

Textual Decisionists

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There is a cult growing in America and Great Britain today and it is gaining prominence within major denominations. This cult is more numerous than the Jehovah's Witness, more prevalent than the Mormons. This cult has members positioned in high and influential places. Some occupy seminary chairs, some stand behind a pulpit but the vast majority of this cult is found occupying the pew within our churches. These cult members seem to enjoy fellowship between themselves and they are active with an outreach to their communities; they are busy doing good for others. The members of this cult are not confined to any theological grouping for deists are plentiful among reform circles as they are among Arminian circles, nor are the members of this cult limited geographically for they are prominent both in America and Great Britain. The members of this cult are neither confined to a particular denomination for they flow into each of them quite easily. The members of this cult seem to flourish in times of great spiritual declension and this cult seems to spread like a plague when vital Christianity is at a low ebb and there is a famine in the land for hearing the Word of God preached with authority and in the power of the Holy Spirit.

The cult to which I refer is called Textual Decisionists. This is what a pastor friend of mine in Glasgow, Scotland calls them: Textual Decisionists. They are people who have entered the church through an intellectual agreement with a certain Scripture, a doctrine or Christian ideology. At one time in their life, they made a decision to be a Christian by believing a particular Bible verse such as John 3:16, or they agreed with the concept that Jesus died for sin and rose again. These cult members often join a church because they have believed the fact found in Scripture, they believe in the death of Christ, but their problem is they have never believed on the Christ who died. They are Textual Decisionists. They base their salvation on a text of Scripture or a fact found in the Bible and they have convinced themselves that they are saved because they made a decision to accept Jesus based on that textual foundation. Their hope of heaven rests on a text rather than on a relationship.

These Textual Decisionists have never been awakened, convicted, regenerated and indwelt by the Holy Spirit. They are best described by Romans 8:9 which declares, "Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." In other words, they have not the Spirit of Christ dwelling in them because they have never experienced the new birth through regeneration. They have become Christians on their own terms and by their own

means and they seem to flock together in great quantities and encourage themselves with encouraging words of Scripture. Oh, they love to talk about the Rapture of the church and how they just can't wait for Jesus to come and get them. They derive great pleasure from serving in their local church and community in the name of Jesus. They like to pray and have Bible studies although their Bible studies often focus on a self-help book written by a contemporary Christian author. These cult members are into self-empowerment and having their tents enlarged for the Kingdom of God. They are busy, busy, busy and if you question them on the validity of their conversion, they may fight you and grow very angry with you because if you start killing somebody's gods, then they will fight you for it and these cult members have several gods they serve but they do not serve the Living God of the Bible.

These Textual Decisionists claim to be followers of Christ and they rest on their duties and on their good works but they have never seen the deceitfulness and wickedness of their own heart. They are very self-righteous individuals who like to point out the sins of society and cry against them but they fail to pursue holiness in their own lives through surrender to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Jesus speaks of these followers of him in the gospel of John 2:23-25, "Now when he was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast day, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did. But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man."

A person within this cult of Textual Decisionists can occupy a pulpit and compose very interesting intellectual essays to be considered. He can tell amusing stories to keep his audience interested in his message. He can take a Bible truth and wrap it with ideology and expound it for weeks upon weeks and they can take notes and smile and feel they are all doing good in their advancement of the Christian character but there is something missing among these cult members. There is no life, no spiritual life, no supernatural activity of God among them. You can sit in their congregations and listen to the content of the sermons and these pastors/Textual Decisionists will never call sin "black" and hell "hot." They won't preach on the blood. They won't preach on the cross. They won't warn you to flee from a future judgment for all mankind. They won't warn you of your duty of repentance and the necessity of a work of grace on the heart through regeneration. It is almost impossible to come savingly to Christ under their preaching because they do not preach what Jesus preached and the Spirit of God is absent from among them.

If you don't believe me, then go to one of their churches and sit among them and see if you hear what Jesus preached. Jesus preached the following:

Listen friends, Jesus preached on the utter necessity of regeneration: John 3:7-8, "Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit."

Jesus preached on man's duty of repentance: Luke 13:5, "I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

Listen friends, Jesus preached on the fires of an everlasting hell: Matthew 18:9, “And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire.”

Jesus preached on the cost of discipleship: Matthew 16:24-25, “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.”

But the doctrine that these Textual Decisionists avoid the most is found in the book of Hebrews: follow peace with all men and holiness without which no man shall see the Lord. They will not preach on holiness because the members of their cult would scream bloody murder if they did and they certainly don't want to preach any upsetting doctrine to their fellow cult members because somebody may get up and leave and go join another cultic church and take their checkbook with them.

I repeat, these individuals have never come savingly to Christ for they have never been awakened to their lost condition. They've never been convicted of sin by the Spirit of God. They've never been a subject of grace through the work of regeneration upon the heart and although they claim to be Christ's, they do not possess Christ through an indwelt Holy Spirit and if you challenge them on any of this, they may grow very angry with you and call you a fanatic or a crackpot.

Listen friends, whenever the church fails to carry out the mandate of the Great Commission and proactively storm the gates of hell, then a vacuum is created. A healthy church advances the true gospel of the Son of God which proclaims what Jesus proclaimed: the necessity of the new birth through regeneration, the duty of sinful man to come to repentance towards God and faith in Jesus Christ. The gospel speaks of a burning and everlasting hell and it warns men not to go there. The true gospel of the Son of God is honest with men and tells them about the cost of discipleship in following a crucified Savior. A healthy church exudes vital Christianity through its born-again believers who strive to live holy lives unto the Lord Jesus Christ. They serve God for the glory of God and not to showcase themselves or their talents.

But when the tide of vital Christianity is running at a low ebb, then there much cultic activity will abound that will try to cover itself with the garments of Christianity like duties and ordinances and activity in the name of Christ. But they are naked and unaware of their true condition because they are blind and deaf and have not the Spirit of the Living God living in them. They lack the blood-red robe of justification and the white robe of sanctification. Their Jesus is not the bloody Jesus on the cross with all his claims on their lives. No sir, their Jesus is a friendly Jesus who lets you live your life as you please as long as you are in church on Sunday, donate time and money and rest upon a decision based on a text of Scripture and sit on a foundation that is on sinking sand.

There is a famine in the land today, friends, and it is a famine of hearing the Word of God preached in the power of the Spirit of God. O Great God, where are your men? Where are

your men who preach what you preached? Where are your preachers who call men to repentance? Preachers who are honest with man and preach that man is an enemy against a sovereign King and that sinful man must throw down his shotgun of rebellion and surrender all to King Jesus to be reconciled back to an offended God who has every right to consign sinful man to a burning hell? Where are the preachers who warn men about the strictness and severity of God's holy law that no man is perfect and all men will one day be held up against the strictness and severity of God's law and all will fail that test? I am a sinner and I know I need a substitute for sin in the person of Jesus Christ. If you stand in your own merits and are held up against the utter strictness of that law of God, you will be sentenced to an everlasting punishment for breaking that law through sin.

Listen friends, man is not a sinner because he sins, rather man sins because he is a big sinner. His heart is wicked and deceitful and man is a rebel who lives in opposition to a holy God. We need men anointed by the Spirit of God to preach the great doctrines of God and warn men of their danger. We don't need any more intellectual essays to be considered on ideologies wrapped in a biblical truth. The days are too dark, the hour is too late, friends. We need men of action to warn men of their perilous position outside of Christ. Where are the ambassadors who call sin "black" and hell "hot" and preach up the blood and the cross on which the Prince of Glory died? Where are the men preaching on the necessity of an active God upon the heart through regeneration?

The days of Wesley and Whitfield were similar to our day. In the 18th century, the church of England was apostate and ordaining unconverted men. It ordained John Wesley in 1735 and Wesley came to America as a missionary to the Indians but the fact remained, he was, at the time, an unconverted minister of the Church of England. It was three years before he came savingly to Christ in 1738.

John Wesley eventually knew about the need for the new birth. Listen to his words that he wrote in his diary,

"In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Altersgate Street where one was reading Luther's preface to the epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, whiloe he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation and an assurance was given me that he had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death."

John Wesley knew of the change which God works in the heart. Wesley friend, George Whitfield, experienced the same change when he read a book by Henry Scougal called "The Life of God in the Soul of Man." And George Whitfield realized that Christianity was not in the amount of works performed for God and the amount of sacrifice suffered for God, nor the numerous prayers offered up to God, but true Christianity occurred when a sinner was awakened to his ruined condition and through repentance and faith received Christ as Lord with all his claims and demands on a man's life and that life was a new life because there had been a change wrought on the heart. Now, the life of God was in

the soul of man through the new birth and that was the message preached during the revival of religion of the 18th century: you must be born-again.

And in our day, friends, when we live in a morally bankrupt society that is growing more hostile towards God and the people of God, when we live in a day of great spiritual declension within the church through a growing cult of Textual Decisionists who know not the Spirit of God in an experiential way through saving faith, then it's time to proclaim the great doctrines that Jesus preached and that comprise the gospel of the Son of God. Surely, the message to this generation must be: repent and ye must be born-again. Sinners must come under the saving influence of the true gospel and be awakened and convicted and regenerated and converted and indwelt by the Spirit of God.

Let me pray.

O God of Glory, raise up a band of preachers to preach like that again. Raise up a band of preachers who call men to repentance and preach your blood on the cross and call sin "black" and hell "hot" and who will preach up the necessity of regeneration once again in the land. These doctrines you've blessed in former days with outpourings of your grace and revival and spiritual awakening. Raise up such an army of preachers who aren't afraid of men but who fear you. Raise up an army of preachers who are so eaten up with eternity and hungry for you, Christ Jesus, and full of the Holy Spirit that their preaching will be like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces. Do it, Great God, for Thy Name's sake. Amen.