

"MAINLINE" OR "SIDETRACK"?

In a syndicated newspaper column a few years ago, William Murchison laid bare the insipidity of the liberalism of certain "mainline" Protestant denominations. He based his column on a poll involving the Methodist, Episcopal, and United Church of Christ (**not** to be confused with the church of Christ). The poll concluded: "The Mainline Protestant Leaders are liberal on every dimension" (i.e., political, social theological, moral, et al.). Murchison noted the steady decline of these religious bodies (e.g., Methodists have lost 1.4 million since 1970). Rebellions in the ranks of the Lutherans, the Presbyterians, and others are also observable. The ultra-liberal National Council of Churches is almost dead. The Southern Baptists are in turmoil involving liberal resistance to its generally strong comparatively conservative elements.

It is ironic that just about the time that liberalism has proved itself hollow, deceptive, and devoid of any benefit in Protestantism, many of our brethren are gorging themselves on it as manna from Heaven. **Liberals in the church should take warning that the gimmicks and gadgets which may now be producing artificial growth must eventually fail them as they have Protestantism.** Many of the folks in our pews have been "suckered" into uncritically swallowing such things, either because of their ignorance or their lack of courage. Some have welcomed the liberal trends gladly in their desire to throw off restraints. Others have stood or will stand up, saying, "Enough is enough! We will forbear no longer"! Such faithful brethren in some cases have been/will be able to cast out the Gospel-perverters who fill the pulpits and/or remove the pseudo-elders who allowed and/or encouraged apostasy and apostates. Where they cannot root out such malefactors the faithful are departing and are building new

congregations on the solid rock foundation of Truth instead of on the sinking sands of doctrinal compromise, pop-psychology, fun and games, and numbers-at-any-price. Sadly, these climactic upheavals will result in the disillusionment and eternal loss of many, for which the change agents must answer.

It is interesting (and almost humorous) to hear some of these brethren describing the church to the Independent Christian Church folks in their current "irenic" bid for union with them. "Our" liberals depict themselves as the "mainline" folk or the "mainstream" of the Lord's church and those who oppose their ungodly union efforts (especially those who oppose the instrument) as merely a dissenting, disgruntled, radical element. I opine that long ago the self-named "mainline" folk who are running pell-mell toward denominationalism pulled a "switch" that diverted them to a dead-end sidetrack. These brethren are no more "mainline" than the liberal denominations are. Wherever God is, there the "mainline" is, however many (or few) are found thereon.

—Dub McClish

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