

Stop Being Conformed

By Earl Radmacher

Announcer

Radmacher has stated, and in the earlier brochure that came out, many of you have seen the quote, My goal is to enable people to distinguish between the changelessness of God and his word and the changing times in which we live through careful exposition of the scripture. In my 17 years at Biola on the staff and four others as a student, at least four others as a student, I've had a chance to see a number of Tory conference weeks come and go, and a lot of men and women bring a uniqueness.

It's not difficult for me to think of the uniqueness of Dr. Earl Radmacher, besides the fact that he honors me by actually asking my opinion on the topics of which he should address, I remember Dr. Radmacher because he has always been extremely relevant. His topics have always been very up to date. We won't name anyone in the world who may come to campus and use repeat series, but we wouldn't have to worry about that with Dr. Radmacher, and I appreciate because those of us who plagiarize enjoy fresh information, and we're delighted that it's up to date. I treasure him as a friend and as a man of God, and we welcome him again to Tory Bible conference. Let's warmly welcome him with a clap, shall we?

Earl Radmacher

All right. Thank you very much. Every time I come to this place, I repeat this, and I say this not simply to pass out flowers, but for my experience here. I find that preaching God's word here is always a joyful experience because there is always a warm reception to it. I think part of that is

the centrality of the scripture in your whole curriculum. However, it's possible to have that and be almost turned off by the Bible at times.

Some people treat precious truth trightly, and they grow familiar, and they do not rejoice in it. They do not have the experience that we sang about a moment ago from Psalm 19. But I sense that here and if there's one prayer that I pray for Biola, it's that you will continue to have that warm openness to the word of God. I appreciate so much my predecessor in the first session, Dr. MacArthur, because he puts that centrality on scripture, and you do that here, and may you continue to do it and may God bless in your midst. I counted a privilege, Ron, to be invited by you to come again and again to Biola.

Now, when I was back on the East Coast this summer for a conference, I was browsing through a bookstore, and I came across a rather garish cover on a book, and Lo and behold, it was by John White, and I couldn't believe that he would write a book that would have that kind of cover. This man who has been a missionary and a pastor and now the professor of psychiatry at the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. A man who has written books that I'm sure most of you have read some of. Parents in Pain, Erosdefiled, The Golden Cow, probably a dozen books entirely, but this one called Flirting With the World.

I looked at it and I thought, well, that'll be probably another checklist of externalities that really don't make a lot of difference. But I didn't really think that because I know John White doesn't think that way. And I pulled it off the shelf. And that night I recommended it to everybody in the Church, and they sold out the next day and I sent off for 600 copies of it. I said, I want to give one to every student and faculty member in our student body, and we've been reading it all year long.

John White is really trying to deal with the problem of how to be in the world without being of the world. That to me is the most difficult task I face to maintain that balance. And I say it's little wonder that Jesus made that a key plank in his prayer in John 17. Father, I don't want you to take them out of the world. And that ought to say something to all of those who are trying to set a date for getting out of the world today. He said, I don't want you to take them out of the world. I want them to be in the world, but I don't want them to be of the world. And Howard Snyder, another well known, Christian writer, writes the introduction to the book, and Howard Snyder says that the greatest problem that the Church of Jesus Christ faces in America today is massive accommodation to the world. From another vantage point, Cabado says that same thing in his book about evangelicals the worldly evangelicals. And I believe so much in what he is saying here that I told Mr. Hafer that I wanted to give a copy to the student body President or the President of the associated student bodies.

And then I said one to each President of each class. He said, we don't have those here. So I said, I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll just give you six of these and you distribute them. He said, I will if I can have the first one. You can do that, Ron, with one condition. You've got to read it. All right. You all saw that in about two months, will you ask him if he read it?

Hafer

I'll start during the message.

Earl Radmacher

He'll start during the message. All right. Now, I want to go back for the three general sessions that I have the privilege of addressing you. I want to go basically to one well worn passage in the Scripture and that's Romans, chapter twelve. I've not preached on this passage really for years until just recently, because I guess I have heard so many messages on it that really had little

relationship to the context of the passage. And I became a little disenchanted with it. But I've gotten a whole new, I guess, understanding maybe, or maybe just a new poll from the Lord about the passage, and I'm really excited about it, and I want to try to share some of the thoughts that God has put in my heart, I believe with you during these days.

Let me begin reading in Romans 11:33. Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God. How unsearchable are his judgments and his ways past finding out for who has known the mind of the Lord, who has become his counselor, or who has first given to him, and it shall be repaid to him, for of him and through him and to him are all things to whom be glory forever. Amen.

And that's where Paul ends the first eleven chapters of the Mercies of God. After he has said all of this concerning God's righteousness and our sinfulness and God's mercy in meeting my needs. He cannot help but just pour out a piano praise to God and say to God, Be the glory for that which he has done. Amen. Then he says, I beg of you, therefore, brethren, by the Mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice wholly acceptable to God, which is your reasonable servant in a light of what I've said to you. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed from the inside out by the renewing of your mind in order that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

For I say through the Grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think. Parenthesis self-esteem leads to thinking more highly than you ought to think. It's a synonym for pride. Self-worth is an entirely different ballgame. Get Joe Aldrich's book on self-worth. Forget the one on self-esteem.

The ones I've had at least a half a dozen come to my desk in the last couple of months. Don't think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but think soberly as God. The one I

mentioned to you has dealt to each one a measure of the faith. For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same functions, so we, being many, are one body in Christ and individually members one of another. Having then gifts differing according to the Grace that is given to us, let us use them. And then he goes on to name some of the categories of gifts and some of the specific examples of gift. There are three things there, basically in that which I read, and two of them surround the core passage.

He starts, really, by saying something about right thinking about God. He ends by saying something about right thinking about myself, and in between that he reminds you that that is not easy to do, and he tells them, stop doing what you're doing. Get a different world view because your worldview is wrong. You are being conformed, he says to the Devil's satanic world system. And it's a well-articulated, carefully honed system and it fits together.

What hit me when I went back over this passage again is that so often we do not go back and look at the world system that Paul was encountering and that they were accommodating to, and neither do we really get specific with the system that we're a part of today and call it for what it is. So I would like to get a little bit specific today about not being conformed to this world system. If I were to go broader than I will go, I would probably name three men that have been awfully influential in your life and mine. I would think of Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche and I would think of B. F. Skinner, and I would think of Joseph Fletcher, the first secular advocates in the women's Lib movement, quoted directly from the selfism of Nietzsche and his will to power. You remember that Nietzsche mocked Christianity as being a slave mentality. He said Christianity calls things virtues that are vices and it calls things vices that are virtues. For example, Christianity calls things like tenderness and love and obedience and submission, virtues. Those aren't virtues, he said, those are vices. What is true virtue? Ah, self-assertiveness,

self aggressiveness, yay, even selfishness, he said. Little wonder he led the philosophy of the Death of God movement, which by the way, died very quickly. God's still here. You don't know their names today. That was Nietzsche. I'd love to expand that I won't.

A couple of Harvard men, B.F. Skinner, great scientist of the mind, did a lot of surveying on human experience and probably did more than anybody in our age to take away man's confidence in taking charge and taking accountability. We've got a cult up in our area in Antelope Valley headed by the Bhagwan Rajnich. The Bhagwan drives down through Madras, Oregon every day in one of his 27 Rolls Royce and parks for seven minutes while the people in the town bow and do obeisance to the Bagwan who says there is no God. One of the principles of his followers is no restraint and no accountability.

They can do anything they want to do without accountability. People seeking to destroy man's responsibility, man's accountability. B.F. Skinner said that there are people who believe that something is going on inside of you, something that's making decisions. He said that's as phony as belief in God. Both of them, he said, are superstitions, for we all know that man is controlled by his environment; it is not something internal that controls him, it is something external that controls him, and Christians fall into that pattern of thought, where I find all kinds of Christians that will blame what they do on somebody else.

So we say, wives, you ought to love your husbands, you ought to be in submission to them. And they might respond by saying, have you ever met my husband? That's scannerianism that's saying that my actions are controlled by my environment. Someone says you shouldn't act the way you act where you work. And they say, have you ever worked with the people I work with? Same thing. They are controlled by their environment. Somehow they have been convinced that

they are just a passive blob that is bulldozed here and there by the forces of their environment or their heredity. And they have no accountability, no responsibility for taking charge in their life. And then Fletcher delivers his alumni address to the Harvard Alumni Association in mid 50s and spawns the new morality situation ethics in which he rewrites the Ten Commandments to say, basically, there are no absolutes. And of that he is absolutely sure great logic. And he says, Thou shalt not commit adultery, ordinarily thou shalt not murder ordinarily, thou shalt not covet ordinarily. But all of these things are perfectly right and proper, given the right situation. And all kinds of Christians are falling into that same trap, and they're excusing their ungodly behavior on the basis of situation ethics. Those men have made a lot of impact.

By the way, Nietzsche's key man was Uber Manch, you say? I've never heard of him. Yes, you have. That's Superman in the English translation he's gotten in the funny papers all over the world. But more recently, there is one that is attacking right at the Fountainhead. And it comes closer to us than perhaps any of the three I've mentioned. In the La Times October 19 front page, as well as several other pages. A little title at the top of the first column.

Process Theology it's taken a long time for this theology to hit pay dirt. It really started back in 1927 in England with Alfred North Whitehead, but it's really getting home now. The subtitle Is God's Power over Evil question. The question has vexed Western religious tradition for centuries. If God is all powerful and all good, why does evil exist? Devastating storms, sudden illnesses, murderous assaults and major airplane crashes can render the philosophical question, an agonizingly personal one. No question in counseling is more difficult, and it is recurrent, says one specialist in pastoral theology. The problem of so much evil in the world today and no apparent response by God is considered to be especially pertinent in the United States, where public opinion surveys show that more than 90% of the people believe in God.

Please turn the tape to side two for the continuation of this session.

The problem of so much evil in the world today and no apparent response by God is considered to be especially pertinent in the United States, where public opinion surveys show that more than 90% of the people believe in God. They go on to talk about the problem, which is this: how can God be all good and all powerful in a world that has so much devastation, destruction, pain, suffering, evil.

Conclusion God is either all powerful and not good and therefore he brings it upon us or God is good but not powerful and he can't do anything about it. They've chosen for the latter option, and in spite of what the word of God says, I am Yahweh, I change not. They are saying God is in process. I seem to remember another cult in our country that's very, very popular and gets a lot of followers and a lot of press that says what God once was, I now am what God now is, I shall become. They've got a changing God, but God is changeless. So because they can't understand God, because they can't figure him out, they demean him. You say well, that was just the La Times, was it?

A little while later I read this article in Christianity Today, The Process Theology Word Game by Harold Kuhn from Ashbury Theological Seminary, a pungent expose of process theology.

Shortly after that in the Arizona Republic, theological struggles, modern thinkers come to terms with evil by modifying God's all powerful image and erudite. Theologians in schools not too distant from here have espoused and are promoting process theology and promoting a book that became an instant bestseller by a Jewish Rabbi, Harold Kushner, entitled Why Do Bad Things Happen to Good People?

He had a little boy that had that disease where you get old very, very rapidly and die and one could understand his deep pain. One would not make light of the pain that is involved. But this

man chooses to bring God down a step so he can figure God out in this universe. You see, the Devil's trick hasn't changed since Eden. He's still raising the same questions. Eve, is God really good? If God were good, wouldn't he allow you to partake of all the trees of the garden? God must not be good. And when Eve listened to that line long enough and the devil saw that she was coming his way, then he got bolder, as he regularly does, and he not only got her to doubt the goodness of God, he then got her to deny the truthfulness of God and make God a liar.

That was it. He hasn't changed since, only today it comes under the title Theology in Seminaries and Graduate Schools of Religion. Tearing down what God is like now, if it only stayed there, I wouldn't be so worried. But the fact of the matter is these books that are written get quite a hearing.

Anne Kushner's book was an instant bestseller with 350,000 copies sold already when this article was written in the Times in October. Can you imagine my shock after reading the La Times article, then getting a hold of a paper from a counseling center where a good many psychologists are counseling that I know and love and respect. And I see Kushner's book reviewed and in the review it explains his problem. And then it says, this book is honest, sensitive and helpful. It provides some new ways to understand human suffering. And because there are a few things in the book that he can identify with, he said, the book is honest. The book is a lie. The philosophy behind it is a lie. But we don't know how to say that today in our sentimentalism.

You see, when they came to Jesus and they sought to portray their devotion to him, and they said, we believe on you, Jesus. If you would be my disciples, then continue ye in my word, and you shall know the truth, and the truth will make you free. And he touched their button with that. Free? What do you mean, free? We're no man slaves. We're Abraham seed. Jesus said, do you know whose seed you really are? You are of the seed of the devil. And they didn't like that. That

was too confrontive for them. But you see, Jesus didn't want to prescribe aspirin when they deserve Tylenol.

He got right to the heart of the issue. And before their dialogue was over, these people who said they wanted to be his disciples picked up stalls to kill him. You see, that's what John was saying in the last hour, wall be unto you if everything you say is liked by the audience. And I don't mean by that to go out and see how much we can antagonize them. Jesus called it for what it was. You see, he had a worldview which saw right to the heart of their problem. There were some things they were doing that was good. What was wrong was saying, Jesus, I want to follow you. But he got down to the basis of their motivation and he exposed their world view. And he said, you're a child of devil. They didn't like that. They sought to kill him. Will a true disciple of Jesus do anything less than Jesus did in exposing error?

You see, why did he do that? Because he had a responsibility to protect his true followers from error. And that's why Paul could say to the Church at Ephesus, I warned you night and day for three years concerning the Wolves on the outside who want to devour you and those on the inside, even who would draw away disciples after themselves. He said, Beware, beware, beware. You're on the battlefield, you're in war. We're playing a game that's called life and death. And there are people outside the camp and inside the camp that are leading others down a primrose path.

When I saw this review, I immediately sent a copy of those La Times articles and Coons article in the Arizona Republic article, and I said, did you ever understand processed theology? Do you know what the man is saying? He doesn't know the God who is because he doesn't know Jesus Christ. Do we still understand that? Or has the pluralism of our day really gotten through to us?

Jesus said, no man comes to the Father, but by me. I am the way, the truth and the life. No man understands God apart from Jesus Christ.

I see a terrible kind of pluralism moving into the evangelical camp simply so we can say we are all one bully, bully for us. I don't see that in the teachings of Jesus. I do see a need for unity, but I do not see that the Bible presents unity apart from purity. And there is a kind of understanding of doctrine that is to be the basis by which we gain our unity. And unity is not simply an experiential unity, it is a doctrinal unity that we pursue more and more.

And my friend called me back after I wrote to him and I could see in a very short conversation that he was defensive and did not have any understanding of the theological problem that was even involved. I am bothered by people in psychology, in psychiatry, in sociology, in economics that don't understand God, and theology. Basic to everything else is an understanding of what God is like. I say, how does that affect me? And I have to get back and start examining what do my actions tell me that I really believe about God. And I find that I don't have enough in my brain to help me out there.

But I find that I can go back to this precious book and I can find clarifications that just are fantastic and they're so simple about God. And I just want to say at this point a great big thank you to Bruce Wilkinson in what he has done in stimulating The Daily Walk as a seminary. We've promoted this from the very day it came out and I don't know of anything that has helped me personally to read through the Bible meaningfully every year since 1977 better than The Daily Walk. I want to say this because I know Bruce cannot in his position say it, in my mind it's the finest devotional material available. I have yet to find an application of the text that you're reading that was not true to the text. And when I get through with it, I've read through the entirety of the Word of God and time and again as I've read through the Bible consistently with

this, which I would not have done consistently because I am too erratic in the passages I go after. And this way I had to read through it whether I liked it or not.

I had to take Jeremiah along with Isaiah. And I would think, oh God, here we are again at Jeremiah. Let's get through here in a hurry. This is bad news, Jeremiah, but so far we're not to Jeremiah yet. We're just in Exodus now. And I've just gotten through Genesis and I want to tell you, here was a man who really understood God, namely Joseph. Could I read to you just two passages? Do I have time to do that and then quit Ron?

All right. Genesis, chapter 45. I'm going to assume that you know the story of Joseph and you'll understand then a little lesson that will help you to understand and explain a way process theology. You remember that Joseph had a position superior in his father's eyes to his brothers, and they didn't like that. And Joseph had a dream and he told his brothers the dream. And I've often wondered where his mind was when he did that because they sure weren't going to respond nicely to that. And then he didn't let it go at that. He had to tell him again another dream that put them down. And they wanted to get rid of this fella.

They wanted to do away with him for good, and they thought they had. And all those years after they had done their dirty deed, they lived in guilt. Now there are those today that would say, just forget about your guilt, but they live with it. And it wasn't until the time came that they could deal with it in repentance that they got rid of it. And in Genesis 45, the brothers are coming back to Joseph because they're getting hungry and they don't know yet who he is. Then Joseph could not restrain himself before all those who stood by him. And he cried out, make everyone go out from me. And so no one stood with him while Joseph made himself known to his brothers. And he wept aloud. And the Egyptians in the house of Pharaoh heard it. And then Joseph said to his brothers, I am Joseph. Does my father still live? But his brothers could not answer him, for they

were dismayed in his presence. And Joseph said to his brothers, Please come near to me. And I'll bet they didn't just bound right up there. But they did come near. And he said, I am Joseph, your brother.

And I suppose in their mind they were thinking, yeah, that's what we were afraid of, whom you sold in Norwegian. Oh, yeah, we know that. Oh, God, you got us now. You found us out. But now he says, do not therefore be grieved nor angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for God sent me. He doesn't say God in a weak moment of a situation that he couldn't really equal. God sent me before you to preserve life for these two years. The famine has been in the land, and there are still five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvesting. And God sent me before you, the pit and all to preserve a posterity for you and the Earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance, verse eight, so now it was not you who sent me here, but God Almighty God, sovereign God, God who brings distress into my life that will allow me in His sovereign grace to be a greater vehicle for the conveyance of His grace than I ever was before. God is not the victim of circumstances God is the sovereign Lord over them and Joseph understood that, and therefore he wasn't wiped out in the process. As you go through the word of God you will find they were not processed Theologian. They were not demeaning either the goodness of God or the power of God they had come to the God who is and they believed Him when they could not explain Him You'll see it all the way through And I conclude with my friends, not Hart, Schaffner, and Marx, but Shadrach, Meshach and tobedwego as my kids used to say.

When the King tried a dirty deal on them, the King who thought he was the Bhagwan, who thought he was God and they said you bow down and you worship the idol, and they say oh no, King we could not do that. And they say you bow down and you worship the idol we put you in a

fiery furnace and we'll heat it seven times hotter than normal and then we'll see if your God is able. And they say okay, you got it all wrong, There is no question about whether our God is able or not we settled at a long time ago the only question is whether he will deliver us or not. Now O King let's have at it and see what he does.

O praise God for Kenny Poor who says if this is my time baby let's go. I want to see people who serve a God who is Victor, Not a guy who is forever stumbling and trying to catch up with the situation. He that comes to God must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of those that diligently seek Him. The greatest answer to process theology is right here in this book, Stop being conformed to a world system, be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

Let's pray. Father, oh how I thank you for this precious book. I would not know you apart from it. I would not know Jesus apart from it. Oh, out of it are all the issues of life David so wisely said Thy word have I hidden in my heart in order that I might not sin against the O God. Develop cultivate within us a love an insatiable thirst for your truth in order that we may truly be like Jesus. In his wonderful name we pray, Amen.