

and lasciviousness too!

Thus denominationalism, by weakening men's faith in the authority of God's word, laid the foundation for moral anarchy. And do not think for one moment that this teaching is unrelated to our soaring crime wave in the nation! We have become a nation with no moral standard, no final authoritative basis for judging "right" and "wrong." The terrible fruitage of a century of chipping

away at the authority of the divine standard has brought down upon our heads a tidal wave of crime and lawlessness. The "situation ethics" of Joseph Fletcher becomes the standard, and every man does that which is right in his own eyes. Sadly enough, some of our own brethren have succumbed to the spiritual miasma of the age, further weakening and invalidating the divine standard. They have forgotten that, "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he

also reap." They have sown to the wind; and the whole nation, the church included; is reaping the whirlwind. Crime in the streets, bloodshed, lust, avarice, debauchery — these are the fruits of the nation. And the building of human organizations, the reliance on human wisdom, the general departure from "thus saith the Lord" in church work and worship — these are the end products we see in the churches. ~

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by Fanning Yater Tant

One of the truly frightening things about denomination- alism, and one that is often overlooked, is the insidious way in which it lays the ba- sis for complete moral an- archy in human affairs. It destroys and undermines the very standard, the au- thoritative guide, by which men can tell "right" from "wrong" —good from evil. This is the very same spirit

which has produced such chaos within our own ranks in recent years. Indeed, the present horrendous wave of lawlessness in the land, with crime soaring at a ter- rifying rate, is due in no small measure to the preaching that has been done in American pulpits for the last one hundred years!

Preaching the cause of law- lessness? Incredible! you

say. But the kind of preach- ing that has been done in our nation, and sometimes in pulpits of the churches of Christ, weakens and vitiates the actual foundation for all moral judgments and all moral standards. We look at a certain action and say, "That is right;" we see an- other act and say, "That is wrong." Now, what do we mean by "right" and "wrong"? By what standard are we reaching our ver-

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dict? On what basis do we judge? Why is it "wrong" for a human being to kill and eat a fellow human being, and yet not "wrong" for a beast of the jungle to kill and eat another beast of the jungle? Why can we not say that murder is a noble act, that the murderer is a hero, deserving of praise for his action? Why do we not put a premium on dishonesty? And on cowardice? By what standard, or for what reason, do we declare that theft and falsehood and cruelty are "wrong," but that virtue and honesty and courage are "right"?

Traditional Teaching?

"Well," one replies, "we have been taught that standard. This is that which comes from the scriptures. The Bible teaches that it is 'right' for a man to act a certain way but 'wrong' for him to act in another way." This is certainly true. We have LEARNED to judge between right and wrong, between what is good and

what is evil. We have been taught by a long and arduous process of education through many generations as to what is "right" and what is "wrong." Thus moral truth has been embedded in the conscience, and in the consciousness of the race. The world feels the influence of this even in lands where the Bible is not known. The whole human race has learned that lust and greed and dishonesty are "wrong" and that virtues and honesty and love are "right."

But for more than a century now, denominationalism has been subtly and insidiously undermining the very standard, the authoritative guide, by which these values and judgments are determined and established. For the Bible is the standard and the rule by which all moral values can be ascertained. And, since the days of the Campbell's, denominationalism has been more and more de-valuing the authority of that standard.

The Dilemma

So terrific was the impact made by the Campbell's and their co-workers on the conscience of the nation, so deep and powerful the conviction wrought by their charges of denominational sin, that from their day to ours, denominational leaders have been frantically seeking some way to overcome the weight and the stinging rebuke of their indictment. In view of Bible teaching, the simple, plain and unequivocal words of the inspired scripture, denominationalism was wrong and sinful; the denominational churches had no right before God even to exist!

Confronted with this devastating attack on the very principle of denominationalism, the forces of entrenched error were faced with a dilemma: they could either surrender their denominationalism, or they could deny the authority

and weaken the impact of that teaching which threatened their existence. Many thousands of these sincere and devout people refused to surrender their conviction in the absolute authority of the Bible, and consequently broke with their traditional denominational affiliations completely and became simple New Testament Christians. Other thousands, however, enmeshed in the labyrinthine toils of their religious heritage, clung to the old ties at the expense of their convictions as to the absolute authority and sufficiency of the scriptures. They could justify themselves in their position only by a refusal to acknowledge the supremacy and final authority of the Bible as a guide and standard.

Thus came about the self-justifying rash of rationalizations which has plagued us these past decades: "Every man has a right to his own beliefs," "if you are totally sincere in what you believe, that makes it truth

for you; one church is as good as another; we can never agree on what the Bible says, we can only agree on love; you worship God in your way, and I will worship Him in mine," etc. This sort of teaching, spread out over a century and more, spawned the belief that the Bible can NOT be understood by the common, ordinary man; that it does NOT necessarily mean what it seems to be saying. A denominational preacher fifty years ago might well have gone into the pulpit, picked up his Bible to read, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved," then spend his entire sermon to show that baptism is NOT essential to salvation! The same procedure might deal with passages that teach of the one church, immersion. the Lord's Supper, and a score or a hundred other items.

Without realizing it, such preachers and such preaching laid the basis for moral anarchy; they destroyed faith in that authority of

God's word. People were slowly conditioned to question, or to reject, plain Bible teaching as to a great many problems or questions regarding the plan of salvation, the church, worship, and other such things. They were sowing to the wind!

Reaping the Whirlwind

And the terrible fruitage of such sowing? Well, take a look at the divorce evil, as an example. When people have been taught for four or five generations that the Bible does NOT mean what it says on baptism; does NOT mean what it teaches on the subject of the one church; does NOT mean what it says on a score of other subjects, then can those same people be blamed for believing that perhaps the Bible does NOT mean what it says about a woman being bound to her husband, "for so long as he liveth?" And perhaps it does NOT mean what it says about theft, and lying, and drunkenness,