
Editorials

WHY ALL THE RELIGIOUS CONFUSION TODAY?

Many are curious about all the religious confusion today. Others are baffled by the proliferation of self-taught, self-sent Bible teachers with extreme views and bizarre interpretations of biblical passages.

It is not hard to figure out the confusion when one looks at the world of philosophy and understands how philosophical views have infiltrated the Church. Knowing where philosophy has taken us in the last 150 years helps us understand and make sense of the explosion of cults and cultic teaching that is swamping the churches today. So-called "Christian" radio, television, and bookstores have added to and, in fact, helped spread the confusion.

Understanding recent history will also help us comprehend why more churches are having "discussion groups" while downplaying teaching and preaching, and are having "facilitators" rather than teachers or preachers. Preaching and teaching is neglected and even demeaned, while group sharing — which in many cases is a pooling of ignorance — is praised and promoted.

It was under the radar at first. A philosopher named Søren Kierkegaard in the mid-1800s dreamed up and constructed what is now called "Christian existentialism." We pick up in the word "existentialism" the idea of our personal existence or personal experience.

Kierkegaard proposed that the individual person was central and that the individual's existence and personal experiences were paramount. Our personal experiences were more important than rules, doctrines, or precise theology. When Kierkegaard died in 1855, no one would have guessed the revolution that his ideas would create.

It took about 60 to 70 years for existentialism to be revived. It was rediscovered and devoured by European theologians and philosophers. Kierkegaard was the new Protestant "saint."

No one realized at the time that existentialism would infiltrate orthodoxy and create a new kind of evangelicalism. If experience was king, the eventual ramifications could hardly be foreseen and measured. If truth is subjective and a product of one's own experience and interpretation of that experience, objective truth and commitment to doctrine begins to die.

In the 1950s and into the 1970s, we all knew for what certain churches believed and stood. One could go to most evangelical churches and be sure of certain standards, practices, and beliefs. No longer is that true. The Church at large is a crazy smorgasbord of experience-oriented people with evolving doctrines and practices.

Television is full of "evangelists" with private interpretations of Scripture. Benny Hinn taught that Pharaoh's army did not drown in the Red Sea, but was crushed by ice. "It's in the Word. It's in the Hebrew," he said. Hinn also taught that each member of the Trinity was a trinity

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in Himself and that “there are nine of them” — “them” being members of the Godhead.

In years gone by, words had specific meaning and when people approached the Bible it was with the understanding that grammar, cultural and historical setting, and the intent of the author really meant something.

Emil Schürer reminded us in his *History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ* that, “No incident in the gospel story, no word in the preaching of Jesus Christ, is intelligible apart from its setting in Jewish history, and without a clear understanding of that world of thought-distinction of the Jewish people” (Vol. 1, pg. 1). That world of thought is now totally ignored and only my subjective world of thought matters. Existentialism is alluring because it is so compatible with the old self-esteem ideas and humanism (that man and not God is central in the universe). People love to be the center and central actor in their own cosmic drama with God only having a bit part that always enhances them.

R.C. Sproul explains the meaning and ramifications of existentialism. After explaining the grammatical-historical method of finding the meaning of the text by studying the historical setting and properly defining the words used, he informs us that existentialism “says that God speaks through the Bible to each person directly, regardless of what the text actually says and meant when it was written. This completely relativistic approach denies all absolutes and abiding principles” (*Before the Face of God*, pg. 249).

So it is not all so mysterious after all. People are exchanging the truth of God for a human philosophy. Those who were born and grew up in the 1980s do not even know what happened. They have been nurtured on existentialism and self-centeredness, thinking the Bible only means what it means to them. It is a terrible loss as so many twist the Scriptures to their own destruction (2 Peter 3:16).

—GRF

NEWS UPDATES

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used and the typical patient load was 75-85 people. It was a financial disaster and drain on the school, despite Roberts’ claim that God personally told him to build it.

In spring 1986, Roberts needed \$8 million to keep the medical program solvent. After raising only half that amount by the end of the year, Roberts took to the airwaves and said God had told him unless he raised the remaining \$4.5 million, his death would be imminent.

“Please help extend my life,” Roberts begged in January 1987. A Florida dog track owner donated the money, but those funds kept the City of Faith going only briefly. It closed in 1989 and sat vacant for several years before being sold to a group of commercial real estate investors.

Roberts is said to have written more than 130 books, including *The Miracle of Seed Faith*, which has more than 8 million copies in circulation. The book’s thesis — sow a financial seed out of your own need to experience a miracle harvest — has been used by many Charismatic and Pentecostal evangelists.

Roberts is preceded in death by his wife, Evelyn, who died in May 2005, and a daughter, Rebecca Ann Nash, who died in a small-plane crash in February 1977. He is survived by a son, Richard, and a daughter, Roberta, as well as by several grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

—MKG

MOON PASSING TORCH TO CHILDREN

The Rev. Sun Myung Moon, 90, recently announced he will give four of his children responsibility for day-to-day operations of the Unification Church.

Three sons and a daughter will inherit various duties in the worldwide church, whose operations include a New York City hotel and a Washington, D.C., newspaper. All three sons, Hyun Jin Moon, 40, Kook Jin Moon, 39, and Hyung Jin Moon, 30, hold degrees from Harvard University. Hyun Jin Moon will manage the theological and business aspects of the church within the U.S. and South Korea. Moon’s daughter, In Jin Moon, will carry on the church operations in America. Worldwide, day-to-day, church functions are reportedly now being handled by Hyung Jin Moon.

Despite the announcement, the elder Moon says he remains in charge. Moon founded the church in May 1954 in Seoul, South Korea.

Hyung Jin Moon has a goal of increasing church membership. He also expresses a desire to be transparent as to the fund raising activities of the church. In the 1970s and 1980s, Moon’s church found itself a target of persistent and harsh criticism for its proselytizing and fund-raising efforts, which some called “heavenly deception.”

While Moon claims his church is Christian, its primary message is that Jesus Christ failed in His messianic mission and that God sent Moon to finish the job. Moon practices spiritism and other occult activities and claims that he has direct and repeated communication with the “spirit world.”

In spite of unbiblical beliefs and practices, Moon is regularly honored by religious and political leaders. On several occasions, the late Jerry Falwell spoke at events sponsored by Moon. In March 2004, Moon was crowned