Liberalism Today

Intro: The rise of modern religious liberalism was an attempt to cope with “Age of Enlightenment” of the 18th and 19th century with all of its rationalism and skepticism. Men such as Baur, Biedermann, Bushnell, Harnack, Heidegger, Kierkegaard, Schweitzer, Ritschl as well as neoorthodox theologians like Bart, Bultmann, Brunner, Bonhoeffer and Tillich impacted religious thought with their liberal theology. Later these views were popularized by such men as Harry Emerson Fosdick, Joseph Fletcher and others. Let us notice in this study what was a stake then and what some of the current trends of liberalism are.

I. WHAT WAS AT STAKE IN LIBERALISM.
   A. The nature of God.
      1. Is God evolutionary and pantheistic?
         a. This concept has God in a constant state of change.
            (1) Some have one view of the God of the Old Testament, and a different view
            (2) Some have completely rejected some of the characteristics of God.
            (3) Albrecht Ritschl (1822-1889) denied the Bible affirmations concerning
                God’s holiness and wrath and viewed Him solely as a being of love.
         b. The idea has been presented of God being pantheistic.
            (1) Pantheism is the doctrine that the whole universe is God, or that every part
                of the universe is a manifestation of God.
            (2) From this we have gotten the idea that one can find God in nature, or
                commune with God in nature.
      2. Is God transcendent and static?
         a. God is not subject to the limitations and conditions of this world.
            (1) God is Spirit
               (a) John 4:24 “God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him
                   in spirit and in truth.”
               (b) Psa. 139:7 “Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee
                   from thy presence?”
            (2) He is everlasting; Psa. 90:2 “Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou
               hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art
               God.”
            (3) He is omniscient; Job 42:2 “I know that thou canst do every thing, and that no thought
               can be withholden from thee.”
            (4) He is omnipotent; Jer. 32:17 “Ah Lord God! behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth
               by thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee:”
         b. God’s nature does not change.
            (1) Mal. 3:6 “For I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.”
            (2) 1 Sam. 15:29 “And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent: for he is not a man,
               that he should repent.”
            (3) Heb. 13:8 “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.”
   B. The person of Jesus.
      1. Was Jesus both human and divine?
      2. The humanity of Jesus is seldom called into question.
3. Was Jesus Divine?
   a. Liberalism attacked the Divinity of Jesus.
      (1) They said He was a good man, but that was all.
      (2) They discounted:
         (a) His virgin birth.
         (b) All His miracles (along with all the miracles of the Bible).
         (c) His resurrection and ascension into heaven.
   b. Jesus is God in the flesh.
      (1) Mat. 1:23 “Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.”
      (2) John 1:1, 14 “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God....4 And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.”
      (3) Phi. 2:6-8 “Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: 7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: 8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”

C. The integrity of the Bible.
1. Is the Bible inspired and how is it inspired?
   a. There are many who denied the inspiration of the Bible.
   b. Other while acknowledging the inspiration taught that it is inspired in its overall teachings.
      (1) Sometimes this is called thought inspiration.
      (2) They claim that God gave the writers the thought then left it up to the writers to put it into words.
      (3) This allows for mistakes or errors in the Bible. They would claim that the Bible as a historical record is not true.
   c. The only proper understanding of the Bible is that it is word by word God breathed.
      (1) 2 Tim. 3:16 “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:”
      (2) 2 Pet. 1:20-21 “Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. 21 For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.”

2. Is the Bible authoritative?
   a. Some claim that there are no moral absolutes, advocating situation ethics.
   b. There is the claim that there are other things that are just as authoritative as the Bible.
      (1) Some will claim that traditions are authoritative.
      (2) Many today teach that human feelings are the basis of what we do.
      (3) Others will imply that the standard is the church, preachers, etc.
   c. The Bible is the only basis for determining right and wrong.
      (1) John 12:48-50 “He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. 49 For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should
say, and what I should speak. 50And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak.”

(2) Rom. 2:16 “In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.”

(3) This would also include that the Bible is able to be understood by man.

D. The mission of the church.

1. Is the church strictly social and ethical?
   a. This view of the church says that it is the primary duty of the church to meet social needs.
      (1) It, thus, centers on, “ministering to the whole man.”
      (2) Much of this started with social ills, such as pollution, the arms race, etc.
      (3) The emphasis is now on personal problems and human relationships.
      (4) We see the fruits of this is seen with seminars on marriage, sex, managing your money, how to deal with whatever (depression, divorce), etc.
   b. This has lead to belief that we are doing the Lord’s work when we have ball-games, parties, exercise classes to lose weight, etc.

2. Is the church spiritual and doctrinal?
   a. The church is not a political institution that is to change the conditions of this world, but to bring lost men into a right relationship with God.
   b. The church is a spiritual institution.
      (1) Luke 17:21 “Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.”
      (2) John 18:36 “Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.”
      (3) Eph. 3:20-21 “Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, 21Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.”
   c. The church, being spiritual, is to save souls by teaching (preaching) the Gospel of Christ.
      (1) Rom. 1:16-17 “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. 17For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.”
      (2) 1 Cor. 1:21 “For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.”

E. The nature of the kingdom.

1. Is the kingdom postmillennial?
   a. These people believe:
      (1) Through the preaching of the Gospel all people will be saved.
      (2) This will usher in a golden era of righteousness and a government of justice and peace that will last a thousand years.
      (3) After the thousand years the Lord will return for a general judgment and the introduction of the eternal state.
b. They do not believe we are presently in that “golden era” but that we will be in it. They do not believe that Jesus is going to come back to this world to reign on earth.

2. Is the kingdom premillennial?
   a. These people believe:
      (1) That Jesus came to set up His kingdom at His first coming.
      (2) The Jews by their rebelliousness, thwarted that purpose.
      (3) God, in a desperate measure, thought up the church age for a parenthesis period.
      (4) That Jesus will come and rapture His saints from the earth.
      (5) There is going to come a great tribulation for those on earth (lasting 7 years.)
      (6) Jesus will return and fight the “battle of Armageddon.”
      (7) He will establish His kingdom in the city of Jerusalem where He will reign on a literal throne for a literal 1000 years.
      (8) After which He will raise the wicked dead and deliver the kingdom to the Father (merge the mediatorial kingdom, with the universal kingdom) ushering in the eternal state.
   b. By far this is the view that permeates the religious world today.

3. Is the kingdom amillennial?
   a. These believe:
      (1) That the Bible does not predict a literal 1000 year period of widespread righteousness (golden age).
      (2) There is a parallel and contemporaneous development of good and evil (God’s kingdom and Satan’s kingdom).
      (3) That these will continue until the second coming of Christ.
      (4) When Christ comes the second time that the resurrection and judgment will take place, followed by the eternal state.
   b. Teaches that it is “simply a synonym for the Christian age. Hence, the millennium began at the establishment of Christianity and will continue to the second coming.”
   c. This basically is the Biblical view.

F. The nature of salvation.
1. Is it universalism?
   a. This view says that all people will be saved, no matter what they do.
   b. Another theme that has resulted from this is the view that only the righteous will be saved, but the unrighteous will be annihilated.

2. Is it an existential encounter and subjective experience?
   a. Is our salvation dependant upon the feelings, or emotional encounters that one might experience.
   b. This led to the mourners bench religion, telling ones experience, and “witnessing” what God has done for you.

3. Is it dependent upon prescribed responses to what God has done in Christ?
   a. While recognizing the grace of God in salvation, there must be a response to God’s grace.
b. That proper response is:
   (1) Faith
      (a) Heb. 11:6 “But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God
          must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”
      (b) John 14:1 “Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.”
   (2) Repentance
      (a) Luke 13:3 “I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”
      (b) Acts 17:30 “And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth
          all men every where to repent.”
   (3) Confession
      (a) Mat. 10:32 “Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess
          also before my Father which is in heaven.”
      (b) Rom. 10:10 “For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the
          mouth confession is made unto salvation.”
   (4) Baptism
      (a) Mark 16:16 “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth
          not shall be damned.”
      (b) Acts 2:37-38 “Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said
          unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then
          Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus
          Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”

G. Let us now look at the current trends of liberalism.

II. DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE
   A. The “traditional” view.
      1. It is a fact that the majority of the members of the church have taught a certain view
         concerning this.
         a. All accept that people who have never married are free to marry.
            (1) 1 Cor. 7:28 “But and if thou marry, thou hast not sinned; and if a virgin marry, she hath
                 not sinned. Nevertheless such shall have trouble in the flesh: but I spare you.”
            (2) 1 Cor. 7:38 “So then he that giveth her in marriage doeth well; but he that giveth her not
                 in marriage doeth better.”
         b. Those whose mate has died are free to marry; Rom. 7:2-3 “For the woman which hath
            an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead,
            she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married
            to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that
            law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man.”
         c. The third area is the area of dissension and trouble.
      2. Individuals (Christians and non-Christians) are free to divorce their mates and marry
         others only on the ground of fornication.
         a. Mat. 5:32 “But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of
            fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced
            committeth adultery.”
         b. Mat. 19:3-9 “The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful
            for a man to put away his wife for every cause? And he answered and said unto them, Have ye
            not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For
            this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall
be one flesh? "Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? "He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so. "And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery."

3. Opposers of this “traditional view.”
   a. Some leave the impression that there has always been difference of opinions on this subject, thus any teaching they come up with should be tolerated.
   b. Others admit this is the “traditional view,” but believe it to be wrong.

4. That many today are teaching contrary to this proves the liberalism of today.

B. Results of differing doctrines.

1. For those upholding the “traditional view.”
   a. Many while verbally upholding the Biblical position, have practiced what they said they condemned.
   b. They have not followed through with the teachings.
   c. They have not resolved unscriptural marriages according to Bible teaching.

2. Others openly have contempt for Biblical teachings.
   a. They will allow and accept (and thus encourage) any unscriptural marriages.
   b. They will condemn those who would settle these problems by Biblical principles.

3. We are encouraged to simply accept divorced and remarried couples regardless of the circumstances.

4. This has caused many to shift their focus to other things.
   a. Things such as “divorce recovery,” “ministering to the single,” “starting over,” etc.
   b. They, thus, ignore the presence of sinful relationships and abandon their responsibilities before God (a don’t ask, don’t tell situation).
   c. They also provide situations that encourage sinful relationships to start.

5. The result is the accommodation of man rather than pleasing God.
   a. That is humanism.
   b. It is from the idea that truth is relative, changing as society changes.
   c. They do not believe that we can unravel people’s marital circumstances (apply the Bible’s teaching to their situation) so they look the other way and forget the whole thing.

III. THE NEW UNITY MOVEMENT

A. Attitudes about the denominations and the desire to unite with them is evidence of liberalism.

B. Present history of this movement with special emphasis on the Independent Christian Church.

1. We will not take the time to go back in history.
   a. Walter Scott in the 1840's promoted acceptance of and union with the denominations.
   b. In the early 1920's, “The Commission on Unity” was formed.
c. Claude Witty (church of Christ) and James DeForest Murch (Independent Christian Church) started unity meetings with the first in 1937 with several that followed.


e. In the 1960’s Carl Ketcherside and Leroy Garrett championed the doctrine called, “unity in diversity” which made a distinction in Gospel and doctrine.

2. Rubel Shelly deserves much of the credit for this current unity movement.

   (1) He misapplied Mark 9:38-41 to denominations; “And John answered him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followeth not us: and we forbade him, because he followeth not us. 39But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me. 40For he that is not against us is on our part. 41For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward.”
   (2) Errors concerning the condition of the church at Corinth. He claimed Christ and Paul extended fellowship to those in error, so we should.
   (3) He claimed, “There are sincere, knowledgeable, devout Christians scattered among all the various denominations.”

b. In sermons, tracts and books he continued to advocate tolerance, recognition of, and fellowship with people not in the church of Christ.
   (1) His basis was there are two levels of fellowship—big F and little f.
   (2) Big “F” fellowship was based upon those who have obeyed the Gospel. Little “f” fellowship was based upon those who agreed with him.
   (3) Thus, he could have Fellowship (big “F”) with people whom did not agree with him on doctrinal issues (i.e. millennium, church support of orphan homes, instrumental music, women officers and preachers in the church, etc.).

3. The “Restoration Summits.”

a. Alan Cloyd and Don DeWelt arranged the first “restoration summit” Aug. 7-9, 1984, in Joplin, Missouri.
   (1) 50 men from the church of Christ and 50 from the Independent Christian Church met.
   (2) It was by invitation only.
   (3) Suggestions were made that men go home and arrange combined worship services and exchange pulpits with each other.

b. The rest were called Restoration Forums of which several have been held.

C. This has spilt over into fellowship with denominations.

1. On Jan. 5, 1986, Bill Banowsky of the Highland Oaks church in Dallas, TX. spoke at the First Methodist Church dressed in their clerical garb praising the Methodist preacher, telling them they were of the body of Christ.

3. These type of situations have become common among “our liberal brethren.”

D. Some results of this liberalism.
1. Caused us to lose our distinctiveness.
   a. We have a desire to be like the nations around us; 1 Sam. 8:20 “That we also may be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles.”
   b. Made the denominations think they are right with God and all Christians together. We are all in the same boat headed from the same place.
2. Caused us to lost respect for the Word of God.
   a. Its teachings concerning the church.
   b. Its teachings concerning fellowship.
3. Caused us to lose respect for the silence of the scriptures.

IV. THE PREOCCUPATION WITH NUMBERS

A. This problem is manifest in two ways among us:
1. A few years ago, the discipling movement.
2. The church growth movement—often borrowing from Willow Creek Church and other Community Church groups.
3. We have today gone from one large denomination to another grasping for ways to make our religious group swell.
   a. Seeking help outside of God’s Word amounts to disloyalty.
      (1) Psa. 146:3 “Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help.”
      (2) Isa. 31:1 “Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help; and stay on horses, and trust in chariots, because they are many; and in horsemen, because they are very strong; but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the Lord!”
   b. Any criticism to this excitement and “progress” is branded as a narrow-minded opposition to “growth.”
      (1) We hear: “They must be doing something right” because they have great numbers.
      (2) Or we hear: “They must be spiritual, look how many people they have.”
4. Numbers mean nothing in God’s sight.
   a. Numbers are to be left up to God.
      (1) 1 Cor. 3:6-7 “I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.”
      (2) Many today cite numbers as the measure for success.
   b. We have substituted human-centered, sociologically-researched, psychologically-based appeals for the only legitimate appeal.
      (1) The only legitimate appeal is the Truth and love of the Truth.
      (2) John 17:17 “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.”
      (3) 2 The. 2:10 “And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.”
      (4) In our desire to grow we have abandoned the one thing the denominations do not have—Truth; John 8:32 “And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”
   c. People today are being converted to a dynamic human leader, exciting programs, a warm accepting environment, but often not to Christ.
5. Jesus did not seek the help of those who would great on evangelism in His day to aid Him.
   a. Mat. 23:15 “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.”
   b. Even His apostles needed to learn the lesson about growth; Mat. 15:12-14 “Then came his disciples, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying? 13But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. 14“Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.”

B. Truth has never been popular.
   1. Elijah was so outnumbered that he thought he was the only one left.
      a. 1 Kin. 19:14 “And he said, I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts: because the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.”
      b. There were seven thousand that had not bowed the knee to Baal.
         (1) 1 Kin 19:18 “Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him.”
         (2) Seven thousand among hundreds of thousands is not very many.
   2. At first many followed Jesus.
      a. They followed him for the food and miracles.
         (1) John 6:2 “And a great multitude followed him, because they saw his miracles which he did on them that were diseased.”
         (2) John 6:26 “Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled.”
      b. When Jesus taught, they left; John 6:66 “From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.”
   3. We read of the thousands that were converted in the early part of Acts.
      a. 3000 on Pentecost (Acts 2:41), but there were many thousand from all over the world.
      b. These were Jews who were looking for the Messiah and had been trained in the Scriptures. They were ripe for harvest.
      c. Still, the majority of the Jews rejected the Gospel.
   4. We are taught that the majority of people will be lost.
      a. Mat. 7:13-14 “Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: 14Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.”
      b. Mat. 22:14 “For many are called, but few are chosen.”
      c. Luke 13:23-24 “Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved? And he said unto them, 23Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.”

C. How we account for situations where there is great growth.
   1. It might be that the area is ripe for harvest.
      a. This would be the case on Pentecost.
      b. The Macedonian call would be another case; Acts 16:10 “And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them.”
c. John 4:35 “Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest.”

2. It might be that many are being converted to a diluted form of Christianity.
   a. They might have succumbed to high pressure gimmicks or a regimented methodology of a human pyramid organization.
   b. All such is a perverted Gospel.
   c. Gal. 1:6-9 “I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: 7Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. 8But 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. 9As 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.”
   d. This might “win friend and influence people,” but it is not New Testament evangelism.

   1. They did not use:
      a. Elaborate cathedral-like facilities to attract people.
      b. Dynamic speakers to arouse the emotions of men by their speaking skills.
      c. They did not use great programs, and ministries (counseling, seminars, etc.).
      d. Some today boast that their growth is based upon:
         (1) Sufficient building/facilities with the latest equipment.
         (2) A preacher who has a dynamic personality and is a motivator.
         (3) A warm, tolerant, accepting, “no questions asked” environment.
         (4) A dynamic inspirational song leader, etc.
   2. What they did use:
      a. They used the Truth.
      b. Sergius Paulus responded to the doctrine; Acts 13:12 “Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord.”
      c. Rom. 1:16 “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.”
      d. Heb. 4:12 “For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”
   3. Some argue that we must preach things people are interested in, or “meet the needs of the people.”
      a. Jer. 10:23 “O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.”
      b. Man does not know what is best for himself and what he really needs.
      c. God is the only one who really knows what man needs.
         (1) He is man’s Creator.
         (2) We, thus, must allow Him to set the blueprint for preaching, and see what He says are the true concerns of man.

E. We must forget the numbers, let God worry about that. Let us concern ourselves with pleasing God and preaching His will to man.
V. NEW BREED OF PREACHERS

A. The new style and substance of preaching is another evidence of liberalism in the church today.

B. Qualifications for the modern preacher in the church of Christ today.

1. From a negative standpoint (what are not qualifications).
      (1) The Bible used to be the sum and substance of our sermon material.
         (a) 1 Pet. 4:11 “If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.”
         (b) 2 Tim. 4:2 “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.”
         (c) Now book chapter and verse preaching is ridiculed for a more scholarly image.
      (2) At one time we were known for using logic and good sense; cf. Acts 26:25 “But he said, I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness.”
      (3) This is no longer the case.
         (a) Most young men and many of our discontented older men have gone to the religious bookstores, bought denominational books, and began preaching out of them.
         (b) Our preaching is dominated by psychology and man’s perceptions of his needs.
   b. Purity of life.
      (1) At one time purity was demanded of preachers, but this is no longer true.
      (2) 1 Tim. 4:12-16 “Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity. 13 Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. 14 Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. 15 Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all. 16 Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.”

2. From a positive standpoint (what is important).
   a. Now our preaching focuses more on the preacher than the message.
   b. A young man.
      (1) Usually someone who is around 20-30.
      (2) They want a man that is very aggressive (a real go-getter).
   c. Ability to motivate and promote.
      (1) Be able to promote whatever comes up.
      (2) Keep people interested in what is happening.
      (3) Motivate others to get involved with the programs.
   d. A dynamic speaker.
      (1) He must have great speaking skills.
      (2) The content is not important.
      (3) He must be a good “after dinner speaker.”
e. Very personable (charismatic).
   (1) Must be able to entertain and induce excitement.
   (2) Biblical substance has been replaced by emotional stimulation under the guise of “spirituality” and “love.”

f. The denominations have always centered around their preachers, while the church has centered around Christ, the church, and the Truth. Now we are becoming like the denominations and using their approach.

3. The sermons themselves.
   a. Can be irrelevant (they are not important).
      (1) In the past few years, I have seen a downplay of the “foolishness of preaching”; 1 Cor. 1:21 “For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.”
      (2) In looking for a place to preach, I was told by one man that they did not care about the sermon (if it was not very good) as long as the preacher was out socializing.

b. Must deal with personal problems.
   (1) The new breed of preachers know psychology and counseling, but little Bible.
   (2) They deal more with:
      (a) How to be kind, and loving.
      (b) How to win friends and influence people.
      (c) How to be good neighbors.
      (d) How to recover from and deal with grief, etc.

c. They must be inoffensive.
   (1) They must make people “fell good about themselves.”
   (2) Offend no one on any subject.

d. Must not make anyone feel guilty.
   (1) They downplay sin, to the extent that they eliminate it.
   (2) While they might speak about sin, it is always in generalities, or sins that affect no one.

e. Must not be distinctive.
   (1) They do away with the oneness of the church.
   (2) Do not teach that it is sinful to use musical instruments of music in worship to God.

4. Must be competent to counsel.
   a. Counseling is a major part of their work.
   b. Counsel the married, divorced, on the use of money, the young, drugs, etc.

C. In their preaching they have abandoned:
   1. Reproving and rebuking.
      a. 2 Tim. 4:2 “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.”
      b. Jer. 1:10 “See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant.”
2. The doctrinal teachings of the Bible.
   a. 2 Tim. 4:3 “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears”
   b. The church and its worship, work, organization, plan of salvation, etc.
D. Jer. 2:13 “For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.”

VII. **VIEW ON THE HOLY SPIRIT**
A. Teachings and beliefs about the Holy Spirit have become a vehicle for apostasy and liberalism.
B. For years there has been a difference in belief concerning the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.
   1. Those who hold that the Spirit literally and personally dwells in the Christian.
   2. Those who hold that the Spirit does not personally dwell in the Christian but rather lives in the Christian insofar as that Christian is influenced by the Spirit’s Word (the Bible). The Spirit dwells in the Christians representively.
   3. Both of these long held that whichever was right the Spirit only operated upon the Christian only through the Word of God, not directly or miraculously.
C. Today many are teaching a direct leading and guiding of the Spirit.
   1. They claim that the Spirit works separate and apart from the Word, beyond the Word, in addition to the Word, etc.
   2. Many are claiming that the Spirit guides them in what to buy, where to move, what to do, what to say, etc.
      a. One preacher claims that when he is standing in the pulpit and “performing” rather poorly that the Spirit “energizes” him and his enthusiasm to bolster his delivery.
      b. Another preacher claims the Spirit “triggers his mind” when his memory fails in the pulpit.
      c. Another admonishes members who feel the Spirit urging them to join someone who has responded to the invitation to, “don’t fight it, do it.”
D. These new thoughts are nothing more than subjectivism.
   1. It is the desire to be loosed from an authoritative Book (the Bible).
   2. It gives the license to believe, practice, and teach whatever one wants and still feel that he is religious and acceptable.
   3. It leads to more emotionalism mistaking the emotions for spirituality.
E. The Bible is the only medium by which we gain insight, guidance, and strength to live the Christian life.
   1. 2 Tim. 3:16-17 “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.”
   2. 2 Pet. 1:3-11 “According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor
unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. 10Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: 11For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”

VII. THE BUILDING MANIA
A. The emphasis upon fashionable, lavish church buildings is a clear indication of liberalism.
B. God’s Word clearly opposes the extreme lengths to which some are going to surround themselves with extravagance and luxury.
   1. We realize that there is a latitude given in Bible teaching which makes room for human judgment regarding the expense of our facilities.
   2. What we see today as church buildings are nothing more than cathedrals.
      a. One group upon completion of their building called it a “mall.”
      b. These are deliberately built to impress and awe the human mind.
   3. Benjamin Franklin when there was a trend toward this type of extravagance called these buildings, “temples,” “a display of unchristian opulence,” and an “appeal to the lust of the flesh and the pride of life.”
   4. 1 John 2:15-17 “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. 17And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.”
C. The building of gymnasiums and “family life centers” is the result of a misguided effort to address family problems through entertainment and pleasure.
D. One day elders will stand before God to give account of how they have used the Lord’s money.
   1. How will they stand when they have built multimillion dollar facilities when the world is being lost.
   2. How will they answer when they have built extravagant buildings and yet missionaries do not have enough money to live, etc.

VIII. APOSTASY IN CHRISTIAN EDUCATION
A. Ben Franklin once stated, “We did not and could not foresee that colleges could be made a power for evil as well as for good; that all depends upon whose hands they are in; that infidels could be made professors; that worldly-minded men could become professors; that men who are not sound in the faith, have not the love of the Truth, could get control of colleges, and that they could be turned against the very Truth they were built to maintain...we must open our eyes and see what has been done and what is being done.”
   1. Bro. Franklin lived in the mid 1800's.
   2. What he said of then is just as applicable for now.
B. What we see today in Christian education.
   1. Gen. 1-2 taught as “creation hymn,” “myth.”
   2. Existential leap of faith. John Willis writes, “The Bible claims to be inspired of God (2 Tim. 3:16). There is no way to prove or disprove this claim absolutely, although
arguments have been advanced on both sides of the issue. It must be accepted by faith or rejected by unbelief.”
3. That the Bible “contains the Word of God.” instead of the Bible is the Word of God.
4. Most of the Christian colleges of our day have the most liberal men in the brotherhood speak on their lectures.

C. Schools of Preaching
1. They developed because of the Colleges were not doing the job in producing preachers of the Word and their liberalism.
2. They, like the colleges, have developed a mentality in their graduates that no one had better attack their school (you can attack the church, just not their school).
3. Because of the need for money, they (like the colleges) have started to broaden their base of fellowship, and including those whom they would not have fellowshipped previously.

IX. SUPERIOR ATTITUDE OF LIBERALS
A. During the 1800's those who opposed the liberalism of that period were attacked by those of the liberal persuasion.
1. Those who tried to hold the line.
   a. They were called “anti-progressive,” “watchdogs,” “uneducated,” “unaccomplished heresy hunters.”
   b. They were accused of emphasizing “infinitesimal matters.”
   c. They were ridiculed for thinking that, “a complete reproduction of the apostolic church” was necessary or even possible.
2. Those of the liberal persuasion.
   a. They argued that we needed to go beyond our “childhood period” by giving up the “thought, language and understanding of childhood.”
   b. They said we needed to “present ourselves before the world in a vigorous, mature manhood,” “we must hush our childhood prattle about baptism for the remission of sins—these and all such expressions must be thrown away for they belong to the language of our childhood period.”
   c. They agreed with the denominational theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945) when he said man has “come of age.”
B. Today we see much the same.
1. Those who try to hold the line are viciously attacked for their views.
   a. They are ridiculed, and berated.
   b. They are branded as having a “gopher wood mentality,” “knuckleheads,” “heresy-hunters,” “legalist,” “Pharisaical,” “unloving,” “vile,” etc.
2. Those who are of the liberal persuasion:
   a. Ridicule and berate preachers of the past that have gotten us to where we are today.
   b. Present a “holier than thou,” “loving” attitude, while viciously attacking those who differ with them.
   c. They claim to be walking by the “spirit” and not by the “letter of the law.”
3. Such smug superiority is a demonstration of liberalism today.
Conclusion: Brethren, let’s wake up and realize what is going on all around us. Let us humble ourselves under God’s hand and do all we can to stem the tide of liberalism. Let us be bold and courageous, but be gentile, kind, and patient. Let us truly, “speak the truth in love.”