

## **"How Can You Be Right, & the Whole Church Wrong?"**

When I first began to talk openly about why I believed God was in the process of ultimately saving all mankind, I remember the response I heard more than once ... "How can you think that you are right, and the entire church that teaches about hell is wrong?"

I just read a biography of Martin Luther entitled, "Here I Stand" by Roland Bainton (Abingdon Press). I found it most interesting that as Eck interrogated Luther as to Luther's critique of the Church, he asked:

"Martin, how can you assume that you are the only one to understand the sense of Scripture? Would you put your judgment above that of so many famous men and claim that you know more than they all?" (page 185)

Had the "majority position" been maintained, we would all still be a part of the Roman Catholic Church, and many of the subsequent reforms even within the Catholic Church would not have come to pass. Most in the Christian community today would agree that Martin Luther was correct in his stand against the teachings and practices within the Church of his day. But Luther was part of the minority at the time!

We who proclaim from Scripture that God will ultimately save all are in the minority, and we seek to bring reform to a Church today that clings to the traditions and teachings of mankind, just as the Roman Catholic Church did in Luther's day.

Who can find fault with the views of Martin Luther when he said:

"Unless I am convicted by Scripture and plain reason – I do not accept the authority of popes and councils, for they have contradicted each other – my conscience is captive to the Word of God." (page 185)

But like the Catholic Church of Luther's day, the majority within the Church today accept the authority of councils, denominations, articles of religion, pastors and teachers.

We need Reformation within the Church today as badly as in Luther's day. We need to understand that "orthodoxy" is not truth as compared with falsehood ... it is simply the majority opinion, and it can be wrong. We cannot cling to a set of beliefs or interpretations simply because the majority that preceded us has worked through these issues and developed what they have passed down to us as orthodoxy ... the "majority opinion."

What if they were wrong?

Read the histories of the church and its councils ... especially those in the 5th century when many of our current beliefs were decided for us, and when "orthodoxy" was born. Persecution, manipulation and impure motives abounded. The "Church" was by no means perfect ... yet today we fall back on the theological thinking they packaged for us as "orthodoxy," and we cling to it as if it were unquestionable truth.

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We need reform within the Church today! We need to escape the shackles of those that preceded us, to seek truth only from the Word of God, freshly studying and thinking thru and discussing what God's Word is telling us.

“Orthodoxy” is widely viewed as a safeguard against heresy. But what if the “majority opinion” is wrong, and what if orthodoxy now prevents us from rooting error out of the teachings of the Church?

Consider this ... When in Scripture was the majority opinion correct? Were the Jewish leaders (the majority) correct, when God's prophets (the minority ... like Jeremiah) were proclaiming things that were “unorthodox” in their day? Were the Pharisees (the majority) correct when Jesus and later His apostles were proclaiming things that were “unorthodox” in their day? Were the majority of Believers correct as they clung to legalism, as Paul spoke of things that were “unorthodox?” (See Acts 21:20-21 when the majority of Believers in Jerusalem opposed Paul when he returned to Jerusalem.)

Today if one challenges the viewpoints of the denomination, or the articles of religion, or the pastor ... they are asked to leave the congregation to keep the unity. This allows for no honest discussion or study. If one strays from the positions that have been determined to be correct, he is cast out ... and the prevailing system of beliefs remains intact and unchallenged. This is true of denominations, individual churches, seminaries, Christian colleges, Christian associations ... where thinking and Bible interpretation has already been done, and members are simply handed a package of beliefs ... and there is no way to present individual viewpoints and bring correction where there is error.

Reformation is needed within the Church today.

The issue of eternal torment, the authority of pastors and other church leaders, viewpoints concerning baptism, the gospel that is proclaimed ... all of these issues are too sacred to touch in today's churches, and we as individual members of the Body of Christ are locked in error ... unless we can escape the biases and study and think for ourselves!

The gospel being proclaimed by most of today's churches and individual Christians is **wrong**, and the way we present God to the world is blasphemous! Reformation is needed, as badly as in the days of Martin Luther.

Cast off the biases, and question the “system of theology” that has been handed to you. If you are active in a traditional church, study and think for yourself. Ask questions and discuss Biblical interpretation openly. Seek truth from the Word of God, and question those things that are being taught that do not appear to be right. Do so in love, and attempting to maintain unity ... but do not sit silently as our Heavenly Father is being maligned ... and while God's message is being so distorted that many in the world reject the notion of God as presented by the Church.

We are Christ's Ambassadors, proclaiming God's message to the world. Let us be sure we are not simply passing along an incorrect message that has been handed to us. Be sure it is the correct message.

“Yet all is of God, Who conciliates us to Himself through Christ, and is giving us the dispensation of the conciliation, how that God was in Christ, conciliating **the world** to Himself, **not reckoning their offenses to them**, and placing in us the word of the conciliation. For Christ, then, are we ambassadors, as of God entreating through us. We are beseeching for Christ's sake, 'Be conciliated to God!'" (2 Corinthians 5:18-21)

– Bob Evely -