

Hello. /We will begin the fifth lecture on “Criticism of Modern Theology.” /Today we will talk about the problem of religious pluralism and the problem of concept of mission.

/Today’s ecumenical movement is leaning towards religious pluralism. / “Religious pluralism” says that all religions serve God but in different ways, and that all religions eventually lead to heaven. /Religious pluralism is one result of liberal theology.

/Paul Tillich says, “Christianity as Christianity is neither final nor universal. But that to which it witnesses is final and universal. This profound dialectics of Christianity must not be forgotten in favor of ecclesiastical or orthodox self-affirmations.”

/This sort of idea opens the way for religious pluralism. /Today’s ecumenical movement is leaning towards religious pluralism. /The 1983 WCC Vancouver Assembly, for the first time in its 35 year history, invited religious leaders from five world religions of Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Islam, and Sikhism and had them give official speeches.

/The WCC Vancouver Assembly declared, “While affirming the uniqueness of the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus to which we bear witness, we recognize God’s creative work in the religious experience of people of other faiths.”

/John Taylor, leader of the WCC inter-religious dialogue, said to the representatives, “WCC members are united in believing that all religions need each other. Mission work directed towards Muslims hinders our dialogue with Muslims. We must stop all mission efforts toward Muslims.”

/Furthermore, some WCC figures deny the absolute nature of Christianity. /When asked the question, “Do you think Buddhists or Hindus can be saved without believing in Christ?” Dirk C. Mulder, chairman of the WCC inter-religious dialogue, said, “Of course, of course I do.”

/Through his book “The Bible and People of Other Faiths,” S. Wesley Ariarajah, chairman of the Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies, denied the absolute nature of Christianity.

/He said, “Absolute truth is beyond human grasp.” /He denies the absolute nature of Christianity because “The Bible itself has different and contradicting theories on Christology. The language of the Bible is also the language of faith.”

/He also said, “People of other religions are children of God, so we are brothers and children, not foreigners. Hindus do not have to repent. They are fellow pilgrims.”

/This idea of religious pluralism is unbiblical and heretical. /It is a phenomenon that appears in the apostasy of today’s church. /A similar phenomenon occurred when the church became secularized during the Old Testament times.

/The people of Israel were unfaithful in serving God. They served Baal, Astharoth, and other foreign gods. /They did not completely give up the religion of the LORD.

/They served the LORD and the other foreign gods. /2 Kings 17:33. /This is an attitude of religious pluralism. /However, the truth about God is clear.

/Exodus 20:3 says, “You shall have no other gods before me.” /Deuteronomy 4:39 says, “Know therefore today, and lay it to your heart, that the LORD is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath; there is no other.”

/Isaiah 43:10 says, “Before me no god was formed, nor shall there be any after me.” /Isaiah 45:6 says, “That people may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is none besides me; I am the LORD, and there is no other.”

/Psalm 96:5 says, “For all the gods of the peoples are worthless idols, but the LORD made the heavens.” /The truth about God’s son, our Lord Jesus Christ, isn’t blurry, but it is very clear.

/John 14:6 says, “Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” /Acts 4:12 says, “And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

/1 Timothy 2:5 says, “For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.” /The Bible teaches us that all foreign religions are meaningless.

/The Bible verses about God and Jesus Christ quoted above contain this truth. /Psalm 96:5 says, “For all the gods of the peoples are worthless idols.” /Jeremiah 10:11 says, “Thus shall you say to them: “The gods who did not make the heavens and the earth shall perish from the earth and from under the heavens.”

/The Bible further states that foreign religions are demonic and are subject to the wrath of God. /1 Corinthians 10:20 says, “I imply that what pagans sacrifice they offer to demons.” /Ephesians 2:2-3 says “In which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience.”

/1 John 5:19 says, “We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.” /Therefore, there is the **need to evangelize**. /Matthew 28:19 says, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations.”

/2 Timothy 4:2 says, “Preach the word.” /John 8:24 says, “For unless you believe that I am he you will die in your sins.” /Of the foreign religions, Judaism is the most similar to Christianity.

/However, the Bible passage is saying that though someone may be a Judaist, if he does not accept Jesus Christ as Savior, he will perish. /Thus, religious pluralism is heretical.

/The fact that the ecumenical movement tends to support religious pluralism is a big problem. /Therefore the ecumenical movement is an unbiblical movement. /It is good for God's churches to be one in the truth. But because today's ecumenical movement embraces liberal theology and the Roman Catholic Church, it is doing wrong.

/Liberal theology is heretical, and the Roman Catholic Church is an altered form of Christianity. /Unity that tolerates these heretical beliefs is a great evil before God.

/Up until now, I have talked about today's ecumenical movement and its tendency to tolerate religious pluralism by accepting foreign religions. /Is this not the modern-day Tower of Babel movement?

/Thus, faithful churches and believers that believe in the Bible must be well aware of the errors of religious pluralism. We need to realize the problems of the ecumenical movement and refrain from participating in this movement. We have to be separated from them.

/Faithful pastors must raise up biblical, conservative churches, and faithful believers must become members of these churches. /2 Corinthians 6:14 says, "Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers."

/Ephesians 5:11 says, "Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them." /16th century religious reformer Martin Luther said, "Cursed be that love and unity for whose sake the Word of God must be put at stake."

/I will now talk about the problem of the concept of mission. /Another important problem of today's church is the altered concept of mission. /Traditionally, mission refers to the Lord Jesus' command for churches to evangelize.

/It is preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ our Savior so that sinners who by the wrath of God were to face eternal death would receive salvation. /It is the most precious and important duty of the church on this earth.

/However, this traditional and biblical concept of mission has changed in modern times. /Many people do not see mission as working to save the souls of sinners, but they have broadened their understanding of mission to include in this concept the church's social and political responsibilities and activities.

/Let me take several examples to **prove that the concept of mission has changed** today's age. /In 1967, the PCUSA adopted the "Confession of 1967." /The "Confession of 1967" includes the church's mission, that is a statement about missions.

/It says, “The church labors for the abolition of all racial discrimination and ministers to those injured by it.” /It also says, “God’s redeeming work in Jesus Christ embraces the whole of man’s life: social and cultural, economic and political, scientific and technological, individual and corporate.”

/To them, the church’s mission is not to preach the gospel and save souls. /Here, it says that “the church must lead the way for the abolition of racial discrimination.” It also says that the “church must be active in doing the world’s social, cultural, economic, and political activities.” This is their statement.

/They have stated this as the church’s concept of mission. /Today’s ecumenical movement emphasizes this concept of mission. /The “World Conference on Mission and Evangelism” was held in Melbourne in 1980.

/The conference said this: “Participating in the struggle for human rights is the central element of the church’s mission, which is to proclaim with words and actions Christ who died on the cross and rose again.”

/When we look at this, we see that **the struggle for human rights** is the central element of mission. /Philip A. Potter, former general secretary of the WCC, said, “The struggles for economic justice, political freedom, and cultural renewal are elements in the total liberation of the world through the mission of Christ.”

/The 1983 WCC “Declaration on Mission and Evangelism” says, “The gospel of the kingdom of God is not only a request for the individual’s repentance, but it is a challenge to society’s structure. Gospel evangelism is about the structures of the world, which are the economic, political, and social systems.”

/In this way, these people include social and political activities in the concept of mission in addition to the salvation of souls. /We call this “**Missio Dei**” (**Mission of God**) or “**Holistic Mission.**”

/Many evangelicals of today are accepting this broad concept of mission. /One representative figure is John R. W. Stott. /Followers of the ecumenical movement not only accept this broad concept of mission, but they also belong to **socio-political behaviorism.**

/At the WCC World Conference on Mission and Evangelism held in Melbourne in 1980, David Stove said, “The Melbourne Conference will focus more on the social, economic, and cultural problems than a conference for social activity does.”

/People participating in the ecumenical movement make the claim that “we must give the poor a sense of superiority and join in their struggle with a sense of togetherness.” /They do not simply emphasize theoretical defense, but they emphasize participating in the struggle.

/Emilio Castro said, “The proclamation of the Gospel of the kingdom includes an invitation to join the kingdom, to participate in its struggles.”

/Let us review these ideas. Is the **broad concept of mission** as put forth by today’s liberalists, people of the ecumenical movement, and evangelicals justified? /Does the church’s mission include social and political activity in addition to preaching the gospel?

/First, let us define the term church mission. /What is the church? /The church is the gathering of believers who believe in Jesus Christ our Savior and have received salvation. /The church is a group of believers. /Then what is mission?

/In English, the word “mission” is a special task, or duty. /The Webster dictionary defines “mission” as “a specific task with which a person or a group is charged.” /Then what is the church’s mission?

/What is the church’s mission as a group? That is the question. /What is the mission of the church as a group, not the believer as an individual? /Does the mission of the church as a group of believers include social and political activities that go beyond evangelizing and saving souls? This is what we are focusing on.

/Traditional theology says the church has three duties. /The first duty is worship, the second spiritual building, and the third evangelism.

/Worship is the church’s basic duty for God. /A gathering of believers who are saved must first give thanks for God’s grace of salvation and give God glory, praise, and worship.

/Spiritual building is the church’s duty for itself. /The church has the duty of growing the believers spiritually and making them whole. /The Lord gave the church its workers for this cause. They teach, pray, chasten, have fellowship, serve, and give help.

/The early church collected offerings to give help to believers who were in need.

/Evangelism is the church’s duty in the world for the world. /The Lord left to the church this special duty, or mission. /Matthew 28:19 says, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations.”

/Matthew 16:15 says, “And he said to them, “Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation.” /John 20:21 says, “As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.” /Acts 1:8 says, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

/It is clear the Lord gave the church this mission. /We can say that the mission of the church is a continuation of the mission of Jesus Christ. /Then what is the mission of Jesus Christ? /It is to evangelize, which saves sinners.

/Matthew 9:13 says, “For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.” /Matthew 20:28 says, “Even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

/John 3:16 says, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”

/John 6:38-40 says, “For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.”

/Jesus came to this earth with the mission to save sinners. /He came to this world to give those who believe in him eternal life. /Mark 1:38 says, “And he said to them, “Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out.”

/What is Jesus’ mission? It is to evangelize people and save their souls. It was an evangelism that saved sinners. /Some people ask, “Didn’t the Lord heal the sick? Isn’t healing the sick social work?”

/Jesus did heal the sick, but that too falls under his teaching and preaching. /Furthermore, the Lord never said that he came to this earth to heal the sick.

/Rather, when he taught and spread the word of God, our merciful and powerful Savior did not ignore the sick, but he healed them. /These miracles of healing bear witness to his divine nature.

/Also, most of the sick who were healed were people who came to the Lord with faith. /Jesus did not search for sick people to heal, but he healed those who came to him. Most of the ones who came to him put their faith in him. Matthew 8:2,10; 9:2,22.

/Therefore, Jesus healing the sick is similar to the church taking care of sick believers within the church. We can consider the healing of the sick to be a part of the process of spreading the word.

/It does not refer to independent medical work or the church’s social and political activities. /Traditionally, the church had a proper idea of its mission to do missions work.

/In his book “The Bible Basis of Missions,” Robert Hall Glover says, “The true mission of the church is identical to the Lord’s mission. In other words, it is to go wherever lost people are and save them, whether it is within the country or in a faraway country.”

/ “The early church faced social and political conditions and problems that are fundamentally no different than those of today. It did not know about the social gospel, but whether in season or out, the church preached the only gospel for personal salvation.”

/The 1970 Frankfurt Declaration properly said it this way: “Mission is the witness and presentation of eternal salvation.” /Peter Beyerhaus said that the classical, traditional concept of mission is to preach the gospel.

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/Let me say a few things about why it is not the church’s duty to do social and political activities. /First of all, Jesus did not participate in social and political activities. /When someone asked Jesus to help him divide the inheritance with his brother, Jesus declined. / Luke 12:13.

/Also, when some people tried to make the Lord king by force, the Lord withdrew from the people and left.

/Second, Jesus never commanded his disciples to participate in social and political activities. /Third, the Lord’s disciples and the early church did not participate in social and political activities.

/The New Testament teaches believers to honor the social order, to submit to governing authorities, to pay taxes, and to pray for the authorities. 1 Peter 2:13; Romans 13:1; 1 Timothy 2:2.

/As we have just seen, the “mission of the church” refers the Lord Jesus’ command to the church to evangelize. /Therefore, the “broad concept of mission” is the wrong concept. / “Mission” must focus on the work of saving lost souls.

/This concludes the fifth lecture on “Criticism of Modern Theology.”