

*[From the Sangre de Cristo Seminary, notes within the book "Biblical Separation Divided" by Gary G. Cohen, The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1966. - DJD 29 Nov 2014]*

Dr. Robert O Fern, a member of the Billy Graham team, has written a volume defending cooperation with liberal unbelievers. Mr. Cohen analyzes his ten main arguments. So explicit is Mr. Cohen's reasoning, so exegetical, so probative, that a cursory survey would eliminate its overwhelming force. Therefore two sections only will be more extensively separated as illustrative both of the method and the material.

Dr. Fern believes that Billy Graham is justified in accepting the sponsorship of known unbelievers, in having them appear on the platform with him, in using them to instruct the converts to liberal churches because Jesus, when he sent out the twelve and the seventy, told them to lodge with any householder who, knowing their message, would entertain them. Dr. Fern writes, "They were supposed to accept hospitality when it was offered. They were to leave only when they were positively rejected." "In fact," says Mr. Cohen, "Dr. Fern "declares it is not even the responsibility of the evangelist to determine the motives which may have prompted ... a denier of the Atonement to invite a conservative preacher to come." (p. 2).

Mr. Cohen then points out that this is not at all what Jesus told his disciples. Jesus explicitly told them to search out who in the town is worthy and there abide (Matt 10:11). Mr. Cohen then asks, would the disciples have accepted the invitation of a known sorcerer or idol worshipper? "If Paul thought it important enough to have Titus circumcised in order to remove an unnecessary stumbling block from the minds of the Jews ... surely the Lord would not consent to a sorcerer's willingness [to be host] as a sufficient reason for basing his proclamation headquarters at a local temple of idols." (p. 3). Dr. Fern ignores the command to seek out who is worthy.

"Who then is 'worthy'? ... In Mathew 7:15 Christ said, 'Beware of false prophets ... ravening wolves.' These words would certainly eliminate 'false prophets' from the list of worthy men. ... Dr. Fern's statement, 'It cannot be his [the evangelist's] responsibility to determine the motives that prompted their [the liberal sponsors's] invitation,' is the exact opposite of what Matthew 10:11 teaches. In any event, since motives of the liberals are often known, it is at least the evangelist's responsibility not to disregard them." (p. 5).

Note very well that this is not a question of going to publicans and sinners, sorcerers and Pharisees, liberals and men whose God is dead, and preaching the saving grace of God to them; the question concerns accepting their sponsorship and sending new converts to their churches. What Dr. Fern cannot see is that such sponsorship prevents an evangelist from preaching as Christ and the apostles did. They said, woe to you generation of vipers, but "A sponsoree comes under a tacit and

understood agreement not to do or say anything that is detrimental to the sponsor.” (p.7). This is Billy Graham's policy with his sponsors, but it was not Christ's method with the Sadducees, the Pharisees, and the unbelievers in Chorazim.

Such is a brief summary of Mr. Cohen's first argument. Limitations of space allow for only one more example, the seventh argument.

Dr. Fern's seventh argument is that “on no occasion did he [Christ] inquire concerning the theology or even the conduct of those to whom he went to minister ... one who reads the New Testament will discover that Jesus attacked hypocrisy and bigotry more than any other evil.” That is to say, since Christ was unconcerned about the theology and conduct of those to whom he preached, Dr. Graham need not be concerned about the theology and conduct of those who sponsor his campaigns.

Dr. Fern's argument is invalid and irrelevant. No fundamentalistic evangelist has ever tried to bar liberal believers from sitting in the pews and listening to the gospel. Billy Graham's critics want to bar unbelievers from the platform and from taking part in the services and from helping to manage the campaign.

Not only is Dr. Fern's argument irrelevant, but its premise is false. Christ did precisely what Dr. Fern says he did not do. Mr. Cohen selects the Samaritan woman as an example of Christ's examination both of conduct and of theology.

Dr. Fern's remarks on hypocrisy and bigotry presuppose that “(1) Jesus attacked hypocrisy more than any other sin, (2) therefore evangelists ... should make the thrust of their 'negative' condemnation of sin against hypocrisy and not against modernism and unbelief, and (3) therefore any evangelist or Christian worker who is not speaking out against unbelief in liberal churches ... is not only blameless, but is in fact following the precise example of the Lord.” (p. 53).

Mr. Cohen then argues that “a minister is bound before the Lord to emphasize any subject which the congregation to whom he speaks needs to have emphasized to them because of their present situation ... thus Dr. Fern's thrust does not take into consideration

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