

INFLUENCE OF DENOMINATIONALISM ON THE LORD'S CHURCH

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INTRODUCTION

The subject has far-reaching consequences as it relates to the church of the Lord. Today, the church is in the midst of an apostasy. Only the apostasy spoken of in the New Testament was larger. While it is true that the church was divided in the latter half of the 1800's and early 1900's, the division today is multi-faceted when compared with that apostasy. That is, there are so many going astray in a multitude of ways. Also, society has abandoned the belief regarding the authority of the Word. To a great extent, 50 years ago people believed in the inspiration of the Scriptures. They may not have been consistent with this belief, but their basic belief concerning the Bible made converting them to Christ so much easier. Also, the "main-line" denominations have themselves been so influenced by liberalism (classical liberalism) that the average member in those groups is in reality a skeptical, agnostic believer in Neo-orthodoxy. We will show that there are several ways in which the church has been and is being influenced by denominationalism. It is affirmed that the reason the Lord's church is in the shape that it is today, is due greatly to the denominational influence wielded upon it. But, how did that come to affect the church?

THE INFLUENCE OF DENOMINATIONAL SCHOOLS ON THE CHURCH

The church has been influenced by denominationalism through some of the men trained in denominational schools. This is not a unique insight. Great men have seen the danger in this situation. Brother Ira Y. Rice, Jr. sounded the trumpet of warning about this subject more than thirty-eight years ago. In his book, **Axe on the Root**, he stated, "I refer, of course, to this 'Educational Trojan Horse' which is being trundled into our midst from the denominational/secular, so-called 'Divinity' Schools intentionally via our Christian colleges. No, I did not say that such is being intended by our colleges; but those who are responsible for the framing and shaping of this Trojan Horse so intend, and if the presidents, vice-presidents, deans, boards of trustees and others responsible for administering our colleges do not guard carefully, such shall succeed in taking over, as they fully are determined to do ... and others among us, from time to time, who have

wandered off from the path of truth after the doctrines and commandments of men. They, too, almost without exception, were led astray by traveling their various paths of so-called 'higher education,' not having had their senses previously exercised to discern between truth and error."

Painfully, this has come to pass in many of our graduate schools, four-year universities, and schools of preaching. And, because this is the case, the church has been infected with the theological "hogwash" spilling out of these schools. Of course, not all of the men come out tainted with error. Brother Rice goes on to say, "There have also been those who have gone on for higher degrees and have come through unscathed with colors flying. Therefore, it is possible to attain advanced education without necessarily exchanging the truth of God for a lie."

Now, one might ask the question, "How can a few false teachers have so much influence?" The digression goes somewhat like this. We go back to the man who has gotten his "higher education" at a denominational school, for the case in point. Unless this person has maintained diligence, he will have had to compromise the doctrine of Christ on several occasions. This, usually, has not been done by overtly and verbally agreeing with the denominational teaching. It usually has been a gradual thing. The person, when he first arrived, may have spoken-up in class when the teacher taught something false. The student, when he is taking an exam, will explain in the test the reason he disagrees with this or that point and will give the truth along with the answer desired by the professor. As it is being described, this is the appropriate thing to do. But, unless the person remains vigilant, he will succumb to the pressure that will be placed upon him. He may become disillusioned regarding his situation at this school. He probably has seen no visible results from the stand he has been taking. The teachers and students with whom he is associated have not changed, and often he gives up and becomes depressed. He may start feeling alone, and he is often made fun of for his stand. He may start "going along to get along." He may start rationalizing that he cannot change the world, so why try? He may be sold on the idea of just being a "scholar." He has been taught that a person is a "true" scholar who never makes statements like, "This is the case," or "The Bible definitely teaches." These denominational teachers have convinced him never to come down on an issue in a definitive way. They say that this is the safe way to go. And, before the person realizes it, he has compromised the truth. His tolerance level concerning error has risen to the point that the person becomes relativistic and agnostic even regarding the truth. This person usually is very cynical toward those who hold up the truth and defend it. This person has become a denominationalist himself. This includes the

fact that he has been influenced by these false teachers to the point that he may be teaching some of their false doctrines himself. Now comes the point where this person and those like him start influencing the church with their denominational error. Brother Rice well states, “Young, would-be preachers, teachers, and college professors, themselves, not well grounded in the truth, go off to such “divinity schools” as Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Chicago, Southern California and the like, imbibing deeply of secular and sectarian theologies, philosophies and psychologies, then come back into our pulpits and classrooms and corrupt our whole teaching process with their newfound “doctrines and commandments of men” contrary to the word of God.”

So, we send our young men and women to our schools where these men teach. They are attending where their parents once did. They are attending schools where great and sound men once taught the Word of God. And naively they think, “Brother So and So can’t be teaching error because he teaches at such and such a school.” These young men and women graduate from these schools and go back to the local churches with the false doctrines they have been taught. If we are to save the church from this present day apostasy, we must break this cycle.

To be continued.....Lee