

"I AM the BREAD"

Jn 6:22-50

I. BREAD SIGNIFICANT (a penultimate)

- A. "Staff of life"—food essential
 - 1. Grains (largely domesticated during "agricultural revolution" ca. 10,000 B.C.)—wheat, barley, maize, rice, millet, oats; easily grown, stored
 - 2. Milled into flour—various grinders from two stones to massive mills
 - 3. Made into bread, nourishing & tasty
- B. "Daily bread" appropriate petition
- C. Feeding the hungry always a Christian mission

II. BUT NOT SUFFICIENT (an ultimate)

- A. Only what's eternal ultimately matters
- B. Jesus rebukes misguided followers seeking purely physical dividends
 - 1. Some want only physical comfort—food, health (crowds follow Jesus craving such)
 - 2. Others want psychological satisfaction—inner peace, success, diversions

III. SIMONY FOREVER a PROBLEM

- A. Simon Magus in Acts 8 illustrates perpetual problem in the Church—seeking gain by misrepresenting and manipulating Christ's work and message
- B. Historical examples
 - 1. Buying and selling positions & services troubles Medieval world
 - 2. Entrepreneurs flourished when churches democratized in 19th century's Second Great Awakening (documented in Nathan Hatch's *The Democratization of Christianity in America*)
 - a. Joseph Smith's "anti-banking" society & Mormon mingling of commerce & theology
 - b. Ellen White's dietary decrees & Seventh Day Adventists
 - c. Mary Baker Eddy & mental health.
 - 3. Protestant Liberals (following Schliermacher) in 19th century present the Gospel as a prescription to pacify emotions—Niebuhr: "A God without wrath brought men without sin into a kingdom without judgment through the ministrations of a Christ without a cross."
 - 4. Prosperity Gospel devotees stress "health and wealth"
 - a. Norman Vincent Poole's *The Power of Positive Thinking*
 - b. Robert Schuller's "Hour of Power" & *The New Reformation*
 - c. Joel Osteen—central figure in Ross Duthaut's *Bad Religion*

IV. LAY INVESTITURE EQUALLY INJURIOUS

- A. Secular powers seek to reduce the Church to a political, economic or humanitarian institution (following tradition of Zealots in Jesus' day), providing bread for the masses
- B. Utopian movements (from medieval to modern times) seek to establish heaven on earth
 - 1. Bohemian followers of John Hus—"Adamites," violent bands
 - 2. Peasants' rebellion in Luther's lands—led by estranged followers (e.g. Karlstadt)
- C. Reformation resolution ("*cuis regio cuis religio*") places rulers in charge of church
 - 1. German kingdoms become Lutheran, Reformed, or Catholic
 - 2. Henry VIII & Church of England
- D. French Revolution—"Liberty, Equality, Fraternity" & earthly paradise fails
- E. Communist revolutions & Christian responses (New York mayor race ought concern us)
 - 1. Rejection—popes, Fulton J. Sheen, American evangelicals; Liz Wheeler's *Hide Your Children*
 - 2. Accommodation—"liberation theologians," "social justice" advocates
- F. Consider Benjamin Wiker's *Worshipping the State: How Liberalism Became Our State Religion*
 - 1. Barak Obama personifies
 - 2. Judicial decrees installing secularism—e.g. forbidding prayers in public events
 - 3. Replacing Christman with "winter solstice" in public schools, government agencies
 - 4. "You don't need the Nicene Creed if you're nice" emphasis on toleran