

Affirmation 2010

An Attempt To Downgrade Orthodoxy

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The Bible League informs us in their 'www.Affirmation-2010.org' website of Malcolm Watts' initiative in drawing up a new para-church creed of that name to win 'the widest possible agreement' in 'various church bodies and constituencies'. A copy of the statement is provided under a separate menu and a form is attached soliciting readers to sign this rather complicated and drawn out Statement of Faith. The names of two dozen subscribers are added which represent a wide area of evangelical witness. We are told that these men 'are able unitedly to subscribe to the truths of the Word of God as set forth in the Affirmation.'

In a two columned article published in the English Churchman, Issue 7787, 2010, Affirmation 2010 is presented by its sponsors as 'A Rallying Standard'. After arguing that old creeds are now despised, we are told how gladdening it is to have Affirmation 2010 express 'doctrine with clarity and boldness' as a new standard for our 'confused and confusing times'. After reading that, my in-built alarm bells began to ring. Affirmation 2010, we are told, will be of particular help in dealing with contemporary errors in our churches. This sounds like modern marketing hype. Who wants the confusing theological creeds of yesteryear which were tied down to church confessions when we can rally around a new clarity creed which unites all evangelicals everywhere and deals with the problems of today?

Alarm Bells

Further alarm bells then rang out loud and clear. Though the interview with Mr Watts starts by affirming a Biblical curse against apostasy, it is emphasised that the Affirmation is in no way intended 'to anathematise' those who are not in full agreement with it, nor does the author wish to 'look down with contempt' or 'unchurch' those who disagree with him. This pseudo-tolerant approach is then dropped and a solemn warning is given declaring that those who disagree with the Affirmation have 'imbibed the spirit of the age' and it would be much better for them to 'seek repentance'. Indeed, those who are seeking to boost Affirmation 2010 on various web-sites are already using very strong language against those who have signed modern creeds which also profess to unite Christian witness. There is thus already a strong in-built claim in Affirmation 2010 followers for a new orthodoxy which belittles both ancient and modern confessional creeds under other brand names. Though Affirmation 2010 professes to be an agent of unity, it is already an agent of division. In spite

of occasionally peaceful words there is a spirit of harsh intolerance attached to this creed of a most uncertain sound which more than threatens to become inquisitorial. Indeed the strong Presbyterian and Covenanting background scenario in which the creed is placed makes one rather fear that this is an effort to impose some kind of new Solemn League and Covenant onto Christian thinking with its Trentian list of anathemas attached. Historically speaking, the many different bands, brigades, leagues and armies of the Covenanters who could support the Church of England Stuarts, Scottish Presbyterians and the Holy Roman Emperor alternately or all at once, have no place in a modern Christian creed. There were saints among them but also cut-throats, highway robbers and thousands of mercenaries who fought for whoever promised the greatest booty. Malcolm Watts speaks of, 'a most encouraging response' and a 'wide support'. However, the figures revealed are more than modest and surely the creeds of our glorious Reformation would find thousands more ready to sign them! We are told that Affirmation 2010 is not meant to replace these now despised creeds. Then why not keep these testimonies of a faithful past rather than introduce a document of modern confusion?

16 Articles

Affirmation 2010 thus claims unity of thought and faith amongst the signatories on 16 Articles which are: The Infallibility of Scripture; The Trinity; The Doctrines of Grace; A Six-Day Creation; Penal Substitution; Justification by Faith Alone: A Holiness of Life; Christian Experience; The Sabbath Day; Reverence in Worship; The Regulative Principle; The Holy Ministry; Separation; Revival; Christ's Second Coming; and The Eternal State. We are told that this list does not cover the whole of Christian faith and testimony. Indeed, we must add that not even the 16 doctrines named are in any way comprehensive. I was surprised to see so little on the Fall, the Purpose and Scope of the Atonement, the Need for, Purpose and Application of Salvation; the Work and Offices of Christ in the Testaments: the Imputation of the Sinner's Sins to Christ and the Imputation of Christ's Righteousness to Sinners and also The Doctrine of the Church and the Necessity of Christian Witness and Evangelism. The article on justification alone, which is viewed as a mere declaration and verdict is far from 'the doctrine which unites all doctrines' of our Reformers.

More alarming still, on examining the signatories who profess to be willing to go all the way in backing this new attempt to define orthodoxy, we find men who have not only radically different views concerning the central doctrines omitted (surely intentionally?) from Affirmation 2010, but their works show that they have equally different views on Sections 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, and 16. Here we have the paradox of ministers agreeing to documents with which they either do not honestly agree or interpret differently for the sake of some weird idea of being considered orthodox, up-to-date or merely wishing, as they usually say, 'to stand up and be counted'. They want it to be seen that they are doing

something! What, for instance, ever moved Albert Mohler to declare that he was one in faith with Roman Catholics in the Manhattan Declaration? Can he live with such a compromise? Why should George Ella declare that he is one in faith with Malcolm Watts in his dubious Affirmation when he finds him totally on the rocks doctrinally and evangelically? I could not live and die under such a compromise.

A Marriage Of Convenience

The signatories' views of justification, redemption, atonement, the gospel, law and sanctification alone (if we believe what they say about being one in the faith) range from sub-Reformed to anti-Reformed and Liberal. In other words, nobody can possibly believe that the subscribers who come from entirely different denominations with entirely different and contradicting official creeds who have now pledged their troth to one another in a marriage of convenience will not wake up after the Wedding Party to find that they are already embarrassingly unfaithful to their common wedding vows. The whole display of unity is, indeed, a mocked-up farce. Those Banner Of Truth friends who support Stuart Olyott and Iain Murray in their new, Liberal views of the Word of God and the Christian Ministry will have a hard time convincing conservative, Reformed Christians that with Affirmation 2010, they are choosing a better way and making a New Deal for Christianity.

So, too, the Presbyterian signatories, who are now saying they believe the Scriptures as the sole basis for worship and the observance of the Sabbath Day, will have to reject their beloved Westminster Confession which teaches that the acceptable way of worship and the Doctrine of the Sabbath are shown to us by the light of nature. Indeed, Natural Religion, Natural Revelation, Natural Law, Platonism and Aristotelianism as introduced by Samuel Rutherford into Westminster Assembly thinking are now playing a major part in the evangelism of at least half of the signatories. I correct myself. One can now truly say 'all the signatories' as they all profess to be one in the faith.

So, too, what are the Baptist signatories to make of the enormous differences in their First and Second London Confessions and those of the Presbyterians' Westminster Standards concerning the ordinances, the work of the gospel, the character of the Church and discipline and order? Many characteristics which Baptists rightly attribute to the Church are invested alone in the Presbytery by Presbyterians. So, too, how can this new wishy-washy Ecumenical Council talk about a united doctrine of the Trinity when at least five of its signatories, as witnessed by their works, do not believe in the Trinity as traditionally interpreted at all? Malcolm Watts himself has given up talking about the Sovereign Triune Will of God in salvation to blather about the ever vacillating, contradicting tripartite wills of a being who certainly is not God but whom Watts worships as such. His doctrine of the Trinity rules out the traditional Reformed preaching of the Gospel to all men everywhere as the Spirit gives leave. What incentive is there to

preaching the glorious gospel of Christ if the preacher feels that God has the basic desire to be mighty to save but has not the basic will to carry His desire out? Watts' gospel that we should not preach what God does but what God would like to do (as if we knew better than God) is a gospel of deceit! There are thus several Anti-Trinitarians out there who are hoping Affirmation will make their fond errors acceptable without them having to spell them out which is always so embarrassing for them. So, too, what are we to think of Maurice Roberts with his Liberal views of the origin of sin and the way man is left to sanctify himself through law obedience alone? This may be acceptable Affirmation 2010 teaching but it is still modern heresy. For rejecting such heresy, Roberts has me listed on his web-site as a Hyper-Calvinist! Does this now mean that all those who do not sign Affirmation 2010 (the majority of faithful Christians?) will be branded 'Hypers' by these Modern Twice-Twelve Apostles on the list of subscribers?

Modern Downgrade

It is quite clear that the idea of the Affirmation is to make the modern downgrading going on in professing Reformed circles so popular that those of the Old School will be anathematised from current evangelicalism on the grounds that they do not fit in with the New Orthodoxy. This kind of denunciation has already become common amongst the signatories. This is merely adding to the modern Babel of new Bible translations, new 'mended' hymnbooks, ecumenical forms of worship and yearly efforts to rally Christians around a new and different pseudo-orthodox, botched-up creed. Affirmation 2010 has one aim, to kill off Biblical Reformed Christianity and replace the Church of Christ by yet another para-church movement with strict control as to who may join the club. Some think it better to pose as the leading Nanny of two dozen goats rather than be amongst the number of sheep which cannot be counted, led by the Good Shepherd Himself.

Now Affirmation 2010 is seeking to become international judging by remarks on American Blogger-sites. We are told there that far too many evangelicals such as Al Mohler have signed the wrong statements of faith. This, they say, is all the more reason why one should sign Affirmation 2010 and avoid the tragedy of compromise. My faith is not up for market. I know in whom I have believed and I am persuaded that He will keep me. Naturally, I must show that I have the strength of the Saviour's commitments on me and avoid both Manhattan's and Affirmation's compromises. Perhaps, however, Malcolm Watts may find a handful of further signatories in the States. He is then sure to tell us that his New Deal is now enjoying rapid, international expansion. The more it expands, the more watered-down it will get.

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