

238 “Emerging Theology”

Readers of these Weekly Reflections will be well aware, from their own experiences and from these pages, that conventional, orthodox, biblical Christianity is under heavy attack these days.

These attacks come from “without”, from strong, well-orchestrated interest groups in society which promote their God-defying agendas loudly and constantly. As a result, prevailing views on a range of social issues have been transformed since 1945, and the general standing of the Christian Faith within society has been decimated.

But these attacks also come from “within”, from within the professing Christian denominations. A liberal approach to Scripture among “Bible critics” became dominant from the early nineteenth century, aided later by Darwinism and then by the profound questions raised by two appalling world wars. The net effect of this has been to place Man above the Word of God, with the freedom for him to pick and choose as he thinks best.

The Church across its denominations thus finds itself confronted with a society that is increasingly dismissive of Christian things, and yet with a Bible in which, by its own choice and folly, it has less and less confidence. In a bid to stay relevant and thus to ensure its own survival, we see why most denominations are running fast to keep up with society’s views, views which are moving strongly away from God’s Word.

This running-fast is well illustrated by a currently popular approach – “emerging theology” - the belief that in each generation the Holy Spirit gives new and newly-relevant light to God’s people. Now no-one disputes the vital work of the Holy Spirit leading God’s people “into all truth” (John 16.13), but that leading will never contradict God’s Word – and if it does so we know this leading is not from the Holy Spirit at all. But the new light of “emerging theology” abandons this Word-aligned safeguard: it grants us permission, perhaps even bestows a duty, to see biblical truth in new ways probably never seen or followed before by our predecessors in the Faith. The Bible thus no longer stands as a permanent depository of God’s Truth, but as an interesting staging-post on the great human journey towards Truth. As a result, anyone who persists these days in following Jesus’ example of “It is written” to settle matters of dispute is an embarrassment to the “emerging theology” supporters.

Here are comments from some Bible-believing members of the General Synod of the Church of England which met recently in York: “I cannot lie; the last 36 hours have been pretty grim and there is no doubt that orthodox Christians are left feeling afflicted, perplexed, persecuted and struck down” / “God is not mocked. The laughter and lack of respect for those who bravely gave the alternate case* was beyond words. Bruised, battered, bullied, betrayed, bewildered” (* meaning the biblical case) / “but we must be in no doubt that what has happened here in York will have serious consequences for all of us in the Church of England” / “But it is not the details of the motions or the numbers of votes that is the real concern; instead it is the 'atmosphere' - there is an arrogance with which God is mocked that we have not

seen before - it seems that God may well have given us up to debased minds to do what ought not to be done (Romans 1:28)".

Such comments arise from the governing body of the Church of England, the Church which is committed to doing nothing "that is contrary to God's Word written" (Article XX, Book of Common Prayer). Clearly "emerging theology" is carrying the day, (expressly at present over the so-called LGBT agenda), implying that now every "It is written" biblical doctrine we have been given can become fair game for "discussion".

Now what is happening these days is nothing new: false teachers, false doctrine and false practice – the devil's tares - were quickly planted among the good seed within the Lord's field from the earliest days of the Church (Matthew 13.37-43). We are told clearly and repeatedly in God's Word that such falsehoods would be widespread in "the last days" (eg., II Thessalonians 2.1-12 / I Timothy 4.1-3 / II Timothy 3.1-7 / II Peter 2 & 3), and the indications around us point strongly towards our being in those "last days" right now.

Bible-upholding Christians will of course continue to "earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude verse 4). That has never been easy or pleasant, but we can all take heart from Paul's great words before Festus – "I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness" (Acts 26.25).

And he did! And so should we.

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