

## We Have Met the Enemy

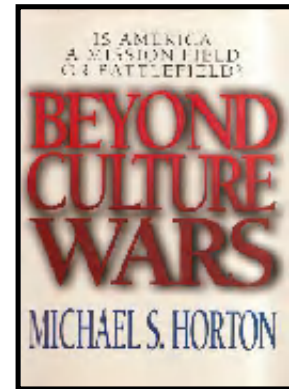
**BEYOND CULTURE WARS** BY MICHAEL S. HORTON

Michael introduces this chapter with the “disturbing irony”: the evangelical attack on “secular humanism” (of the church) while the movement swallows nearly hook, line, and sinker the dogmas of modern, secular culture.

The “changing views” toward God and self can characterize this dual effect of condemning and embracing the culture. Consider that God can be conveniently placed among categories of religion or spirituality such that Christianity becomes just another way of self-achievement or gratification. Examples of this practice or perspective are probably forthcoming (in the chapter); but the effect of it has been to figuratively “fix” God in the perspective of self-interpretation or fulfillment as a problem that Michael calls **secularization**.

This treatment toward God is nothing new. Some of the founding fathers (of our nation) are described of the vein; called **deists**, these framers of the Constitution made known their disbelief in the supernatural power of God.

The conflict between Christianity and self-fulfillment should be fairly evident; but on a basic level, the marked difference is that Jesus modeled a life of service as a *servant*...and not the *master*. As the central theme of Christ, love is not about self-fulfillment.



At the pulpit, these “changing views” are noted as in the shift away from sin and grace, to social and personal problems of addictions, recovery, feeling, etc. As Michael notes:

The demand today (among churches) is that preaching must be “practical” and have “application” to daily living. The goal must be to show people how to live happier and more fulfilling lives.

In this demand (and “changing views”) is the sense that people are generally good; therefore, the redemptive power of God has little application or promise. If such a high view of mankind prevails among the church, then the shift to self-fulfillment and practical lessons has been the main course of contemporary worship. **The question is: who are we worshipping?** As A. W. Tozer describes:

The flaw of current evangelicalism lies in its humanistic approach. It struggles to be super-naturalistic but never quite makes it. It is frankly fascinated by the great, noisy, aggressive world with its big name...

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In the content to follow (the quote above), the theme draws on the book of Romans, chapter 1; from *The Message*, the following:

*What happened was this: People knew God perfectly well, but when they didn't treat him like God, refusing to worship him, they trivialized themselves into silliness and confusion so that there was neither sense nor direction left in their lives.*

Recall that the “changing views” is marked by the notion that people are basically good. This concept, which Michael refers to as “secular progress”, goes part and parcel with the ideal that “America is a special agent” in the improvement of the globe. Opposite of this concept however is the dispensational pre-millennial scheme that calls for a pessimistic or worsening culture...until Jesus comes.

To complicate these opposing views or beliefs is the mix or model of government or economic models. Marxism, for example, is described as a godless state – but consider the closeness it has to capitalism. Marxism and free market capitalism are “twin sisters of modernity” – which means that capitalism is just as godless...In this striking comparison is not only the apparent threat of America's economic model or government but, as Michael continues:

By reducing human beings to consumers, making nearly all social relationships depend on competition, and shrinking human life down to purely economic determinism, modern capitalism is just as dangerous to the soul...

In the “mix and model” then is the apparent conflict with Christianity – a condition that should render warnings to any movement with the contemporary world.

Again, comments from Michael Horton:

The more popular evangelism becomes (or tries to become), the more it takes on the appearances of the contemporary world and becomes a prisoner of the very culture it is seeking to convert.

In this apparent conflict and “changing views” comes a recommendation in the form of “first task”. That task, as Michael outlays, is to “unmask secularism” – rather than consort with it. To begin the task, he notes that the church must see:

- 1. The errors of this movement (toward secularism)**
- 2. The truth of divine revelation**

Returning to the title, “We Have Met the Enemy”, the chapter closes with the stated condition that the church cannot fulfill its purpose in the **errors** of moving toward secularism. If secularism is the true enemy of the church (worldliness, etc.), then the church is its own enemy.