

Liberalism: Its Cause And Cure –

Chapter Two Merger Mania



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This is the continuation of the introduction and chapter one of [Liberalism: Its Cause And Cure – The Poisoning of American Christianity and the Antidote](#)

Becoming Unitarian

Houdini, the famous magician, used to astound people by having himself locked in a safe and then escaping. From working at a factory that made safes, Houdini knew what the audience did not, that safes were weaker on the inside than on the outside. For the same reason, Christianity has withstood centuries of attack from the outside, growing stronger in the process. In the last century, however, the Christian faith has been attacked from within, by those who know where the weak places are. The attacks have come from self-described liberals who lead denominations and inter-denominational agencies, teach in church- owned colleges and seminaries, and serve as pastors in congregations. Liberal Christianity is not Christianity at all, but an anti-Christian cult, an alien philosophy at war with the Scriptures, operating through deceit, manipulating the hearts and minds of sincere believers who mistakenly finance the destructive programs of apostasy.

Apostasy describes our era better than liberalism does, for apostasy literally means a falling away from the truth a believer once confessed. Someone who never trusted in Christ could not be called an apostate. However, a person who formerly believed in Jesus as the Son of God and Savior but now rejects the divinity of Christ, spending his energy in undermining the faith of others—that person is an apostate. While the laity of the church may stop attending services while still believing, the clergy become even more involved in the Church after losing their faith. Luther wrote:

When a devil gets a man into his clutches who has been in our midst and also has the Bible, such an apostate is worse and more harmful than all the heathen, who know not Scripture.¹

Apostasy is a sign of the end, predicted in 2 Thessalonians 2 and 2 Timothy 3. Paul warned Timothy:

Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. (1 Timothy 4:1-3; KJV)

He also wrote:

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry. (2 Timothy 4:3-5; KJV)

The most recent religious scandals have alerted people to the fact that a turning away from the truth of the Word of God has indeed taken place, and that many scoffers of all varieties have murdered the souls of countless believers by taking away their trust in Christ as Savior.

Those who study cults find a common characteristic among them, that the most basic Christian doctrines are denied: hell, the divinity of Christ, the virgin birth, the miracles, the bodily resurrection of Christ, and the Trinity. Yet cults want to be called Christian and call themselves the only true manifestation of Christianity, even while denying the doctrines of the Bible. The Masonic Lodge is an 18th-century, anti-Christian cult. Although the Masons make use of some words from the Bible, and even claim to be Christian, no one can pray in the name of Christ in a Masonic Lodge, lest he be subject to discipline. Ordinary Masons (Shriners, Knights Templar, Rainbow Girls, DeMolay) are taught that they do not belong to a religion, but the Masonic experts present the lodge system as a religion and confess it as a religion. In brief, Masons are taught that they will enter the Celestial Lodge by being good Masons.

The Mormons or Latter-day Saints, considered a renegade branch of Masonry by the Masons themselves, for copying the rituals of the Lodge, are perhaps the fastest growing 20th-century cult.

Mormons teach that people become gods by being good Mormons. The Mormon temple rituals are much like Masonic rites, because their first leader, Joseph Smith, was a Masonic leader.²

In the same way, liberalism is a cult which borrows the terminology of the Christian faith in order to extend its influence and subvert the church. How badly has the Christian faith been distorted in the last century? Consider these examples:

1. A Lutheran visited his friend at a seminary in a major city, hoping to talk about Christ. The seminarian said, "[expletive deleted], I don't know who Christ is!" The seminarian was later ordained. The Lutheran layman joined a Pentecostal group and became quite involved in world missionary activities.

2. A Presbyterian doubted the divinity of Christ and received approval for ordination. The same year, another candidate doubted the ordination of women and was turned down. Later, a Presbyterian minister was told to leave the ministry because he had expressed doubts about the ordination of women. He promised to be silent about the topic, but the church official said, "I can't risk it." The minister joined another denomination.

3. A Roman Catholic woman glowed about her brother-in-law's work as a theologian at a Roman Catholic theology school. "He wrote that there's nothing wrong with couples living together, since so many people are doing it now. And 10 per cent are homosexual. So it must be part of God's plan. The cardinal asked my brother-in-law into his office. We thought he was in trouble. The cardinal said, 'The trouble with you is that you are too honest.' The cardinal gave him a big hug before he left and said, 'Stay healthy.'"

4. A future Disciples of Christ minister said, "At our school, one third of the divinity students are Unitarian." During the conversation she made an obscene remark about the virgin birth, denied the resurrection of Christ, and dismissed both doctrines as "unimportant."

5. The hymnal committee for the United Methodist Church almost included "Strong Mother God" as an addition to its forthcoming hymnal. Feminists vowed to appeal the negative vote at the 1988 convention. An avalanche of phone calls prevented the hymnal committee from deleting "Onward Christian Soldiers" for being too warlike.

6. The president of the Southern Baptist Church tried to ask the seminary professors at Louisville, their largest school, what they believed. They refused, claiming academic freedom. Yet the Wall Street Journal, considered a somewhat conservative publication, covered the Southern Baptist conflict as if the advocates of inerrancy were conducting the Salem witch trials all over again.³

7. A minister of a "conservative" group said he would not transfer members to churches of the same denomination in town, because of their vast doctrinal differences.

8. A professor in the liturgy program at the University of Notre Dame, Niels Rasmusen O. P., was discovered dead in his home with a bullet in his heart. Police found equipment nearby used in sado-masochistic homosexual rituals (whips, handcuffs, leather articles). A note left by the deceased asked that no Christian burial rites be performed. William Storey, recently retired from the Notre Dame liturgy department, urged a police investigation of the case. Storey is a confessed atheist and homosexual. Notre Dame is the Vatican-approved center for teaching the theology of worship.⁴

Some people will react to such stories by saying, "These are only isolated instances, the worst possible examples anyone could dredge up." That notion

would be comforting, if reality did not disturb our hope-filled illusions. A mainline seminary student brought his textbook, required for his biblical studies class, to an adult Bible study class. The book, *Understanding the New Testament*, by liberal Howard Clark Kee, claims that John's Gospel "insists that he was born in Nazareth rather than in Bethlehem (John 7:41-42) and that Joseph was his father (John 1:45)."⁵ Those who believe that television Christianity provides an alternative to liberal apostasy will find that the stars of media religion are deeply involved in the rankest false doctrine, from occultist imaging (Robert Schuller, Pat Robertson, Paul Y. Cho) to Mormon-like deification of the self (Jimmie Swaggart, Paul Crouch) and the prosperity gospel of Robert Tilton, Oral Roberts and many others.⁶

The irony of liberal Christianity is that a tiny group, the Unitarian-Universalist Association, has seen its un-Christianity overwhelm the mainline church bodies. The U-U's, as they call themselves, do not need to start a lot of mission congregations or join the Church Growth Movement. The liberal church bodies have enthusiastically embraced the Unitarian-Universalist heresy.⁷

Some well-known Unitarians of the past include Susan B. Anthony, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Adlai Stevenson, Frank Lloyd Wright, Alexander Graham Bell, Albert Schweitzer, and Linus Pauling. Unitarian U. S. presidents include: John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, John Quincy Adams, Millard Fillmore, and William Howard Taft. Their total membership today is only 179,000 with slightly over 1,000 churches.⁸

A Little Unitarian History

In 1785, James Freeman, a liberal Harvard graduate, decided to improve the Book of Common Prayer, removing Trinitarian references. The church was King's Chapel in Boston, the first Episcopalian congregation in America, also the first Unitarian meeting place. Apostasy, the turning away from the Christian faith, took only a liberal religious leader and an easygoing congregation. Of course, the Unitarian spirit was in the wind, blowing over from England and Poland. Even in the time of Luther, the Socinians (mentioned in the Augsburg Confession) were actively denying Christian doctrine.

Benjamin Franklin believed in a creator, in the immortality of the soul, and eternal life—enough to get him removed from the most prestigious theological faculties today for being a Fundamentalist. But Franklin was not a Christian believer and did not attend church on Sunday. His rational and moral approach to life blossomed in New England.

When two moderate Calvinists at Harvard died, in 1803 and 1804, Jedidiah Morse demanded publicly that orthodox men replace them. Instead, after a long battle, liberal professors replaced them. The acrimony which followed helped uncover latent Unitarianism, which is based on a rationalistic approach to the Bible, rejecting the Trinity, the divinity of Christ, his preexistence, the virgin birth, his miracles, his atoning death, and his resurrection.

Morse, a Yale graduate, could see what was blowing into New England through Harvard and set about creating Andover Divinity School as an orthodox

antidote to Harvard. He continued his remorseless attack on liberalism by quoting an English Unitarian's glowing account of apostasy in America. The "quiet and dignified" William E. Channing lamented this effort in an open letter where he used the term Unitarian. Like all liberals, Channing argued that his version of Christianity was the true faith.⁹

By 1819, Unitarianism was in full flower. The Unitarian congregations devolved from the Congregationalist parishes, influenced by their Harvard-trained pastors. Yale graduates like Moses Stuart, a Hebrew scholar, countered the Harvard menace, and Unitarianism was confined largely to the "Fatherhood of God, the Brotherhood of Man and the neighborhood of Boston," as people have joked. Some Congregationalist parishes split over doctrinal issues. Others slowly became Unitarian by the gradual process of doctrinal laxity and corruption. The political process added congregations to the Unitarian association as well.

Park Street Church in Boston was organized as a counter to Unitarianism, to preserve the Christian faith and retain a conservative Protestant approach. The recently deceased Rev. Harold Ockenga served as pastor of Park Street, helped establish *Christianity Today*, Fuller Seminary, and the Billy Graham Crusades. Ockenga was a pioneer in promoting ecumenical Evangelicalism, emphasizing only the positive elements which united various confessions. This led eventually to the amalgamation of Evangelicalism, Pentecostalism, and the liberalism one finds today in *Christianity Today*, the Billy Graham Crusade, and Fuller Seminary.

Stuart charged in 1819 that Unitarianism was simply a half-way house on the way to infidelity. The Unitarians, like their descendants in various denominational seminaries, were anxious to prove they believed in something.¹⁰ In 1853 they issued a florid statement affirming that God existed and that Jesus taught the truth, if we distinguish his genuine sayings from the rest of the New Testament.

Ralph Waldo Emerson unsettled Unitarian nerves when he addressed the Harvard Divinity graduating class in 1838, declaring a pantheism which found the biblical concept of miracle a "Monster." Unitarians were still clinging to some notion of the divine, so the battle raged for decades. This was a foretaste of mainline church struggles, where similar appeals to the "cutting edge" of theology led to disintegration of doctrinal standards, in the midst of such misleading claims as this: "The Gospel means that God remains faithful even when we are not." The reference to 2 Timothy 2:13 has been used by mainline ministers to support their infidelity, rather than the faithfulness of God. Whenever a liberal denomination slips another notch into apostasy, the older liberal leaders, who greased the skids by first proposing and defending looser doctrinal standards, lament loudly the growth of destructive trends. Retired bishops can be most critical of the consequences of their action or inaction.

The first stage of Unitarianism was the denial of the divinity of Christ. The second stage of decline was signaled by Emerson's Harvard speech, confessing a pantheism which is only slightly removed from atheism. A pantheist believes that everything in the universe is god, rejecting the merciful, loving God of

the Scriptures. The Unitarians were pioneers in the historical-critical method, an influence which spread to the mainline churches, as detailed in "Merry Widow Waltz."

Unitarians have the highest percentage of women clergy, 22%. More than half of the Unitarian divinity students are women. "The church is also outspoken in its defense of gays and lesbians, openly embracing them as clergy." Unitarian-Universalist minister Rev. Betty Doty said, "As a group, we do not accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior."

Modern biblical scholarship in the Unitarian confession produced the Secular Humanist movement, which is outright atheism. Carl Sagan won the Humanist of the Year Award for his "Cosmos" television series, which bristled with anti-Christian remarks. One founder of Secular Humanism, which has been recognized as a religion by the U. S. Supreme Court, was Curtis Reese, who had been ordained as a Southern Baptist minister. A laudatory biographical sketch states: "Impressed by the higher criticism of the Bible, which undermined his biblical faith, he evolved intellectually toward Unitarianism and eventually declared his change of faith in 1913. . . ."11

Charles Potter, another Baptist minister, was smoked out by colleagues, kicked out of his denomination, and turned Unitarian. John Dietrich, who was raised in a conservative Reformed group, served as a Reformed pastor until removed from the ministry of his denomination for heresy in 1911. He also became a Unitarian minister.

Reese declared that "the outstanding characteristic of modern liberals, and indeed of all modern thinking, is the evaluation of personality as the thing of supreme worth."¹²

A Unitarian opponent of this unblemished atheism was William Sullivan, a former Roman Catholic priest who was booted out of the church for his fondness for modernism. In 1921 he led an unsuccessful "conservative" battle to get all Unitarians to declare they believed in God. Some of the most effective Unitarian leaders have been former pastors from Christian denominations. Times have changed. Now these men would no longer have to leave their denominations to give Unitarian sermons.

The first Humanist Manifesto was drafted by Roy Wood Sellars in 1932-33 and signed by three of the ex-ministers mentioned above: Reese, Potter, and Dietrich. Augustine was correct about the decline of doctrine, even among the Unitarians. First, false doctrine is tolerated. Then, false doctrine is given an equal voice. Finally, false doctrine dominates. Today the typical Unitarian minister is likely to be an atheist who views Channing and Emerson as crusty old conservatives.

The first Humanist Manifesto declared:

Religious humanists regard the universe as self-existing and not created. Humanism asserts that the nature of the universe depicted by modern science makes unacceptable any supernatural or cosmic guarantees of human values. Religious humanism considers the complete realization of human personality to

be the end of man's life and seeks its development and fulfillment in the here and now. In the place of the old attitudes involved in worship and prayer the humanist finds his religious emotions expressed in a heightened sense of personal life and in a cooperative effort to promote social well-being. Man is at last becoming aware that he alone is responsible for the realization of the world of his dreams, that he has within himself the power for its achievement.¹³

Some of the original signers of the Humanist Manifesto include Lester Mondale, the half-brother of Walter Mondale, the former vice-president of the United States, and John Dewey (1859-1952), the foremost influence in American education today.

The second Humanist Manifesto, 1973, elaborated the implied agenda of the earlier version. The updated version stated:

...traditional dogmatic or authoritarian religions that place revelation, God, ritual, or creed above human need or experience do a disservice to the human species... we can discover no divine purpose or providence for the human species. While there is much that we do not know, humans are responsible for what we are or will become. No deity will save us; we must save ourselves. We affirm that moral values derive their source from human experience. Ethics is autonomous and situational, needing no theological or ideological sanction. In the area of sexuality, we believe that intolerant attitudes, often cultivated by orthodox religions and puritanical cultures, unduly repress sexual conduct. The right to birth control, abortion and divorce should be recognized.¹⁴

Signers of the second Manifesto include: sex experts Sol Gordon and Albert Ellis, authors John Ciardi and Isaac Asimov, Harvard psychologist B. F. Skinner (pioneer of behavioral modification), abortion activist Allen F. Guttmacher, feminist Betty Friedan, and Rev. Joseph Fletcher, the Episcopalian author of *Situation Ethics*.

The Unitarians helped in forming the American Humanist Association, which maintains a separate existence today, publishing its own journal of theology, *American Humanist*.

Some people realize the dangers of Secular Humanism, but few consider the extent of its influence through the spread of the historical-critical method through merger.

Apostasy through Merger

The history of the mainline churches in this century has been a record of institutional mergers and cooperative efforts. Mergers have been sold to unsuspecting laity as great opportunities for saving money, increasing mission efforts, and working together more effectively. Instead, the result of all mainline mergers has been:

- 1) Doctrinal compromise,

- 2) Enormous expenditures of money,
- 3) A catastrophic loss of members and financial support,
- 4) Decades of bitter infighting among the merged factions.

Except for sex education, merger is the most oversold commodity in American life and the least effective in bringing about advertised results.

If mergers are so destructive to denominations, then why are they still being pursued with unrelenting zeal? The United Church of Christ is looking into merger with the Disciples of Christ. All the mainline groups are discussing union through the Consultation on Church Union. The real purpose of mainline merger is to absorb the assets of congregations, reduce confessional standards, and displace conservative leaders. All ecumenical endeavors serve to water down the scriptural basis for the church. Consider the results of these bridge-building efforts:

1. In Marxist-Christian dialogues, do the Marxists become more Christian, or do the Christians become more Marxist?
2. In Lutheran-Reformed talks, do the Lutherans convince the Calvinists about the Real Presence of the body and blood of Christ in the sacrament, or do the Reformed persuade the Lutherans to confuse the distinctions?
3. In Jewish-Christian discussions, do the Jews confess Jesus as the Messiah, or do the Christians admit that Judaism is sufficient without Christ?

Merger produces the same bitter fruit. When a somewhat more conservative denomination merges with a liberal group, the theology of the liberal group quickly dominates the new church body. The degenerative process is actually hastened by merger, since the obvious disparities of faith drive out the more conservative members and pastors, allowing the Left to whoop it up on their own.

When a denomination with property rights merges with another group where the congregation has no property rights, the effect of the merger is to take away property rights from the conservatives, not to restore rights to the liberal group. The more liberal the denomination, the more tyrannical the rules concerning the ownership of property. In addition, newer congregations have even fewer rights than the older churches established in more democratic times.

Unionism

Hardly anyone believes that a group of Christians would allow the destructive effects of a merger based upon losing property rights and giving up the inerrancy of Scripture, yet recent history shows how easily the worst can come about. Unionism is the best explanation for the development of destructive mergers. Unionism is the display of doctrinal unity through

worship when agreement in faith does not exist. The term comes from the Prussian Church Union, 1830, which forced Lutheran and Reformed churches to unite with a common worship service without resolving major doctrinal differences, such as the Real Presence of the body and blood of Christ in Holy Communion and baptismal regeneration.

Confessions of faith must affirm the truths of Scripture but also reject false teaching. The Book of Concord clearly does both. However, the modern spirit of achieving institutional unity has degraded doctrinal clarity, not only among the mainline liberals, but also among the Evangelicals. Martin Reu, a seminary professor in the old American Lutheran Church, explained the problem of unionism:

We find this attitude of tolerance quite frequently among unionists. It is often used to assuage a troubled conscience, one's own as well as that of others; for the unionist declares that everyone may continue to hold his own private convictions and merely needs to respect and tolerate those of another. This attitude is totally wrong, for it disregards two important factors: (a) In tolerating divergent doctrines one either denies the perspicuity and clarity of the Scriptures, or one grants to error the right to exist alongside of truth, or one evidences indifference over against biblical truth by surrendering its absolute validity; and (b) in allowing two opposite views concerning one doctrine to exist side by side, one has entered upon an inclined plane which of necessity leads ever further into complete doctrinal indifference, as may plainly be seen from the most calamitous case on record, viz., the Prussian Union. Doctrinal indifference is at once the root of unionism and its fruit. Whoever accepts, in theory as well as in practice, the absolute authority of the Scriptures and their unambiguousness with reference to all fundamental doctrines, must be opposed to every form of unionism.¹⁵

In Lutheranism, the question of unionism has played a major role from the beginning. The first Lutheran church body in America, the General Synod, was founded to keep the congregations from joining with the Episcopalians. The Pennsylvania clergy reserved the right to withdraw from the General Synod, since they were thinking about merger with the Reformed. Later, when tensions grew between the revivalists on one side and the confessional Lutherans on the other side, the conservative General Council was formed in 1867 to bring about a confessional Lutheran church body in the East. By pulling out of the General Synod, the General Council deprived the General Synod of any resistance toward revivalism and the Social Gospel movement. Nevertheless, the General Council did not resolve some major doctrinal issues, such as pulpit and altar fellowship, the lodge, and the millennium.

When the General Synod and General Council reunited with the United Synod of the South, forming the United Lutheran Church in America in 1918, many doctrinal questions went unanswered. The inerrancy of Scripture was not an issue before the 1918 merger, but it soon became an issue for all Lutherans when the newly discovered historical-critical method began working into the seminaries. Liberal Lutherans continued to merge until the 1987 formation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, whose constitution avoids the clear doctrinal standards of the past, including the inerrancy of the

Scriptures.

The doctrine of the mainline seminaries may be illustrated by selections from the dogmatics textbook which is used at all the seminaries of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, *Christian Dogmatics*.¹⁶

ELCA Doctrines, Shared with Mainline Churches

THE TRINITY

Truly, the Trinity is simply the Father and the man Jesus and their Spirit as the Spirit of the believing community. (I, p. 155)

THE INCARNATION, VIRGIN BIRTH, AND ASCENSION

The notion of the preexistent Son of God becoming a human being in the womb of a virgin and then returning to his heavenly home is bound up with a mythological picture of the world that clashes with our modern scientific world view. (I, p. 527)

The main statements of the Apostles' Creed are so bound up with its mythological form that to get rid of the myth would destroy the creed in toto. Can modern people still be expected to accept the creed, with its mythological elements? We know that in the scientific picture of the world, the categories "above" and "below" do not make sense. Therefore, the story of the descent of the Son of God to earth and his ascent into heaven cannot be taken literally. (I, p. 529)

THE MIRACLES

We must concede the possibility that miracles may have been attributed to people simply to enhance their status, that is, their special relationship to the gods. Each claim of truth must be carefully analyzed, and it should not be excluded that some of the miracles attributed to Jesus may have no historical basis and serve only to emphasize his exceptional status. (II, p. 283)

THE ATONEMENT

The one splattered against the front of our truck comes back to say "Shalom." There is no strange transaction that takes place somewhere in celestial bookkeeping halls to make it universal. (II, pp. 91-2)

Commenting on the Braaten-Jenson volumes, which he highly recommended, one ELCA pastor, considered a conservative, said, "They are a little weak in Christology."¹⁷

Merger Works

The greatest achievement of merger is in establishing the theology of the Unitarians. By making all things new, the denomination can eliminate troublesome confessional statements of the past, such as mischievous articles on the inerrancy of the Bible, the authority of previous confessions of faith, and fellowship principles. A new constitution can bypass such

“outmoded” language and interject the philosophies of the Social Gospel, feminism, socialism, and the quota system. The new denomination can close down conservative pockets of resistance by fiat, erasing entire departments (the sober, diligent ones which built new congregations and engaged in some forms of modest evangelism) while funding new, “creative” efforts in institutional radicalism. Merger can also get rid of congregational constitutions which stipulate doctrinal standards for the minister and members.

Mainline Churches, Home Missions for the Unitarians

Visible Unitarians have fared poorly outside of New England, although they have been over-represented in positions of American leadership. However, Unitarians take great pride in the fact that the “green wood of Unitarianism has been grafted onto the old wood” of the mainline churches. F. E. Meyer noted: “As a liberal movement it has many spiritual brethren in the Reformed churches. As a result there are undoubtedly more Unitarians outside than inside the Unitarian fellowship.”¹⁸

Unitarian theology developed from an overemphasis on the fatherhood of God among the Congregationalists and the euphoria felt over the new scientific age. Advocacy for the Social Gospel movement, delight in the theory of evolution, negative criticism of the Bible, and doctrinal liberalism were overlapping movements which gathered force in a united attack upon the Christian faith. At Yale, the integrity and authority of the Old Testament were under attack in the closing decades of the 19th century. In the opening decades of the 20th century, the divinity of Christ was denied.

Roman Catholics saw a similar decline develop later, since the Vatican opposed modern biblical criticism until after World War II. Now the head of the theology department of Notre Dame, Richard McBrien, routinely denounces the pope on national television, the department exults in its radical feminism, and Notre Dame’s seminary teaches future priests that Jesus was a male chauvinist.

The Unitarian process has completely overtaken the mainline denominations. The change has been slow but insidious. Many older clergy maintained some aspects of traditional Christianity while embracing the fatuousness of liberalism. The authority of the Scriptures became undermined when church leaders said the Bible was infallible in its doctrines but not in reporting historical, scientific, and geographical facts. Infallibility lost its original meaning by the 1930s, so some writers started using inerrancy to re-assert the original intent of the term infallibility. Now liberal church leaders assert that inerrancy is a new term, invented in the 1930s. A little truth can be very misleading.

History is never very simple or neat, but this is how denominations have turned away from their confessional standards over a period of time. The National Council of Churches denominations have completed these steps. Others, like the Southern Baptists and the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, are pulling in three directions at once (conservative, charismatic, and liberal/Unitarian). Denial of historic Christianity has followed these

successive steps in each denomination:

1. Old Testament narratives are no longer accepted as entirely accurate: the six-day creation, the creation of Adam and Eve, the Tower of Babel, the flood, the exodus. Science professors in the church-owned colleges are allowed to teach evolution as factual, Genesis as poetical.
2. Certain aspects of the life of Christ are questioned, following the methods used to undermine the authority and unity of the Old Testament.
3. A lot of noise is made about getting at the actual truth of what Christ said and did, separating that imaginary body of truth from traditional Christian doctrine.
4. A leading theologian discovers that Christ really wanted us to believe in political activism, not in him as Lord and Savior. Seminarians are urged to turn their denomination around.
5. Denominational leaders support pastors and professors on the "cutting edge," pleading with people to tolerate new ideas.
6. Anyone can question the central doctrines of the faith with impunity. If anything, apostates are rewarded and conservatives are punished in denominational promotions and perks.
7. Denominational funds are moved out of world missions and American missions, to fund political activism. Or the mission divisions retain the same names, but the work within them is changed from evangelism to radicalism, in the name of "reaching out with the gospel." One church official said piously, "Not one boy in our boys' home is a member of our church, so this institution is pure mission."
8. More and more clergy speak about the prophetic role of the denomination and denigrate such things as evangelism, worship, prayer, and home visitation.
9. Women are ordained without serious consideration of scriptural injunctions and centuries of practice.
10. Those who question the ordination of women can no longer obtain approval for ordination.
11. The denomination uses its name and funds to support abortion on demand, doing its best to hide this from most members.
12. Suddenly, a homosexual lobby appears in the denomination.
13. Charismatics grow in number as people struggle to recapture the vitality of the past or turn from corpse-cold liberalism.

Gradualism

Gradualism works well in slowly desensitizing people to the total impact of pretend-Christianity. A congregation may have a pastor who teaches the inerrancy of the Bible for 30 years. When he retires, after years of ignoring what the denomination has been doing, the congregation finds itself with pastoral candidates who waffle about every doctrinal question, who use weasel words to baffle the audience. At this point, people will not easily abandon the church building they have used for many years, and the friends they have made. Worse, liberals in the congregation are supported by the denomination, and they unite behind the minister with a fuzzy theology. The congregation is divided. Ultimately, the crypto-Unitarians will win. The members most concerned about scriptural doctrine will join another congregation. Even if conservatives work together to install a conservative minister, the denomination will prevail in the future. Thus, the green wood of Unitarianism is grafted onto the old wood of the mainline denominations.

NOTES

1. *What Luther Says*, 8 vols., Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, I, p. 39.
2. Theodore Graebner, *The Lodge Examined by the Scriptures*. Jack Harris, *Freemasonry: The Invisible Cult in Our Midst*, Towson, Maryland: Jack Harris, 1983. Walter Martin, *The Maze of Mormonism*, Ventura: Regal Books, 1978. Walter Martin, *The Kingdom of the Cults*, Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1985. James R. Spencer, *Beyond Mormonism, An Elder's Story*, Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1984. Books and videotapes on the Masonic Lodge are available from John Ankerberg, P.O. Box 8977, Chattanooga, TN 37411.
3. March 7, 1988, page 1.
4. E. Michael Jones, "Requiem for a Liturgist: Endgame Dissent at Notre Dame," *Fidelity*, January, 1988. Jones has also published *Is Notre Dame Still Catholic?*, which treats the anti-Roman Catholic doctrine and practice of Notre Dame and her sister school St. Mary's. Jones was fired from St. Mary's for being pro-life.
5. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1983, p. 150.
6. Michael Horton, ed., *The Agony of Deceit*, Chicago: Moody Bible Institute, 1990; cited in "Heresy on the Airwaves, A New Book Slams Televangelists for Doctrinal Errors," by Richard N. Ostling, *Time*, March 5, 1990, p. 62.
7. The Unitarians and Universalists merged in 1961 to form the UUA, acknowledging their common lack of faith. The Universalists have their own history up to 1961, but that story is not distinct enough to merit additional space here. One good way to remember the difference: the Unitarians taught that man was too good to be condemned to hell by God; the Universalists believed that God was too good to condemn man to hell. In either case, they neglected to check on what the Scriptures revealed. The Universalists tend to be more conservative on social issues than the Unitarians, so the

Universalists might be included among those more conservative groups which have suffered from merger.

8. Debra Mason, "Unitarians Seek Bigger Role in U. S. Culture," *Columbus Dispatch*, October 31, p. 11A.

9. Sydney Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of America*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972. Ahlstrom's treatment of Unitarianism is rapturous.

10. The walkout of liberal Lutherans at Concordia Theological Seminary in St. Louis in 1974 was portrayed in apocalyptic terms by the press, who knew the liberal seminary president John Tietjen previously in his role as a public relations director for the Lutheran Council in the USA. What the media did not show was the return of the exiles for lunch, 20 minutes later, at the same school. Tietjen's role in history was assured when he quit after one month as ELCA's first Bishop of the Metro Chicago District.

11. David Robinson, *The Unitarians and the Universalists*, Westport: Greenwood Press, 1985, p. 144. When a Christian becomes a Unitarian, the U-U's call him a "come-outer," which sounds better than "apostate."

12. Ibid., p. 146.

13. James Hitchcock, *What is Secular Humanism?* Ann Arbor: Servant Books, 1982, p. 11.

14. Ibid., p. 14.

15. M. Reu, *In the Interest of Lutheran Unity, Two Lectures*, Columbus: The Lutheran Book Concern, 1940, p. 20.

16. Carl Braaten, Robert Jenson, ed. *Christian Dogmatics*, 2 vols., Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984.

17. *The Religious Bodies of America*, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1954, pp. 505f.

18. E. Michael Jones, op, cit.

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