

"I AM the DOOR"

Jn. 10:1-21

I. DOORS MATTER

- A. Entryway—"come on in" when door's open; "welcome" mat inviting
 - 1. Jesus "is not willing that any should perish" as evident in shepherd looking for lost sheep
 - 2. Missionary impetus from earliest days of Church
- B. Barrier: closed/locked door protects from invaders, harm—security set
 - 1. Nehemiah & gates to Jerusalem's walls, finally providing safety for Jews
 - 2. A home's a home when doors installed—when needed enable inhabitants to relax, rest

II. "THIEVES AND ROBBERS" EVER THREATEN CHURCH (evident in Pharisees)

- A. Deny the Deity of Christ
 - 1. 1st century "judaizers," Ebionites & Nazarenes, carry on Pharisees' stance, refusing to believe
 - 2. 4th century Arians say Christ was, much like an angel, a created being, not eternally God
 - a. Jerome laments overnight success
 - b. Athanasius mounts orthodox endeavors
 - 3. 7th century Muslims emphatically denounce very idea of Incarnation
 - 4. 16th century Unitarians systematically deny that Jesus is God
 - 5. 19th century Liberals, following F.D.E. Schliermacher's *Letters to the Cultured Despisers of Religion*, stressed the humanity of Jesus—a God-anointed teacher rather than God-with-us
 - a. Success evident throughout Europe, as evident in Adolph von Harnack—"the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man" as *The Essence of Christianity*
 - b. Powerfully critiqued by John Henry Newman, who devoted himself for decades to resisting
 - 6. 20th century Progressives call for therapeutic gospel, social changes to provide equality for all
 - a. Michael Kruger: *The Ten Commandments of Progressive Christianity*—(1) Jesus Is a Model for Living More Than an Object for Worship; (2) Affirming People's Potential Is More Important Than Reminding Them of Their Brokenness; (3) The Work of Reconciliation Should Be Valued over Making Judgments; (4) Gracious Behavior Is More Important Than Right Belief; (5) Inviting Questions Is More Valuable Than Supplying Answers; (6) Encouraging the Personal Search Is More Important Than Group Uniformity; (7) Meeting Actual Needs Is More Important Than Maintaining Institutions; (8) Peacemaking Is More Important Than Power; (9) We Should Care More about Love and Less about Sex; (10) Life in This World Is More Important Than the Afterlife
 - b. Mainline denominations ("seven sisters") slowly succumb
 - c. J. Gresham Machen's *Christianity and Liberalism*—cannot be both!
 - d. Thomas Reeves' *The Empty Church: The Suicide of Liberal Christianity*
 - 1. Dramatic loss of members
 - 2. Dubious expenditures, lobbying "for an unlimited welfare state, praising Fidel Castro's Cuba, urging global U.S. military withdrawal, bemoaning the revival of free market economics, and affirming, of all things, the sexual revolution"
 - 3. Feminists agitate and demonstrate and orchestrate changes—unisex & Inclusive language in scripture & hymns; calling God "Mother," eliminating "Son of God" language re Jesus
 - 4. Gays & Lesbians push for acceptance, ordination, same-sex marriages
 - 5. "Deconstruction" of biblical texts & rejection of Truth of any ultimate sort
 - e. Thomas Oden's *A Change of Heart and Requiem: A Lament in Three Movements*
 - 1. Early years devoted to "social justice" following the guidance of Marx
 - 2. Turning point when immersed in Church Fathers
 - f. Ross Douthat's *Believe* recent illustration of pragmatic justification
- B. Deny the Need for Christ
 - 1. Judaizers in 1st century—Paul constantly at odds with them
 - 2. Pelagius (ca 400 A.D.) represents numerous persons & movements—deny original sin & stress righteous living (perfectionistic tendencies)
 - a. Individual: self-help, self-realization, "be all you can be"
 - b. Collective: organize "heaven on earth"—political, utopian, socialistic