

Why has the church, down through time, constantly had a battle for orthodoxy?

Have you ever had a hard time standing for Biblical orthodoxy? Well, you are not alone. Christians down through the ages have always battled for the truth. But why is the church constantly being tempted to give way to cultural norms?

I believe one reason, or perhaps the chief reason, is that the narrow truth of God, Christ, salvation, and reality is treated as revealed and therefore binding. That does not allow man to be creative in making his own way to approach God.

Besides the COMMAND (not SUGGESTION) to engage in apologetics and polemics, the text of Jude:3 reveals the faith was "once for all DELIVERED (NOT DISCOVERED) to the saints." Once you have that kind of claim, disagreement isn't merely "different opinions in a big tent." Sound doctrine was delivered by God and is non-negotiable. The culture of unbelievers will never accept it, but why does the church try to (to a fault) "meet culture where they are at?"

Another possible reason I have seen down through the years is what I would argue as a misunderstanding of Acts 17 when Paul quoted pagan poets and usually the evidential apologist will say, "see Paul met culture where they were at by quoting these sources." And then it's a slippery slope to this imaginary world of a "neutral plane" of existence where we can meet unbelievers and try to argue TO the Scripture rather than FROM the Bible.

This type of "understanding" of Acts 17 fails to see that Paul told the Greeks three shocking ideas: 1 Creation occurred Ex nihilo (verses 24-28). 2 The fall of man into sin and guilt (verse 30). 3 Redemption is through a Resurrected Savior (verses 18 & 31).

Paul did not play the evidential apologetics game of offering these concepts as PROBABLY true. Paul called all the views outside of Scripture as "times of ignorance," which would include all Greek and Roman thought. After hearing this judgment on their "wisdom," the Greek philosophers ended up calling Paul a "babbler."

The church has always faced cultural and intellectual pressure to accommodate unbelievers. Sometimes the compromise of the organized church with the world is so bad with cardinal doctrines being denied, it is no longer as Machen noted just a disagreement but the belief system is outside of Christianity. But a quick note here: I am not arguing that all evidential apologists are unbelievers, nor am I saying it is wrong to sometimes use evidential apologetics. But mankind is not on a neutral plane, as no such thing exists.

The other possibility that Machen mentioned in his book "Christianity and Liberalism" is that people will adopt Christianity for the wrong reasons and thus dilute it. I'll close with a quote from Machen regarding this matter.

“Christianity will indeed accomplish many useful things in this world, but if it is accepted in order to accomplish those useful things it is not Christianity, Christianity will combat Bolshevism; but if it is accepted in order to combat Bolshevism, it is not Christianity: Christianity will produce a unified nation, in a slow but satisfactory way; but if it is accepted in order to produce a unified nation, it is not Christianity: Christianity will produce a healthy community; but if it is accepted in order to produce a healthy community, it is not Christianity: Christianity will promote international peace; but if it is accepted in order to promote international peace, it is not Christianity. Our Lord said: ‘Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.’ But if you seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness in order that all those other things may be added unto you, you will miss both those other things and the Kingdom of God as well.” J. Gresham Machen “Christianity and Liberalism”

Thanks for reading, John