

STRAIGHTWAY

"And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him" [Mark 1:18].

CHRISTIAN PURITIES FELLOWSHIP

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A REFORMATION CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

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There are probably two great peak places in history where truth arose from the Holy Scriptures to unprecedented times. The first was the great days of King David, which continued on through his son, King Solomon, and possibly on through the reign of King Hezekiah. The second was the great days of the sixteenth-century Protestant Reformation, which continued on through the Pilgrim and Puritan Fathers during the Biblical Commonwealth in Massachusetts from 1626 to 1686, but also through the days of Jonathan Edwards (1703-58), George Whitefield (1714-70) and John Wesley (1703-91) in the eighteenth century.

After these two high Biblical and Doctrinal peaks of greater understanding of scriptural truth, the matters fall away to lesser doctrinal eminence. The immediate aftermath of the Reformation became the catalyst for a wide proliferation of theological systems. Of course, not all of them would follow Reformed Theology, but they did proceed on the presupposition of the Reformation. Lutheranism, Calvinism, Wesleyism, and Arminianism would finally fill the spectrum. Fundamentalism, today, shares fellowship within systems, but the "hyper" and the "liberal" of any one of them are rejected. Of course, Fundamentalism does not fellowship any

apostate person or movement.

The Days of Moses and Joshua

At the same time, however, we must not forget the rebirth of the nation of Israel in their exodus from Egypt under the leaderships of Moses and Joshua. This was indeed a great time in the Bible, but it dealt with the institution of Law and all of the practical statutes and precepts arising out of the Wilderness Wanderings and the Battles of the Land of Canaan. The exodus and the conquest demanded great leaderships in the ways of men, but they all led to the greater proliferation which was to come later in the time of the Judges.

David and Solomon

The days of Israel during the time of David and Solomon, however, were the glorious days of a Golden Era. There was an increase in the number of prophets and prophesying, and enlargements of a higher dimension of spiritual realities resulted. The

arts flourished in the Psalms, generally speaking, with music, literature, and the architecture of the Solomon Temple as well as in that of the palaces and fortresses. Of course, sin was there and it marked families. The need of Law was elevated to the great place of wisdom in mind and heart. The "search" for the commandments gave way to "depths" of insight and interpretation of the Law and the Messianic Hope. The demands of the Law were now to be highlighted by the beauty and glory of truth in its full revelation of wonder and power.

Earlier, in the days of Abraham, there had been the Wise Men of Melchizedec and Job. Then during the days of Solomon, wisdom would flourish again, and the prophetic orders would expand to an unprecedented place of beforetime.

After the New Testament

Of course, the coming of the Lord Jesus into time, space, and history gave greater light upon the Old Testament revelation—the entire revelation of the past. We were prone to think that our understanding of Adam was found back in Genesis, chapters two and three, but in the Second and Last Adam, the Lord Jesus, we could really see great depth in the ways of God with Adam—greater than before.

Also, the teachings of the Lord Jesus and the entire revelation of the New Testament

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brought a completed compendium of all that would be needed in the sufficiency of the Bible alone for the rest of history and the prophetic future. The entire Text of the complete Bible was placed ready for future members in the Body of Christ to be called and anointed to interpret the Word of God. There will never be anything added or subtracted from this complete revelation from God.

Biblical Interpretation

There is the Revealed Text; and there is the Interpreted Text. If there are in fact 2,081 contexts in the Bible, as some authorities have counted, each one of them was originally given with a primary interpretation intended by God. For about 2000 years now, since the Bible has been finished by the Holy Spirit, "once delivered to the saints," Christians of all distinctives have contributed to the interpretation of contexts in the Word of God. We would believe that there is but one divine interpretation to each context, with certain implications, too; but probably no one person or theological system has come to an absolute understanding of every context in the Holy Scriptures. All the fundamental truths of the Gospel have been found, interpreted, and proclaimed by our time in church history. When we read of the early days of church history, in the times of the church fathers, we can see through their councils and creeds that they were searching for a final interpreted conclusion of the

great Gospel truths of which The Apostles' Creed was one of the first. In the days of the Lord Jesus, we can see this in the question He asked His disciples, "But whom say ye that I am?" (Matthew 16:15). Some historians have believed this was the first "creed" in church history, and it was revealed as a pattern.

No one theological system, however, has exhausted the Bible of all its potential, precious interpretations. Personally, I am glad that I have lived long enough to have had access to so many right interpretations of so many contexts in the Bible, and they have flourished to the present. I am also glad that I have realized that no one theological system has formulated the entire Word of God in all of its fullness. Eternity will reveal much more.

The Categories of Bible Interpretations

Across these 2000 years there have been the early Fathers, the Papists, the Scholastics, the Reformers, the Remnants, the Puritans, the Theologians, the Ecclesiastical Churchmen, and the Divines. Of course, the Roman Catholic canonized saints, their monastic orders, their priests, bishops, nuns, their Jesuits, and others have been identified with Christianity. Besides these, there have been "Christian" sects, cults, and even occultists who have vied to identify themselves with some form of Christianity and the Bible. Even men of literature and politics, moralists, and other men

of prominence have laid claim to something in the Bible.

Both pagan and heathen concepts in Old Testament times give evidence of certain perversions in their own historical records of the Creation, Satanism, the Flood, Messiahship, blood sacrifices and Law, with many other half-truths and compromises.

In spite of all of these directions, there remain the true interpretation, preaching, exhortations, admonitions, and spread of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Presently, we believe we are living in a wholesale apostasy away from the Biblical Christian Faith. Historic Christianity has suffered an untold damage in the public proclamation of the Gospel. It may well be that the public, so-called, proclamation of Christianity to the masses has been entirely perverted by the famous treatments of neo-evangelicalism, charismaticism, and the ecumenical movements. They are all in fellowship with and support a return to Rome. Fundamentalism is not a part of these ecumenical fellowships; fundamentalists are separatists.

Great Changes Brought Clarity

Across these 2000 years there have been some outstanding changes which have brought clarity to the method of hermeneutics—the interpretation of the Holy Scriptures. We only mention a few.

Augustine (354-430 A.D.) delivered the early Fathers from the extreme use of the allegory as a tool for Biblical interpretation. At least, he purged interpretations of doctrine from the allegorical method. Unfortunately, he left prophecy in the former method of the allegory. However, Augustine should be no final word to any “ism” which may receive popularity. Everything from Romanism to Protestantism has made a claim of Augustine. Augustine took the A-Millennial interpretation of the Second Coming of Christ.

John Calvin (1509-64) finally rescued doctrine and history and prophecy from the unseemly use of the allegorical method, which Augustine omitted, that distinguished literal interpretation for the entire Word of God. John Calvin is the distinguished father of the exegetical method of the interpretation of the Holy Scriptures. It is doubtful, as concluded by some scholars, whether Calvin proceeded to fully apply his own principles to the eschatological interpretation of prophecy and the Book of Revelation. However, others believed he did.

The Protestant Reformation Ethic

As we mentioned in our introduction, the Protestant Reformation was the second of the two great periods of the glory and wonder of the power and influence of the return and revival of Biblical truth so hindered by

the Roman Dark Ages (500-1500 A.D.), the long dark millennium of religious slavery and apostasy.

The Protestant Reformation Ethic commenced with some earlier men like John Wycliffe, (1320-84), John Huss (1369?-1415), and others. Of course, God used Martin Luther (1483-1546) as the first, full Reformer. God did not use Erasmus (1466?-1536), although he was in sympathy with Luther, nor Carlstadt (1480?-1541), nor even Melanchthon (1497-1560), as the Reformers, *per se*. However, we think of Melanchthon as something of a scholar behind Luther. He was more a man of peace in the cause against Romanism. John Calvin was twenty-five years younger than Luther's Reform. Zwingli (1484-1531) was not to be the leading Reformer either. Of course, he met with Luther concerning the definitive meaning of the Lord's Supper and took Luther's definition back to his Swiss Brethren without their accepting it.

So, the Ethic of the Protestant Reform Movement should be credited to Martin Luther in the birth and direction of a Reform Movement. John Calvin has been named the father of Reformed Theology, and thus some distinction should be made between the Reformation and the birth of Protestantism—at least, time-wise.

What Must We Conclude?

There is a great need in our time to return to the simple

Reformation Christian fellowship and spirit of the earlier years of Church history. I realize what I am saying and only raise the issue as realizing a greater need in our time to strengthen ourselves as separatist fundamentalists in bringing back a stronger testimony to our own historic legacy. This kind of fellowship should not be misconstrued any more than historic Fundamentalism intended in its fellowship of other denominations. Its open fellowship was fully understood as the possibility of an agreement across the denominational line centering around the great fundamental teachings of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus. We believe the Holy Spirit brought that fellowship about in the late nineteenth century in a stand against Liberalism—Modernism. It could be understood as a confirmation of force in our steadfast testimony against the twenty-first century apostasy.

Historic Christianity, rooted in the Incarnation and Virgin Birth of the Lord Jesus, His completely sinless life lived in history, as well as His historic death, Bodily Resurrection, and Bodily Ascension, was all validated in time, space, and history.

So, it follows that historic Christianity experienced a most historic Reformation which gathered from Wycliffe to Whitefield and Wesley. This is the full Biblical Witness or Ethic, if you please, from about 1350 through 1790. This covers some 450 years.

Seven Strong Reasons to Strengthen Ourselves in the Spirit of a Reformation of Christian Fellowship

Seven reasons have urged me as a separatist fundamentalist to join the spirit of a Reformation Christian fellowship again, and again, especially because of the times in which we live. These reasons motivate this article. My own background prior to my regeneration was neither Arminianism nor Calvinism, yet I have studied faithfully for a half-century the theological systems which flowed out of the Reformation. They distinctively led me to the greater affinities with Reformation Protestantism.

This article is not motivated to debate or change anyone's theological system; it is an urgent plea in these days of Protestant denominations' going back to Rome. We need the Reformation spirit in all of our hearts to pick up the Sword of the Word of God against the ecumenical forces taking the Christian people, so-called, back into the apostasy of Romanism. I am amazed at the absence of public stand against the Pope and Rome in our time. The seven reasons for such a spirit, a fellowship, are as follows:

First, the Reformation Ethic has been our best source of sought truth and practice in the test of Biblical doctrine which was so urgent in its time as well as ours.

Second, many of the Biblical elements in the Reformation are

also found in the remnant Christian movements prior to and after the formal presentations of the Reformation itself.

Third, most of the theological systems which eventuated into Protestant denominations were greatly molded by the powerful influence of the Reformation.

Fourth, we are in great debt to the sanctified, scholarly theologians and divines for their contributions which flowed out of the Biblical impact from the Reformation.

Fifth, separatist fundamentalists, in the main, have taken their stand against the apostasy of the twentieth century from the definitive doctrines which were revived in church history through the Reformation and its aftermath.

Sixth, Reformation truth has been the largest single influence for Biblical integrity in the world for the last five hundred years because of its Biblical base and claim.

Seventh, because the ecumenical movement in the last fifty years has brought back the popularity and acceptability of Roman Catholicism, we need a revival of the Reformation stand in the present world. The largest damage has resulted in a return of Christendom to the fellowship and claims of Roman Catholicism.

The Privilege of Individual Faith in Theological Distinction

In the presentation of this burdened article, I am keenly

aware of the delicate care I must have in my motive. I trust that all of my brethren will deal kindly with me in reading this article. The Bible encourages us in this: "Take heed what ye hear" (Mark 4:24); and, "Take heed therefore how ye hear" (Luke 8:18).

My article is a desperate one. I have substantially infringed upon my fundamentalist brethren's privilege of their choice of theological system and denomination. I have not intended any intimidation at all—it is not in my heart or spirit to do so. I respect my brethren too much to impose such a reproach. Each one of us must preserve this individual Biblical distinction that we share together. It will help preserve a separatist Fundamentalism which is unrigged and uncoercive. We need the integrity of every Biblical voice in Fundamentalism.

Is There a Jacob's Trouble Ahead?

Having already approached the delicacy of each personal theological distinction in Fundamentalism, whether Presbyterian, Baptist, Methodist, or other, there remains a need to face future possible conditions ahead of us all in this next century.

I do not believe it is becoming us as fundamentalist brethren to impose upon each other the exactitude of the order of events in future prophecy. I have a position of the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus just as you do. What I have carefully said about our individual theological sys-

tem, I also carefully say concerning our distinctive belief in prophecy. The main wonder is that we agree, with all of our hearts together, in the wonderful truth of the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus as a fundamental belief. Let that suffice for my present remarks.

Whether the Book of Revelation be an account of the historical past of the church or futuristic, we all agree that we are living in a time of world-wide apostasy. That is a large truth for all fundamentalists to see and has been our legacy since the birth of Fundamentalism itself.

With the return of an increased Christian persecution in the earth and the risk of so many false teachings abounding, would we not agree we are watching the nearness of "Jacob's trouble," as revealed by the prophet Jeremiah (30:7).

Of course, there is also the emphasis by some of Daniel's Last Week" (9:27) as well as the emphasis upon "the midst of the week" (cf. Revelation 11:2-3 & 13:5, etc.).

The point is: if indeed there is another fulfillment of the many travails of Jacob (the Jew), we can expect the base of religion and the message of Christianity also to be possibly shifted to the Middle East while the English and American influences continue. But they will seem, at first, to be two diverging messages from the Bible.

The ecumenical evangelism and other fellowshiping move-ments have caused a great loss in the promulgation of the Reformation Ethic. Other than among the fundamentalists, there seems to be nothing in the denominational theology, presently, which is vital for the preservation against its loss into the main-stream of the presupposition of the World Council of Churches or Roman Catholic fellowships.

If indeed this continues, we may well expect and must be prepared for the inevitable. Our witness will be brought to the bar of the Middle East in religious force, persecution, and possible martyrdom. From the Middle East to China, Christians are now being openly persecuted and martyred. Even in our own beloved country, it has become very difficult to maintain a Biblical standard of scriptural separation as well as an acceptance of the fundamentals of the Gospel. We are even less loved by the media, the charismatics, and the neo-evangelicals. I have heard a few fundamentalists publicly speak, recently, for the first time, of a possible extinction of their ministry. I have understood them to mean that each one of us in a fundamentalist ministry must "Keep the Watch" just as long as we possibly can. We are not in the ministry only if it grows, enlarges, or has horizontal success. We are in the ministry until death us do part because of the Lord Jesus and His infallible, inspired, inerrant Word.

However, we might be called upon to adapt ourselves to the changing need of the generation in which we live. The question is not if we will go on, but how.

"Jacob's trouble," so appropriate a phrase for what we are beginning to see in the Middle East, will undoubtedly shift the "neo" definition of Christianity to further successes in World Religions. There will be both a new "neo" and other "neo" religions as well as the rising Jewish religion in both its liberal and orthodox identities. Fundamentalists themselves, if they remain true to the Holy Scriptures, and as separatists, will automatically fall into the categories of cults, fools, radicals, and bigots. To orthodox Christianity the Messiah has come; the orthodox Jew believes He will come in the future. Somewhere in all of this, we believe the Bible reveals that these two beliefs will ultimately come out the same, and possibly with the Jew leading the message of Jesus as the Messiah. Modern Christendom has been greatly damaged by the ecumenical amalgam of the public, mass concepts of the Gospel. However, at this point, Israel is even against the Christian Witness in their nation. But we believe a transition will come.

But once again, the word "bigot" will remind us of its etymological and historical origin. We will be "by godders" (bigots), and **by God's** grace we will take our stand. The world needs both views of this possible

transition between orthodox Christianity and orthodox Judaism for the future fulfillment of the Word of God on this subject. We make a mistake to think that all of these preliminary details will only come to pass after the coming of the Lord in the clouds for the saints.

Therefore, because of the failures, compromises, and increase of the ecumenical apostasy, historic Christianity will suffer in its proclamation; and probably some more fundamentalists will fall away to neo-evangelical, charismatic, ecumenical positions, or other because of the wholesale test going on in the world and the very human feeling of the loss of certain horizontal fellowships with those near us.

The Prophetical Jew

Somewhere in all of these things, we need to recognize that at some point in the future a major shift of emphasis will be made from "The Gospel of Grace" to "the Gospel of the Kingdom." This is not to be construed as a reference to the Dispensational Theology of the nineteenth century. What we are referring to is that contemporary Christianity, publicly presented and espoused, such as the grave damage Billy Graham has brought, has been a force to rid the world of historic Christianity. I do not see Fundamentalism, any longer, as a triumphant warrior, but rather as a faithful remnant force holding fast the last bastion of the New Testament and

Reformation message of historic Christianity in the meaning of the New Testament church.

Along with this, however, there will be a Middle East move in world powers which will cause the voice of orthodox Judaism to pursue both Sinai and Zion—Moses and David—the Temple and the Messiah.

There must yet come forth the double witness of the Church and the Jew. Christendom is a word reminding us of Christianity as espoused by the effort of Constantine with Rome's claiming the Keys to the Kingdom—Christendom. There will be the increasing light of at least a growing Jewish remnant into the New Testament teachings of the Messiah, the Lord Jesus, which will, ultimately, bolster Christian truth. It is not one or the other; but both the Church remnant and the Jewish remnant will be indeed used of God.

The denominational distinctions, in name only, could be greatly diminished by the ecumenical movement back to Rome while a fresh, ongoing Biblical emphasis brings us back to the New Testament Body of Christ. This phrase, the Body of Christ, could finally transcend all former theological declarations of Old Testament saints under the Law or New Testament Church under Pentecost and symbolism and systems. The return possibility of a Jewish remnant will not necessarily come into saving grace through the study of Protestant

systems. Their return will be mainly by way of the Old Testament directly to the New Testament Messiah – the Lord Jesus Christ. Already, at this very time, Orthodox Judaism has made it clear that only Orthodox Judaism is the true Judaism. There is presently a great struggle going on between “Sinai” belief and “Zion” belief – the Orthodox versus the Reform Jew.

speaking more for the Body of Christ than the Base of a Ministry, as is being thought of in modern methods identified in Christianity. As we continue our stand against an ecumenical body of the return to Rome and the fulfillment of history and prophecy, let us do all we can to preserve every possible Biblical fellowship. Scriptural separation does not include the separation of fundamentalist brethren.

There is a great need now to

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"A Forgetory"

Man's grappling with the problem of how a peacock's tail came to acquire its elaborate pattern has never been solved although even evolutionists have tried to do so. One scientist made an attempt to estimate what today would be called the amount of "information" that must be present in the peahen's egg in order to produce the pattern of just one single feather of the adult tail. That particular scientist gave up his attempt. His name was Herbert Spencer. He admitted frankly that this "organizing process transcends human knowledge. It is not enough to say we cannot know it; we must say we cannot even conceive it in our frail mind." Think about the vast "memory" bank of peacocks since God created them.

However, chipmunks are something else. The *Forestry Digest*, some years ago, gave an extract that two research workers had found that chipmunks and squirrels plant about 17,000 trees per acre as a result of "forgetting" where they buried their nut-seeds. Think about it! What would appear to skeptics and doubters of the Creator as a failure falls out to the glory of God. Although chipmunks have both a memory and a "forgetory," this was ordained by God with purpose. Many thousands of nut-seeds are purposely buried and forgotten. In reality this is a superior kind of wisdom given to them by God. He reveals His care in creating chipmunks who would deliberately forget where they buried most of their seeds so that the sacrifice would fall out for the benefit of mankind. The chipmunks were created with a "forgetory" in their memory. Think of it! God gave them a deliberate "forgetory" for our good.

Man has been given a memory that is capable of great things. Some have a photographic mind; others, a cooperative system of memory for recall. We are being told in our generation that man is capable of fifteen trillion experiences in a lifetime of 75 years. However, man also needs a "forgetory." When we repent of our sins and confess the Savior, Micah reveals that God "wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea" (7:19). Jeremiah said that the Lord "will remember their sin no more" (31:34). God's "forgetory" blots them out. He did that for David (Psalm 51:1 & 9). "Forgetting the things which are behind," our memory is fixed upon God!