

The Final Reformation

Part 1 of 7

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It is believed by some that we are standing at the front of the “last reformation” and in certain circles this phrase is, perhaps too casually, being tossed around and the impression is being given that this event is, prophetically speaking, an absolute certainty. Even when one agrees that a reformation of some kind is needed and indeed coming, at the least, this phrase needs to be more carefully examined – especially if we believe this to be a genuine work of God. This is quite a large picture to put into two words and we would do well to consider as many aspects of this idea as we possibly can. Let’s face it, if the concept embraces too much or too little of what Christ is doing and accomplishing, then the very label, to one degree or another, will be one of the very things that will keep us from the fullness of what Christ is doing. Put another way, if we apply the label before we spiritually gain the picture of God’s will and intent, we may, with our very efforts, create an insurmountable hurdle to attaining to God’s will for our lives. Also, as is the case with so many things in the English language, these two words are subject to the meanings the particular hearer or speaker gives them and in this way they can be too succinctly spoken and understood. Let us slow down and look carefully at the myriad issues these two words place before us.

Last

If we speak of something being “last,” we mean there will be no more like it, that this is the final occurrence of that particular thing. If we believe that we stand in front of the last reformation, we are intimating that we believe that we are living in the end times, that there will be no more changes made to the practice of the way of following Christ and God. We are also implying that, this being the last change, the way we do things as a result of this reformation will be the true and complete and right and only way to follow Christ and God. We do well, then, to consider most carefully what the true and complete and right and only way to follow Christ and God is. For this way must be the original and first way and, as such, it must surely be the last way as well!

Christianity, as indeed do other religions and philosophies, claims to hold the keys to the right and only way to better, beneficial and even eternal life. Yet Christianity is divided into hundreds, even thousands of sects that each offer competing and differing views on how a follower is to attain to that life. One can devote one’s life to analyzing and dissecting these various views and methods but all one is likely to accomplish is to produce yet another regurgitation of some pre-existing view or some syncretistic hybrid of pre-existing views that only further complicates the choices one faces in deciding what is the “right and only way” to follow Christ.

The first question that must be grappled with is:

“Is there a right and only way?”

The vast experience of mankind – as encountered in any realistic study of historical persons, peoples and their beliefs and practices – seems to suggest that the notion of one truth for all people of all times is merely a fantastic myth. Yet this superficial interpretation fails to reckon with the transcendent nature of God as He has revealed Himself in the recorded words of

the Bible. Jesus said, “Wide is the gate and broad is the *way* that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. How narrow is the gate and difficult is the *way* that leads to life, and there are few who find it.” (Mt. 7:13-14) As elusive as the existence of a “right and only way” in life may seem to be, the unarguable and incontrovertible existence of these two destinations – death (destruction) and life (in all its wondrous complexities) – clearly show us the reality of there being *ways* to get to either of these destinations.

Jesus, in a claim which is not fully embraced by many of those who claim to follow Him, said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.” (Jn. 14:6) Jesus clearly taught that not only was there a “right and only way,” He made it clear that *He Himself* was that right and only way! Other religions and philosophies make the mistake of rejecting Him as the right and only way to find God. Much of Christianity makes the mistake of presuming that their own myopic views, religion and practice incorporates all of, and is the same thing as, what Christ *is*. The latter error is more worthy of condemnation than the former.

The second question that must be addressed is:

“Can a right and only way be known by one person or group?”

That is, can an individual or group of individuals know such a thing as one truth for all people of all times? Is it even possible for an individual to reach beyond the misguided preconceptions and ingrained paradigms that cloud and distort his ability to grasp realities larger than himself and beyond the scope of his own little world? Jesus said, “If you remain in My word (sayings and teachings), you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” (Jn. 8:31-32) Here we must decide whether Jesus was, as He claimed, the Messiah who brings and is the right and only way or was He merely just another deceived, deluded and deceitful egomaniac as have been all the other claimants to being Messiah? Is He truly able to liberate us from all our misguided preconceptions and ingrained paradigms that cloud and distort our ability to grasp realities larger than ourselves and is He able to take us beyond the scope of our own little worlds? If He is not able to do this, then we are, of all people, the most to be pitied.

Yet this is precisely where faith enters in. “Without faith it is impossible to please God, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.” (Heb. 11:6) We are not asked to make “blind leaps” but rather to make informed choices. We are given many kinds of evidences to weigh and consider and then we are asked to believe that which seems most true. We are led and taught by the Spirit of truth (Jn. 16:13) so that we may know the things known in the mind of Christ. (1 Cor. 2:16) This spiritual insight, knowledge and revelation given by God to humble recipients, is precisely how the individual overcomes his own misguided preconceptions and ingrained paradigms that cloud and distort his ability to grasp and know truth. This is liberty indeed!

Thus the basis for our “right and only way” is not the Bible as an intellectually absorbed book. Rather, our basis is the “rightly divided” (2 Tim. 2:15), untwisted (2 Pet. 3:16), *spiritual* (1 Cor. 3:1) word of truth that nests perfectly within “the *whole* counsel of God.” (Acts 20:27) The words will come from God (Mt. 4:4) and be brought to life by the Spirit of truth (Jn. 14:26) within our own hearts and lives. This truth, much more difficult to attain to than one’s preferred doctrines, traditions and intellectualisms (because we must relinquish self, die to our own aspirations and follow Christ only – Lk. 9:23), is confirmed and ratified by those others who also seek and follow after Christ in this way. (Eph. 4:3, Jn. 7:17) Those whose lives and “wisdom”

are characterized by arrogance and rudeness (see Jas. 3:14-16, 1 Cor. 13:5) are propagating a spirit different from the Spirit of Christ (2 Cor. 11:4) and are sent merely as the devil's agents to disrupt and divert individuals and groups from knowing truth and attaining to the unity of the Spirit. (2 Tim. 2:25-26)

Jesus said, "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." (Jn. 13:35) This is the "ID card" of the genuine member of Christ's family and kingdom. Anyone who claims to belong to Christ but who does not have the Spirit of love that *is* Christ is not one of His. (Rom. 8:9) Truth – spiritually accurate knowledge and belief – is a product of spiritual maturity and is an integral part of following Christ but it must not be the only part. Truth must be spoken in love with the grace (power) given by the Spirit of truth (Eph. 4:15, Col. 4:6) or else all we have is a "dead letter" right-ness devoid of the life of the Spirit (2 Cor. 3:6) and if this is all we have, we are to be avoided! (2 Tim. 3:5)

It must never be missed that the "right and only way" is held together by the word *and*. We can be so exclusive that we are no longer right and we can be so "right" (in our own opinion) that we will embrace anyone or anything as if it were Christ Himself. The right and only way to better, beneficial and eternal life is found first in the source – Christ Himself. There is not, has not and never will be any other name given in which we may find true and ultimate salvation. (Acts 4:12) He is the only way to the life, truth and righteousness that is God. Once we have found Him as source, we must remain in Him as the way or means by which we progress. (Col. 2:6, 1 Jn. 2:27) Anything – "church," the "Christian" religion, ear-scratching "spiritual gurus" (2 Tim. 4:3-4), whatever – that curbs or prevents our ability to hear and follow Him is a thing that is robbing us of our abundant and eternal life. (Jn. 10:27-28) Do not be deceived!

The right and only way is not found by merely reading books and studying sacred texts, though these may indeed be milestones in one's progress toward spiritual maturity. Knowledge – however extensive or meager – will not be the standard by which we are judged on the last day. Rather it will be our obedience and faithfulness – or the lack thereof – to what we did know to be true which will be used to show us whether our life was lived on the road that leads to destruction or lived on the road that leads to life. Once we have reached our destination, however, it will be far too late to change which road we're on. The only opportunity we have to change the road we're on is found only in that time frame we call "today."

Reformation

When we speak of "reformation," we speak of taking certain pre-existing elements and rearranging them into a new order or structure. What is lacking in most people's understanding of church history is that there have already been two reformations and that this one being called the last reformation will be the third.

The first reformation occurred in the second and third centuries. When the original apostles passed from the scene, people began to scramble to be sure they had the right and only way. But as Paul prophesied in the book of Acts, "bishops" arose from the ranks of the elders, spoke their own peculiar corruption or dilution or perversion of the truth and drew followers after themselves. (Acts 20:30) Quite often these bishops believed themselves to be the last bastion and very protector of truth but by having men follow them, they removed Christ from His place of preeminence (Col. 1:18) and headship over all things to His people. (Eph. 1:22) As Jesus had Himself predicted, "while men slept" the enemy sowed his tares (sons of the devil) among the wheat. (Mt. 13:25, etc.) The right and only way of following Christ was reformed

and that which The Revelation would call the Great Prostitute was fashioned in the midst of the people of Christ. (Rev. 17:5, etc.)

The second reformation occurred in the sixteenth century and was led by men like Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, etc. We know much more about this reformation because it was more widely recognized as a reformation and more of the history has been retained. However, this reformation can only be called incomplete, at best, because this reformation took elements of what The Revelation called Babylon and retained them in their practices of “the right and only way.” Among these practices were the “church” building, the priesthood of a select exalted “clergy,” and the reliance upon the Scriptures apart from an obedient, spiritual life in Christ.

That the reformation failed to produce a “right and only way” is most easily seen in the fact that Christianity was not unified but rather produced various denominations, the first of the daughters of the Great Prostitute. And it is also precisely here that we can see the dual streams of power that have attended all revivals, renewals and moves of God. ***Every*** move of God, ***every*** revival, ***every*** outpouring of His Spirit has devolved into a schism (Greek *schisma* [4978]), sect or heresy (*haireisis* [139]), a dissension (*dichostasia* [1370]), and/or a contention (*eris* [2054]), etc. – and usually as the expression for someone’s incomplete or twisted version of “the faith.” And each of these things are contrary to the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:25) and keep us from experiencing and inheriting the kingdom of God. (Gal. 5:20-21)

Yet at the very same time and in the very same movements, we see that God was simultaneously restoring something that had been lost as a result of the first reformation. Even the first reformation, the Catholic “church,” was built, however imperfectly, on the idea of the singular body of Christ and unity of the one faith given once for all. The sixteenth century reformation was sparked largely when the Lord gave Luther the revelation regarding the idea of justification by faith. Then came the Baptists who were given the revelation of the importance of water baptism as a sign of repentance. Then came the revelation God gave to John Wesley and the Methodists of the need for sanctification by faith. Then came the revelation that the Adventists received that there would be a second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Then came the Finney and Moody revivals with the idea that believers should be baptized with the Holy Spirit and following that was the Pentecostal revivals that brought forth the concept of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. More recently has come the idea of the apostolic and prophetic which, in spite of its many abuses, is rightly based on the gifting or gracings of the apostles, prophets, heralds, shepherds and teachers. (Eph. 4:11)

But the power of the forces of darkness is in their ability to deceive. They don’t have any power over us until we give it to them – thus they have concocted their great schemes (wiles, “cons”) and used the “church” deceptions to keep men in bondage to death and darkness. Yet Jesus promised that He would build His ekklesia ([1577], the Greek word poorly translated “church” in English versions) and that the imprisoning gates would not overcome His people. (Mt. 16:18) Thus, it is both necessary and inevitable that the deceptive elements of the “church” paradigm must be removed from the midst of Christ’s people. As John was told, we must “Come out of Babylon, lest we share in her sins, and receive of her plagues.” (Rev. 18:4) And we must “Cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” (2 Cor. 7:1) The Great Prostitute – that which was added to the original “right and only way” – simply cannot be reformed. We cannot take of the elements of Babylon and hope to build spiritual Israel. It simply cannot happen. In this sense, if we apply the notion of reformation to anything that truly comes from the Great Prostitute, our attempts at reformation will fail miserably because we are literally standing in opposition to what Christ and God are

doing. Christ's people must come out of Babylon so as to return to the original gospel and covenant of Christ and God. Only when we leave Babylon will we find the way to the kingdom of God. There is simply no way to be in both the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan.

What Will It Look Like?

Paul wrote, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." (Rom. 12:2) John wrote, "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world – the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life – is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever." (1 Jn. 2:15-17) Those who do the will of God in this life are those who are in the kingdom of God. (Mt. 6:10) A kingdom is ruled by a king – that is the nature of a kingdom. If Christ is truly not our King in all things, then we are not in His kingdom. If we do not obey Him, we are not participants in His eternal salvation. (Heb. 5:9) The "Christian" religion has so muddled the stark contrast between light and darkness because a place was needed where the tares could masquerade as wheat. But if the next reformation is to be the final one, we must begin with wheat and not with tares. We cannot take the things of this world (as did the Great Prostitute) and formulate our own preferred "theologies" and doctrines and call that "the right and only way." We must begin with Christ, we must continue with Christ and we must end with Christ. (Rev. 12:11) If our lives are not different from the lives of this world, if our mind is not spiritually renewed by God and His Spirit of truth, we simply will not know what the will of God is and we will not be participants in His kingdom.

The greatest weapon that Satan wields against us is deception. As has already been said, the devil and the demonic have absolutely no power over us until we give it to them! But unfortunately, because the Great Prostitute, the "church" (using the term in the sense of all the demonic and man-made reformations of the original "right and only way" of following Christ and God), is the devil's most effective scheme, many people who have tasted of the life of Christ are lulled into lethal negligence and lethargy by the very things they are told will bring them into Christ's light and life.

For the next reformation to be the final and last one, it will have to experience a lot of painful purification. *All* the elements of Babylon must be rejected as quickly as the Spirit of truth exposes them to us. All traces of following demonic teachings (1 Tim. 4:1) must be rejected. All following of mere men (1 Cor. 3:4) and following of merely human tradition (Mk. 7:8) must be forsaken. We must be genuinely partaking of the divine nature as He has promised and given it (2 Pet. 1:3-4) and no longer be content to have a mere form or façade of godliness. (2 Tim. 3:5)

One element that will be present but will perhaps cause the most confusion and controversy will be that of miraculous powers. If we are in the end times and the kingdoms of Satan are going to forbid us from participating in their forms of medicine and healing, then we will be required to rely only on the Spirit of God for health and life. This is how it should always have been (in a perfect world) but God is going to require us to choose which system – His or Satan's – that we will bow down to. We will require miraculous healing and spiritual maintenance of our health as part of following Him – and this will bring glory to His name. If glory somehow begins to come to our name because of any miracles, we can know that, at least to some degree, an element of demonic deception or power is at work in those miracles.

The last reformation will have to be completely spiritual even as it rejects all that is carnal. Adam – the representative of fallen and unregenerated, unregenerated mankind – will be in hell for all eternity. Only those who have in faith and obedience come to the second Adam – Christ – will be able to remain in His kingdom. Paul could not speak to the Corinthians as spiritual people but only as infants or even carnal (fleshly) people. (1 Cor. 3:1) Thus he was forced to tell them to imitate him as he imitated Christ. (1 Cor. 11:1) But to the more spiritually mature Ephesians, to whom Paul was able to write what has been called “the highest mountain peak” of the New Testament, he said to them, “Imitate God.” (Eph. 5:1) We must leave behind Corinthian carnality (which is in truth *enmity* against God – Rom. 8:7) and press on to Ephesian spirituality and maturity.

The last reformation must be about spiritual life and not religion. Religion is mentioned most infrequently in the New Testament and then only by one author. Yet men like Calvin somehow considered it appropriate to *institute* the Christian *religion!* Jesus said, “I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.” (Jn. 10:10) He did not say that He had come to bring abundant *religion!* Any life that does not resemble the Person and Nature of Christ is a false life, no matter what titles the person has or what religious rituals one performs or how long one has been performing one’s own peculiar religious practices. “No lie is of the truth.” (1 Jn. 2:21) “For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols?” (2 Cor. 6:14-16) What compromise can there be between death and life? Any religious practice that does not attend to the orphans, widows and least (poorest) of our brothers in this world and in Christ and that keeps us conformed to this world is only a lie, a deception. (Jas. 1:27)

The last reformation will see a renewed emphasis on the “one another” commands of the New Testament and will not focus on “ME” and my wants, needs and desires. Christ will fill all in all and He will lay down our lives as surely as He laid down His own. As we give of ourselves, that is, the new nature that Christ has put in us, we will find that He fills us with His life, nature and comfort so we will be expanded and not diminished by giving ourselves and our lives away in service to Him for the sake of the others around us.

And finally, the last reformation must be about obedience to God and not knowledge about God and the Bible. Even the knowledge that has been presented in this study is not absolutely essential. All one needs is Christ. People have faithfully lived and died for Christ without possessing much or even any of this knowledge – and many will do so again. But this knowledge has been presented here to reassure the faith of those who will run into the over-educated and knowledge-inflated people who still cling to their vestiges of Babylon and insist that they alone have the “right and only way.” Anyone who has seen this “bigger picture” of what the “last reformation” will look like will not be deceived if some portion they are involved with should devolve back into some form of “church” by returning to either Babylon or Egypt. It will always be truth that only those who genuinely have Christ have the right and only way! If you have Christ, He will sustain you whether you have knowledge or not. The knowledge presented here is meant as a confirmation and clarification of what the next move of God must look like so that we might take care to participate in His light and truth but it is certainly no substitute for the real and ongoing interaction with the Person and Spirit of Christ.

Are we seeing or about to see the last reformation? Are we participating in a real move of God or are we experiencing a counterfeit deception of Satan? The answer to those questions depends on who we are and what we want. Do we want Christ at all cost? We may have Him.

Or are we content to re-write or re-define elements of the New Testament to suit our own desires and preferences and beliefs about our own “theology” and doctrines and dogma? We may have those.

Do we want power to walk in miraculous things so that we might seem to be a wonderful thing in someone’s eyes? We may do so. Or do we want to humbly serve others around us in whatever way they need (whether that be with humble servitude or in great, visible power)? We may indeed do so.

But we cannot do both at the same time. One of the main reasons the power of God has been unavailable, unused and withheld for so long is that the demonic has been routinely followed, served and obeyed in the boxes men commonly call “church.” God is not willing to confirm the schemes of the devil with His power – He came to destroy all the deceptive works of the devil (1 Jn. 3:8) not to support their works by confirming them with miraculous power. When miraculous power attends any deception, we can know it is the power of Satan by which he comes to deceive. (2 Ths. 2:9)

The last reformation will be a tumultuous event and will require that every true saint of God endure to the end. (Mt. 24:13) It will be a time of purification and making the ekklesia (people) of Christ ready for His return when she must be without “spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but [instead] holy and without blemish.” (Eph. 5:27) Participation in anything less than this, no matter what labels we apply or refuse to apply to ourselves, will simply mean that we have become a victim of the end time deceptions of Satan and that we have in some way returned to carnal Egypt or Babylon and we have failed to be spiritual Israel that is the kingdom of God. The last reformation will not be about this or that organization of mere men but rather will be about the kingdom of God versus the kingdom of Satan.

It is this last thought that should give us the greatest pause. If God knows that this last reformation is needed and He intends it to come forth, our response to the people and issues such a reformation raises up will be our response to God Himself. If we are too busy with our possessions, our property or our family – or worse to our own “theology” or “ministry” – to attend to the things important to His kingdom, why should we be surprised when He declares that we have no place at the wedding feast of His Son? (see Lk. 14:24) We have no trouble condemning those who failed to recognize the Christ when He came among men but perhaps we are failing to recognize the Christ who resides within His servants and treating them in much the same way the Jews treated Jesus all because we already know all the answers to all the questions that could ever be asked. If we truly walk in such arrogance, our judgment is not sleeping and will catch up with us soon enough.

Let he who has ears hear.

Part 2 of 7: Coming Out and Moving On

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