

A Brief Introduction and Critique of Contemporary Theological Thoughts in Christianity

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INTRODUCTION

Since the 18th and 19th Century Christianity suffered many heavy blows from all sides: The Reformation and Counter Reformation movements of post-Renaissance has brought the Church out of the so called "Dark Ages" giving the Church much thinking spaces. The Age of the Reason that followed continued to challenge the Church with its enlightenment spirit, bringing the authority of the Church to the brink of collapse. It also created an almost brand new scenario for human history; whereby man appeared to be fully emancipated and could act autonomously. General speaking, man had entered into a period of irreversible Golden Age when human reason seemed to mature without limitation. Then came the discovery of the New World and wisdom literature from the East. The two forces combined bringing yet another wave of shocks to the foundation of the Christendom: challenging its finality and absoluteness, providing fertile soils for the breeding of the rebellious spirit of disbelieve.

After the rise and the decline of colonialism of three centuries (i.e. 18th to 20th Century) human thought began to challenge the Creator at the beginning of the 21st Century! Religion and religious practices again enjoyed much focus both in sociology and politics. In fact, religion had become an inevitable proposition in any discourse, science and para-science alike. Even at the dawning the revival of the Evolution theory that was considered long time dead¹, under the shadow of the wars and terrorism, moral breakdown, and social disintegration, everyone begins to talk about religion again. Superstition, the study of mysticism, theosophy, and astrology are rising to its unbelievable height now. New age movement was reported as being one of the most favorable religious beliefs side by side with Greek Orthodox in the once atheistic Russia. As for Christianity and the Church, the signs of revival and awakenings are everywhere. New denominations, sects, even heresies are mushrooming everywhere within the Church, fulfilling what St Augustine's foresight of the growing of grains and weeds together in the last ages. Upon such a phenomena, this paper tries to provide an introduction on some of the theological

¹ C.f. National Geography, 2004.10

thoughts and religious practice in contemporary Church with the purpose to equip members of the church and beginners for proper understanding when reflections are called for.

I. Theological thought of the Modernism and Liberalism

The theology of Modernism and Liberalism are twin sisters resulted from the age of reason and humanism. Founded on the conviction of the supremacy of rationality, they attempt to replace God with human reason, and further challenges the authority of the Church and its tradition with rationalism.

Taking sense and experience as only instrument to human understanding, they try to negate all self-evident truth of faith with a total commitment to the spirit of Positivism. Besides denying God and his existence, they rendered high critique with haughty spirit at all and any tradition and authority, especially that of the Church and its faith. They lay much confidence on human ability and denied the possibility of God and miracles. They believe in human autonomy and determinism, asserting that God and the faith in God is possible only when man live in the epoch of innocence and ignorant, as man has come of age, man shall discard these crutches man uses when their thought was feeble and crippled. Man has come has no need of these crutches other than preserving them in the museum as a proof of man's primitive and ignorant.

Taking another look, we find that the so-called rationalism has ironically and humbly turn to the mysticism and so occupied with the wisdom of the East with infantile spirit. What can we say, if human reason is absolute, it may choose whatever it likes at will, even superstition! This is the consequence, when Reason is the Master and *homo mensura* of Protagoras is its doctrine, ironic is the result.

In fact, Liberalism and Modernism are most friendly. They are pleasurable! Nevertheless, in the final analysis, we find that though they have discarded the belief in the God of the Bible, they have actually taken Science and Reason as a God. They take the position that appears to say that as long as there is no God, all others are acceptable. This is an irresponsible and gross discriminative act against God and Christianity. Though they still maintain certain forms of worship services, even maintain the used of "Church" and "Christianity", and still engage in mission and sending, nevertheless, at the bottom of their belief is the doctrine of: the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of man. Appeasement and peaceful coexistence is their basic religious motifs. Religion for hem is just a fashion of moral life in the society. It

is good for man to have it, but they are surely not absolute.

Consequently, this group does not believe in revelation, substitutional redemption, and miracles. They talk about history yet taking history as natural development by putting absolute trust in human nature. They also believe in the perfect, infinite and absoluteness of human rationality. In religion and philosophy, they take the position of syncretism, asserted the Christ is only a symbol, he also exists outside of Christianity. For them, the Church is a mere social institution; it should be democratic, even with its beliefs. Let its members decide what they wish to believe with the spirit of liberalism, each member decides his own creed. For which they consequently forfeited the doctrine of infallibility and the inerrancy of the Scripture. Within such an understanding, they have ascertained the centrality of humanism as foundation of theology. For them, man is the center of universe, the master and supreme judge of themselves.

II. The Post Modernism

Post Modernism thought begins at nineteen sixties and seventies. It is a consequent of Modernity as it fails to meet the moral demand and the falling culture. In the midst of human estrangement and frustration, the Church realizes its helplessness with its traditional faith and moral value; it comes to the stage of discarding its tradition and foundation *in toto*, and adopts extreme antinomianism and absolute relativism. Finding Christian faith unacceptable to modern mind, many theologians try to avoid, even negate anything about faith and absolute to appease others. They believe that even though man may make mistakes, those mistakes at the most are breaking the law, not sin against God. Right and Wrong are relative and situational. They also separate themselves from rationality to meet irrational needs of emotion. Irrationality and relativism is absolute. For them, there is no eternity other than temporal present. Their motto is: One present experience is worth more than eternity, an expression of the basics of extreme existentialism.

In fact, Post-modernism is a rebellion of human thought against authoritarianism of rationalism. It lashes out based on the foundation of humanism, creeping into Christian theology anonymously, and become the backbone of the soul of many peripheral theology and para-faiths. Being so pantheistic and panentheistic in nature, they take themselves as God, boasting on their achievement, leaving the practice of the Word and established their own sects that eventually become cults. Many contemporary Charismatic movements and Pentecostalism have unintentionally

adopting this kind of philosophy as the bases of their thought resulted in an unaccountable authoritarianism.

III. The Neo-orthodoxy

Neo-orthodox theology began at the beginning of 20th Century and to fades away at 1970s and 1980s. In fact, Neo-orthodoxy is one of the most theological thoughts that influenced Christian scholars in the 20th. Century. Started with Swiss Theologian, Karl Barth's reaction towards the Liberalism and Modernism of his time, who found the helplessness of the Church in facing the post World War One's devastation. Barth, then with his Reformed background deliver a series of message on the Paul's Epistle to the Romans discover the absolute gap between God and man, time and eternity, absolute inability of man and the absoluteness of God. He suggests that the Church should return to the Bible and the Sovereignty of God. He emphasizes the inability of man and the definite need of God's grace. His contemporary carry on his thought and coined Crisis Theology that focus on the existential encountering experience with God. Their thought has once overtook all theological discourse triumphantly and become the favorite son of the Church. Nevertheless, most unfortunate is their incomplete and indecisive delineation of the Word of God, in which the Neo-orthodox emphasizes the absolute freedom of God and ends up with denying the absoluteness of divine revelation in the Bible in becoming a theology that has no absolute foundation in the Word of God. In affirming the absolute freedom of God Barth asserts that the Word of God cannot be limited in the revealed words of the Bible, he then proceeds to affirm that the absolute grace of God is the based of God's operation. He and his follower have doubts on the absolute truthfulness of Biblical records, taking biblical narration as saga to emphasize on the existential and functional meaning of the Biblical writing instead of its essence. They affirm that the Bible is not the Word of God, it only witnesses to the Word of God that becomes the living Word of God in the Church through pastoral preaching. As such, they deny the infallibility and inerrancy of the Bible.

Their most problems rest in the fact that they use the terminology of the traditional reformed and orthodox theology and its framework then inserted or interpolated the existential thought to establish their theological understandings. Apparently, they have switched the pearls with fish eyes. At last, their thought follows the path of the liberalism they robustly fought against and ends to become one of the scars of the theological failure of the age. Many Fundamentals and Evangelicals brand

them Liberals.

IV. The Christian Fundamentalism

This is one of the native bred of the American Church. Beginning at close to the end of the 19th Century and the beginning 20th Century, this movement is a strong reaction of the conservative Evangelicals to Liberalism, modernism, and dead orthodoxy of the time. The Christian Fundamentalism has been infamously recognized as provoked fighter due to their rude attitude, furious words, and heavy message against fellow Christians or non-Christians.

As a matter of facts, the Fundamentalist is not necessarily representing all of the Christian conservatives. They committed to strong beliefs in the inerrancy and creditability of the Bible, the Holy Trinity, the deity of Christ, the virgin birth and the physical second coming of Christ, and later added the belief in the Premillennianism and Dispensationism as some unnegotiable fundamental Christian beliefs. They also put much emphasis on born again experiences and life witnesses in resisting the tide and spirit of the age, the traditional moral disciplines and values, holiness, rejecting smoke, drunkenness, and sexual immorality. During the 1930s to 1950s they has served well as bulwark for the Church and society and became the backbone of the Church's good witnesses. Nevertheless, due to their over-commitment to the spirit of separatism and their holding to fanatic conservatism, most of the main line evangelicals chose to depart from them, resulted their becoming lonely fighter without friends and closed ones.

V. The Neo-Evangelicals

When the fundamentalists became fanatic and extreme, some of the evangelicals, though still identify themselves with basic beliefs of the Fundamental, disagree with the extreme negative and the fighting attitude of the Fundamentalists in order to avoid unnecessary back fire from the general public. They begin to disassociate with the fundamentalists and name themselves the Neo-Evangelical. They adopt a broad spirit to allow the academic pursuit with amiable spirit toward natural science, humanities, and its quests. They also attempt to work hand in hands with the modern discoveries, changes, and expansions of scientific knowledge to adapt to the modern world.

The Neo-Evangelicals affirm the basics of the Gospel yet insisted that the nature of the Gospel is universal. They begin to do dialogue with sciences, especially archeology with the purposed to seek harmony in order to assert the right to lead, to

influence, and to change the society, the politics, and academic world.

Practically, they do regain many lost territories and platforms. They are much respected throughout years of efforts. They bear much fruits in evangelical works and have much influence in the community, and have becoming good witnesses for contemporary Churches.

Unfortunately, as many of the Neo-Evangelical are students of the Neo-orthodoxy, due to the fact that they do not make clear distinction between accommodation and compromise in Gospel strategy, in the midst of their adaptation, they have sacrificed some of the un-negotiable principles. The most unfortunate, among others, is there ignorance and forfeiture of the principle of the absoluteness of the Biblical revelation and the infallibility and inerrancy of the Bible. This the most dissatisfaction and objection the Fundamental has on them.

In fact, the Neo-Evangelical forgets that Christian beliefs are not accountable to human rationality. If the Neo-Evangelical insists on the absoluteness of divine revelation in the Bible and the infallibility and inerrancy of the Bible as not accountable to human rationality, they will still lose no respect of the unbelievers, instead, they will gain more respect in claiming their religious rights. Apparently, Faith and Truth are solely accountable to God. If we lose such an affirmation of our faith, then we shall become man pleasers. Let us be reminded of what Paul has said: “for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.” (Gal.1: 10) This is exactly where the Neo-Evangelicals fall.

VI. The Pentecostal and Charismatic Theology

The Pentecostal movement begins at the turn of the 20th.Century is also a native bred theology of America. Within a short period of hundred years, it has become the fastest; the greatest, and most wonderful scenery like a rainbow covers the whole world. This denomination is most colorful with many sects. They all shared the following three commonality and focuses.

- i. They have firm believe in spiritual experiences, especially personal experiences.
- ii. They seek to perform unlimited spiritual power, extreme phenomenon of functionalism and efficiency with special emphasis in wonders and miracles.
- iii. They express much joyful spirit in the midst of their worship, emphasizing lay involvement church offices and activities, especially in praise and worship.

All of the above is due to the fact that they have special understanding on the personality of the Holy Spirit and its proclamation. Based on their special emphasis on the Holy Spirit, they committed to total and global evangelism, for which they have brought revival and renewal all over the world. On the other hand, because they are more focus on individuals, whenever they plant church, the church eventually becomes the property of its founder, resulted in a fragmented organization, having the denomination as fellowship of believers without real unity.

General speaking, Pentecostalism is one of the mainline Evangelicals, they share similar basic beliefs, differs only in whether they emphasizes personal emotion and experiences. The basics of Pentecostal faith are that of the Arminian and Wesleyan persuasion that put their focus on the second spiritual experiences and the experience of being filled by the Holy Spirit. Besides, they bears more inclusive spirit in allowing wonders and miracles, speaking in tongues, prophecies, and prayer message in their services. They believe in the continuation and succession of the apostolic gifts and affirm the authority is inherent in the one who was filled by the Spirit. The message of these people has apostolic authority; some of them even equate them with the authority of the Scripture, evident by the miracles and wonder as the present of the Holy Spirit and its work, an evident of Power Preaching and Power Evangelism.

The worst problem they are facing is that though they believe in a God that performs the wonder and miracles, nevertheless, whenever wonders and miracles do not happen, they would then blame others as having no faith, or not enough faith. Besides, many of their glossolalia and prophecies are bogus and not true.

The Pentecostal movement went through three waves. Beginning with the first wave that emphasized confession of sin and repentance, seeking the gift of the Sprit, speaking in tongues, healing and the life power of revival that entailed in separation from mainline denomination, it went though the second wave of the 1950s that happened in many mainline denominations, even he Catholics, by emphasizing showers of spiritual blessing, repentance, revival, glossolalia, and singpiration movements; at last it come to the third wave, the Charismatic movement of the 1980s and 1990s that focus on the phenomenal wonders, miracles and power evangelism. Since the operation of the Pentecostals and the Charismatics has most focuses on phenomena, at times, they have to helplessly engage in imaginary or bogus miracles to prove God's mighty present to the point of being so anthropocentric and auto-soteric in its preaching and practices.

Thereafter, they begin to engage in much praise and worship to replace the

important of traditional preaching, besides, their worship are more interested in personal testimony as evidence of God's present in their lives. All of these make their faith tilling to utilitarianism and instrumentalism in its souls, and ends with the so-called Prosperity Theology and Success Theology. As their emphases are on the phenomena and emotional aspect of life, making them to become an indiscriminative institution taking anyone who wishes to joint regardless of motives. As such, they render saving grace cheap and Christianity faith superficial that entails very high Church membership mortality rate.

Nevertheless, after 1980s many of Pentecostals begins to return to the mainline denominations, they begins to establish theological seminaries beside Bible Colleges and engage in advanced theological studies, providing its members and leadership systematic theological training and higher education. They also engage in heavy dialog and communication with mainline evangelical institutions. One of the most prominent sign of the Pentecostal Church is its fervent engagement of laymen in Church work. Their Christian businessmen associations flourish all over the world, leading bible studies and become one for the greatest moving force in the advancement of the Church. It is a phenomenal laymen movement of the century.

Aside from their emphasis in external signs and emotional operation, the Pentecostal and Charismatic movement should be considered as the main force in contemporary Church. At the end of the 20th Century, they began to put much effort in their organizational system, academic studies, and social concerns, besides work hand in hand with the mainline evangelicals. The Evangelical also learns from the Pentecostal the long lost emotional aspect and godly passion of their faith and Gospel zeal in Christian spirit. Lately, many evangelical denominations are attracted and engaged in the praise and worship ala Pentecostal and the Charismatics. Nevertheless, due to the Pentecostal and Charismatic lack of respect on the weightiness and universality of church offices besides their disregard on the authority of the tradition, many conservative evangelical still remain holding grudge against them, and very cautious in doing dialog with them, lest approaching them.

VII. The Superficial and Shallow Evangelical

Most Evangelicals believe and emphasize God's calling sinner through the preaching of the Gospel. Consequently, they all have altar calling after preaching or worship service, inviting sinner to come to a decision for returning to God and giving sinner an opportunity to accept Christ as their personal savior.

The Pentecostal, The Wesleyans, the Holiness, and the Baptists, they all have this tradition of altar call at almost each Service. This is considered as following the practice of the apostles recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. Unfortunately, through out the development of the Church we have seen much change in this tradition, calling are routine and obligatory, many decision are induced and become momentary emotional reaction without real intent of conversion to follow Christ. Apparently, the Church becomes only concern with the calling and counting of the converts without discipleship training, rendering the new believers astray without the benefit of knowing the full impact of the gospel. Many Church even fully engaged in the using of the “Four Spiritual Law” of the Campus Crusade to entice people to make decision and claimed them to be newborn Christians for numerical counting. Eventually, they have rendered themselves superficial and shallow Christians.

Theologically speaking, we believe that everything is of God, through God, and for God. Undoubtedly, decision for Gospel and Christ is the work of the Holy Spirit, all we have done is only responding to the work of the Holy Spirit, endlessly, selflessly, without claiming any merit. Therefore, we are not proselyting other than presenting Christ and his Gospel. If that is called superficial and shallow, it would still be acceptable theologically, because the God, who has begun the good work shall bring it to the completion in the day of the Lord. For this reason, we diligently sow the seeds of the Gospel, and doing the watering unto the time of harvest. The Lord has promised those who sow shall rejoice together with those harvest. We shall collaborate and appreciate one another’s work. In fact, the superficial or shallowness of the gospel is not on its form and ways of gospel presentation, but in the content and the intent of the Gospel itself.

For a matter of records, superficial and shallow Evangelicals takes two forms: 1) The mistake of anthropocentrism of the Arminians, and 2) The fallacy of the hyper Calvinism. The former takes human involvement and human works as absolute necessity and focus on the urgency of immediate decision-making; whereas the latter emphasizes the divine sovereignty and neglect the persuasive power of the Gospel and the positive aspect of immediate decision-making in the presentation of the Gospel, both have gone extreme making them remaining in a primitive stage of being superficial and shallow.

VIII. Positive Assertive Evangelicals and the Extreme Responsive Evangelicals

This group is the result of Evangelical response to the contemporary sociological challenge of the age. Its basic tenets can be seen below:

- i. They emphasize the power of gospel in every area and levels of life. They strongly believe that Christians have to permeate their influence in every area of human lives to serve as change agent.
- ii. They firmly believe in the Bible, especially the moral principle expressed therein, not only for Christians, but also for non-Christians. They also assert the need of Christian involvement in politics and political actions as to advance biblical moral principles in law and national legal system with strong intent to exercise Christian legal rights to influence government.
- iii. They believe in an Eschatology that God will at last hand over the governing authority into the hand of his people, the Christians. Some of them adopts a theology of post-millennianism, trusting that before the second coming of Christ, the Church will be endowed with all political power as to Christianize the whole world.
- iv. They try to perform biblical teaching in mandating Christians to involve in politics or to provide necessary political support. Trusting that all law must base on the Law of God. Besides uprooting cults and heretics, they try hard to gain the lost territory to affirm the Lordship of Christ all over the world.
- v. They are over confident on the power of the Gospel in assuming that everyone shall hear the gospel and shall return to Christ, for which Christians are obligated to force the government militantly to establish a better society and environment for human lives.

Apparently, this group of the evangelicals has replaced proper function of rationality with religious fanatics and passion. They can hardly find recognition, nor are they respected in the midst of contemporary well-developed civilization and pluralistic culture. Theoretically speaking, based on the principle of equality and emancipation, if we adopt their position, then we also need to allow other religion to have same illogical, unreasonable and fanatic commitment to their faith and practice. In so doing, we have degraded Christianity and the salvation of Christ to become a form of mere religion and instrument of culture. Christianity is salvation, and salvation finds no enemy.

Undoubtedly, They have neglected the general revelation and the common grace God. They do not have the spirit of tolerance, besides having no humility and meekness. If God allows the sun to shine upon the good and the bad, and sends showers to all being, who are we to disregard the justice of God. What Christ has said to John and James shall always resound in our ears with the saying: “you know not what manner of spirit your are of.” (Luke 9:55). All these shall be a warning to us. We should never replace God’s mine with our own mind. Further, we should not consider ourselves as God’s sole representative or angle of vengeance as most of the self-justified extreme Muslim terrorists.

IX. Conclusion

Above is but a simple delineation of some of the contemporary Christian thoughts. In fact, in the course of explanation we found that the contemporary thought differs not much from the thoughts of previous ages, they all cannot avoid being adhering to the extremes of the theological pendulum, either being Theocentric or Anthropocentric in their theological thought orientation. They either try to make the Gospel and the work of salvation purely human, or purely divine. The former being committed to theocentricity to the extend as to disregard human responsibility and demanded absolute surrender of human will, whereas the latter being over committed anthropocentricity and asserts human centrality in all God’s work and purposes, asserting that without man. God can do nothing and actually do nothing; God is almighty, nevertheless, he cannot infringe on human will.

In fact, so far as biblical truth is concerned, we affirmed that everything is of God, through God, and to God. That’s the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! “How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!” (Romans 11”33) Yet at his appointed time, God has sent his Son to come and born of a women even born under the law. (Gal 4:4) Christ incarnated, dwelt among us, that we may see his light and believe in Him. All this affirmed man’s position in God’s eternal plan and its operation. The participation of human intellect, emotion, and will in God’s plan and salvation are not only permitted but also mandated by God. As we are saved by grace through faith, we shall maintain proper balance, to carefully commit ourselves in the course of our salvation in order that we may complete the work of salvation and walk in accordance of the grace we have received. There we shall discover the wonders and power of God, that we shall be made complete and fulfill others.

In response to contemporary challenge in the Church as well in the world of religious thoughts, being a contemporary Christian, the writer believe we need to equip ourselves with quality of thought stated bellow:

1. Simplicity of faith:

As we ascertain that our faith is of God, through God, and for/to God, we need to rid ourselves of a thought pattern that committed to instrumentalism of the self-centeredness. We shall affirm that that God does not instrumentalize man nor let him be instrumentalized.

Though instrumental faith works and is effective at times as affirmed by the Positive Assertive Evangelicals, nevertheless, al of that is only due to the greatness of his grace and mercy. Therefore we need to leave our beginner stage in making salvation mere religion, and advance to a complete knowledge of the truth and salvation.

2. A creative thought

Creativity is one of the natures of God. It is also one of the characteristics of being human in bearing God's image. As children of God we are renewed in being the image bearers of God, we are empowered to participate in God creation through the knowledge of God's word and revelation. These shall include aesthetic and artistic operation, enabling us to proclaim the beauty and the goodness of God and to shine as lights of the world in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation. (Phil.2:13)

3. A gentle, obedient, and kind mind

Christians have no enemy, yet afraid of no one. Our kingdom is not of this world, therefore we are not to depend on guns, artilleries, or political powers to do the will of God and his works. Though we have the right to participate and the ability to perform our political and civil duties, nevertheless, as Christ being the Prince of peace, where all powers have been given unto him, we may live peacefully and complete his will on earth to that end that the earth shall be filled with the glory of the knowledge of the Lord as waters cover the sea! (Hab. 2:15)

4. The affirmation of history and tradition

The kingdom of God has double aspects: spiritual and secular. The former affirms the prevailing nature of the Will of God, that his will cannot be withhold; the latter affirms the persuasive power of the word of God. The former works in obscurity, the latter reveals in conspicuity. Both supplement one another without conflict to accomplish God's plan. Many Christians make a mistake in taking an

extreme over the other and lose sight of a modest understanding and application of God's word. Looking from the course of human historical development, we do see a clear line of the Kingdom of God. As Augustine says, the Kingdom of God in this world extends continuously unto the end of the world, the Eschaton, the second coming of Christ. For this reason, the accumulated experiences of the Church and the children of God, along the way of historical progress, automatically becomes an un-negligible tradition witnessing to the presence and the operation of God and his word among the lives of his people. This is why history and tradition is so precious for the church and its members.

Tradition has lost its respect since the Reformation, the age of Reason, and followed by the Enlightenment. It even was treated like trash in wasteland, in the thought of modernism and post modernism. Nevertheless, for the Church, generation after generation, the renewal and reformation movement in the Church that rid the Church off choking dead tradition; has in fact rebuilding the strong heritage. Taking the example of the Pentecostal renewal movement, spouting out from the lifeless conservatism due to their dissatisfaction of the Church tradition to start the movement with glossolalia, wonders, and prophecies renewal, pressing strong challenge on mainline denominations, nevertheless, in the course of their development, they still reestablish the old tradition in their new fashion. This is followed by the second and the third waves movement, even the fourth wave which is evolving at the present.

In fact, inherent in every renewal movement, especially in Christian renewal movement, there is a hidden heritage that converge all energy of renewal. If renewal is only due to dissatisfaction, then we shall soon discover short breath of the movement due to human limitation. Unless we discover and appreciate and understand the hidden call of the word of God for us return to the Truth, all movement shall be short lived. Therefore, as we think reflectively on the word of the truth in the course of historical development, we shall find the saying of George Santana so true: "One who forget history is condemned to repeat the same history." Learning nothing from the history shall inevitably yield repeated unnecessary error.

For this reason, what we need to do now is to return to the mainline thought as we process with our renewals. Giving due respect to the tradition and heritage which have been established for us in the course of Church history, to build upon the foundation which has been laid for us (Hebrews 6:1). There we shall find we were

saved from falling into the gorge as we adhere the warning.

In conclusion, in the study of the psychology of religion it is easy to discover that one who has correct and proper belief in the sovereignty of God will have correct understanding of God's creation and its operation. In other words, one who has stronger belief in divine sovereignty will have more courage and understanding to turn to God and affirm that God wants us to participate in his work of creation and renewal.² This surely includes the civilization and cultural development and renewals in the context of the common grace of God together with the special grace in the context of Gospel mission and great commission to bring the gospel unto the end of the world to bring men to Christ.

These are the two great commissions of the Church in this world: to be the light of the world and the salt of the world, that we should share the goodness of the Gospel to everyone. So we may proclaim the God who called us out of the darkness to enter into the wonderful goodness of God and to lead others to the salvation.

Paul's exhortation to us shall always be clear and resounding, on which he says, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. (Romans 12; 1-2)

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² C.f. Joseph Tong, *The Relation of Sovereignty of God Belief, Religious Orientation, and Locus of Control*, Ph. D. Dissertation, Los Angeles: University of Southern California, 1978