

You Ain't Seen Nothin' Yet

Any Fifth Street Promenade tarot card reader would be thrilled to nail a prediction as accurately as William Booth did one hundred years ago. *"I consider that the chief dangers which confront the coming century will be religion without the Holy Ghost, Christianity without Christ, forgiveness without repentance, salvation without regeneration, politics without God, and heaven without hell."*

Was the founder of the Salvation Army accurate?

>Is there religion without the Holy Ghost? With a red face I confess that we conservatives have veered from the zany antics of televangelism into a ditch with little recognition of the active work of the Holy Spirit.

>Is there Christianity without Christ? Have you been to an Episcopal church lately?

>Is there forgiveness without turning from sin? Ask Dallas Theological Seminary.

>Is there salvation without regeneration? Google "Carnal Christianity."

>Is there politics without God? www.ACLU.com

>Is there heaven without hell? Paging Rob Bell.

How was General Booth able to make such an accurate prediction? He surveyed the doctrines that were under assault, and then forecasted where that errant theology would take us. What deficient theology did he see? He witnessed a forsaking of the preaching of the Law. While he did not know *what* the result would be named, he knew that anti-nomianism (no law, lots of grace) had to lead to what turned out to be watered down mainline Protestantism and the seeker sensitive movement.

Now that General Booth's predictions have been fulfilled, we would do well to survey the latest threat. "Isn't the seeker sensitive movement the latest threat?" you ask. I would suggest it is not.

The seeker sensitive movement is the *result* of the squishy, anti-nomianism that General Booth witnessed; it is not a *new* threat. Seeker Sensitive is the *manifestation* of bad theology. Seeker sensitive is merely a fad (a bad fad, but a fad, nonetheless), and it won't be long before it is replaced by another fad that is the result of new bad theology. What is the bad theology of our day?

Redefined justification.

Nearly 500 years ago, God used Martin Luther to recapture the foundational doctrine of justification by grace through faith alone. Every puritan who followed in his wake recognized that justification is the core doctrine of Protestantism.

How did they define it? Man=sin. God=holiness. Consequence=hell. But God chose to demonstrate His kindness by taking the punishment we deserve by sending His Son, Jesus Christ, to live a sinless life and die on a cross, rise from the dead and defeat death. Therefore, if people will repent and trust the Savior, the righteousness of Jesus will be imputed (credited to our account) that we might be made the righteousness of God (see II Cor.5:21) so that God can be glorified for His kindness. *That* is justification.

But alas, today's "progressive" theologians have decided we need to take a fresh, new look at our cherished corner stone. Emergent leader, Brian McLaren says he simply wants to have a conversation and re-think long-held evangelical assumptions.

While he acts like he is taking us on a journey whose destination is unknown, Mr. McLaren seems to know exactly where this conversation is headed: a new definition of justification. From the article "*Interview with Brian McLaren about 'A Letter to Friends of Emergent.'*"

Interviewer: *I think with all the other change going on, one thing we've got to hold firm on is the Gospel.*

McLaren: *What do you mean when you say "the Gospel?"*

Interviewer: *You know, justification by grace through faith in the finished atoning work of Christ on the cross.*

McLaren: *Are you sure that's the Gospel?*

Interviewer: *Of course. Aren't you?*

McLaren: *I'm sure that's a facet of the Gospel, and it's the facet that modern evangelical Protestants have assumed is the whole Gospel, the heart of the Gospel. But what's the point of that Gospel?*

Is it beneficial to question whether Christians should have Christmas trees? Sure. Is it necessary to question whether Christmas trees are green? The doctrine of justification has been long settled. To open up the doctrine for the sake of conversation screams of a hidden agenda.

While Mr. McLaren's framing of the issue is under the guise of, "Let's just open up the issue for discussion," does Mr. McLaren know where he wants this conversation to go? It sure seems like it. He just seems to recognize that if he does not take a slow, meandering, deconstructionist path, he might be labeled for what he is.

"Is getting individual souls into heaven the focal point of the Gospel? I'd have to say, 'No,'" states Mr. McLaren. Sure seems like the conversation is closed.

Mr. McLaren considers the classic understanding of penal substitution as “cosmic child abuse.” Is it any wonder that Brian thought the manager in *Hotel Rwanda* was a better example of love than Jesus in *The Passion of the Christ*?

The new bad theology is mangled justification. That means we have no further need for the Bible, Jesus or the cross. Christianity will be nothing more than a work righteous religion on the same level of Islam or Buddhism.

Christianity will no longer be about forgiveness of sins for the glory of God. The cross is no longer about satisfying the wrath of God. Faith is no longer about being in a right relationship with the Creator and inheriting eternal life.

Now, let's put on our General Booth goggles and take a look into the future of Christianity. What will be the result of this bad theology?

Universalism.

If the emergents have their way, Jesus Christ will no longer be the exclusive way to everlasting life, nobody will go to hell and everyone will go to Heaven.

Brian McLaren offers this oxymoronic defense. “I am not embracing a traditional universalist position, but I am trying to raise the question, ‘When God created the universe, did he have two purposes in mind—one being to create some people who would forever enjoy blessing and mercy, and another to create a group who would forever suffer torment, torture, and punishment? What is our view of God? A God who plans torture? A God who has an essential, eternal quality of hatred? Is God love, or is God love and hate?’”

Straw man aside, that is like stating, “I am not saying I think everyone is going to go to heaven, I'm just saying that God is so loving He won't send anyone to hell.”

In 1759, William Romaine presented, “The Doctrine of Imputed Righteousness Defended.” This was an effort to fend off the advances of the Catholic merit system (infused righteousness) into Protestant circles. The doctrine of justification that Luther had rescued was under assault. Here is what William Romaine begged. I have taken the liberty of replacing “Catholicism” with “Emergent”.

“A sinner made righteous by the righteousness of Christ is the doctrine upon which a church stands or falls. Upon it our church was established, and has long stood; but do we stand upon it now? Are we all champions for the protestant doctrine, or are we in general departed from it? Alas! Our enemies can tell, with triumph they tell of the increase of the emergent interest among us. And why does it increase? Whence is it that they make so many converts? Is it not because our people are not well established in the protestant doctrine? If it was taught and preached more, our churches would not be so empty as they are, nor the emergent houses so full. Many of our people know not what it

is to be a protestant, and therefore they become an easy prey to the emergents, who are so busy and successful in making converts.”

Our new bad theology is redefined justification. The result can only lead to universalism. Mr. McLaren might try to obfuscate his position by saying he does not believe in “traditional universalism”, but universalism by any name (or with any adjective) is heresy. Heresy means people will go to hell.

Listen to William Romaine. “I fear this may be true; but is it not alarming, and ought it not to stir up the clergy, to try to put a stop to the spreading of the emergents? May the Lord raise up faithful and able men to defend His righteousness against them who have established a meritorious righteousness of their own, and will not submit to the righteousness of God.”

If you choke on the squishy gospel of the seeker sensitive movement, you ain't seen nothing yet.