

IS MODERNISM MODERN?

Our task is to find the true answer to the question: "Is Modernism Modern?". As one meditates upon this subject, the words of Solomon in Ecclesiastes 1:9-10 cannot help but be pressed indelibly upon his mind. "That which hath been is that which shall be; and that which hath been done is that which shall be done; and there is no new thing under the sun. Is there a thing whereof it may be said, see, this is new? It hath been long ago, in the ages which were before us."

HISTORY REPEATS ITSELF

The force of this statement and that of Solomon will be readily attested by any true student of the story of by-gone days. Realizing that this civilization of ours runs in definite cycles, and that human behaviour is constant, one can readily see the value of the study of the days that are past and their happenings. Such a study affords not only a ready interpretation of current events, but a glimpse into the future as well. Solomon was certainly correct in stating: "There is no new thing under the sun."

THIS BEING TRUE, IT IS ENTIRELY POSSIBLE THAT MODERNISM IS A MERE REPETITION OF SOME CHURCH HERESY BITTERLY FOUGHT AND STRUGGLED AGAINST IN AGES PAST. The repetition of history holds true not only in the secular field but in the passing annals of church heresy as well. Our study at this time will establish the integrity of this statement.

To clarify our quest, let us first ask:

WHAT IS MODERNISM?

Modernism is that branch of infidelity which, denying the Bible's claim to infallibility and ignoring the possibility of the supernatural, turns the guns of destructive criticism upon the sacred Book, and strives to tear it apart piece by piece. Do not assume that this is an overstatement. That word "infidelity" merely means "without faith", an apt description for that critical school which depends entirely upon knowledge. Modernism is infidelity trying to parade itself in the garb of scholarship and religion. As for the latter part of the definition, it is literally true that Modernists strive to rend the narrative of the Bible piece by piece. The Pentateuch, against which destructive criticism was first exercised, is divided by them into four separate tribal traditions and stories. These they term the "J" document (or story), the "E" document, the "P" document, and the "D" document. The prophets are broken into little fragments by various unknown authors, and even the writings of Paul are dissected and attributed to the pens of other men. Under the Modernist, the whole Bible suffers from disintegration and mutilation.

THE DESTRUCTIVE CRITIC (MODERNIST) WHOLLY ELIMINATES THE SUPERNATURAL ELEMENT IN THE HISTORY AND RELIGION OF THE BIBLE. Even some who do not go so far, leave but little standing. The history of the first five books of the Bible, down to the time of the Kings is largely given up. Genesis is a legend; Exodus is hardly more than trustworthy; Joshua is a romance. The histories

of the kings of Israel and Judah are "written up" by a later theocratic scholar who gathers his material from sources now unknown. None of the laws, not even the ten Commandments, are allowed to have come from Moses for sure. Monotheism--the belief in one God--is said to have begun with Amos and Hosea; earlier, Jehovah was just a "tribal" God. The Ark of the Covenant, the tabernacle in the wilderness, the priesthood, and the Jewish feasts as depicted in the Pentateuch are no more than post-exilic fiction.

IN THE FIELD OF NEW TESTAMENT CRITICISM, THE MODERNIST HAS DEVELOPED THE "HISTORICAL-CRITICAL" SCHOOL. This radical school is intensely aggressive, treating the text and history of the gospels with a recklessness to which no limits can be put. Jesus is a mere man, who happened to fit into the religious situation of His time, even as George Washington fitted into the political situation of his time. Some of the ideas of Jesus were wrong, and He was continually changing His mind, according to the historical critics. What the gospel writers report about Jesus is hardly worthy of credence, and most of what Jesus is reported to have said, was merely put into his mouth by the gospel "compilers." These gospel "compilers" merely wrote the traditions and legends about Jesus current in that day. It is even doubted that Jesus claimed to be the Messiah. Sayings are accepted, rejected or mutilated at pleasure. If you will allow a personal experience, your speaker has heard one of the apt and "learned" scholars of Modernism make this

statement in regard to the baptism of Jesus as reported by the gospel writers: "That could very well be historical, because it sounds historical." (Such statements lead one to doubt the name "scholar" as applied to these individuals!) Whatever pleases the individual in his own mind is accepted as the words of Christ--all else is rejected. One may almost say that this "historical-critical" school goes to such excesses, that it will finally cure itself.

THIS DESTRUCTIVE CRITICISM OF THE BIBLE RISES FROM A MISAPPLICATION OF A VERY WORTHY BIBLICAL SCIENCE CALLED HIGHER CRITICISM. Higher criticism is that field of scientific endeavor which tends to establish the date, background, integrity, authenticity and genuineness of the Bible writings. It deals, in the stricter sense, with the background of the Bible books. However, Higher Criticism in the hands of those tending toward Modernism inevitably widens out into illimitable regions where exact science cannot follow it, where, often the critic's imagination is his only law. Indeed, so far have these modernists twisted the field of higher criticism, that they dabble in the field of lower criticism (that which deals with the text of the Bible itself), trying to get behind the existing texts of the Bible and show how these "grew" from simpler beginnings into what they now are. Such actions are not in keeping with the field of Higher Criticism, and this misuse and misapplication of a science which is capable of much good has in many cases turned a fine science into a curse.

MODERNISM AND DESTRUCTIVE CRITICISM HAD ITS ORIGIN NOT IN THE UNITED STATES, OR GREAT BRITAIN, OR CANADA-- BUT WAS INCUBATED IN A PAGAN AND GODLESS GERMANY. Out of Deism, that religion teaching only the existence of a God, who works all things through nature alone, and Atheism, that line of thought which denies the existence of a God, came German Rationalism. Modernism is the very essence of German Rationalism; all modernistic theories are based upon the lines of thought postulated by the German Rationalists. German Rationalism and Modernism in many cases lead to their basic postulates, Deism and Atheism.

THE LAST CRY OF THE MODERNIST--HIS LAST LINE OF DEFENSE--THE STRONGEST WEAPON WHICH HE CAN USE IN HIS BEHALF IS A "THUS SAY THE SCHOLARS." Their only reason for belief is "the scholars say so." The scholars to whom they inevitably refer are those of Germany, who started this movement of infidelity and are still espousing it. Such "scholars" as Eichborn, Semler, Graf and Wellhausen are quoted. At this point let me interject this sagacious observation made by a famous Bible teacher in Abilene Christian College. "A scholar is the man who has made an extensive and intensive study in a certain field, and comes to a conclusion that agrees with what you already know to be right." In other words, the scholar is the man who agrees with you!.

THIS GERMAN RATIONALISM, PROFOUNDED BY THESE GERMAN SCHOLARS, PLACED GERMANY WHERE SHE IS TODAY. First, they undermined the religious life of the nation and

made their fatherland a Godless country. Upon such a people, it is easy for a dictator to work his miracles of mob psychology and lead them into whatever course he may choose.

THIS PREDICTION UPON THE BASIS OF PAST HISTORY: LET MODERNISM GAIN CONTROL OF THE UNITED STATES AND SHE WILL SUFFER THE FATE OF GERMANY.

There is your Modernism, destructive in its every detail, leading finally to Godlessness and Atheism. Let us be reminded just here that Modernism is not just something that is spoken of by preachers; it is very real, and a very present menace to our civilization. Modernists stand in many of the pulpits of our country today. I challenge every individual listening to this broadcast to see their preacher and make him take a definite stand on this vital question. Our boys and girls, our young men and women are being indoctrinated with such infidelity in our schools--not only in secular schools, but in many religious schools as well. Seminaries all over the United States wreak with this doctrine which would undermine our religion, destroy our nation, and bring bitterness to our souls.

But let us not become discouraged. The church of the Lord Jesus Christ has fought this battle before. And Christ shall again be the victor.

THE VERY NAME "MODERNISM" IS A CONTRADICTION WITHIN ITSELF. This present-day movement is only a re-hashing of old theories, the falacies of which have been shown centuries ago. Before our lesson is through, we will

see that even the Apostle Paul had this same battle to fight.

THE GREATEST ENEMY THE CHURCH HAS EVER HAD FROM WITHOUT HAS BEEN GNOSTICISM. This term comes from the Greek word 'gnosis' meaning "knowledge." This church heresy invaded Christianity about the middle of the second century, although, and please note this, it had its beginning rooted far into the past. The church's battle with Gnosticism from the second through the fourth centuries was the greatest crisis experienced by Christianity in all of its history.

WHAT IS GNOSTICISM?

This is a hard question, for Gnosticism almost defies a set definition. It was not a homogenous system of religion, but rather a way of thinking embracing many widely diversified sects. One of these sects which was affected by Gnosticism in the first century was one closely associated with Christianity--the Essene sect of the Jews. The doctrine of Essenic Judaism and Gnosticism are so closely related that the former can well be termed Judaistic Gnosticism. This is that group against which Paul wrote in his epistle to the Colossians, and against which John wrote his first epistle. This same group caused Paul to caution the Romans and the Corinthians about the dangers of human wisdom.

According to Dr. Lightfoot, the doctrine of Gnosticism can be classed under three heads. (1) Intellectual exclusiveness. The sect was true to its name.

Knowledge reigned supreme, and those who were initiated into the realm of high knowledge were far above all others. To them knowledge was superior to faith. (2) Speculative tenets. The Gnostics dealt in speculation, trying to reason in their minds concerning the origin of the world and the existence of evil. They wrestled with the latter problem until finally many of them came to believe there was no such thing as evil insofar as the spirit was concerned. (3) Practical errors. This included two opposite ethical rules reaped from their philosophy--on the one hand, asceticism, against which Paul wrote in Colossians 2:20-23, and on the other hand unrestrained license.

Time allows no further discussion of the Gnostic movement. We must make our application. Let us list on one hand the tenets, beliefs, and practices of Gnosticism, and on the other hand, the tenets, beliefs, and practices of Modernism.

GNOSTICISM

1. Supremacy of knowledge over faith.
2. Speculatory theories.
3. A disbelief in the supernatural.
4. Docetism--the denial of the coming of Christ in the flesh.
5. Denial of the Old Testament Scriptures as having come from God.

MODERNISM

1. Supremacy of knowledge over faith.
2. Speculatory theories.
3. A rejection of the miracles.
4. A denial of the Bible doctrine of the sonship and pre-existence of Christ.
5. A rejection of the Bible claim to inspiration.

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| 6. Lofty claims of superior knowledge; Esoterism. | 6. Claims of superior knowledge; certain men put in a class by themselves as "scholars". |
| 7. Denial of the effect of sin upon the soul. | |
| 8. Denial of the atonement and of Christ as the Saviour. | 7. Denial of the existence of sin. |
| | 8. Denial of the power of Christ's blood, and of the efficacy of the death on the cross. |

IT IS EASILY SEEN HOW TEACHING OF THIS SORT STRIKES AT THE ROOT OF ALL RELIGION AND MORALITY. The existence of moral evil, the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ, the redemption which He accomplished for the world, His resurrection, the whole significance of His person and His work--all is denied. This is the spirit and the meaning of second century Gnosticism and twentieth century Modernism.

In this, our main point of defense, may we have the courage, knowledge and zeal of those valiant men of old who have fought the battle before us--Paul, Peter, Jude and John. Let us look the issue squarely in the face, and expose this infidelity which is garbed in the clothing of religion. For we know that regardless of all the critics can say or do, the Lord Jesus has promised us victory at last. "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall never pass away."