

NEW EVANGELICALISM: A REVIEW
Tom's Perspectives
by Thomas Ice

Paul Smith, the younger brother of Pastor Chuck Smith of Calvary Chapel fame, has written an important new book entitled, *New Evangelicalism: The New World Order*.¹ In this book, Smith identifies the snares that threaten to destroy the effectiveness of Bible-believing, gospel preaching, Bible teaching churches, like those within his own Calvary Chapel movement. *New Evangelicalism* traces the roots for the last hundred years that lurk on the horizon and threaten biblical churches today, by demonstrating how too many evangelicals have already swallowed the poison. Smith not only exposes the problem, which is abandonment of the inerrancy of Scripture, but what the solution is and how it can revive our evangelical churches.

ORIGINS OF THE PROBLEM

Peter Drucker, the management guru, is identified as the key player that influenced the rise of the church growth movement at Fuller Seminary, which led to many anti-gospel influences within evangelicalism. Smith demonstrates historically that the existential philosophy of Soren Kierkegaard influenced Drucker leading to his pragmatic theory and approach to community and the church's role in his ideal community. Karl Barth, the famous Swiss neo-orthodox theologian, also drank heavily of Kierkegaard, who in turn captivated Daniel Fuller, the son of Charles Fuller who founded Fuller Seminary in 1947.

Even though Fuller Seminary in Pasadena, California got off to a good start, by the 1960s the Seminary had abandoned inerrancy and started down the slippery slope to modern liberalism. Smith notes that former Fuller faculty member Harold Lindsell documented the Seminary's demise and abandonment of inerrancy in his famous book entitled, *The Battle for the Bible* in 1976.² Smith provides much more extensive detail of the philosophical and historical backgrounds leading up to the rapid theological demise of Fuller Seminary, which sets the stage for why that school has been at the epicenter of many of the influences that plagued evangelicalism for the last three decades.

At the core of Smith's book is his belief, which I agree with, that biblical downgrade or apostasy starts with a shift away from belief in the doctrine of the inerrancy. This is true within academic institutions that are supposed to be training the next generation of leaders for the support of the church. Instead, they destroy the confidence in the Word of God, which the next generation of leaders will need to feed and expand the church.

Smith has an excellent chapter entitled, "How Historical Drift Happens." In this chapter he explains how the world's way of thinking comes to dominate the church. Basically, it starts with the denial of inerrancy, which means that there is a loss of confidence in God's Word as the ultimate authority for man. Then, a given church is open to the thoughts of man as having the same authority as the Bible. The next step is to bring things like sociology, marketing, and psychology into the church to provide a basis for one's philosophy of ministry, which is what the church growth movement has done.

An amazing testimony is provided by Smith of Fuller's decline from then student Wayne Grudem in 1971, who is today a well-known evangelical theologian.

While I was still an undergraduate at Harvard, I had heard warnings that Fuller Seminary was seriously compromising the truth of God's Word. Even

though these warnings came from such respected sources as Francis Schaeffer, John Montgomery, and Christianity Today, I didn't believe them. Now I do.

Not one of my courses here has strengthened my confidence in the Bible. Even more distressing is an intellectual narrow-mindedness: I have not had one professor who teaches biblical inerrancy as a possible option. Students that I talk to are completely unacquainted with the great defenses of inerrancy made recently by men like E.J. Young, Ned Stonehouse, and Cornelius Van Til.

I am concerned for Fuller Seminary, but I don't have any proposed solutions. The cards are all stacked in the direction of further concessions and compromise. Faculty members seem to think they are holding the only possible solution; those who thought otherwise have left the school. But as for myself, I want a seminary to make me a minister of God's Word, not its critic. I have no choice but to leave.³

THE CHURCH GROWTH MOVEMENT

In the 1960s Daniel Fuller, the founder's son, returned from Switzerland where he had studied at the University of Basel and was taken captive by the liberal theology of Karl Barth. Fuller brought that mentality back to his father's Seminary, which aided in its decline. The date in which Fuller Seminary officially abandoned inerrancy is identified as December 1962.⁴ The downgrade of Fuller Seminary and their low view of the Bible was one of the factors that led to the founding of their school of church growth, which employed pragmatic and often humanistic principles.

In 1971 C. Peter Wagner became a professor of Church Growth at Fuller. The emphasis upon the social sciences, not the Bible, was the focus of Wagner and others influenced by the "science" of church growth. "The way for many pastors to grow their churches was by using social programs,"⁵ notes Smith. Wagner teamed with John Wimber to teach the mystical Signs and Wonders class that became very popular with Fuller students. Rick Warren of Saddleback Community Church in Orange County California got his Doctor of Ministry degree from the school of church growth and was deeply influenced by their thought. Combined with his mentor, the unbelieving sociologist Peter Drucker, and the latest from Fuller, Warren moves forward to become the most influential pastor in America.

AN UNHOLY MARRIAGE

"Rick Warren credits the spectacular numerical growth of his Saddleback Church to his Purpose Driven model, an organizational and marketing strategy primarily inspired by Peter Drucker,"⁶ says Smith. Warren's model for growing a church is based upon Drucker's view of building a social community and has nothing to do with the gospel. Even though Warren uses the Bible, his philosophy of ministry is not taken from the Bible, but is derived from humanistic social theory as he admits. This explains why Warren is engaging in a global effort to further socialism, rather than a global effort to preach the gospel.

Out of the church growth movement of the last forty years has arisen the next progression down the slippery slope away from orthodoxy called the Emerging or Emergent Church movement. Warren and others support this movement. However, Paul Smith notes that his brother totally rejects it and has issued a Calvary Chapel position letter against this threat to biblical Christianity. Chuck Smith is critical of the

Emergent movement and notes the following objections: “1. That Jesus is not the only way by which one might be saved. . . . 2. The soft peddling of hell . . . 3. We have difficulty in their touchy-feely relating to God, . . . 4. We have problems with the use of icons to give them a sense of God or the presence of God. . . . 5. We do not believe that we should seek to make sinners feel safe and comfortable in church. . . . 6. Should we seek to condone what God has condemned, such as the homosexual lifestyle? . . . 7. Should we look to Eastern religions with their practices of meditation through Yoga . . . 8. their challenging the final authority of the Scriptures. . . .” Pastor Chuck ends his letter with the following: “There are those who say that [the] Emergent Movement has some good points, but so does a porcupine. You are better off if you don’t get too close!”⁷

CONCLUSION

Paul Smith believes the slippery slope that too many evangelicals are on is setting the stage for globalism and the new world order, which will usher in the anti-Christ once the true church vacates planet earth via the rapture. There is no doubt in my mind that Smith is right on track. The final form of the apostasy within the false church will be some form of mysticism, which is exactly where the American evangelical church is steadily heading. Everything seems to be moving toward globalism, whether social, economic, political, or religious. Smith notes that even Rick Warren has a global PEACE Plan that he promotes. Promote Reconciliation, Equip Servant Leaders, Assist the Poor, Care for the Sick, and Educate the Next Generation.⁸ There are two e’s in Warren’s PEACE plan, but neither stands for evangelism, because the gospel is totally missing from his plan.

Smith does not just curse the darkness in his book, instead, throughout his discourse he tells believers what we should believe and be doing in contrast to the New Evangelicalism. Smith notes how the movement that he has been apart of for over forty years—the Calvary Chapel movement—was built, not on church growth principles and the planning of men, but upon the simple preaching and teaching of God’s Word and His gospel, while relying upon the Holy Spirit to apply that Word to the heart of men, whether believer or unbeliever. When the Word of God is proclaimed, notes Smith, the Lord builds his church. Frankly, the Calvary Chapel movement (with thousands of churches worldwide) is likely having a greater impact globally for the cause of Christ than any other denomination or movement that I know of. This was not the product of human planning but the result of preaching God’s inerrant Word while trusting in the Holy Spirit to open people’s hearts. Maranatha!

ENDNOTES

¹ Paul Smith, *New Evangelicalism: The New World Order* (Costa Mesa, CA: Calvary Chapel Publishing, 2011), 215 pages.

² Harold Lindsell, *The Battle for the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976). Lindsell’s follow-up book was *The Bible in the Balance* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979).

³ Wayne Grudem, cited from the Billy Graham Center Archives, Wheaton, IL. Harold Lindsell Collection 192, Folder 6-20ff, Item 3, in Smith, *New Evangelicalism*, p. 74.

⁴ Smith, *New Evangelicalism*, p. 95.

⁵ Smith, *New Evangelicalism*, p. 108.

⁶ Smith, *New Evangelicalism*, p. 126.

⁷ Smith, *New Evangelicalism*, pp. 140–41.

⁸ Smith, *New Evangelicalism*, p. 166–67.