

THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY.

VOL. IV.

AUGUST—SEPTEMBER, 1924.

Nos. 8 & 9.

Methodists Disavowing the Holiness People.

W. H. T. DAU, St. Louis, Mo.

The religious movement which has resulted in the organization of the so-called Pentecostal churches, vulgarly known as "Holy Rollers," is very frequently connected with the Methodist Church. The connecting link is the Methodist teaching of the perfect sanctification of believers through the bestowal of the Holy Spirit, either as a distinct gift after justification and essentially different from justifying grace, or as an increased measure of the Holy Spirit after justification. The bestowal of this special gift of the Holy Spirit gave rise to the name "Second Blessing," which became a sort of shibboleth with that particular class of Methodists who insisted on this bestowal as the distinguishing mark of genuine believers. John C. Montgomery, writing in the *Methodist Quarterly Review* (April, 1924, pp. 374—9), admits that Methodist teaching is at least indirectly responsible for the rise of the Pentecostal churches. He asserts that he has made a thorough study of the modern Pentecostal movement and has arrived at the following conclusion: "It will be found that the Second Blessing movement, so strong about a quarter of a century ago, prepared the way for the Pentecostal movement. That Second Blessing movement is our own. Its promoters made much of the inchoate pronouncements of the Rev. John Wesley, A. M., on this subject. Our preachers were their prophets, and our church-buildings were their refuge. There was a time when it was practically impossible to secure a Methodist evangelist to assist in a meeting without having a Second Blessing meeting. Many of our general evangelists were once of this group." Further on he says: "A devout old Methodist lady, mother of a prominent Methodist minister, described for the writer a Pentecostal meeting she had been attending. 'Why, brother, it is just like the old-time Methodist meetings. They had "the power." It was just like being in the meetings we used to have.' The Pentecostal people, with a great deal of gusto and ability to make a good case in the eyes of some

Will the Fundamentalists Win Out in Their Fight Against the Modern Liberalists?

JOHN H. C. FRITZ, St. Louis, Mo.

The Fundamentalists are that party in the non-Lutheran Protestant churches of our day which is making a fight for the fundamentals of the Christian religion over against the Modern Liberalists, who deny these fundamental truths of the Bible and of historic Christianity. The Fundamentalists are sincere; this cannot be said of all the Modern Liberalists. The Fundamentalists are fighting for a good cause; the Modern Liberalists are not.

Will the Fundamentalists win out in their fight against the Modern Liberalists? Our conviction is that they will not, and cannot, unless they submit to a radical revision of their position by adopting an entirely different attitude toward the truth as it is revealed in the Scriptures and toward those who deny this truth.

In a recent issue (May 1, 1924) of the *Watchman-Examiner*, a Baptist weekly, a reply is printed to a friend, "a thoroughgoing evangelical," who wrote: "I like the *Watchman-Examiner*, but from the bottom of my heart I wish this controversy in our denomination might cease. Your paper is the key to the situation.

If you will stop adding fuel to the flames, the conflict will die down. Can we not have at Milwaukee an old-fashioned, non-controversial convention?"

To this request the *Watchman-Examiner* made the following reply in an editorial: "We take no offense at such a letter as the foregoing, but we confess that it cuts us to the quick. We dislike controversy and conflict. We despise littleness, meanness, and bitterness of spirit. But in the name of the living God we ask if we ought to give up the defense of the truth merely that we may all be at ease in Zion. As far as we can see, the signs of the times do not point to peace. No one man, no thousand men among us, can stop this controversy. *There is an irrepensible and eternal conflict between truth and error.* We hope sincerely that the time has arrived when the controversy can be lifted above pettiness, meanness, and bitterness. The question that will not down is this, *Are the great doctrines written into the confessions of faith of all denominations the doctrines of God's Word?* The *Watchman-Examiner* believes that the historic faith of our churches is the faith of the New Testament. As we see it, there is not the shadow of a doubt about this. *But this New Testament faith is being attacked and ridiculed. A professor in one of our own theological seminaries has said that this faith as interpreted by Paul is fit only for African savages.* Under these circumstances, what must be the attitude of those who cling to this New Testament faith and count it their most precious possession? Under existing circumstances, dare they be silent? Can they be silent? *Would not silence be cowardice and treachery?* Better that a man be silent when the honor of his mother or his wife is publicly assailed. The *Watchman-Examiner* resents the imputation that it has been a stirrer up of strife, but it glories in being a defender of the faith. It is loyal to our denomination and has done its utmost to advance the interests of our organized work: *but the New Testament faith is dearer to us than all the organizations on earth put together.* To the defense and promotion of that faith the *Watchman-Examiner* here and now dedicates itself afresh." [The italics throughout are our own.]

This makes good reading. It breathes the spirit of sincerity. The main question in the whole controversy is well put: "Are the great doctrines written into the confessions of faith of all denominations the doctrines of God's Word?" That is the question which calls for an answer. When the answer has been given, corresponding action is demanded. The answer to the question cannot be

given without calling forth a controversy. The Fundamentalists have such in their camps as radically disagree with them. "A professor in one of our own theological seminaries," says the *Watchman-Examiner*, "has said that this faith as interpreted by Paul is fit only for African savages." That professor is not the only one among the Baptists and other denominations who ridicule the religion of Paul and deny the religion of Jesus Christ. There are many others: professors, pastors, laymen. This is well known; it is also frankly admitted.

What shall be done? Shall the controversy go on? The *Watchman-Examiner* says that silence would be "cowardice and treachery." But how shall the controversy go on? Shall it be made the chief issue of the Church and fought to a finish, and shall this be done as speedily as possible? Although the very fundamental truths of the Christian religion are at stake, the editorial in the *Watchman-Examiner* from which we are quoting says: "*We sincerely hope that we may have at Milwaukee 'a non-controversial' convention. To give this irrepressible doctrinal conflict of which we have been speaking the center of the stage at Milwaukee would be most unfortunate. From the first we have pleaded that this controversy should be irenic and academic, and that it should not involve organization questions. It can be readily seen, however, that such a course was impossible, because, in the nature of the case, you cannot long keep doctrinal and organization questions apart. On the other hand, neither the Northern Convention nor the general missionary societies were organized to pass on doctrinal questions or to establish a doctrinal standard. The convention and the societies are the creatures of the churches, and they were organized to do a definite work. That work was not to adopt a creed that can be so construed as to have binding authority.*" [Italics throughout our own.]

Strange, is it not? The same editorial which tells us that the "doctrines of God's Word" are being assailed, and that it would be "cowardice and treachery" to keep silent, at the same time advocates a *non-controversial* convention of its church-body, going even so far as to say that it would be "most unfortunate" to give the "irrepressible doctrinal conflict *the center of the stage.*" Church organizations, we are told, have not been called into being for the purpose of carrying on controversies, nor "to adopt a creed that can be so construed as to have binding authority." This reminds us of the Presbyterian clergyman who a number of years ago, in our study, expressed himself something like this: "I do

not demand that every one who joins my church subscribe to the Westminster Confession, nor do I demand that he believe as I do."

We ask, If a controversy which involves the very life or death of a church organization is not to be given the center of the stage, what is? If a church organization, claiming to be Christian and claiming to accept the Scriptures as God's inerrant Word, will not, over against false teachers and antichristian religious organizations, adopt a creed of binding authority *which shows what it believes*, we ask, what, then, does such a church organization stand for *doctrinally*? Is such a church organization actually in a position to fight error? Can it have the courage to do so? Can it uncompromisingly defend the truth?

The Bible tells us not to compromise between truth and error. When the Galatians had forsaken the Gospel, Paul did not seek to compromise with them, but he wrote: "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from Him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel; which is not another; but there be some that trouble you and would pervert the Gospel of Christ. But though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." Gal. 1, 6—8. This is plain language. Truth and error will not mix, and one who tries to mix them will simply yield the truth in favor of error.

The spirit of indifferentism and compromise has been characteristic of the Reformed theology since its very earliest history. *It is, in fact, an essential part of its system.* If it were to eliminate it from its system, it would cease to be what it is. Reformed theologians to this very day cannot understand why Luther accused Zwingli and his followers at Marburg in the year 1529 of having a different spirit ("*Ihr habt einen andern Geist*"). They will even now not forgive Luther for having refused to Zwingli the hand of fellowship. They cannot understand why our Lutheran church-body stands for doctrinal purity and therefore refuses to have pulpit- and altar-fellowship with such as disagree with it in doctrine. Such a position, they tell us, is narrow,—if they are at all willing to dismiss the case with such a mild reprimand. Such plain words in Scripture as, "Hold fast the form of sound words," 2 Tim. 1, 13; "Mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them," Rom. 16, 17; "Though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed," Gal. 1, 8; "Beware of false prophets,"

Matt. 7, 15; and many other, similar plain words and commands of Scripture, are by them not at all understood.

That very spirit of Zwingli of which Luther spoke was a compromising spirit, a spirit which would not make a clean-cut and clear-cut issue of the truth, a spirit which would let truth and error stand side by side in the Church. What the result of that position has been is clearly seen in the deplorable condition of the non-Lutheran denominations of our day. The course which the admission of error into the Church takes can work out only in one way. In his *Conservative Reformation* Dr. Krauth says: "When error is admitted into the Church, it will be found that the stages of its progress are always three. It begins by asking *toleration*. Its friends say to the majority: You need not be afraid of us; we are few and weak; only let us alone; we shall not disturb the faith of others. The Church has her standards of doctrine; of course, we shall never interfere with them; we only ask for ourselves to be spared interference with our private opinions. Indulged in this for a time, error goes on to assert *equal rights*. Truth and error are two balancing forces. The Church shall do nothing which looks like deciding between them; that would be partiality. It is bigotry to assert any superior right for the truth. We are to agree to differ, and any favoring of the truth because it is truth is partisanship. What the friends of truth and error hold in common is fundamental. Anything on which they differ is *ipso facto* non-essential. Anybody who makes account of such a thing is a disturber of the peace of the Church. Truth and error are two coordinate powers, and the great secret of church-statesmanship is to preserve the balance between them. From this point error soon goes on to its natural end, which is to assert *supremacy*. Truth started with *tolerating*; it comes to be merely tolerated, and that only for a time. Error claims a preference for its judgments on all disputed points. It puts men into positions, not as at first in spite of their departure from the Church's faith, but in consequence of it. Their recommendation is that they repudiate that faith, and position is given them to teach others to repudiate it, and to make them skilful in combating it."

How shall we account for the peculiar position held toward the truth by the theologians of the Reformed Church, to which also the Fundamentalists of our day belong? Their peculiar position toward the truth, and consequently also toward those who deny the truth, is due to their peculiar position held toward the Scriptures. In the first place, they are not agreed that the Bible

is the *verbally* inspired Word of God; in the second place, none of them accepts the divine principle of Bible interpretation: *Scriptura Scripturam interpretatur*, nor that other hermeneutical principle, which is closely related to it: *Sensus literalis unus est*; on the contrary, *they let man assume the right to interpret the Scripture as he understands it*. This wrong principle of Scripture-interpretation has opened the floodgates to the various and manifold differing opinions in the Church and to the spirit of sectarianism. This wrong attitude toward the Scriptures is the weakness of non-Lutheran Protestantism and the very thing which in the course of time, in the very measure in which the wrong principle is being *consistently* applied, is bringing about its ruin.

The fact is that in their attitude toward the Scriptures the Fundamentalists and the Modern Liberalists do not essentially differ; *they differ only in degree*. Both the Fundamentalists and the Modern Liberalists accord to human reason the right to interpret what God says in the Bible; the only difference is that the Modern Liberalists have consistently carried out the principle and have therefore also applied it to such doctrines as the deity of Christ and the atonement, while the Fundamentalists have not yet gone to the same extent, in other words, are yet more or less inconsistent.

To the Fundamentalists this criticism, we know, will seem harsh. But we ask, Is it not true? The fact of the existence of the denominations, differing as they do in doctrine, can be explained only on the basis of a wrong principle of Scripture interpretation. If all men in the Church would admit that the Bible must be taken as it reads, taken at its face value, then there could be no differences of opinion as to doctrine; and without differences as to doctrine there could be no denominationalism in the Christian Church. The grievance which Zwingli had against Luther was that Luther clung too closely to the letter of the Scriptures, and it is this same grievance which the churches of the Reformed theology have against our Lutheran Church to-day. It is our intolerant spirit over against any departure from the *one* true meaning which the words of the Scripture convey that they detest. If we would grant to every man, as they do, the right of his own private opinion in interpreting the Scriptures, then they would not accuse us of narrowness and bigotry. If we, however, would take their position, we would be just as unable and as ineffectual as they are to combat error and, in the same way as they are doing,

expose ourselves to the same dangers and put ourselves under the same condemnation.

For the sake of avoiding misunderstanding, it may be well to add here the distinction which must be made between the *assumed right* of private interpretation and the *divine right* of private judgment. Man has the right of private judgment, that is, the right that he himself may go directly to the Scripture to find out *what Scripture teaches*. Man need not, and ought not, take his theology from any human authority, as the Pope, the church councils, the pronouncements of any church-body or synod, but every man should make sure that what he believes is taken from the Bible. For this purpose every man must have access to the Bible itself, must read and study it, and on the basis of his own investigation be able to say, "Thus saith the Lord." But no man has the right, after he has learned to know what the Lord has said, to put his own private interpretation upon the Lord's words. After man has learned what the Lord has clearly revealed in His Word, there is but one thing left for him to do, if he would be a Christian who does the Lord's will, namely, *to accept what the Lord says*.

The Fundamentalists, we contend, do not approach the Modern Liberalists with clean hands. It seems to us that they realize this, perhaps unconsciously so. Because they are not willing to take the first step, that is, to believe that the Bible is the *verbally* inspired Word of God, that it must be taken as it reads, and that no man has the right to read into the words of the Bible his own opinions, therefore they are not willing to take the second step, in fact, they cannot consistently do so, namely, deny others the right which they for themselves have assumed; nor can they consistently take the third step, that is, separate themselves from those who teach error. Yet it is this very thing which the Word of God teaches us to do, namely, to separate ourselves from religious errorists, especially from those who, as far as they are concerned, undermine the whole structure of the Christian Church. Any one who reads the sign, "Beware of the dog!" on any gate which leads to a yard, readily understands what it means. It is plain English. So it is plain English when the Lord says, "Beware of false prophets!" In fact, the Lord Himself has posted the sign, "Beware of dogs!" in His Word and thereby does not refer to the canine kind, but to the human kind, the "evil workers," the false teachers. Phil. 3, 2. Paul's words to the Romans also are plain. He says: "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and

offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, *and avoid them*. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple." Rom. 16, 17, 18. Equally plain are the words of Paul to the Galatians: "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from Him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel; which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the Gospel of Christ. But though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed." Gal. 1, 6—9. Nor can there be any doubt as to what Paul means when he writes to the Corinthians: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers; for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? and what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God, as God hath said, I will dwell in them and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. Wherefore come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." 2 Cor. 6, 4—18. But why multiply texts? The words are plain. Their intention can easily be understood; we need but heed them.

Are the Fundamentalists doing what the Lord says? Are they separating themselves from those who are denying the fundamentals of Christianity? No; they are not. We do not even have any evidence of their serious intentions of doing so. We know that occasionally the resignation of a false teacher is demanded, but this happens very seldom. The fact is that such denominations as the Baptists, the Presbyterians, the Methodists, and others have many Liberalists in their theological schools, in their pulpits, and also in their pews, have had them for many years, have been tolerating them, are tolerating them to-day, and are giving no indication of any willingness to change their position in this respect. After all, they are not willing to give to the doctrinal conflict "*the center of the stage*" and then fight the fight to a finish. They tell us that the controversy — this great con-

trovery in the life-and-death struggle of the Church — should be “irenic and academic.” What do they mean? In the light of what has happened and what is happening to-day we can understand “irenic” to mean only this, that the controversy should be so carried on that in spite of it “the peace of the Church” be not seriously disturbed; and “academic” we can understand only to mean that the controversy should continue to be formal and theoretical, rather than to have it fought through to such practical results as would demand, and insist upon, that the prophets of the Lord separate themselves from the prophets of Baal.

As long as the Fundamentalists do not change their old position in their attitude toward the Bible and toward errorists, they cannot win out. Worse than that; in the course of time they themselves will become more and more contaminated with the poison of false doctrine and with the spirit of indifferentism. Sad, but true.

We do believe and hope, however, that now and then some of the Fundamentalists, and occasionally even a Liberalist, will be completely won over to the cause of the truth and will separate himself from those who deny it. May the Lord strengthen those who are fighting His battles; for, verily, none of us can stand alone. But victory can be won only by the power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and not by the wisdom of men, that “our faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.” 1 Cor. 2, 5.
