

Few would argue that we live in interesting times. Even though we may agree with the Preacher's observation that "there is nothing new under the sun" (Ecclesiastes 1:9), we find ourselves living in a day when man's thinking seems to know no bound. There has been a resurgence of ancient beliefs and practices, mixed with modern philosophies to generate a myriad of views of life. Combine this with an oppressive need for tolerance, and you have the setting for a hotbed of philosophies where virtually anything goes.

What a wonderful setting for the Christian! What a day to be a watchman, to be alert to the circling enemy! Unfortunately, most of our Evangelical watchmen have either fallen asleep at their posts or have joined the enemy, and we hear few warnings of the encroaching and oftentimes inhabiting enemy. Evangelicals have been lulled into a false sense of security and brotherhood, a semi-comatose state of hear-no-evil, see-no-evil. The resulting influences on the movement are apparent to anyone with sufficient desire to look for them, or sufficient spiritual awareness to realize that the enemy of the saints is devouring massive numbers of so-called Evangelicals without even hearing a whimper of protest (1 Peter 5:8). The trap set by the devil is age-old and dates back to the time many Evangelicals now believe to be a myth – the Garden of Eden. The trap may be ancient, but the bait has been custom designed to the person being targeted; the trap is pragmatism.

What is Pragmatism?

A common over-simplification of pragmatism that we hear is: the end justifies the means. Although the pragmatist might agree with that thought, pragmatism is really much more than that and its roots go much deeper. The words *pragmatism* and *pragmatic* come from the Greek root *pragma*, which simply means "action."¹ From this same root word, we get such terms as *practical* and *practice*. We all appreciate someone who is a practical-thinker, someone who can easily analyze a situation and see the best approach that will work. Although such a person may simply possess a greater ability to understand the context of a situation, this does illustrate one of the fundamental elements of the pragmatic philosophy: a focus on results.

The question for the pragmatist is not, "Is it right?" but rather, "Does it work?" Consider this for a moment. For the pragmatist, the standard by which we are to live is a function of the consequences of our actions – if our actions produce positive results, then the action taken is right, and so becomes an acceptable standard (at least for now). Who determines if the consequences for my actions are positive? – I do! Therefore, the product of this thinking must be my own happiness, for surely, what makes me unhappy is not be considered positive and, consequently, holds no allurements. Indeed, the "terms 'true' and 'right' gain their meaning from their use in evaluating the relative success of efforts to achieve happiness."² Within this framework, *true* and *right* are no longer objective realities that find universal definition, but are reduced to being subjective determinants. There is no room here for absolute truth, only experimental guesses (for they are always

¹ <http://www.flash.net/~bob001/pragma.htm>

² Dickstein, Morris, ed. "The Revival of Pragmatism," <http://www.nytimes.com/books/first/d/dickstein-pragmatism.html>.

subject to change) authored by individuals in a vain attempt to duplicate the positive things happening in their lives.

It can be easily understood from this that pragmatism is a highly individualistic philosophy, for the individual has the final word on whether something is true, and, within the reality of this philosophy, it may only be true for him. Nietzsche, the German philosopher who proclaimed God to be dead, would have thrived in today's emphasis on the individual. He saw the use of many gods by the ancients as a foundation for the "*plurality of norms*; one god was not considered a denial of another god, nor blasphemy against him. It was here that the luxury of individuals was first permitted; it was here that one first honored the rights of individuals."³ Nietzsche was the son of a Lutheran minister, whose father died when he was only five,⁴ and yet (or, consequently) he freely declared, "monotheism ... was perhaps the greatest danger that has yet confronted humanity."⁵ Two things are evident: 1) Nietzsche honored the independence of the individual, and 2) there is no room for the God of the Bible in such individualism. A pragmatist, therefore, as an upholder of individualism, must also be a polytheist, for there is clearly no room for only one God in such a philosophy. Within the philosophy of pragmatism, "you are a polytheist if you think that there is no actual or possible object of knowledge that would permit you to commensurate and rank all human needs."⁶ There is no opportunity within this framework for just one standard for all of mankind; therefore, the only alternative available is that individuals create their own gods and declare their own standards. There is no place for the God of the Bible (hence Nietzsche's need to declare Him dead), only gods pragmatically created and subject to the ever-changing reality of what brings happiness.

How is this worked out in our world today? Clearly, the pluralistic social order that is the pride of our Western culture fits well with the pragmatist's approach to life. We extend tolerance toward those whose beliefs and views we may neither hold nor appreciate, permitting them the "right" (an important word in our society) to be wrong. Our premise has been that "if we allow one, we have to allow all; therefore allow all."⁷ However, it is soon not good enough to permit the "wrong" merely to co-exist; pragmatism and individualism dictate that we must acknowledge the validity of their position, after all, who are we to judge the standard by which another person chooses to live? Because this philosophy leaves no room for the existence of an absolute Authority (God), all experiences become equally valid and the resultant relativism further reduces truth to a subjective intangible. Our present, consuming obsession with the use of "politically correct" language is a product of our unwillingness to adopt a standard, even in our speech, lest we be offensive to someone.

³ Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Gay Science*, Section 143.

<http://www.geocities.com/thenietzschechannel/diefroh17.htm#moralp>

⁴ Funk and Wagnall, "Nietzsche."

⁵ Nietzsche.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Michael Horner, "Secularism is Discriminatory! True Pluralism Provides Hope", *Citizen*, (May 1995), 6.

For many years, the Judeo-Christian values, held by Western society in general, have supported the Christian who desired to live Biblically, but that day is quickly fading. The influence of men like Nietzsche found new life through Darwin's theory of natural selection, which provided a "scientific" reason for not needing God. John Dewey, a significant contributor to pragmatic thinking and application, carried this thinking into education, and exercised significant influence on our approach to education in the last century. Dewey, raised by a Calvinist mother, felt he had been made to feel unnecessarily miserable through the belief in original sin, and simply stopped thinking that there was anything wrong with humanity; the only thing lacking was that we had not achieved a proper understanding of the fraternity of mankind – "society had not yet become pervasively democratic."⁸ It is said that once Dewey had freed himself from his mother's beliefs, there was nothing he distrusted more than "the suggestion that there was a nonhuman authority to which human beings owed respect."⁹ This is the man who exercised great influence on the mode of education in America, and who shifted the focus from the school and curricula to the student (a good place to begin imparting pragmatic thinking). Dewey was aggressively anti-monotheistic, and saw God as "all the varied sublimities human beings come to see through the eyes that they themselves create."¹⁰ In other words, there are as many gods as there are people who desire to hold their own standard; we are all gods (and polytheism rears its ugly head again). As this emphasis on the individual has taken hold, each succeeding generation has become more self-focused and less willing to admit any need of God.

The evidence seems clear that pragmatism, individualism and relativism all bear the same agenda: we must raise the right of the individual over all else, and thrust away from us any concept of accountability to God. Within this framework, the extent of our accountability is that we live at peace with those who share the planet with us, we accept their experiences as being as valid as our own, and we exercise tolerance for everyone – except those who subscribe to an objective standard to which we are all accountable. Monotheism is the bane of the pragmatist; since "truth," within this context, is something that is determined experientially, the rigidity of only accepting one God and His standard is unacceptable. For the pragmatist, there is no objective truth; it is reduced to "an idea that has worked in practical experience."¹¹

When we consider the rise of pragmatic thinking in our day, we often look to men like Nietzsche and Dewey as being responsible for giving rise to this philosophy. However, that would attribute them with far too much originality and influence. It was mentioned earlier that pragmatism is an age-old trap used by the devil to snare the unsuspecting; the best Nietzsche and Dewey can hope to claim is their undying allegiance to Satan. The beginning of pragmatic thinking goes back to the Garden of Eden and the father of all lies; consider the following:

⁸ Richard Rorty, "Pragmatism as Romantic Polytheism." <http://www.nytimes.com/books/first/d/dickstein-pragmatism.html>

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ *Funk and Wagnalls Encyclopedia*, CD-ROM 1995 version, "John Dewey."

Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which *is* in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, **neither shall ye touch it**, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and **ye shall be as gods** [the seed of pragmatism], knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree *was* good for food, and that it *was* pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make *one* wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat. (Genesis 3:1-6, emphasis added).

God was clear in His instructions to our first parents; He laid out one restriction which Adam and Eve were to abide by and gave the reason for it: "... of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Genesis 2:17). Satan came to Eve and drew her focus away from the command of God (a command which Eve misquoted to the serpent), and, through lies and deception, painted a picture that made the fruit appear to be desirable. Even as pragmatism seeks to emphasize the need for a positive experience for the individual, so Eve's attention was drawn to the perceived advantages of eating the fruit; after all, the fruit was "good," "pleasant," and "desirable," something that would make them better people! Why should she be denied something so wonderful? Satan is the father of pragmatic thinking: he subtly shifted the focus from the principle of "God hath said," to personal advantage and desire, away from our responsibility and accountability to God, to our "right" as individuals to satisfy our own appetites.

Pragmatism is a shift in focus from the action undertaken to the results obtained, from the reason for doing something to the resulting consequences. Integral to this paradigm shift is the elevation of the individual to become the primary determinant of what constitutes positive results and therefore what is considered acceptable action. Inherent is the "right" of the individual to create his or her own destiny without censure. Within this context, almost any philosophy of life will fit, from the mysticism of the eastern gurus to the animistic spiritism of our North American Indians, from the ancient rites of the druids to the modern cry of New Agers that we are all gods.

Pragmatism and the Christian

The obvious question at this point is this: how has today's Christian fared in the face of pragmatism? Since our sinless parents fell for the ploy, it should be obvious that many of their sinful descendents would not be able to resist. Harbored safely within the folds of pragmatic thinking is a strong appeal to our natural pride. In our present age, we admire those who wield great power and influence, especially those who rise from the ranks of the downtrodden, and we love to acclaim the resiliency of the human spirit. We take great pride in being independent and deem dependency something to be shunned, considering it shameful and an indication of failure and weakness.

Modern Evangelicalism is not what it was a hundred years ago, yet most Evangelicals today remain largely unaware of the fundamental transition that took place within their ranks just over sixty years ago. The calculated change, which occurred in the late 1940s, can be held accountable for providing the seedbed for the apostasy that is rife within Evangelical ranks today. Man is a decidedly pragmatic creature, and we love to see grandiose achievements – from Eve’s failure to discern Satan’s lies to today, we fail to recognize our longing to be great and to accomplish great things. We forget to remember who we are before God, and love to contemplate the “modern” lie of our self-worth and independence. The same lie that Eve succumbed to has not lost its allurements! Satan’s siren song from the Garden of Eden has many verses used by the father of lies throughout the millennia, but the melody and theme have not changed.

New Evangelicalism

Throughout my thirty years within the ranks of Evangelicalism, both as a student in two different Evangelical Bible colleges and as a member of several Evangelical churches, I never heard of New Evangelicalism, of the man who coined the phrase, or of the movement that followed. As I look back on it now, it seems incredible that I would not have heard of it at all; it was a pivotal time in the history of Evangelicalism, yet for some reason it slipped quietly off the radar and it was not discussed, in my hearing, within Evangelical circles. Perhaps there is no desire within the modern Evangelical movement to give credence to the massive paradigm shift that took place during the late 1940s, nor how that shift swept through the ranks of the movement in short order; it is easier to pretend that it never happened and let everyone think that what’s happening today is the way it’s always been. However, sometimes it is good to become somewhat familiar with history so that we can better understand what is taking place around us, and be armed to stand for truth.

At the epicenter of this dramatic shift was a man by the name of Harold J. Ockenga (ōk’-ēn-gay). He pastored the Park Street Congregational Church in Boston from 1936 to 1969¹², and was the driving force whereby the dream of Charles E. Fuller (founder of The Old Fashioned Revival Hour radio broadcast) for a new Christian educational facility on the west coast became a reality. Ockenga served as president of the Fuller Seminary from its inception in 1947 to 1954 and then again from 1960 to 1963 (always in absentia, as he never left his responsibilities at Park Street Church during these times).¹³

It is interesting to consider some of Ockenga’s history in light of his central role in the dramatic shift in the Evangelical focus in the coming years. At the time Ockenga entered Princeton Seminary in 1927, J. Gresham Machen was in a desperate fight to hold the school from sliding into liberalism; the division that faced Princeton was less a matter of doctrinal differences than a growing tolerance for error.¹⁴ When Machen formed Westminster Theological Seminary in the fall of 1929, Ockenga made the difficult decision of following him and separating from Princeton’s increasingly liberal stance and

¹² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Park_Street_Church

¹³ <http://www.fuller.edu/about-fuller/mission-and-history/history.aspx>

¹⁴ George M. Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism*, p. 33-34.

foregoing the prestigious Princeton degree that was within his sights.¹⁵ Perhaps he was more influenced by the charisma of Machen than by the separation from a tolerance of error. One thing Ockenga and Machen were together on was that the only hope for conservative Evangelicalism was a respected intellectual influence, and this would become very evident in Ockenga's influence on Fuller Seminary.

Charles Fuller, on the other hand, saw a tremendous need for a school to train missionaries and evangelists, and as early as 1941 had discussed this vision with Harold Ockenga.¹⁶ Both men held a passion for missions (Park Street Church had a significant missions budget), which only served to provide them with common ground for discussions. In the fall of 1946, Dan Fuller (the only child of Charles and Grace Fuller) entered the still prestigious Princeton Seminary to begin his education.¹⁷ The problems with Princeton had now taken a very personal flavor for the Fullers, and they felt the urgency of getting another school in place as quickly as possible. Ockenga shared his vision of scholarship as being central to the success of the conservative Evangelical movement, and the Fullers embraced this as an amplification of their own vision – so the stage was set. Ockenga began recruiting those who were considered the best-of-the-best in their fields of education and who were committed to the fundamentals of the faith (this was to be a “new Princeton: the new west coast seminary would recapture the glory and **academic standing** of the old Princeton”¹⁸ – emphasis added). As you can see, even before their doors were opened, scholarship had been quietly slipped into the driver's seat under the guiding hand of Ockenga.

Although the seminary that opened its doors in the fall of 1947 bore the name of Charles E. Fuller and opened largely through his financial means, the hand on the helm was clearly that of Harold Ockenga. In 1948, he announced that Fuller Seminary would be “ecclesiastically positive” and that “we do not believe and we repudiate the ‘come-out-ism’ movement.”¹⁹ With the benefit of hindsight, he clarified his pronouncement some twenty-eight years later in the *Foreword* to Harold Lindsell's book, *The Battle for the Bible*:

Neo-evangelicalism was born in 1948 in connection with a convocation address which I gave ... While reaffirming the theological view of fundamentalism, this address repudiated its ecclesiology and its social theory. The ringing call for a repudiation of separatism and the summons to social involvement received a hearty response from many evangelicals. ... Neo-evangelicalism differed from modernism in its acceptance of the supernatural and its emphasis on the fundamental doctrines of Scripture. It differed from neo-orthodoxy in its emphasis upon the written Word as inerrant, over against the Word of God which was above and different from Scripture, but was manifested in Scripture. It differed from fundamentalism in its

¹⁵ Marsden, p.34.

¹⁶ Ibid., p.18.

¹⁷ Ibid., p.20.

¹⁸ Ibid., p.24.

¹⁹ Ibid., p.64.

repudiation of separatism and its determination to engage itself in the theological dialogue of the day.²⁰

Even after viewing the fallout from his New Evangelical pronouncement for almost three decades, Ockenga still made the same declaration with the same passion. Despite Fuller Seminary having long since departed from a positive stance on the inerrancy of the Scriptures, he still maintained his position without apology. As early as 1955, his handpicked successor, Edward Carnell, spoke forthrightly during his inaugural address of the need for a “Christian philosophy of tolerance.”²¹ Only eight years after its founding, here was a significant sign that heresy was standing at the door, waiting to be welcomed in.

Even with the improved vision of hindsight, Ockenga still could not see (or admit to) his responsibility in the falling away that followed. In the same *Foreword* to Lindsell’s book, he says, “... younger evangelicals joined the [New Evangelical] movement and claimed the name, but did not confess the doctrinal position of orthodoxy. This brought neo-evangelicalism into criticism and often, both unwisely and unfairly, transferred these criticisms to the original leaders of the movement.”²² He accepted no responsibility for the spiritual devastation that followed his declaration in 1948, even though within a year, he was instrumental in bringing Béla Vassady onto the faculty of Fuller. Vassady was educated in Europe (the hotbed for aberrant theology), had been a guest professor at the now liberal Princeton Seminary, and a member of the Provisional Committee that formulated the World Council of Churches.²³ He left within a year, when it became apparent that he could not sign their statement of faith as required; Fuller’s statement still spoke of the Scriptures as being inerrant. Just a few years before Ockenga wrote the *Foreword* to Lindsell’s book, Fuller Seminary changed their statement of faith in order to accommodate the faculty who no longer believed in the inerrancy of the Scriptures. After accepting no responsibility for the devastation that worked its way into Evangelicalism, Ockenga goes on to say, “The evidence that those who surrender the doctrine of inerrancy inevitably move away from orthodoxy is indisputable.”²⁴ Despite being the one who brought Vassady (who did not believe in Biblical inerrancy) onto the faculty of Fuller Seminary within a year of its founding, he still makes the observation that holding inerrancy is critical to remaining Biblically orthodox; on the flip side, he blames the younger Evangelicals for joining ranks with him but not holding to orthodox doctrine. The events, which took place, would indicate that Ockenga bore a great responsibility, even though he claimed none.

“Ockenga ... had clearly decided that it was better to let that small band of fundamentalist separatists flail away at them than to risk entering a conflict with the left that might cut the seminary off from wider influences.”²⁵ Pragmatism rears its ugly head. His decision to proclaim the denial of the Word of God (through his denial of Biblical

²⁰ Harold Lindsell, *The Battle for the Bible*, *Foreword*.

²¹ Marsden, p.147-148.

²² Lindsell, *Foreword*.

²³ Marsden, p. 98-99.

²⁴ Lindsell, *Foreword*.

²⁵ Marsden, p. 64-65.

separation) in very specific ways was based on his view of the landscape and where there appeared to be greater opportunities for Fuller Seminary in the future. If he had been as concerned about orthodoxy as he claimed, he would never have blatantly contravened the Scriptures by denying the Biblical doctrine of separation (pivotal to God's call to our holiness); he claimed to adhere to the Word of God as being inerrant, yet welcomed the opportunity to revisit some of the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith in light of liberal scholarship. His reexamination of some of the foundational teachings of Christianity included "the antiquity of man, the universality of the Flood, God's method of creation, and others."²⁶ What is immediately evident is that the Scriptures' clear teaching on these matters was no longer sufficient for Ockenga; he was prepared to view these foundational doctrines as being errant – otherwise, why would he feel free to question them? Fuller Seminary's departure from the Scriptures began almost immediately under Ockenga's watch as president; he had a vision for scholarship and set out immediately on that course – all else was secondary, including maintaining an orthodox view of God's Word.

However, Ockenga's influence was not limited to either Park Street Church or Fuller Seminary. When the National Association of Evangelicals formed in 1942, the first president was Harold J. Ockenga; when the magazine, *Christianity Today*, began in 1956, the first Chairman of the Board was Harold J. Ockenga; when the World Congress on Evangelism convened in 1966, one of the three key speakers was none other than – you guessed it!²⁷ His pragmatic departure from the truths of Scripture worked well to vault him into a position of great influence within the New Evangelical movement. Amazingly, when he turned away from those who held to Biblical separation, he found broad acceptance within the Evangelical community; there were very few who challenged him on his heretical views – for the most part, what he envisioned has become the reality for all of Evangelicalism today; unfortunately, what his pragmatic approach did not predict was the massive slide into apostasy that would result.

Church Growth Movement

Whenever anyone mentions, "church growth movement," a couple of names immediately spring to mind: Bill Hybels and Rick Warren. Although these men may surface first on mention of the church growth movement (CGM), the net must be cast much wider than that, and the roots of the movement go back much further. Donald McGavran, a missionary to India, formulated "the main principles of Church Growth theory in the 1930s" for use within his context.²⁸ However, it wasn't until the 1970s, with the publishing of his book, *Understanding Church Growth*, along with the formation of the Institute for American Church Growth, and the influence of several of Fuller Seminary's faculty that the principles found fertile soil within the established church. Interestingly, David Wells clarifies for us that McGavran was "not theologically oriented. His thinking was quite pragmatic and results-oriented. He argued ... the only barriers to

²⁶ Lindsell, *Foreword*.

²⁷ Ashbrook, John E., *New Neutralism II*, p. 4.

²⁸ David F. Wells, *God in the Wasteland* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994), p. 68.

conversion were social, such as class and ethnicity.”²⁹ The very roots of the CGM are imbedded in pragmatism, with a clear focus on results; but not only this, there is an accompanying departure from the truth of Scripture. Wells goes on to say,

It is probably no accident that these principles began to find wide acceptance in the evangelical world during the 1970s, because...this was a time when the confessional and theological character of evangelicalism began to fade, leaving the churches wide open to the intrusions of raw pragmatism.³⁰

Robert Schuller, a mentor to Bill Hybels, lays claim to being the founder of the church-growth movement in the US, and, whether or not his claim is accurate, it is evident that he was one of the first on the bandwagon. In his book, *Your Church has Real Possibilities*, he states, “My particular job as senior pastor is, hopefully, to deliver messages that will bring great crowds to church on Sunday morning.”³¹ The test of the success for Schuller was the size of the crowd that appeared on Sunday morning – yet Paul’s admonition to Timothy was to “hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 1:13). Yet should we be surprised by Schuller’s apparently shallow approach when the very basis of his ministry is to look to the surrounding community to determine the appropriate *modus operandi*? The notoriety of men like Schuller, and Hybels and Warren after him, would be due largely to the size of the works that they lead, and the fact that they have become key marketers of CGM concepts and their churches key models of CGM “success.”

Hidden in plain view is the pragmatic element that finds voice through the works of Schuller, Hybels, Warren and others like them. Warren unequivocally states, “I contend that when a church continues to use methods that no longer work, it is being unfaithful to Christ!”³² The focus is on results, results that are evident to the eye, as Schuller made clear, to the extent that the size of the crowd becomes the measure of faithfulness to Christ! The focus of CGM is selling the non-churched on attending church, and, to accomplish this, they will use the latest inventions of business marketing skills. This gives rise to someone who has gained great popularity with the CGM; “perhaps no single source carries as much weight in the ‘seeker-sensitive’ church than George Barna and his Barna Research Group.”³³ Barna defines marketing as “all of the activities that lead up to an exchange of equally valued goods between consenting parties.”³⁴ He goes on to clarify

²⁹ Ibid., p. 69-70.

³⁰ Wells, p. 71.

³¹ Robert H. Schuller, *Your Church has Real Possibilities* (Glendale, CA: Regal Books Division, 1974), p. 60. This is not an isolated quote taken out of context, he goes on to say “it is my job to *attract non-churched people into the sanctuary on Sunday mornings* through sermons *that do not sound like sermons*, but which sound like helpful and inspiring messages” (p. 64, emphasis in original). And even further, he advocates, “inspiring preaching must be backed up by exciting programs to impress the non-churched people of every age” (p. 141). He also describes “one of the most spiritual experiences of my life stemmed from the musical production, *Man of La Mancha*” (p. 139) – a wholly secular production!

³² Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), p. 65.

³³ Gary E. Gilley, “The Market-Driven Church: A Look Behind the Scenes,” Part 1 <http://www.svchapel.org/ThinkOnTheseThingsMinistries/publications/html/market1.html>

³⁴ George Barna, *A Step-by-Step Guide to Church Marketing* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1992), p. 19.

how he sees this working itself out in evangelism: “the nonbeliever has committed his time to hear your message. If he decides to embrace Jesus as his Savior, he gives up worldly freedom and a sinful nature and agrees to commit himself to following Jesus Christ. In return, he gains the assurance of eternal life with God.”³⁵ However, what Barna fails to identify right at the outset is that his definition of marketing does not fit his own concept of evangelism. The exchange that is made is a relinquishing of sin and a commitment to Jesus on one hand, and eternal life on the other hand – how can these be remotely construed as “equally valued goods,” even within Barna’s mind? The former, even if accompanied by many righteous acts, are nothing but filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6); the latter, was accomplished by the death of the perfect Son of God! Equal? Hardly!! Salvation is not an exchange – it is a gift from God!

What Barna has learned is that there can be success through the application of business or secular marketing tools – however, what he does not say is that this success must also carry a secular definition. Marketing schemes are totally pragmatic in their approach. Both pragmatism and marketing say, “If you achieve the desired results then you have success.” Marketing says you must continually evaluate your target audience to ensure that you are adapting to meet their needs; pragmatism says that makes good sense in order to achieve success. Marketing makes the consumer the focus – it is all their needs, what they want to see, hear, do, etc.; and pragmatism, as we have seen, is also a decidedly man-focused philosophy. Schuller personifies this with great flair, and Hybels’ Willow Creek Association is founded upon this principle.

However appealing the ministries of Schuller and Hybels might be, there is a significant flaw in their philosophy of Christian ministry. For

neither Christ nor his truth can be marketed by appealing to consumer interest, because the premise of all marketing is that the consumer’s need is sovereign, that the customer is always right, and this is precisely what the gospel insists cannot be the case....

Christ’s gospel calls sinners to surrender their self-centeredness, to stop granting sovereignty to their own needs and recognize his claim of sovereignty over their lives. ... Barna’s program inverts this basic truth; it is the antithesis of the biblical affirmation that the church will grow only through greater fidelity to the radical commands of the gospel ...

Hawking the church as a product inevitably violates its nature as the gathering of the redeemed for service in God’s kingdom and in his world. What is lost is biblical truth.³⁶

Although different churches and leaders within the CGM may emphasize different aspects of the movement, there are characteristics common to all. Whether they are known as market-driven, purpose-driven, or seeker-sensitive churches, they all reflect a paradigm shift from what has traditionally been considered the basis for church development, namely, faithfulness to the Word of God. “New paradigm churches ... are identified by a philosophy of ministry intentionally designed to effect numerical

³⁵ Barna, p. 20.

³⁶ Wells, p. 82-83.

growth.”³⁷ The focus of CGM is numbers; the churches involved justify this shift in focus by calling it “evangelism.” The thrust is to get as many of the non-churched to come through the doors of the church, be exposed to a gospel message that will convince them that all their needs will be met in Jesus, and then permit them to arrive at the conclusion that accepting Jesus is the way to realize personal fulfillment. To accomplish this, of necessity, the Gospel message must be crafted in such a way as to not offend, and herein lies the offense of this movement.

There can be no doubt that the Gospel is an offense! “Behold, I lay in Sion a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed” (Romans 9:33, see also 1 Peter 2:7-8). To the unbelieving world, the Gospel and Jesus are offensive for they shine light on their sinful ways. In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul made it clear that “Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect. For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God” (1 Corinthians 1:17-18). By contrast, Mark Mittelberg, a member of the Willow Creek phenomena, teaches that “unchurched Harry, if he is to become a believer, must understand and respond to certain truths: ‘He needs to understand – he needs a rational grasp of what it is that we’re saying’.”³⁸ In their efforts to shape the Gospel so as to make it comprehensible to the minds of sinners, they have stripped it of its very essence and are left with a weak gospel at best, and a travesty of the Gospel of the Scriptures at worst.

Since Hybels is perhaps the most popular example of the CGM tools for success (although Rick Warren is quickly closing the gap), consider, for a moment, the beginnings of Willow Creek. In 1972, Hybels began a youth ministry that very shortly desired to reach out to the non-believer. However, the youths involved at this point had several objections to their present meeting format – factors that they felt would hinder such an outreach: their location (a church basement), their music, and the Scripture-filled teaching of Hybels.³⁹ Heeding their recommendations, Hybels soon discovered the growth potential of a work that looked to meet the felt needs of its target audience. Since it worked so well among the youth (pragmatically speaking), Hybels carried this approach into the Willow Creek church that he began in 1975, and was further solidified in his philosophy of ministry through the influence of Robert Schuller. Although G. A. Pritchard, during a yearlong study of Willow Creek for his dissertation, found that many new Willow Creek staffers were unaware of Schuller’s influence, and many older staffers were reluctant to mention it, the marks of Schuller were evident. Willow Creek bases its approach to what it does on a thorough understanding of its target audience, the key to successful marketing. After surveying their community (the first in Barna’s seven-step marketing process⁴⁰), Hybels began Willow Creek with a philosophy of “specifically

³⁷ Gilley.

³⁸ G.A. Pritchard, *Willow Creek Seeker Services* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1996), p. 172. Willow Creekers refer to the sinners, whom they are seeking to influence with the Gospel, as unchurched Harry and Mary; but evidently, the gospel, which they enunciate, is not the same as the Apostle Paul’s.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 31-32.

⁴⁰ Barna, p. 30.

requesting visitors in the weekend services not to participate in the offering at the church; developing music that these visitors could enjoy; crafting messages that related to the audience and met their needs; creating services that were exciting; and seeking to avoid making participants feel guilty.”⁴¹ Schuller’s influence shines through!

The *modus operandi* of Willow Creek is to understand where the average attendee is at in their world, and then to provide them with a message that will give them a sense of fulfillment. “Hybels attempts to help individuals clarify their psychological ‘identity’ by teaching about topics such as temperament, family history, emotions, and addiction patterns. ... A major theme of Willow Creek’s teaching in the weekend service is to provide this self-understanding.”⁴² This significant shift from a Scripture-focused ministry to an audience-oriented approach led to a new definition of spiritual success; and, not surprisingly, “success naturally became the number of those who were affected” by the church.⁴³ The natural outcome of this was to speak to those who attend in a framework that they were familiar with, which, in turn, ultimately leads to a synthesis of Christianity with worldly concepts and standards. Pritchard notes:

Christians are always tempted to synthesize their Christianity with prevalent cultural ideas and practices. The Lord is very clear that compromise of his truth should be confronted.

... while Hybels is evangelizing those in the world toward Christianity, he is also evangelizing Christians toward the world....

This tendency to compromise Christian truth is built into this model of the church. An unintended consequence of this approach to doing church is the latent temptation to water down the biblical message with the culture’s categories [i.e., psychology].⁴⁴

The underlying driving force within Willow Creek is to discover what works so as to get as many people as possible through their doors, and help them feel comfortable with Christianity; the evidence would suggest that they are successful. However, by making their unchurched Harry and Mary comfortable with Christianity, they have lost their ability to confront them with the need for repentance and brokenness before a holy God. For a sinner to become comfortable with the message of the cross, quite obviously the message must be whitewashed in order for it to appear as other than what it is. As Gary Gilley has put it,

Under the new gospel, salvation is not simply the forgiveness of sin and the imputation of righteousness. It is not merely a deliverance from the wrath of God upon a deserving and rebellious people. The new gospel is also a liberation from low self-esteem, a freedom from emptiness and loneliness, a means of fulfillment and excitement, a way to receive our heart's desires, a means of meeting our needs.⁴⁵

⁴¹ Pritchard, 55.

⁴² Ibid., p. 232.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 49.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 238-239.

⁴⁵ Gary E. Gilley, “The Doctrinal Downgrade of the Market-Driven Church”
<http://www.ifca.org/voice/00Sep-Oct/gilley.htm>

In short, the Gospel (which, as Gilley points out, is actually a new gospel – small “g”) has become less about dealing with the sin that separates man from God, and more a matter of making man feel fulfilled and good about himself.

Rick Warren, as much a guru of the CGM as Hybels, has written an extensive defense of his ministry, which reveals glimpses of the molding that must take place in order to support the movement from Scripture. By going to such great lengths to find this support, Warren thereby poses a greater threat to the unsuspecting. His book, *The Purpose Driven Church*, bears the subtitle: “Growth Without Compromising Your Message & Mission.” He begins by stating plainly, “... *growth cannot be produced by man!* Only God makes the church grow” (emphasis in the original).⁴⁶ A fine statement that would bring to mind Jesus’ promise that He will build His Church (Matthew 16:18), and Paul’s words that even though he may have planted and Apollos watered, it was God Who gave the increase (1 Corinthians 3:6). However, it does not take long for Warren to shift the focus: “It takes more than dedication to lead a church to grow; it takes *skill*” (emphasis in the original; he is not referring to God’s *skill*).⁴⁷ What has brought about this change of focus? Between these two statements, Warren makes an astute observation but then gives it a twist: “The church is a body, not a business. It is an organism, not an organization. It is alive. *If a church is not growing, it is dying*” (emphasis added).⁴⁸ The subtle twist comes when he moves from speaking of “the church” to “a church;” all within the same metaphor. The Church of Jesus Christ is indeed a Body – it is neither a business nor an organization, but is made up of redeemed mankind, eternally set apart to the praise and glory of God. However, can this be said of a local gathering, which we call a **church**? The careful answer is, “No.” Even though a local church may include the redeemed, it will also include those who are not saved. Even though he would agree with this, Warren takes the growth of a living organism (the Church, a homogenous group of redeemed, which is being built by Jesus Christ) and applies that characteristic of life and growth to a local church, a heterogeneous gathering of both the redeemed and the lost. Herein is the fallacy. Warren would agree that a local church is a heterogeneous group, yet he chooses to ignore this, and takes the characteristics of life, which can only pertain to the Body of Christ, and applies them to an organization made up of both believers and unbelievers. Warren’s conclusion is that “if a church is not growing, it is dying”; the rest of the book is proof that this growth is understood to be numerical.

However, he does not rest there. He goes on to state, “God expects both faithfulness and fruitfulness,”⁴⁹ and, “the fruit of a believer is another believer.”⁵⁰ As much as we may admire Warren’s evident zeal for the lost, what he has very cleverly done is narrow the definition of a believer’s fruitfulness to numerical growth. So when the apostle John wrote the words of Jesus, “Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples” (John 15:8), Warren interprets this fruit as being the multiplication of believers. Yet the context is Jesus’ discourse on our identity as branches that bear fruit,

⁴⁶ Warren, p. 14.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 57.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 16.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 62.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 63.

and the need for the branches to remain united with the life-giving Vine (Jesus). What fruit does a living branch produce? Another branch? Hardly! Jesus goes on to say, “as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine: no more can ye, except ye abide in me” (John 15:4). Jesus also stated, “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him ...” (John 6:44). Paul reminds us in Galatians 5 that the “fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance ...” – in short, a godly life! Once again there is overwhelming evidence that we are not building the Church, the Body of Christ; this is a supernatural work empowered by God the Father, made possible by the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross, and carried out under the guidance of the Spirit of God; at most, we can be those who plant, water, and labor in the harvest fields.

Clearly, within Warren’s frame of reference, the work of Noah was a failure – he preached for 120 years and when the day came to enter the ark, only he and his family were saved. Yet Noah is acclaimed as one of the heroes of the faith in Hebrew 11, and is called a “preacher of righteousness” (2 Peter 2:5). The difficulty that Warren seems to have fallen into is a redefinition of what constitutes fruitfulness in the eyes of God, a redefinition that justifies the CGM concepts, which have formed the basis for his work at Saddleback Community Church. “Numerical results are no justification for being unfaithful to the message, but neither can we use faithfulness as an excuse for being ineffective!”⁵¹ If we are faithful to God and His Word, how is it possible to be ineffective in the eyes of God? Like Noah, we may indeed be ineffective in the eyes of the world, and before men like Warren, but you do not have to read far in Scripture to realize that God is not impressed with numbers. Jesus said, “... strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and **few** there be that find it” (Matthew 7:14).

There is a subtle irony within the CGM. On the one hand they bend over backwards to lure the crowds in, but through accomplishing that task, the Gospel has become twisted and compromised. Having used entertainment and positivism to draw the unchurched in, they can do little other than continue to entertain them, for they have inadvertently removed the Gospel of the truth that will lead to life everlasting. Yet, unfortunately, they seem oblivious to the demise of the Gospel by their hands, and strive to encourage others to experience the “success” which they have attained. In writing to the Corinthians, Paul declared that he had been sent “to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect. For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness ...” (1 Corinthians 1:17,18). By carefully crafting their services, CGM churches have rendered the cross of Christ of little or no effect. Any true fruit that is produced will more likely be despite their efforts than because of them.

Tom Watson, of Countryside Bible Church, has legitimately raised a question with regard to the CGM: “Who really is in the lead here?”⁵² Is it a matter of gifted leaders who have attracted many followers, or have some leaders discovered what the itching ears of the multitudes want to hear? The pastor of a CGM church might “claim to be the

⁵¹ Warren, p. 64.

⁵² Tom Watson, “The Church Growth Movement: Why Don’t We Call it What it is?,” The Day Drawing Near, Fall 1997 (a publication of Countryside Bible Church), p. 3.

one who leads and feeds the flock, yet the flock determines where you will lead and what you will feed.”⁵³ Herein lies a further downfall of the CGM in the light of Scripture. Nowhere are we taught to shape our message to the desires of the people; but we see much exhortation by Paul to Timothy and Titus to maintain a strong hold on the teachings that had been given to them. In addition, Paul warns of the approach which the CGM has taken: “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers [this is nothing other than the CGM concept of giving people what they desire], having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables” (2 Timothy 4:3-4). True doctrine, the bane of the CGM, is the lifeline for the believer. In a day when the spirit of anti-Christ is becoming ever more prevalent, we would do well to take heed to our beliefs, lest we be deceived as those who will perish “because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved” (2 Thessalonians 2:10). Let it be stated here: what is at stake is nothing less than the declared truths of Scripture, the very words of God reaching out to sinful mankind, and the very souls of lost mankind.

Evangelicals and Catholics Together (ECT)

As with many things in this day of information overload, the signing of the *Evangelicals and Catholics Together* (ECT) agreement has lost much of its spark, and is certainly off the radar of most Christians today. However, the significance of this agreement, and of those who signed it, has not gone away. This agreement became a watershed of sorts – a coming out for some who have aligned themselves with those who have been deemed to be “believing Catholics.”

For the purposes of this study, the question which begs a response is: what role did pragmatism play in bringing this agreement to fruition? Clearly, our concern is less with those of the Catholic faith and more with the Evangelicals of some notoriety who signed the document. Herd instinct will lead many Evangelicals to follow other Evangelicals when they would never think of following a Catholic, yet, if the end result is apostasy, what difference does it make whom they follow?

The ECT document begins:

We are Evangelical Protestants and Roman Catholics who have been led through prayer, study, and discussion to common convictions about Christian faith and mission. ...

We together, Evangelicals and Catholics, confess our sins against the unity that Christ intends for all his disciples. The one Christ and one mission includes [sic] many other Christians, notably the Eastern Orthodox and those Protestants not commonly identified as Evangelical. All Christians are encompassed in the prayer, "May they all be one."⁵⁴

⁵³ Watson, p. 3.

⁵⁴ <http://www.leaderu.com/ftissues/ft9405/articles/mission.html>

The quote that they make is in reference to John 17:11, in Jesus' prayer to the Father before His crucifixion: "And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we *are*."

There were two driving forces behind the ECT, two things above all others that those who drafted this agreement sought to make evident – the unity of all believers, and the clear evidence of love between believers. Their paramount drive for unity has been misappropriated from the text just quoted, and their love for one another is derived from John 13:34. Bringing these two attributes of the true followers of Christ together in their unholy alliance, they declare that

Unity and love among Christians is an integral part of our missionary witness to the Lord whom we serve. ... As Evangelicals and Catholics, we pray that our unity in the love of Christ will become ever more evident as a sign to the world of God's reconciling power.⁵⁵

Those involved in the ECT accord set their focus on unity and love and, despite their efforts to state otherwise, set out to accomplish these through their own efforts. The Evangelicals involved determined beforehand that the aberrant doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church are not important, and that anyone who simply believes in Jesus as Lord and Savior, to the neglect of all of the rest of Scripture, is a Christian. By so doing, they are able to grant the Catholic message and means of salvation equity with that understood within Protestant Christianity. By setting aside much of Scripture that would condemn their actions, the Evangelicals involved with the ECT have fallen for the oldest trick of Satan: take a few words of God out of context, give them a slight twist, and then focus on the end result that appears to be so good. Pragmatism forms the basis of the ECT accord.

The first name that appears on the list of participants for the ECT document is that of Charles Colson. Herein lies the danger for the average Evangelical today, perhaps, even for those who would profess being Fundamentalists. Colson has been a very recognized name within Christian circles for the last number of years, and, in many ways, has been accepted both as a theologian and as a key Evangelical thinker of today with considerable influence. The thrust of the ECT bears Colson's signature stamp of emphasis on unity and love, of ignoring the barriers of errant doctrine and embracing heretics and apostates despite the warnings of Scripture.

In his book, *The Body*, Colson states unequivocally that "we must strive for unity because it is the essence of the church."⁵⁶ For Colson, the focus of his efforts within the community of Christianity is for the unity of all believers. He goes on to clarify, "true unity is not sought by pretending that there are no differences, as modern ecumenists have done, but by recognizing and respecting those differences, while focusing on the

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Charles Colson with Ellen Santilli Vaughn, *The Body* (Vancouver: Word Publishing, 1992), p. 102.

great orthodox truths all Christians share.”⁵⁷ He is openly critical of the World Council of Churches’ (WCC) efforts to reduce faith to its lowest common denominator, which, according to Colson, has simply made it a common belief in nothing. In Colson’s mind, he is not guilty of the same travesty, but he has simply focused on what he has termed the “great orthodox truths” that we all hold in common. The difference is this: whereas the WCC has sought to come to unity with Liberals, Colson’s focus has been to come to unity with Catholics; on the one hand, Liberals have neglected every form of doctrine, while, on the other, Catholics do in fact adhere to some doctrines shared by Evangelical Christians. In the former case, the WCC seeks unity among apostates; in the latter, Colson seeks unity with heretics.

For Colson, the need to reconcile the Catholic and Protestant faiths began immediately upon his conversion, and the evidence of his compromise is at once evident. In his book, *Born Again*, Colson clearly identifies his position in a discussion he had early on with his wife, Patricia:

[Colson says to his wife] “but, honey, you are a complete part of it [his new life]. We are both Christians now, whereas before you were a Christian and I was not.”

“Will you be going to a church?”

“Yes, but I’m not sure which one yet.”

Patty’s eyes were still cloudy, her voice apprehensive. “Then you don’t expect me to give up my Catholic faith to join you?”

So at last the real problem was out in the open. Somehow Patty had identified what was happening to me as a Protestant experience, rather than an *across-the-board Christian one*. [emphasis added]⁵⁸

Even though Colson’s experience was centered within the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), it is evident that he immediately accepted his practicing Catholic wife as a fellow Christian! The seeds of the ECT were already flourishing! Equally evident is the failure of those within the SBC, who were working with Colson to warn of seeking the syncretism of Catholic and Protestant faiths.

Colson’s need to come to terms with a reconciliation of Catholic and Protestant faiths was immediate and close to home. Every day he was faced with the need to bring these two together, for only in so doing would he be able to experience unity of faith with his wife. For Colson, the reality of the ECT was personal.

Of all the participants in the ECT development, Colson’s name is by far the most recognizable within the Evangelical community. However, that does not discredit the others from being influential members of their respective spheres of activity. Following is a list of the other participants, and a brief biography, to give some appreciation for the broad impact the ECT had:

- Fr. Juan Diaz-Vilar, S.J. Catholic Hispanic Ministries, a Jesuit priest. He is a member of the “Societas Jesu” (hence, S.J.) founded in 1540 by Ignatius of Loyola

⁵⁷ Colson, *Body*, p. 104.

⁵⁸ Charles W. Colson, *Born Again* (Old Tappan: Chosen Books, 1976), p. 157.

whose primary intention was to promote the imitation of Christ. Prevented from pursuing this, he made himself and his followers available to the pope of the day, the “Christ upon earth.”⁵⁹ Although not founded to specifically oppose the progress of Protestantism following the Reformation, it proved to be the task of the Jesuits wherever they went to do just that.

- Fr. Avery Dulles, S.J. Fordham University – appointed as a Cardinal in 2002, and described as “profoundly loyal to the Catholic tradition and Pope John Paul II.”⁶⁰ Hailing from a Presbyterian background (albeit in name only), he was accepted into the Catholic Church in 1940 through the influence of Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen.⁶¹
- Bishop Francis George, OMI Diocese of Yakima (Washington).
- Dr. Kent Hill, Eastern Nazarene College.
- Dr. Richard Land, President and CEO of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, responsible for “applied Christianity,” a position he has held since 1988.
- Dr. Larry Lewis, Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention.
- Dr. Jesse Miranda, Assemblies of God.
- Msgr. William Murphy, Chancellor of the Archdiocese of Boston.
- Fr. Richard John Neuhaus, Institute on Religion and Public Life – led the charge with Colson; he began his “ministry” as a Lutheran cleric and then converted to Catholicism, becoming a priest. He functioned as advisor to President George W. Bush.
- Mr. Brian O’Connell, World Evangelical Fellowship.
- Mr. Herbert Schlossberg, Fieldstead Foundation.
- Archbishop Francis Stafford, Archdiocese of Denver.
- Mr. George Weigel, Ethics and Public Policy Center and author of the best-selling biography of Pope John Paul II, *Witness to Hope*.
- Dr. John White, Geneva College and the National Association of Evangelicals.

Colson lived in a home where he was reminded daily of the need to reconcile Baptist (Evangelical) and Catholic beliefs. That was his desired end; he discovered that when he put his mind to it, he could accomplish that lofty goal and still convince himself that he was on solid Biblical ground. Thanks to the fine groundwork laid by Harold Ockenga, Colson and Neuhaus found a ready audience of Evangelicals more than willing to lay their spiritual weapons down and embrace the enemy.

Pragmatism, originating in the mind of Satan, has formed the foundation for self-justification from the time of Eve’s deception in the Garden. Aaron designed a golden calf for the people of Israel, even after he had being instrumental in seeing the judgments of God brought upon the heathen Egyptians; he blamed the people and said, “I cast it [the gold] into the fire, and there came out this calf” (Exodus 32:24). He sought a celebrating

⁵⁹ <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14081a.htm>

⁶⁰ <http://www.crisismagazine.com/julaug2001/feature1.htm>

⁶¹ This is the same Fulton J. Sheen who met with Billy Graham early in Billy’s ministry, and whom Billy admired greatly. In his autobiography, *Just as I Am*, Billy states that they talked of “our ministries and our common commitment to Evangelism, and I told him how grateful I was for his ministry and his focus on Christ” (p. 692,693). Billy Graham’s infatuation with Roman Catholicism has deep roots!

people instead of the grumbling that he faced; if returning to the gods of Egypt could accomplish that, then so be it. King Saul, in disobedience, went ahead with the sacrifice even though he knew it was not for him to do; the enemy was closing in and Samuel was not coming soon enough for him (1 Samuel 13:8-12). David had Uriah killed in battle to cover his sin of adultery, even though he knew both were wrong (2 Samuel 11).

Notice the results of pragmatism are always sin: Eve sinned in taking of the fruit of the forbidden tree, Aaron sinned by making an idol of gold, Saul sinned by taking charge of the sacrifice, and David sinned through adultery and then murder. Each one sought an end that appeared favorable; each proved to be along a pathway that departed from what God desired. Ockenga sought influence and scholarship, but he brought the Word of God into question because of the path he chose. Hybels desired to extend his influence within his community, but the Gospel was stripped of its power because of his methodology. Colson desired a strong spiritual bond with his Catholic wife, but his course of action has led to great compromise and failure on the part of Evangelicals. The Lord says, “**Obey my voice**, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people: and **walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you**, that it may be well unto you” (Jeremiah 7:23) – there is no room for pragmatism if we would desire God’s blessing to be our portion.