



Storming Fortresses

For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh,
but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.

2 CORINTHIANS 10:4

Vol. 22; No.01

©Copyright, 2003

January, 2003

Thought Provoker:

GREAT ART THOU, O LORD, AND GREATLY TO BE PRAISED; GREAT IS THY POWER, AND THY WISDOM INFINITE. AND THEE WOULD MAN PRAISE; MAN, BUT A PARTICLE OF THY CREATION; MAN, THAT BEARS ABOUT HIM HIS MORTALITY, THE WITNESS OF HIS SIN, THE WITNESS THAT THOU RESISTEST THE PROUD: YET WOULD MAN PRAISE THEE; HE, BUT A PARTICLE OF THY CREATION. THOU AWAKEST US TO DELIGHT IN THY PRAISE; FOR THOU MADEST US FOR THYSELF, AND OUR HEART IS RESTLESS, UNTIL IT REPOSE IN THEE.

SAINT AUGUSTINE

Keeping the Faith ... or Not!

By

Murray McLeod-Boyle

Introduction

“Curiosity killed the cat!” So says the old proverb. Well, it is also good at killing a few other things; like brain cells and the belief that Hollywood can be neutral. Some time ago Touchstone Pictures released the movie, *Keeping the Faith*. Whilst it was billed as a comedy, I could not escape that uneasy feeling given to me by the fact that two of the three lead characters were ‘men of the cloth.’

This uneasy feeling is one that has built up over the years. It is primarily due to the fact that no one seems capable of portray-

ing a MOTC (man/men of the cloth) that is anywhere near to normal. They are either demented psychopaths who froth at the mouth when they talk always and only about sex and Hell or they are so effeminate that they get the lead role as “Mary” every Christmas.

So, resisting the temptation, I waited for the idiot box (television) to carry it for free (saving \$2.00 and destroying thousands of brain cells with those con-founded ads). To my great satisfaction and absolute disappointment it turned out to be exactly what I had thought. It was a load of

humanistic nonsense that had nothing to do with “Keeping” and even less to do with “Faith.”

Not wanting to waste the time spent enduring this concoction, I thought it best to inflict it upon you, the unsuspecting readers.

No, seriously, movies of this type really present us with a challenge. The characters they portray are becoming more of a reality and less of a fictitious creation by playwrights. This is particularly true in regard to the liberalising of the Church. Conservatives, although very different to those of yesteryear, are still

STORMING FORTRESSES is published monthly by REFORMATION MINISTRIES, a non-denominational organisation committed to maintaining and implementing Biblical truth as reasserted by the Reformers.

STORMING FORTRESSES is sent free of charge to all who request it.

We would ask that those who receive STORMING FORTRESSES prayerfully consider how they may support this work. Donations are gratefully received and can be made by Cheque, Credit Card (Visa, Master and Bank) or Money Order.

Amounts payable in Australian currency. Cheques and Money orders made payable to:

REFORMATION MINISTRIES,
PO Box 1656,
THURINGOWA CENTRAL,
QLD 4817

©Copyright, 2003. All material published in STORMING FORTRESSES remain the property of its author.

Permission to reprint material from STORMING FORTRESSES in any format, apart from short quotations for review purposes, must be obtained from the copyright owner.

vilified for their stand, if and when they take one.

Those who hold to the orthodox position and call themselves ‘conservatives’ are going to come under increasing pressure ‘to change,’ ‘to get with the times,’ and ‘to be relevant.’ The seeds are already being sown. What we write here, we do in the hope that to be forewarned is to be forearmed.

The Plot

“Keeping the Faith” revolves around three principal characters, two male and one female. Basically, we are introduced to an inseparable

trio, inseparable that is, until young Anna’s family shift away. We then skip to the lives of the two men as they find their way in their chosen professions. Jacob and Brian have remained best friends despite the obvious differences in their beliefs. You see, Jacob Schram is a Rabbi and Brian Finn is a Roman Catholic priest.

This should set the stage for a few fireworks. After all, the central belief of Catholicism is supposedly the person of Christ, Son of God. This is, of course, anathema to the Jew. However, there is little need for a fire extinguisher as both are committed to the modern idea that “faith” is what you make it. In other words, “all roads lead to Rome or Jerusalem,” which in the end is the same place known by different names. Each has a valid faith expression and each seeks to *break* the historic shackles in order to bring their message to the modern age.¹

Rabbi Schram, who would better wear the name ‘Sham’, modernises worship, modernises the message, and generally lacks anything that would be considered reverent. Father Finn is of the same ilk, though less obviously so.

Then, out of the blue, Anna phones and says she will be in town and would like to catch up. The upshot is that the unholy Rabbi Schram agrees to enter a casual and sexual re-

lationship with Anna. This is a ‘no strings attached’ agreement which seems to suit both parties. This relationship continues behind Father Brian’s back until Anna decides she loves the rabbi and seeks a more solid relationship. When confronted with this the rabbi drops the ball because of historic and religious pressure. At the same time Father Brian falls in love with Anna and seeks an opportunity to express this.

As Rabbi Schram is coming up for his last gasp, he uses what could be his last sermon to address those attending the synagogue. He stands up and basically says, he was wrong for not trusting the people to understand. He then does the emotional heart string tug with, ‘This is *Yom Kippur* it is all about forgiveness. Please forgive me for not trusting you.’² With this, the rabbi escapes being removed from his office.

Whilst there are sub plots, for example, Anna secretly taking lessons on Judaism, the very obvious omission is that there are no negative comments about the fornication. When the situation becomes known the greatest problem seems to be that Schram has not copulated with a Jewess. Breaking of tradition becomes a greater wrong than breaking God’s Word.

Now, it goes without saying that

1. It is here that we meet the modern usage of “faith” and not a Biblical one. When the Scriptures are studied, one will see that “faith” is a belief in the credible, tangible, and ineffable works of God as expressed in and by His revelation in history—most particularly in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Faith is founded upon the reality of what God has done and what He says He is going to do. It is not blind. It is not the existentialist’s idea of a voice calling through the smoke saying, “Jump! I will catch you.” Even less so, is it the modern idea that “faith” is what you make it and that each faith expression is as valid as the next. Consistent with modern thought, this approach makes man the architect and finisher of his own faith. It is tailor made to the individual. It is therefore unassailable because it is made by the individual for the individual. It is subjective and cannot be touched by the outside world. This has a parallel for the Christian in certain pietistic beliefs which I term as “Me and Jesus on the inside.” A subjective belief system that cannot be touched or criticised by any other. It overrules the objective. It disarms God’s appointed officers. It leads to an antinomian and anarchistic Christianity.
2. Note that the offence is one that goes no further than human interaction. There is no concept that Divine Law has been transgressed and that propitiation must be made.

the Jew and the Catholic share much of the same revelation—Genesis to Malachi to be precise. Within those books you will find a clear denunciation of the practice in which Rabbi Schram so willingly engaged (Exodus 22:16; Deuteronomy 22:13-29; Proverbs 5:1-6). Despite this shared standard there are no raised eyebrows, words of condemnation, or reference to the displeasure of God.

God is, of course, irrelevant. The modern man makes his own ‘faith’ and ‘keeps’ it as he will. This is nothing less than humanism come into its own. The difficulty for most is that when it arrives clothed in ecclesiastical tradition and wearing a dog-collar or prayer-shawl it becomes a little harder to distinguish and to combat.

The reasons for this are varied, but all have one common fault—they begin with man and not God!

The liberality shown and condoned by this Hollywood story reflects the state of many denominations. As we shall see later, there are pushes to revamp denominations without changing the actual traditions and beliefs of that denomination. The only way this can be achieved is by the old existentialist’s trick of “reinterpretation.” This is done by using existing words and terms, but with a completely new meaning—a meaning that is not immediately defined. The idea being that you enter dialogue and begin to accept the other person/view because you are lead to believe that you are on the same track. Further along that track, you may wise up, but by that time many have been subtly hooked. In such a climate we must affirm our beliefs and understand what we mean by the statements made therein.

Scripture

One of the real tests for ‘keeping the faith’ is our belief in Scripture—

beginning with God and not man. This is, in a very real sense, the watershed. Included in this is the often overlooked field of “Hermeneutics”. Hermeneutics is the discipline that deals with the rules that are used in interpretation. It is therefore vitally important that one not only affirm a belief in Scripture, but also that one affirm a *Biblical* hermeneutic.

When Applied Christianity is criticised and debunked by many moderns, it is done so on the basis of hermeneutics—I would say, a failure to derive and apply a hermeneutic commensurate with our theology. People often focus on doctrines or theologies, but the critical point is, how do we arrive at those doctrines? Are they derived with the use of precise, Scriptural rules for interpretation or are they formed using our imaginations, scientific research or in reaction to humanistic pressure.

When our forefathers recorded the Church’s beliefs, it is interesting to note that they did not overlook principles of interpretation. The framers of the Westminster Confession opened their work with a declaration about Scripture. This declaration is informative. The very fact that Scripture is given priority shows that they were convinced of Scripture’s primacy. In other words, this was the source from which all else flowed.

Therefore, the first chapter contains statements like these:

The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man’s salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit or traditions of men. (2 Tim. 3:15–17, Gal. 1:8–9, 2 Thess. 2:2) Nevertheless, we ac-

knowledge the inward illumination of the Spirit of God to be necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the Word: (John 6:45, 1 Cor 2:9–12) and that there are some circumstances concerning the worship of God, and government of the Church, common to human actions and societies, which are to be ordered by the light of nature, and Christian prudence, **according to the general rules of the Word**, which are always to be observed. (1 Cor. 11:13–14, 1 Cor. 14:26,40)

And again:

All things in Scripture are not alike plain in themselves, nor alike clear unto all: (2 Pet. 3:16) yet those things which are necessary to be known, believed, and observed for salvation, are so clearly propounded, and opened in some place of Scripture or other, that not only the learned, but the unlearned, in a due use of the ordinary means, may attain unto a sufficient understanding of them. (Ps. 119:105,130).

The Divines, however, were not content to leave us with these lofty statements alone. They knew more was necessary. It was not simply enough to say that they believed in the Bible. After all, they were about to summarise what was said by the Bible. As a result they had to teach us their methodology so that we could assess the validity of their work. More importantly, they had to teach us this methodology as it is itself a Biblical method, and one which forms an integral part of Scripture’s teaching. Consequently in this same first chapter they wrote:

The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself: and therefore, when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture (which is not manifold, but one), it must be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly (2 Pet. 1:20–21, Acts 15:15–16).³

The framers of the Belgic Confession shared this conviction:

We believe that **those Holy Scriptures fully contain the will of God**, and that whatsoever man ought to believe unto salvation is sufficiently taught therein. For since the whole manner of worship which God requires of us is written in them at large, it is unlawful for any one, though an apostle, to teach otherwise than we are now taught in the Holy Scriptures: *nay, though it were an angel from heaven*, as the apostle Paul says. For since it is forbidden to *add unto or take away anything from the Word of God*, it does thereby evidently appear that the doctrine thereof is most perfect and complete in all respects.

Neither may we consider any writings of men, however holy these men may have been, of equal value with those divine Scriptures, nor ought we to consider custom, or the great multitude, or antiquity, or succession of times and persons, or councils, decrees or statutes, as of equal value with the truth of God, since the truth is above all; *for all men are of themselves liars, and more vain than vanity itself*. Therefore we reject with all our hearts whatsoever does not agree with **this infallible rule**, as the apostles have taught us, saying, Prove the spirits, whether they are of God. Likewise: *If any one cometh unto you, and bringeth not this teaching, receive him not into your house*.⁴

This second statement may not be as comprehensive as that given by the

Divines, but the key ingredients are still discernible. The Scriptures are said to contain all that man ought to believe “unto salvation.”⁵ Then in the second paragraph we are given a list of things which are not suitable standards to be used in interpretation. In this statement, Scripture is left as the only rule by which we are to interpret Scripture.

In light of our heritage, how do we fare today? Do we make affirmations that we deny with our interpretive principles? Are our interpretive principles in line with our affirmations? Last, Are our statements of faith orthodox?

With these questions, and many of a similar nature, in mind, let us take a look at the modern situation.

The Modern Situation

As one may suspect, an overview of the Christian landscape reveals some horrific sights. The sobering aspect is that the cases are wide spread. It is not that one rotten apple has given the rest a bad name. On the contrary, the rot has spread to the point where most exhibit some aberration.

1. Liberal Influence

Within Australia, the Uniting Church (UC) has to be the leader in liberalism and the denial of all things Biblical.⁶ The danger presented by the UC is the same as that posed above. Ideas are disseminated by an

organisation that declares itself a church and which claims to have some Biblical warrant and authority.

United Theological College is “the recognised college of the NSW Synod of the Uniting Church in Australia.” A perusal of the site is informative. It is one of those sites where you must dig. Nothing is offered openly. Search on the “Bible” or on “Scripture” and you will not find a definitive statement about either. What I did find was a discussion on “Exegesis and Interpretation.”⁷

This page begins by stating that, “The two extremes in theological terms for interpretation are the *fundamentalist* and *liberal*.” The fundamentalist we are told will “take every word in the bible as literal; Bring the words in the bible to the present but also copy the bible’s context and try to reproduce it in the present”; and last of all the fundamentalist will, “Think that all other interpretations are wrong.”

We are further instructed that these fundamentalists have created great harm. “In history, fundamentalist interpretations have hurt many people. Just think of what a male God preferring a male identity can do to women. Fundamentalist interpretations also find it hard to understand situations that are new or are cultural/contextual. For example, when a fundamentalist encounters a culture different from his/her own, the reaction

3. Westminster Assembly, The Westminster Confession of Faith, (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.) 1995. 1:6, 1:7, and 1:9. Bold added.

4. Brannan, Rick; Editor, *Historic Creeds and Confessions*, (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems) 1997. Article 7. Bold added.

5. At this point a quick word is necessary. The term “salvation” is used in a much broader way than generally used today. We have become saturated by the narrow modern view that salvation is only, ‘Come to Jesus and be saved!’ The writers of both confessions realised that salvation did not stop there. A way of life is implied and commanded. This is borne out by the reference to the worship of God.

6. We note here that on or around the July 18, 2003, the Uniting Church accepted that homosexuals can be ordained.

7. <http://www.utc.uca.org.au/private/bud110/issues.htm> accessed 05/03/2003. All following quotations are from this site unless otherwise noted.

is of overcoming the culture with the 'gospel' rather than learning or sharing."

In contrast to these people we have the other extreme, the liberal. "The liberal interpreter on the other hand can: not take the words of Jesus seriously; understand God as a concept and abstract; be too rational and scientific in understanding faith."

This said we are given some good advice, supposedly. "As with most things, the best thing to do is to find a place in the middle. A place that understands that our faith is founded on the words and faith of Jesus, but one that also sees the importance of interpreting those words and faith in light of our own context—that is, **our own words and faith.**"⁸

Well there you have it folks! Keeping the Faith in the year 2003. I am not sure about you, but such decisive arguments have left me speechless; fortunately, I can still type.

The words presented here by the UTC are exactly the insidious and odorous aberrations of which we were speaking. Note how calmly and coolly this argument is put forward. In the first instance, it is proper to

note that no commentary is given on the dangers of "liberal" interpretations. Secondly, how accurate are these definitions? Not very. I would easily fit the "fundamentalist" tag. I gladly where the name.⁹ Yet I find it strange that I have failed so dismally. I do not have a parapet on my roof. I am sure my wife went to work this morning in modern dress and not a sheet. When I sinned recently, I asked for forgiveness. I did not send my wife to sharpen up the butchers knife so I could remove, hand, eye etc., etc. I deal in Australian dollars, might as well be Monopoly money, not shekels (weight of metal as a price), minas, drachmas, denarii or lepton. I travel by motor car, push bike and aeroplane, not by donkey, and last, but by no means least, I wear trousers and boots, not a sheet and sandals.

This leaves only two possibilities. Either I am a failure as a fundamentalist or the definition given is so overly simplistic that it becomes erroneous.

I am taking the second option.

That this is so, has nothing to do with the fact that as a fundamentalist I consider all other interpretations as

automatically wrong. It has to do with the very commentary given which belies the underlying predisposition of the author. When fundamentalism is attacked we are given the ideas of "a male God preferring male identity" and of "overcoming the culture with the 'gospel'" as examples of how it has failed. Yet there is no attempt to prove the case.

At no stage does the author attempt to grapple with the fact that the Bible always uses male pronouns to describe God.¹⁰ Off course this is a mute argument because the Bible was written by men.¹¹ *Ipso facto* it was written by male repressionists whose sole aim was to suppress women.¹² To illustrate this we look at the author's attempt to clarify "eisegesis." They state, "Many people in history have said and thought that the story of Adam and Eve and the fall means that the woman, Eve, is to blame. They have made Eve out to look like the guilty one who tricked Adam into not doing what God said. **These people were all male** and read into (eisegesis) the text their own way of looking at the world."¹³

This statement is as erroneous as that which the author attempts to refute. The error here stems directly

8. Bold added.

9. I gladly embrace the term "fundamentalist" for what it truly stands for. Media have used this term for radicals, but there is a huge difference between the two. Radicals betray their cause because they abuse and deny the very principles they say they are fighting for. Fundamentalists are those who believe in and uphold the essential principles of their belief system. The fundamentals of anything are the basic building blocks necessary to support the structure. In Christianity those fundamentals are our foundation. Scripture declares that to be the Prophets, Apostles and Christ. We are the temple erected on that foundation. Would you deny these fundamentals? If so you condemn the temple erected thereon.

10. The question that really poses the problem is, What about Jesus? Jesus is eternal. When He came as Man, He could have Come as Woman. Why did He not? If the Godhead can be male or female and gender is unimportant, why did the Godhead chose to continue with this male repressionist idea which should be offensive to them?

11. Once more the inference is an un-Biblical one. 2 Peter 1:20-21 clearly states that man did not speak of himself. Rather it was men moved of the Holy Spirit. What was written came from God. Either we believe it or deny it? Is Scripture true or is it not?

12. It a shame that the feminist wannabe theologians do not study Ruth and Esther before launching the diatribe like invectives against "men" and the repression by "patriarchal" societies.

13. <http://www.utc.uca.org.au/utc.bak/private/bud110/whatisexegesis.htm> accessed on 05/03/2003. Bold added.

from the failure to allow the text to speak for itself. Rather, we are subjected to a statement that is as equally maleficent as that which the author seeks to reject. The fact is that the text condemns all parties. Genesis 3:14-15 directs a curse at the serpent. 3:16 is directed at Eve for her part. Whilst 3:17f is directed at Adam because he was foolish enough to follow Eve's advice contrary to God's command. It is also important to note that Eve was commanded to abstain from eating as was Adam. So when she ate, she had transgressed the express command of God. In this action she brought death to herself. Adam's foolish capitulation brought death to humanity.

This is the danger. Understand it well. One corrupt view is claimed to be the majority view when in fact it is not. To counter this, an equally erroneous view is put forward as the truth, but nowhere is it substantiated by reference to the text. When I was a boy, they called this "Building a straw man." Now it seems to be called "Academia."

2. Culture and Religion

Another important aspect that flows from the above is the emphasis upon our cultural perspective. If you read the definitions given above carefully, what they are saying is that we in our time become the measure of what is right. This subjective approach is a key element in liberalism. The individual decides what is applicable. The individual validates the text by what he/she brings to it. There is nothing of the idea that the Word was given by God as His message to Man. There is no sense of authority, of obedience, or of humility. That this is so is clearly seen when the au-

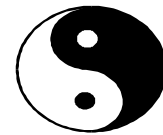
thor, in attempting a *via media*, states that the middle ground is, "A place that understands that our faith is founded on the words and faith of Jesus, but one that also sees the importance of interpreting those words and faith in light of our own context—that is, our own words and faith." In this scheme the interpretation from *our* standpoint becomes the guiding principle in or hermeneutic, not the fact the Jesus is the Theanthropos Who speaks authoritatively and Who therefore is to be obeyed.¹⁴

The nett result is that the Biblical message is made to conform to our culture and not our culture to the Biblical message. Thus we need to spend a few moments on this subject.

It is wrong to equate culture and religion as the same thing. Similarly, it is foolish to divorce the two and view them as having no relationship to each other. The beliefs of a society (religion) will always work themselves into the laws, lives, and nature of that society (culture). Some things will be neutral. Whether you drive on the right or left-hand side of the road is a matter that has no moral or ethical bearing. However, if a society devalues life this emphasis will be worked out in the laws and customs particular to that nation. Whether it

be leaving babies to die, allowing wives (and women in general) to be mistreated, sending young men to die on foolish crusades, or neglecting a health system in favour of establishing a casino.

This is the point rarely addressed when the question of immigration is raised. People talk of culture in a neutral context. Issues such as food and dress are highlighted. What about the belief system that is brought to the new country? I remember a case in Victoria where an immigrant hired a hit-man to kill his daughter because she refused to go through with an arranged marriage. Cultural clash? Yes. Clash of ideas? Even, more



so. A new country, but the old ways—obstacles were removed, even with the barrel of a gun.

What's new?

"Glo-

balisation and the many cultures in Australia forces us to think about what our own culture and context, geographic and social – economic/Socio-political, has to do with the way we interpret the bible. You and I cannot say that one universal way of doing theology, or understanding God, is the only way any more.¹⁵ We must take into account that we see the

¹⁴. It must also be noted that the author makes the classic distinction of singling out Jesus' words. These are, in the Liberal's estimation, the only words to be dealt with.

¹⁵. No right or wrong. No authoritative Word from God which is to be obeyed. Just a blind science built on subjective elements of society, political belief, and geographical location.

world, and God,¹⁶ differently and that these differences are part of the entire picture.

Most important is that God talks through humans and since not all humans are the same (for example I am South American) then God speaks in may different ways. It is our job to listen, learn and share.”¹⁷

Somebody pass the sick bags! The total and utter thrust of this statement is that every culture is valid. God will speak through humans in any culture. We cannot have a full picture until all cultures have added their piece to the God-mosaic. Last, but by no means least, there is no objective revelation, no authoritative revelation, no standard by which any contribution is measured or can be measured, and there is no hope for understanding. God is Dead!

What is here meant to be instruction by the UTC on how to conduct Biblical exegesis is nothing more than an apology for feministic, liberal belief that has nothing whatsoever to do with the Bible, God, salvation, redemption, life, Jesus Christ, ...! It is a message of death. It is man stating, in religious terms, that everyone is fine and that their individual expression is valid.

Before concluding this section, we need to note that UTC is not alone in this type of enterprise or belief. On the Charles Sturt University website

you will find reference to the Designated Research Group who are looking at “Public and Contextual Theology.” Here is their statement:

A research group in the area of Public and Contextual Theology breaks new ground in the theological scene in Australia. Traditionally theology has been undertaken within the narrow ecclesial environment ignoring the wider contexts. The twin foci of the Research Group – both public and contextual – point to an overriding concern for questions and issues relevant in contemporary society in the Australian setting. Public theology is concerned with the engagement in dialogue of the received faith tradition with wider social and intellectual concerns of the day. Contextual theology in Australia takes account of our pluralist, multicultural society as it is evidenced in the dispersed population groups of our sparsely populated land. The context created by aboriginal settlement, colonisation and progress to nationhood provides the perspective from which the various strands of theology are drawn upon to provide a unique resource for the tasks of theology.¹⁸

Confused by this babble? Do not concern yourselves. It is pure intellectualism for, ‘We are doing something new (read-induced by humanistic belief.) so that we (read-those of us who deny the Bible as institutions but outwardly seek some popular religious expression.) may

be more relevant to our society.

If you examine the text carefully you will note a good number of omissions. First, it does not mention God. Second, it does not mention Christ. Third, it does not mention the Holy Spirit. Fourth, it does not mention the Bible. Fifth, it does not mention sin. Sixth, it does not mention salvation. Seventh, it does not mention atonement. Eighth, it does not mention faith in a true Biblical sense. It only mentions a “received faith tradition.” Ninth, it does not mention grace. Tenth, it does not mention law.

I am not seeking to fill the pages with useless words at this point. What I seek to do is ask, How can a group proclaim something new and exciting in the field of theology and not deal with these subjects which are at the very heart of theology? The answer once again stems from the fact that it is our “pluralist” and “multicultural” society that shall determine the validity of any received tradition.

With the introduction of this ideology, this Research Group have made some silent yet sweeping comments. The reason that they can happily ignore the basic elements of historic Christianity has everything to do with the fact that they place more importance upon the validity and integrity of an individual experience or culture than upon the fact that “In the beginning God ...!”

As there is no regard for Divine

16. Think about this! God is not an objective being. He does not possess a personhood. Now cast your mind back to the definition of “liberal” given by the author. The liberal is one who can conceive of “God as a concept and abstract.” Now ask, Is the author of this really finding a *via media* or are they trying ever so hard to disguise the fact that they are liberal? This language sounds very much like God is a concept or abstract. It would be impossible to be this malleable if you were anything else.

17. It is important to notice the emphasis here upon “self-help” theology. With the feminisation of our culture we have seen the rise of self help groups. Many of these groups have arisen at the hands of women and are aimed at “airing” or “discussing” issues, rather than solving problems. This same theme can be seen here in this statement. We learn, we listen, we share, but we do not implement! There is no concept of changing anything as the only necessary changes to be made are internal, and only if the individual thinks they are necessary.

18. [Http://www.csu.edu.au/research/centres/theology.htm](http://www.csu.edu.au/research/centres/theology.htm) accessed 01/03/2003.

Authority, the fact that men did not speak of themselves, the received tradition / message becomes pliable and mouldable. At this point the Enlightenment, Modernism and Postmodernism meet. The first elevated Man's reason to a god-like status. The second questioned the epistemological basis for truth. The third has denied truth as an absolute. At this point, the common philosophy replicates the old existentialist proposition that the individual makes and validates truth and reality. The major difference is that the existentialist was a little more humble. He was less likely or willing to assume a god-like status. The postmodern world has no scruples about doing this.

In short, this paragraph has trumpeted the rise of Man's autonomy and his ability and right to shape and destine all things by the power of his own will. As an image bearer he cannot escape the God-hole left in his heart, therefore, he seeks to baptise his humanism in a vain attempt to make it fit that very hole. It then becomes palatable to him because he looks at it through his own distorted vision and not with the pure clarity with which God views it.

The treachery of this is that it leaves Man outside the Garden of Eden. The way is shut by swords of fire. There is no hope. All that lies before Man is the prospect of living out his days under the curse of God.

Oh, that they who speak such error had never been born. "Millstone!" I cry, for they shut up the way to eternal life and trample the Holy Jesus underfoot.

Conclusion

In short, we must read and study the Bible as it says it should be read and studied. You cannot claim that the Bible is to be validated by *our* experience, when the Bible clearly states that God is the Law-giver, the Creator, and the source of all meaning. You cannot blend sexes in light of "God made them male and female." Cultural neutrality is not possible when God says, "Any man who sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed." Factions and beliefs that divide cannot be accepted when the Lord says that it is by "love" that we are known as his disciples.

Right belief and right practice can only be implemented when we arrive at a right theology through the adoption of correct and Biblically sound hermeneutical principles.

Please allow me to conclude with a summary:

1. Everybody does theology. When you open the Bible, read a text, and say, "I think this means...!" you have done theology. The question is, will it be done correctly?

2. Interpretive principles govern the discovery of truth. The principles we apply in doing theology will either lead to the truth or it will take us away from the truth.

3. Truth begins with God. To arrive at the truth, we must start with the truth. Therefore our hermeneutic must begin with God, the eternal, infinite, and absolute. To start with anything else is to settle for second best and often much worse.

The aberrations pointed out in this article all stem from one fundamental failure. They start at a point other than with God. Keeping the Faith is only possible when we start with the Author and Perfecter of our faith! Why? Because faith is objective not subjective. It believes the promises and words of God. It does not invent words for God's mouth or thoughts for His mind! A true hermeneutic will show this.

Now the challenge! I have primarily highlighted the erroneous teachings of the Liberals, particularly their rank individualism and the idea that our cultures are the touchstone by which all else is measured. In short, the idea that every man in his own time is his own god.

It is easy to look "out there" and note these aberrations. It is a lot harder to look at ourselves and our own denominations, but this is the challenge. How many of these same ideas have infiltrated you denomination, your local church, and dare I say, your thinking?

...you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, *engaged* in evil deeds, yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach—**if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard** (Colossians 1:21-23. NASB).

Keep the Faith—the True Faith, that is!