religion, is to bring men to salvation. It is, then, important to know what salvation is.

According to Holy Scripture, the life eternal which Christ will graciously bestow upon His followers, consists in the perpetual beatific vision of God.** Various views are held by liberalists, but the consensus is that such a salvation as offered by Scripture is regarded as antedated. The illusion of political peace has replaced the pearly gates as the ideal:

The supreme need of the world at this hour is deliverance from war. In the face of the absolutism of death with its henchman, hate, the Christian liberal will affirm the absolutism of life through its saviour, love.***

Usually, salvation is more general.

Religion at its best has supplied--and it can now supply--the motives, faiths, insights, hopes, convictions by which men inwardly come to terms with themselves, gain spiritual ascendancy over their baser elements, achieve peace and power, and come off more than conquerors.#

* John 20, 31

** Mueller, Op. Cit., p. 640

*** O. H. Baker, Religious Digest, 5/39, p. 52

Fosdick, Adventurous Religion, p. 26

This rather complete catalogue of the benefits of religion omits all reference to eternal salvation. Others more clearly say that salvation in that sense is an illusion:

According to liberal theologians,--salvation is the removal of those hindrances which prevent the unfolding of the inner nature of things. It is the liberation of that perfection which is thought to be directly available to him who knows the right methods of releasing it. (But spiritual) life must not be understood as a progress toward perfection, but as a conflict between good and evil, between holiness and sin, between belief and unbelief. The solution of this conflict does not lie in a goal toward which one can directly move, but in a "yonder" of good and evil which can only be believed.*

Most writers offer a salvation which will benefit people now:

In attempting to interpret the need and experience of salvation, Christian thinking has been too frequently handicapped by the technical jargon of current theology. Phrases like "original sin," "total depravity," "guilty nature", "imputed righteousness" and "changed essence" have survived even though their original meanings have been forgotten, with the result that their significance is not only inadequate but untrue in a succeeding period... The need of our day is to be able to present a message of salvation matching the complexity of human need... It is still difficult to talk to men about the grace of God if we do nothing for their empty stomachs... People also must be saved from mental ills...

The Christian view of salvation is one that identifies the experience with life... We must learn to choose the more enriching way of living for ourselves, the standard of our judgment being the way of living which Jesus embodied.

By salvation, I mean the process of the enrichment of life in its integrity by satisfying its need and mastering its hindrances so that fellowship with God is sustained.**

* Wilhelm Pauch, Journal of Religion, vol. 15, p. 166

** A. Stewart Woodburne, Religious Digest, vol. 7, p. 35

This is the salvation of the social gospel which shuns "otherworldliness":

Otherworldliness is a form of selfishness.*

Modernists profess to have a more humanitarian and practical application for Christianity:

The realm of redemption is never, as in rational and mystical religion, above the realm of living history, but within, and at the end of it.**

This means, however, that the real beneficiaries of our Christianity shall be our posterity. Dr. Fosdick puts it:

The adventurous ethic of Jesus calls us to pray and live for an ultimate international community in which the collective security of all is the aim of all.***

As for the individual:

A man is saved when his needs of adventurous security, recognition, and response are adequately or abundantly met.†

In the opinion of this writer, the modernist is striving for heaven, but he wants his heaven on earth. It is an anthropocentric heaven which leaves out the glory of God entirely. It seems that only the momentum of centuries of orthodox Christianity prevents that heaven from degenerating into a happy hunting grounds, or a Mohammedan Paradise. Let us see how it is attained.

* Machen, Op. Cit., p. 148

** Niebuhr, An Interpretation of Christian Ethics, p. 29

*** Religious Digest, vol. 10/39, p. 18

† McGiffert, Journal of Religion, vol. 11, p. 57

THE DOCTRINE OF THE GRACE OF GOD

Saving grace, is God's gracious disposition, mediated through Christ's vicarious atonement, revealed in the Gospel, and witnessed to the world in order that it may be believed by all men.* To the modernist, grace, if there is such a thing at all, is not an attitude on God's part, but a change on the part of man:

The death of Christ had an effect not upon God, but upon man.**

God's forgiveness of man's sin is not merely a subjective experience. It is an objective social event. It consists in the fact that the individual is caught into this life-transforming communion which has issued from the life of Jesus Christ as a social, psychological, historical process, wherein the individual experiences a more profound community with his fellows and with God.***

This quotation uses the phrase, "issued from the life of Jesus Christ", as though Grace in the true sense were thus bestowed for Jesus' sake, because the justice of God is satisfied. This is the orthodox teaching:

Justifying grace is not absolute grace, or grace bestowed upon the sinner by a fiat of the divine sovereign will, but grace mediated through Christ... Scripture leaves no room for grace without the payment of the penalty for man's sin.†

But liberalism feels that God is above justice. "God is not a judge, a moody despot, but simply a loving father."‡
For the liberalist, "God is love", allegedly in a degree superior to that which orthodoxy holds. But we find the love of God all the greater in this that He loved us despite

* Mueller, Op. Cit., p. 243
 ** Machen, Op. Cit., p. 118
 *** Wieman, Christendom, vol. 3, p. 79
 † Mueller, Op. Cit., p. 246f
 ‡ Machen, Op. Cit., p. 132

our worthlessness, not on account of our goodness. Dr. Dau explains how God's loving-kindness is confused with justifying grace:

The modernist argument against the legalistic character of the Biblical plan of salvation operates with the love of God to the exclusion of the justice of God... It forgets that while the general loving-kindness of God is impartially extended to all His creatures, to the evil and to the good, the just and the unjust, to sustain them in their natural life, the redeeming love of God, which sets them up in a spiritual relation to God against whom they have rebelled, is imparted only through Christ.*

Since salvation reaches its goal in this life, it is only natural that the purpose of grace is not to make men right with God, but to help them in their life here.

God is forgiving and does not disown sinners, i.e., by refusing to cast us away from himself, God makes it possible for us to endure our own failures and attain perfection.**

Again:

Repentant men and communities can, under His grace, transmute the consequences of their evil into means of spiritual growth.***

In the final analysis, liberalism has no grace. It has rejected the means of grace by rejecting the Scriptures. It denies the necessity of grace by denying the depravity of man and the justice of God. Yes, "the grace of God is rejected by modern liberalism. And the result is slavery, the slavery of the law."[#]

* Concordia Theological Monthly, vol. 3., p. 92
 ** McGiffert, Op. Cit., p. 60[‡]
 *** Frank, Religious Digest, p. 12, v. 12/39
 # Machen, Op. Cit., p. 144

CHRISTOLOGY

Since the grace of God toward sinful mankind is not absolute, but mediate, the redemption of our Savior constitutes its indispensable foundation.* As we noted before, liberalism rejects the premise of this statement, and cannot, therefore, accept the conclusion of this statement in the sense we do. They believe that Christ is important. Indeed, as one writer tells us:

Within the Christian movement, the name Jesus has been used with reference to at least seven different figures.**

It seems that Christ is all in all to them for he is mentioned so frequently. But their doctrine of Christ has not been found in the Bible. "The Christ of modernism has been 'made in Germany', and it has taken about a hundred years to make him."*** "The object which liberal theologians set for themselves was to meet the challenge presented to Christianity by modern science and philosophy."# Naturalism and materialism led to the discovery of the 'historical Jesus'. "The historical Jesus is but a construct of historian's minds, designed to reconcile contradictions which will not down."## Higher criticism led the way in the development of this new Jesus. It proceeded with the conviction that "they know more about the life and teachings of Jesus than the writers of the Gospels."### This attitude may appear ridiculous to us, but it is fully

* Mueller, Op. Cit., p. 255
 ** McGiffert, Op. Cit., p. 47
 *** Dau, C. T. M. vol. 3, p. 85
 # Horton, Contemp. Continental Theology, p. 86
 ## Aubrey, Op. Cit., p. 81
 ### Horsch, Op. Cit., p. 84

justified in the eyes of the modernist:

Having witnessed the rise and fall successively of the church as the sole ark of salvation and the Bible as the infallible rule of faith and life, and having observed that the outcome was not so calamitous as had been expected by the respective nervous and faint-hearted champions of authority, the modernist N. T. scholar feels under no obligations to refrain from tearing off the wrappings of mythology, dogma and sentimentality with which the figure of Jesus has been mumified and from presenting him as he actually was.*

By "presenting him as he actually was," liberalists arrive at an entirely different Christ from that which we know. In the first place, he ceases to be God. "That Christ is true God, coeternal and consubstantial with the Father, is incontrovertibly attested in Holy Scripture."** But "modernists mean by calling Jesus God merely that they try to enter into the same religious experience as the experience of those who in past generations called Jesus God."*** This is a hopelessly impossible task because they have given up every foundation on which to build the experience of faith.

The effort to build the Christ of modernism starts in every case with two assumptions which are basic and essential to the entire movement: 1) Deity in the proper sense of the term cannot possibly be predicated of Jesus Christ; He must simply be taken as a historical figure that looms in the annals of our race; 2) the occurrence of genuine miracles, properly so called, is impossible, for miracles lie outside of the scientific circle of reasoning and do not answer to scientific formulas and laws.†

When men today say that Christ is God, they often do so, not because they think highly of Christ, but because they

* McGiffert, Op. Cit., p. 51

** Mueller, Op. Cit., p. 256

*** Machen, Christian Faith in the Modern World, p. 125

† Dau, C. T. M., vol. 3, p. 86

think desparately low of God."*

God, according to the logical trend of modern liberalism, is not a person separate from the world, but merely the unity that pervades the world. To say, therefore, that Jesus is God means merely that the life of God which appears in all men appears with special clearness or richness in Jesus.**

Modernism, then, rejects the deity of Christ by placing him on the same level with man.

THE TWO NATURES OF CHRIST

Christ is, therefore, true God and true man, or the God-man.*** "This doctrine is of course rejected by modern liberalism. And it is rejected in a very simple way--by the elimination of the whole higher nature of our Lord."# Jesus was no more than a man, and as such, quite arrogant.

The Jesus of modern liberalism advanced stupendous claims that were not founded on fact. All through his ministry, (he) employed language which was extravagant and absurd.##

THE SINLESSNESS OF CHRIST

"While all other men are conceived and born in sin, the Son of Man was without sin, and had to be without sin to be our Savior."###

But "liberal theologians are not so sure that when Jesus taught His disciples to say "forgive us our debts," He

* Machen, Op. Cit., p. 141

** Machen, Christianity and Liberalism, p. 110

*** Mueller, Op. Cit., p. 256

Machen, Op. Cit., p. 115

Ibid., p. 94

Mueller, Op. Cit., p. 259

did not pray that prayer with them."* They do not deny Jesus' perfection outright, because "the liberal theologian is trying to obtain the religious advantages of an affirmation of Jesus' sinlessness, at the same time that he obtains the supposed scientific advantages of its denial."**

THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST'S OFFICE

By denying the divinity of Christ, liberalism completely vitiates His three offices. As God's prophet, He is rejected:

As a matter of fact, the modern liberalism does not hold fast even to the authority of Jesus... Those words of Jesus which are to be regarded as authoritative by modern liberalism must first be selected from the mass of words by a critical process.***

His priestly office is torn down:

Modern Theology conceives of Christ as the Savior in an unreal sense. It does not teach salvation by Christ's work of redemption and of regeneration of the heart, but by following His example.#

In order to be the vicarious offering, as well as our High Priest, it would be necessary for Christ to be more than a man. But for "modern liberalism, a supernatural person is never historical,"## therefore, the Savior never existed. The kingly office is made impossible when His deity is denied.

* Machen, Op. Cit., p. 88
 ** Ibid., p. 89
 *** Ibid., p. 77
 # Machen, Op. Cit., p. 92
 ## Machen, Op. Cit., p. 107

CHRIST AS THE OBJECT OF FAITH

Finally, the liberalist denies that Jesus is the object of faith:

Jesus for him is an example for faith... The modern liberalist tries to have faith in God like the faith which he supposes Jesus had in God, but he does not have faith in Jesus.*

Christ is to be studied, not believed:

A friend is a mirror in which by friendly silences we see our weakness, our conscience, our very self reflected. Such a responsive friend is the historic Jesus--A friend who is at the same time a scathing critic. He is, to change the figure, a lense through which we read our own mind as it really is.**

* Ibid., p. 85

** McGiffert, Op. Cit., p. 62

THE DOCTRINE OF CONVERSION

The liberalist does not accept the biblical doctrine of conversion. His social gospel offers an entirely different type of salvation;

No man is satisfactorily saved unless he is a member of a saved home; there can not be a saved home unless there is a saved community, nor can there be a saved community unless there is a saved world. *

Conversion is essentially the bestowal of faith in the divine promise of salvation for Christ's sake upon the sinner who from the divine Law has learned to know and lament his sins. ** Liberalists take issue with this entire concept of conversion;

Dr. McGiffert points out that the doctrine of divine immanence, which is now generally accepted among liberals ascribes divinity to man, since it is supposed that man's nature is one with God's and he needs simply to awaken to that fact.... What a man requires is not regeneration in the old sense, or a change of nature, but simply an awakening to what he really is. ***

The bestowal of faith is unnecessary because man can derive full benefit from Christ by simply studying Him objectively.

One cannot live with the soul of the historical Jesus for long without coming to a new realization of one's dignity as a member of the human race. #

Characteristically, conversion does not lead to confidence in Christ, but it leads to an unsatisfied striving.

Man is a sinner because he must be radically transformed before he can experience the fulness of the specific content of God's goodness. He never does experience all the specific goodness of this. But he can, even in his state of sin, experience the unspecific fulness of it. That means that, without knowing the specific nature of all that enters into it, he can know that such goodness

* Horsch, Op.Cit. p.130
 ** Mueller, Op.Cit. p.336f.
 *** Horsch, Op. Cit. p.14
 # McGiffert, Op.Cit., p.61

is there, provided he has made the commitment of faith. He can commit himself to that goodness while it is yet incompletely known, and can experience it as a potent encompassing and sustaining reality although the specific details of its nature are unknown. According to the theistic naturalist, the goodness of God is given to man in its unspecific nature on the condition of man's readiness to receive. This readiness means the striving of one's whole self to find the very best that can be discovered in ever concrete situation, no matter what the cost. *

"Scripture positively ascribes conversion, or the engendering of faith in man's heart exclusively to God." ** Some liberalists seem to agree. Thus Niebuhr;

Man cannot transfer his loyalty from one of the false gods to God by exercising his will, since that will is loyal to the false god....Redemption from sin is possible only be a reconciliation to God which cannot be initiated by the disloyal creature. Man the sinner is incapable of overcoming his sin.***

Niebuhr, however, refuses to attribute this reconciliation to the Holy Spirit. Most liberalists hold that man has the power in himself to make himself happy and serene, to save himself.

A cardinal doctrine of modern liberalism is that the world's evil may be overcome by the world's good; no help is thought to be needed from outside the world. ...The evil that is in man is to be overcome not by a foreign good, but by a good which man possesses. †

THE MEANS OF CONVERSION

The Gospel is the effective means by which the Holy Spirit works faith or conversion in man...the divine law is used by God to prepare the sinner for conversion. *†
This use of the law and Gospel as the instrumental means

* Wieman, Christendom, vol.3, p.79

** Mueller, Op.Cit. p.343

*** Niebuhr, Journal of Religion, p.279

† Machen, Christianity and Liberalism, p.136f.

*† Mueller, Op.Cit. p.347

of conversion is entirely confused by the liberalist. He tries to use only the Gospel, and thus makes a law out of it. Fosdick says;

I should like to hear more Christian preachers addressing youth today somewhat as follows; We want you to be genuinely Christian. But as precedent to that, it would not occur to us to demand that you should believe even about Christ what we believe. What we see in Christ is not the question. The question is, "What do you see in Christ?" Surely, you do not mean that you see nothing to challenge your conscience, rebuke your life, summon your devotion ! Will you start with that, follow that as far as it carries you, and then go on if you see more? *

THE STARTING-POINT AND TERMINUS OF CONVERSION

Properly speaking, the starting-point of conversion is unbelief, its terminus saving faith in Christ, and its essential feature, the kindling of faith. ** Here the final objection against the doctrine of conversion is raised. Liberalists do not see that the convert is regenerated, that he is a new creature.

The obvious objection to the doctrine of the new creation is that it does not seem to be in accord with the observed fact...If you look upon them you cannot notice any very obvious change. They have the same weaknesses, and, unfortunately, they have sometimes the same sins. ***

By elevating man, by placing his reason as the judge of doctrine, the liberalist is unable to grasp the simple truths of conversion; he cannot see that the real change is inward, that it has to do with man's relation to God.

* Fosdick, Adventurous Religion, p.10f.
 ** Mueller, Op.Cit. p.341
 *** Machen, Op.Cit. p.145

THE DOCTRINE OF SAVING FAITH

THE NECESSITY OF FAITH

We affirm that faith is needed for the acquiring of salvation.* Liberalists also stress the importance of faith. It is essential for their definition of religion.

By religion I mean the effort to deepen one's feeling of cosmic solidarity or kinship with God, and to draw from that union strength, courage, and inspiration.**

But their definition of faith is a far cry from the Biblical stand. Holy Scripture knows but one way to salvation, namely, by grace through faith in the redemption of Christ.

But Liberalists say;

Christianity is not all a matter of belief; it is a matter of faith and life, of righteousness and service, and any exaggerated emphasis on belief as embodied in creeds or doctrinal statements can only obscure the true character of Jesus Christ and His Gospel.***

It is a small step to place "life" and "service" before "belief". Sherwood Eddy shows how this is done when speaking of his own conversion to the social Gospel;

Religion was not primarily something to be believed or felt; it was something to be done, a life to be lived, a principle and a program to be incarnated in character and built into a social order...The scales fell from my eyes and I saw a new facet of truth.†

With its accent on the social gospel, liberalism still finds faith so important that it predicts dire consequences for those who try to do without it. But they are not speaking of saving faith.

* Mueller, Op.Cit., p.321
 ** C.C.Josey; Journal of Religion, v.18, p.22
 *** Evangelical Herald, 1/17/24
 † Religion and Social Justice, p.206

We would affirm, therefore, our faith in God and in Jesus Christ our Lord. Churches become truly relevant to the human situation when they have real faith in God and take seriously the Lordship of Jesus Christ over all life. This faith holds that the universe is so constructed that no system of human life or form of human action can permanently endure that violates the moral order which the "Maker of heaven and earth" has written into the constitution of the world...

A faith like this is needed to save men from despair at a time when sacred principles of righteousness are being spunned. *

THE NATURE OF SAVING FAITH

A typical description of faith is given by Dr. Fosdick;

A new eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews could be written on the heroes of scientific faith. By faith Sir John Mandeville in 1356 said; I tell you, certainly, men may go all around the world, as well under as above, and return to their country. By faith Columbus reached land sailing westward although mankind had been incredulous about it. By faith Newton grasped the idea of gravitation although he was the first to guess it. By faith Darwin seized on an hypothesis which arranged and explained facts else inexplicable, although it took a daring venture of the mind to do it. These also are heroes of faith.... Faith is an indispensable way of dealing with facts.

Behind the whole intellectual adventure of mankind, therefore, is faith - the basic faith that chaos cannot be the last word in any realm. Faith is not an excrescence on the mental life. Faith is not a flimsy patch to cover the intellect's nakedness when the solid garment of knowledge gives out. **

Scripture, on the other hand, describes faith as the "personal trust in the wonderful message of the Gospel that God for Christ's sake is gracious to all who believe in the atoning blood of His Son shed on Calvary." *** What is required, then, is a very specific faith. This offends the liberalist.

Of all the causes that have led to disunity (in the church) the belief in infallible truth which must be

* John A. Mackay; Religious Digest, 2/39, p.20

** Fosdick, Op.Cit. pp.48 & 51

*** Mueller, Op.Cit. p.322

known in order to be saved has been the most potent.*
Assent to the truth of the Gospel is not necessary according
to the liberalist, for "theology is to be used rather than
accepted as true." **

As for confidence, it is completely misplaced,
because Jesus is not the object of faith.

The root of Christianity is reverence for personality
and faith that God must care for the spiritual values
of his universe. ***

For that reason, "the full and solid hope and comfort
which warmed the hearts and illuminated the faces of the
fathers is now absent." # Modern faith belies the certainty
which should be inherent in faith. Professor Gerald Birney
Smit^h points out;

There is no more fundamental need today than that a
~~new~~ way be found for formulating religious faith anew;..
Thoughtful men and conscientious people are painfully
aware that as yet nothing of a strong, positive character
has come to take the place of the older, type of theology. ##

The agony of uncertainty which contributes to the downfall
of modernism is due to the fact that God has been removed
from His rightful place at the center of theology and no
concept, not even the inherent goodness of man, is
adequate to take His place.

* McGiffert, The Problem of Unity, p.47
** Horsch, Op.Cit., p.45
*** Fosdick, Op.Cit., p.44
Horsch, Op.Cit. p.279
Ibid, p.46

DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

THE CHURCH UNIVERSAL

The community of the regenerate, or of all those who believe in Christ and are justified by faith is the invisible Church of Christ on earth. * This Church Universal, or Una Sancta is not known to the modern liberal. He, of course, feels that there is more to being a Christian than having one's name on the rolls of some Church, but because of his high regard for man, and his rejection of justification by faith, he misses the underlying difference between the true member of the Church, and the nominal member of a church.

But "church" here does not mean merely the individuals who have their names on the church roll. Neither does it mean the social structure of a great institution. It means rather a kind of communion which does occur between some individuals whether their names stand recorded on an official document or not. It is a communion wherein the individuals share a common devotion to the God of love, wherein they inform one another of the difficulties which stand in the way of that devotion, - in their individual personalities, in the local community and in the basic social structure - wherein they cooperatively strive to overcome these difficulties. It is a communion wherein each resolves with the utmost degree of sincerity to strive with all his powers of appreciation of construction and reconstruction to bring about all the good that can be found in each situation. **

This (invisible Church) is the Church which is to endure forever, and against which the gates of hell shall not prevail.*** The liberalist is not so sure of the permanence of the Church because he relies on human aid to preserve it. "Unless the Church succeeds in winning the leaders of modern world-thought she is doomed." †

* Graebner, Op.Cit. p.205
 ** Wieman, Christendom, vol.3, p.79.
 *** Graebner, Loc. Cit.
 † Horsch, Op.Cit. p.96

The means by which God gathers and sustains His Church is the Gospel in all its various forms of application.* Liberalists, although they themselves are "outside the pale of the Church",** would strangle the Church by eliminating the only possible source of growth, namely, preaching of the truth of the Gospel.

The Church should give up the idea that it can teach final truth on any subject...The Church should devote itself to purely humanitarian endeavors.***

THE LOCAL CHURCH

Local Churches are assemblies of believers, or Christians grouped together at one place, to preach the Gospel and administer the sacraments. # The liberalist looks upon the local church as a moral agency more than anything else. R.W.Frank says;

An adequately Christian Church will be more ethically sensitive and militant than it now is. Laymen expect the church to be an ethical pace-seeter. If it represents nothing better than the average moral habits and ideals of the community, of what profit is it? Do not even the Gentiles the same? ##

Others consider the visible church the trustee of civilization.

I turn with hope - a trembling hope - to the Christian church. Perhaps the church may yet save civilization. If it cannot save Western civilization, it can begin now to set its own house in order, so that it may save the civilization that will slowly arise upon the ruins of the West. The Christian church is the carrier of the eternal truth upon which any enduring civilization must rest. ###

That the church should simply preach the Gospel and administer the sacraments is looked on with something akin to horror.

* Mueller, Op.Cit., p. 551.

** Ibid., p.91

*** Horsch, Op.Cit. p.49

Mueller, Op.Cit., p.553

Religious Digest, 12/59 p.12

C.C.Morrison; Christendom, vol.3, p.124

Although education is commonly regarded as the cornerstone of our civilization, the church is to be deprived of its teaching function. We are told that "instruction must be emptied of its traditional implications of telling pupils what to believe." * Just how the church is to preserve our culture and civilization is not quite clear. It appears that the pastor under such circumstances would be bigoted to have firm convictions of his own.

This lack of conviction has very definite results. The congregation need not be committed to hearing any specific message. Such an attitude shifts "the basis of the missionary motive from obedience to the command of Christ to a purely humanitarian impulse and purpose." ** "The missionary enterprise is rapidly being conceived as a democratic social program, rather than the rescue of the individual from divine wrath."*** As a matter of fact, there is no reason for attempting to convert the heathen, for "there are no heathen religions". †

By removing the glory of God as the object of the Church's existence, and putting in His place the benefit of man, the liberalist has admittedly removed all justification for the church's existence as a church.

* Horsch, Op.Cit. p.159
 ** Ibid, p.180
 *** Ibid, p.175
 † Ibid, p.170

MAN AND THE HEREAFTERTEMPORAL DEATH

Temporal, or bodily death is not the total annihilation of man, but the deprivation of natural life, occurring through the separation of the body and soul.* Modern liberals are divided on the question whether death amounts to annihilation. Foskick says;

Death is not merely an individual problem; it is a racial problem. Without immortality all our fathers are finally dead, and we shall be finally dead, until at last, upon a planet that was once uninhabitable, and will be uninhabitable again, every human being will have perished - nothing left to conserve the spiritual gains of all this sacrifice upon the earth.

I cannot believe that. I cannot believe that his ascending struggle of humankind is doomed to end in a hopeless cinder heap...We cannot submit to the mental confusion, the triumphant irrationality of existence where death finally is victor over all. **

The reason modern theologians cannot be sure of the future is that they are outgrowing belief in God. With the fading of this belief, "man will be forced to acknowledge that he is an earth-child whose drama has meaning only upon earth's bosom." *** The same view is expressed by O.H. Baker;

Liberalism must affirm an absolute commitment to the way of love. This means that if the forces of life are to be victorious over the forces of death in the modern world, that victory must be sought here and now where the issues of life and death are joined, and not in some historical or metaphysical vacuum. #

The cause of temporal death is that man has fallen into sin.## Liberalism also sees sin as the cause

* Mueller, Op.Cit., p.613

** Fosdick, Adventurous Religion, p.198

*** Horsch, Op.Cit., p.72

Religious Digest, 4/39 p.51

Mueller, Op.Cit. p.614

death, but here we have a different kind of death;

The first result of disloyalty (sin) appears to be conflict...A second consequence is death. We are beginning again to become aware of the fact that the death of cultures is the consequence of the sin of social wholes, etc.,*

The death of the individual is simply looked on as a natural phenomena which need not be attributed to any fault of man.

THE MILLENNIUM

Scripture teaches most emphatically that in His appointed time Christ, the God-man, will appear visibly to all men at the same time. ** Modernists are silent concerning the coming to judgment. In general they avoid the error of Chiliasm.

Millenarianism is a way of washing religion's hands of any responsibility for civilization. It is a fantastic psychological device for saving the church in some other world while humanity in this world goes to perdition. ***

THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD

The doctrine of the resurrection is taught not only in the New, but also in the Old Testament. † Liberalists claim that this doctrine was only gradually developed among the believers.

It is indisputable that within a brief interval after Jesus' death he was believed to have risen from the dead and to be awaiting the predestined time, soon to occur, of his manifestation as the messiah of Israel. Clearly, this faith is...a manifestation of (his disciples') love, interest, and admiration. ††

* Niebuhr, Journal of Religion, vol.15, p.278
 ** Mueller, Op.Cit. p.619
 *** C.C.Morrison, Christendom, vol3, p.117
 † Mueller, Op.Cit. p.625
 †† John Knox, Christendom, v.3, p.53

In other words, belief in Jesus' resurrection was a delusion to which naive Christians succumbed. But there is some evidence that man is immortal;

Man is the only moral animal who knows that he is mortal. Man is the only creature imbedded in the flux of finitude who knows that this is his fate; which proves that in some sense this is not his fate. *

Comment on such logic is superfluous. But there is more convincing evidence. Immortality is the only solution for the problem of evil.

The horizons offered by immortality do suggest the only possibility that evil will finally be overcome by God. Immortality is no short cut to a solution of our problem. For all that we know, any future existence will have its own forms of evil and its own problem of evil. Moreover, nothing could be worse than to use the idea of immortality to freeze for all time and all eternity the human distinctions which emerge among men in this short life. But immortality does provide new opportunities for transmuting of evil by persons, new possibilities of overcoming evil by God. The affirmation of belief in immortality is our way of affirming in the face of these difficulties ultimate trust in God.**

Thus the hope of immortality is based on very slender evidence/

Immortality, when mentioned at all, is at best a hope cherished in the face of an admitted lack of evidence - an inference from an inference. From the fact, 'interesting enough, to be sure,' that one planet has produced man, these theologians draw the conclusion that the universe as a whole has a tendency toward moral ends. But from the equally pertinent fact that the same planet has produced rattlesnakes, and hideous diseases, they draw no conclusions about the universe whatever. ***

Because the Bible has been discredited and man cannot prove the existence of a hereafter by the use of logic, "the only valid immortality is of two kinds; influential and eugenic." #
 "Men are exhorted to find immortality in advancing the race,

* Niebuhr, Interp. of Christian Ethics, p.67
 ** J.C.Bennet, Journal of Religion, v.18, p.421
 *** E.C.Vanderlaan, Journal of Religion, v.15, p.226
 # Horsch, Op.Cit. p.212

only remembered by what they have done." * As Dr. Speers says;

The lingering hope which surrounds this Easter is the abiding hope that not we as individuals might live beyond the grave, but that our world might be saved from the death of evil and hate. **

That men can speak so lightly of eternal verities is due to the fact that they have their eyes focused on man.

The liberal preacher has little to say about the other world. This world is the center of his thoughts. ***

Men are not afraid of God; "Death destroys our bodies, but after that it has no more it can do." # So the problem of immortality is not very important in the modernistic system.

We are not other-worldly in our aspirations. We expect to die, but we spend little time thinking of it, and fitting a never-dying soul for the sky is certainly not the way in which a typical member of the younger generation would describe his major and dominant ambition. ##

We describe his "major and dominant ambition" as anthropocentric. It is concerned with the interests of man, not the revealed will of God. Instead of assured bliss in heaven, he reaches for happiness on earth. At the present time, while five continents are engaged in war, making peace between men is presented as the highest ideal instead of urging men to make peace with God. We are told that "to be an adequate religion, (Christianity) must deliver men from death as manifest in the arch-devil of war."###

* Horsch, Op.Cit., p.212.

** New York Times, 3/25/40

*** Machen, Op.Cit., p.149

Foddick, New York Times, 3/25/40

Foddick, Adventurous Religion, p.23

O.H.Baker, Religious Digest, 5/39, p.52

We cannot but be struck by the shallowness of this entire system. We ask the same question that was asked decades ago by Dean Fenn, a Unitarian;

We must seriously raise the question whether liberalism can bear the weight of the tragedies of human experience. Does not the amiable faith in inherent goodness appear but ghastly mockery when confronted with the facts of life ? *

But the concluding thought is even more vital. Does not the "amiable faith in inherent goodness appear but ghastly mockery when confronted with the facts of death ?

All we like sheep have gone astray.

The soul that sinneth, it shall die.

The Bible gives the only solution;

By the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God hath raised from the dead, even by Him doth this man stand here before you whole....
Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved.

* American Journal of Theology, 1913, p.516

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