

Defender



“I am set for the defense of the gospel”

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Recommended Reading: *The Blight Of Liberalism*

Gary L. Summers

During the past forty years brethren have published many excellent books on the theme of liberalism, but this 2005 lectureship book from the Bellview Church of Christ in Pensacola, Florida, is not only recent (June 11-15)—it also stands as one of the most comprehensive books on this subject ever compiled and is easily the largest one (675 pages) ever to be associated with this annual event.

“The Origin of Liberalism” gets the reader into the subject with some necessary definitions. Of interest are the “two things liberals and antis have in common” (3). Ultimately, the writer traces liberalism’s beginning back to the Garden of Eden but then works his way up to modern liberalism. He discusses three important philosophies: *existentialism*, *pragmatism*, and *irrationalism*, followed by a look at some of the world’s theologians of liberalism, such as Kant, Schleiermacher, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Bultmann, Tillich, and others.

Brother Guy N. Woods knew of the rising threat of liberalism. On November 3, 1966, he wrote to Ira Y. Rice, Jr., expressing agreement with the material published in the first volume of *Axe on the Root* (19); he further warned brethren shortly afterward in the Open Forum at Freed-Hardeman College. Also cited to show how long our current apostasy has been developing is the Introduction to the 1970 Freed-Hardeman College lectureship book by brother Thomas B. Warren (20).

W. Carl Ketcherside and Leroy Garrett were two of the early apostles of liberalism in the 60s, and their doctrine is discussed. (Having known of the damage done by these two men for more than three decades,

this reviewer was stunned to find out that one of the elders of a church, living in the same town as Leroy Garrett, was fellowshipping this false teacher and the congregation with which he worships—and he (the elder) had no idea who Garrett was!) This first chapter concludes with a look at Postmodernism.

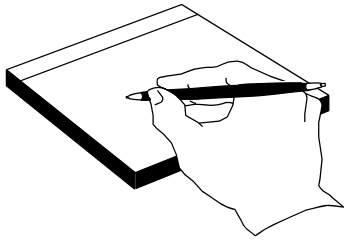
“The Attitude of Liberalism” brings to light the arrogance of those who challenge the authority of the Scriptures. Generally speaking, such men attack those who uphold the Truth, make up their own definitions, and are willing to settle for unity in diversity (so long as they get to be leaders).

The next chapter describes the infiltration techniques that liberals use (“The Covert Nature of Liberalism”) and provides some recent examples of language that departs from what we read in the Scriptures. One of those involves the phraseology used to describe two of the speakers at this year’s “Tulsa International Soul Winning Workshop” (51). Still more historical material of “Liberal’s Elitism” is provided, including one man who was extremely condescending toward brethren committed to the Truth—until he was arrested for stealing from parked cars and trying to pass a hot check (65).

Such setbacks, however, do not slow down those opposed to the Gospel. They do not have a very high opinion of anyone—except themselves—and that includes “Liberalism’s View of God.” These men have no confidence in God or His Divine Word. One lengthy paragraph by Jeff Walling demonstrates his view that the Bible is not sufficient (74). Jim Woodroof is equally dissatisfied with the Bible alone (75-

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Notes From The Editor



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Jesus the Great Prophet

In the long ago, God told Moses: “The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken... I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, *that* whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require *it* of him. But the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die” (Deu. 18:15, 18-20). That prophet Who was prophesied to come is, of course, Jesus of Nazareth.

Consider this word *prophet*. It comes from the Greek *prophetes* is a compound word meaning literally, “to speak forth.” While we generally think of a prophet as one who foretells the future, the prophet is actually one who speaks forth. The **foretelling** might be a part of that **forth-telling**, but it is not inherent in the word. When one looks at the two main Hebrew words translated prophet, we learn this lesson again. The Hebrew *nabi* is the word most often translated *prophet* in the Old Testament. *Nabi* has the basic idea of “to boil forth.” The idea is seen very well in the life of Jeremiah when he says, “Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But *his word* was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not *stay*” (20:9). The ASV expresses the last phrase as, “I cannot contain.” God’s Word was in Jeremiah in such a way that he could not contain or hold back speaking that Word; God’s Word boiled forth from his heart. The other Hebrew word is *roeh* which means “seer.” This

word refers to one has seen God or has had a communication with Him and then reveals that Will of God to man.

Jesus is that great prophet of whom God spoke to Moses. The Father gave His Word to Christ. Jesus said, “When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am *he*, and *that* I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things” (John 8:28). Jesus was speaking forth what the Father taught Him. Later Jesus would say, “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. 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. And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak” (John 12:48-50). When He says, “I have not spoken of myself,” He uses the Greek word *ek* (translated “of”) which shows the source of His message (it literally means “out from within”). Thus, the one who originated Christ’s message was not Himself, but the Father.

In the Lord’s prayer, Jesus prayed for His apostles: “For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received *them*, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me.... I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world” (John 17:8, 14). He again states that the Word was given to Him by the Father. In this we now have an additional thought—the **same** Word Jesus received of the Father, He gave to His apostles.

The Father also affirmed that Jesus was His spokesman on the Mount of Transfiguration. “While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him” (Mat. 17:5). The Father was affirming that Jesus was that great Prophet of which He told Moses. Peter also affirms that Jesus is that prophet when he says, “For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, *that* every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people” (Acts 3:22-23).

Jesus was faithful in delivering the Word of His Father. In Jesus’ prayer, He not only speaks of receiv-

ing the Word from the Father, but of giving that same Word to His apostles. He did not change or alter that Word; He had total respect for it. He gave that **same** Word—not some different Word—to the apostles.

The apostles received the same Word which the Father had given to the Son and which He had given to them. Like Jesus, the apostles were faithful in dealing with the Word. Paul wrote of the Thessalonians' need to hold the traditions they had been taught. (2 The. 2:15). *Traditions* means that which has been handed down. In this case, the *traditions* were those teachings which the Father had handed down to Christ, He had handed down to his apostles, and Paul was now handing down to them. Paul, and all the apostles, had dealt faithfully with that Word.

In faithfully delivering that Word to others, Paul expected them to deal just as faithfully with it as did Christ and himself. In writing to Timothy, Paul said, "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also" (2 Tim. 2:2). Paul expected Timothy to hold faithfully to the Word ("the things that thou has heard of me"), but also to give it to others who would just as faithfully handle it as Christ, Paul, and Timothy had done. That pure Word of God has now been handed down to us today; it has been committed to our trust. Jude wrote, "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort *you* that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3). "The faith," the Word of God, has been delivered to us, and we must be faithful stewards of God's Word today.

The sad fact remains that some today do not deal with God's Word faithfully. We all know of the rank liberals in the church today who do not hold to the Word (e.g., Rubel Shelly, Jeff Walling, Randy Harris, Max Lucado, et al.). However, perhaps even more worrisome to me are those in the church who are generally considered to be *sound*, but who teach false doctrines and concerning whom very few seem to care. Otherwise faithful brethren continue to use these men on their lecture programs, and many will even defend these men. For example, brethren continue to use a brother who teaches a doctrine which destroys the authority of the eldership (i.e., congregational reevaluation and reconfirmation of the elders, requiring each elder to get a certain percentage of congregational votes or be removed). Further, the same brother advocates that a foreign citizen can marry an American citizen for

the purpose of defrauding the American government and getting into the United States, divorce that person, and still have the right to marry because supposedly he never had the "intent" to be married (actually, he did have the intent to be "married," even though his motive and purpose for the "marriage" were fraudulent). Yet, many faithful brethren simply ignore the false doctrines of this brother. Why do faithful Gospel preachers continue to appear on lectureships with one who teaches such damning doctrines? If Mac Deaver was to appear on those programs, they would refuse to speak on them—and rightly so, yet they will not do so with one who teaches such doctrines as noted above. Why, brethren? Not only would these brethren not speak on a program with brother Deaver, they also would not support any organization of which brother Deaver is a part. Why then will faithful brethren support organizations that employ and promote men who hold such doctrines as those described above?

God told Moses that this prophet of Whom he spoke would speak what the Father commanded Him. We should do no less today. Those who speak other things need to be held accountable for those false teachings, and unless and until they repent of them, they should not be used by faithful brethren. They certainly should not be promoted and encouraged (2 John 9-11). MH

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76). This declared deficiency of the Scriptures is just part of their problem.

Liberals also challenge the Lord Jesus Christ by first of all denying that sound doctrine is necessary. Carroll Osburn is quoted in that regard from his book, *The Peaceable Kingdom* (89-90). Rubel Shelly defends denominationalism (90) and the unscriptural tradition of Easter (91). In other words, the liberal philosophy is summed up by the word—**Whatever**. According to liberal philosophy, God hardly ever means what He says. They are akin to the Pharisees who undoubtedly thought they were clever to have found a way around the fifth commandment by saying, "It is corban."

"Liberalism and the Holy Spirit" covers the various theories of the way in which the Bible is inspired (97-98). The writer briefly relates the effect that Calvinism has had on doctrines concerning the Holy Spirit. After giving a brief history of Wesley and

Parham, he discusses *neo-Pentecostalism*, the *Vineyard Fellowship*, and the *Third Wave*. Rubel Shelly is eager to embrace this error (why not?). In 1996 he “spoke on the *Mid-South Conference of Spiritual Renewal* conducted at Florence, Alabama” (103). Mike Bickle, founder of the *Kansas City Prophets*, now part of the *Vineyard Fellowship Movement*, also spoke on the same program. This group claims to have the gift of prophecy.

“Liberalism and the Origin of the World” looks at the “big bang” theory and explores interestingly the matter of “cause and effect” (109). The recent admission of Dr. Antony Flew (the atheist who debated brother Warren in 1976) that some kind of God may exist, after all, is also referenced (113). One other challenge to the truth is found by those who espouse theistic evolution. In particular are noted the views of John Clayton, which (whether he realizes it or not) question the inspiration of the Scriptures (115).

The longest chapter in the book is “Liberalism’s Effect on Bible Translations.” All brethren would profit from reading this excellent summary (119-68), which begins with a history of English translations and sets forth the characteristics of a good one. Consideration is given to some of the deficiencies of modern translations, beginning with the Revised Standard Version and includes the New International Version and a few others (142-55). The chapter concludes with a look at how today’s erring brethren have followed some of the doctrinal departures in these faulty versions. The writer cites about 55 sources and provides 62 endnotes.

As the reader might imagine, “Liberalism’s View of the Church” is different than what faithful brethren have preached for decades. The writer points out the way liberals use their own special language when referring to us, such as “our heritage,” “our fellowship,” and “our traditions,” all of which seek to make us denominational (171). Some mention is also made of unity efforts (181), which have not promoted harmony but compromise. A companion chapter is: “Liberalism and the Uniqueness of the Church,” which refutes such popular notions as “one church is just as good as another,” “the church is just like the airport,” and “join the church of your choice.”

The next area of consideration is: “Liberalism and the Work of the Church,” which includes a chart of “How to Determine Authority from God’s Word” (212). Included is a lengthy section on the role of women in the church, feminism’s influence upon the church, and false arguments made to justify women in

positions of leadership. Since the work of the church is so broad, an entirely different aspect is examined: “The Churches of Christ Disaster Relief Organization” in Nashville, Tennessee (231-37).

Related to the previous topic is “Liberalism’s Effect on the Mission of the Church.” Some of the strange things that are referenced are that liberal congregations are now supporting *In Search of the Lord’s Way*, one congregation is advertising a “Recreation Ministry,” and brethren are allowing their young people to attend Winterfest, which is little more than a Pentecostal pep rally (250). Also related is “Liberalism and Church Growth,” which analyzes thoroughly what hinders church growth and what truly promotes it.

Hardly any aspect of our worship and work has been left untouched by those who have departed from the faith; thus the reader finds material dealing with “Liberalism’s Effect on the Organization of the Church.” Heretics like Lynn (“big sick denomination”) Anderson are recommending that brethren follow the thinking of denominational leaders (274). “Liberalism and the Eldership” notices that some elders go beyond their authority—while some are not permitted to exercise the authority they have. Women Elders have been added in some churches, and others have bought into the faulty notion of “Reevaluation/Reaffirmation of Elders” (292-94).

The chapter that discusses “Liberalism and Fellowship” asks the important questions: “Can we continue to fellowship apostate congregations?” (307-308). In “Liberalism and Worship” there is a portion of an interview from *The Baptist Standard*, which provides some insight into Max Lucado’s heretical ideas. There follow chapters relating to liberalism’s effect on singing and preaching. On page 342 the editor of this volume, Michael Hatcher, prints a chart concerning music—what God does and does not authorize.

The next two applications of liberalism relate to salvation and baptism. The former reveals the weakness of “the umbrella of grace” concept, and the latter looks at teaching of *The Standard Manual for Baptist Churches* by Edward T. Hiscox, a philosophy endorsed by Max Lucado (369, 376).

“The State of the Church Today” includes some interesting statistics about current congregations of the Lord’s church (379-82) and is followed by “How To Recognize a Liberal Congregation,” which includes the following subsections: “A Needed Vaccine Against Liberalism,” “A Needed Antidote for Liberalism,” and “A Needed Amputation of Liberalism.” A chapter that

clearly needs to be read by brethren everywhere is: “‘Moderates’ Pave the Way for Liberalism.” Most congregations do not just wake up one day and say, “We think we should be liberals.” It occurs by degrees, and all should be aware of the warning signs.

At this point is included the chapter titled, “Reaction to Liberalism—Anti-ism.” Two of the sub-headings are “Common Elements of Anti-ism and Liberalism” and “Expediency: Major Principle Misunderstood by Anti-ism.” The first of these provides an explanation for some brethren swinging from one extreme to the other.

Few would probably envy being assigned “Liberalism and Our ‘Christian’ Schools,” and 33 pages is probably not nearly enough room to cover everything, but the reader will certainly have enough information to seriously consider the subject. Most of us already know about Abilene Christian University (447-55), but the writer refreshes our memories with references to theistic evolution, Carroll Osburn’s disdain for Truth, the school’s willingness to support fellowship broader than that prescribed in the New Testament, and its support for feminism and unscriptural roles for women.

Some professors at Abilene felt compelled to take issue publicly against one of their colleagues who wrote a letter to the editor, upholding the biblical view which opposes homosexuality. Their letter of rebuttal against him and in favor of the homosexual is reprinted on page 454. This, by the way, is the upshot of liberalism: their “love and compassion” cannot allow them to condemn anything or anyone—except those who stand for Truth both morally and doctrinally.

Oklahoma Christian University has at least one professor who openly supports the theory of evolution (455). Another OCU professor is one of the officers of the “Winterfest Group,” which subjects young people to Jeff Walling and “contemporary Christian performers” who are not even members of the church (457). OCU also publishes *The Christian Chronicle*, which promotes every aspect of liberalism and in its recent July issue degraded itself by airing information for all to see that did not need to be made public.

Harding University has professors like Flavil Yeakley, John Mark Hicks, and Evertt Huffard (Dean of the school) who promote openly or approve of the “community church” concept (460-62), which is reflected in many of their graduates’ disassociation with the churches of Christ. Jimmy Allen, once a great Gospel preacher, has now compromised even on the plan of salvation, as promoted in his book, *Rebaptism?*

(464).

David Lipscomb is well-known for its apostasy and fellowship of those who are “Christians” but just do not “go to the church of Christ” (466). They also invite false teachers in to conduct seminars, such as Joe Beam who claims that God tells him when someone lies to him in a counseling session (467). F. LaGard Smith, “Scholar in Residence of Christian Studies,” announced as early as 1988 at the Pepperdine lectures that God will destroy the soul, not punish it. He has decided that the biblical doctrine of hell cannot be true (468). Although Freed-Hardeman and Faulkner University are not in the same category as these others, they are definitely fellowshipping along liberal lines (469-76).

The next chapter deals with “Liberal Publications and Workshops,” and it covers the “Spiritual Growth Workshop” here in Orlando, Florida, along with the “Tulsa International Soul Winning Workshop” (486-87). It also refers to *The Christian Chronicle*, which is published by Oklahoma Christian University (488).

Following “Liberalism’s View of Law and Love” is a connection that brethren need to see, which perhaps we have overlooked: “Liberalism and Calvinism.” Some of our brethren have had so much association with denominationalists that they are now teaching the theology of John Calvin. Given attention are Jack Exum’s *The ABC’s of Grace* (507-508), Bill Love’s *The Core Gospel* (508), Milton Jones’ *Grace: the Heart of the Fire* (with a Foreword written by Max Lucado 508-509), William Mural Worthey’s *Jesus Our Righteousness* (509-13), David Chadwell’s *Having the Faith of Abraham* (513-15). Briefly mentioned are Mike Cope’s *Righteousness Inside Out* and Norman Bales’ *How Do I Know I Am Saved?* (515). The chapter also mentions those whose views of the Holy Spirit tend toward Calvinism, including those of Terry Rush, Terry Bell, and Mac Deaver (516-17). Of course, Max Lucado and Rubel Shelly have been leaders in asserting certain aspects of Calvinistic doctrine (519-20). Brethren need to give this material serious consideration.

The next five chapters cover some additional fundamental applications: “Liberalism’s Ethic,” “Liberalism and Morality,” “Liberalism and the Role of Women,” “Liberalism’s Support of Homosexuality,” and “Liberalism and the Home.” The material on homosexuality is from the perspective of liberals in society rather than the church.

Another chapter dealing with the effect of this philosophy in society is “Liberalism in the Courts,”

which considers: “How Should We View the United States Constitution?” and “Following Precedent.” An Appendix is included of all appointments to the Supreme Court (600-602). A not-altogether-unrelated topic is “Liberalism in Politics,” which deals in part about the intent of our founding fathers. The idea that there is no truth in politics, which liberals obviously believe, comes from Karl Marx. In his eulogy of Marx, Engels stated: “Our dialectical philosophy abolishes all the notions of absolute and definitive truth” (610). Other quotes from Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas are similar.

“Liberalism and Public Education” presents a thorough look at the history and current condition of our public schools. If students are unable to read or execute simple mathematical calculations in their minds, there is a reason for it—these abilities are being de-emphasized by many. Several examples are cited of both teacher and student deficiencies. Note the com-

ments of “the smartest student” in a class (623). John Dewey himself, who has had a profound effect on public education, said that “early education need not be tied to specific content” (635). Grades are being de-emphasized while the student’s self-esteem is exalted. Values clarification, death education, sex education, and several other topics are discussed. A look at some of the textbooks being used is instructive, also. The 44-page chapter closes with “Ten Principles Used By All Liberals” (653-60). This section shows how that the liberals in education and the liberals in the church used the same methods.

The volume closes with a look at “Liberalism in the Media”—an obvious fact, but we are in danger of becoming desensitized to it. The book costs only \$12 (plus postage) and may be ordered from the Bellview Church of Christ, 4850 Saufley Field Road, Pensacola, FL 32526.

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Spiritual Pacifism

Tracy Dugger

Webster defines *pacifism* as: “Opposition to war or to the use of military force for any purpose.” Certainly, there are brethren who oppose the use of physical force on the part of a Christian toward other human beings whether it be a soldier, law enforcement officer, or even in self-defense. It is not the intention of this article to discuss that issue. However, I want to expose a very damaging attitude among some brethren with regard to another form of pacifism—this I will call “spiritual pacifism.”

As long as there exists truth and error there will always be conflict (Mat. 10:34-39). It seems some believe that if we ignore controversy, this conflict between good and evil and truth and false doctrine will disappear. The devil has propagated this lie in every generation. Those who so believe could not be more wrong about a view! The only remedy for sin is righteousness and the only remedy for error is Truth. The battle is not won by meeting on the “plains of Ono,” nor offering a compromise somewhere between “you do your thing and let me do mine.” There is a war to be waged as long as there is a devil who walks about like a lion, seeking who he may devour (1 Pet. 5:8) and as long as there is one to flee from (Jam. 4:7). Of this war, Paul writes:

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war

after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) (2 Cor. 10:3-4).

Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ (2 Tim. 2:3).

Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses (1 Tim. 6:12).

For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high *places*. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God (Eph. 6:12-17).

Yet, we have those among us today who have sent the white flag out in the name of love and understanding. When will we learn that there is no compromise with error, no laying down the arms against those who

malign the saving Gospel. God's terms for surrender have always been the same—"It's My Way Or No Way!" This is illustrated numerous times by Holy Writ. Moses would not compromise with Pharaoh and stated, "there shall not an hoof be left behind" (Exo. 10:26). Micaiah would not compromise with Ahab when he stated to his messenger, "As the LORD liveth, what the LORD saith unto me, that will I speak" (1 Kin. 22:14). Paul explained regarding false teachers, "To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you" (Gal. 2:5). We must make sure that we do not forget the supreme example, the Lord Jesus Christ, who unequivocally corrected the Sadducees in Matthew 22:29: "Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God."

Must we be loving in our approach with false teachers and their error? **Always!** The Bible so teaches (Eph. 4:15). Must we exhibit a care and respect for the souls of all involved? Even those who are in error? **Absolutely!** "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one **in the spirit of meekness**; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted" (Gal. 6:1).

Have we forgotten the lessons of history when it

comes to church growth? The church always grew when it was militant and aggressive against error. We see this in the first century, we read about it during the Restoration Movement, and many remember it in the mid-portion of this present century. Men were ready to debate error wherever it raised its ugly head. Preachers of the church preached biblical not social sermons. They exposed the error of the day—both religiously and morally. They lovingly told people that they were wrong and showed them from the Scriptures. They remembered that there was a war to be waged.

Many today, in our "age of tolerance" have forgotten, or never learned, that there is a war going on. They have therefore become "spiritual pacifists." They seemingly believe it wrong to engage the enemy; to wage an offensive against false doctrines which war against the soul (1 Pet. 2:11; 1 Tim. 1:19-20). It is as if some believe that friendship with the world is equal to friendship with God and yet inspirations repudiates that idea (Jam. 4:4). Let us together with God's help put away our pacifism and "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (Eph. 6:11).

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MICHAEL HATCHER, EDITOR

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