

An Identity Crisis

1. Have you ever thought who you are identified with in church history?
2. What do you think establishes your comparative identity?

For the answers, let's start at the church's beginning (not in the middle, where we came in)—and trying not to rationalize it by today's "standards", but accepting it at scriptural face value. Which, as simplistic as it may sound, is exactly how we ought to regard all of God's inspired word-literally, as it was rendered. Specific, or black and white; not gray!

First, there was complete unity; oneness of heart and mind. Per Acts 2:41-47. That is, perfect mutual identity (unanimous agreement) with the Lord, his word, and each other.

Do you have the same credentials, the same constitutional beliefs, and testimony? Don't be too quick to answer in the affirmative.

If we trace the evolving (devolving) process of church history, we can see a very contradictory development.

As I have commented elsewhere, human nature being what it is, it wasn't a century before the character and testimony of the church had begun to deteriorate. And, contrary to what the modern day churches see as progress and success, the downward process of true doctrinal faithfulness and resultant unspirituality, has continued ever since.

In 529, the Synod of Orange refuted the teachings which Pelagius had introduced into the church,"that it is up to the individual to accept or refuse God's 'offer' of grace". While that is what is commonly believed in today's church, it was a radical modification of established church doctrine, to the contrary.

The first church in Jerusalem, would have known immediately that it was heretical teaching, and would not have admitted it into their church, or if it started internally would have, by process of discipline, cast out such a one, who would not recant and repent from false teaching.

The Reformation era helped restore some of the early church doctrinal truth, through Martin Luther, John Calvin, and others, but the reform did not last long in the church's ensuing annals.

Moving up to the 17th century, Jacobus Arminius, perpetuating the perverted ideas of Pelagius and subsequent adherents, added his own corrupt thinking to the scheme.

1. He denied the total inability of man to believe spiritual truths, or that he was in such respect, totally depraved. Thereby, corrupting an absolute truth!

2. He taught that Christ died for all men—not only the elect (the literal interpretation).
3. And he claimed that it was possible to fall from grace (though not held by many in that camp today).
4. He denied that the work of the Spirit in salvation is irresistible, but taught that becoming a Christian is a cooperative act of both God and man. Which is taken for granted in the modern church world.

Boosted further by John Wesley, and others in the 18th century, the “new” theology, has since become the “accepted doctrine in most churches in America” (per “The Church in History”, a Christian school textbook).

Can you not see who most of you are identified with? It is with those who have departed from the “apostles’ tradition”, or the literal interpretation of gospel principles that the original church exemplified. And do you not realize that any deviation from the truth of God’s word is either influenced by him at the start, or certainly capitalized on by him as long as the doctrinal error continues to be maintained?

Do you think if the Apostle Paul could come into your church that he would be in fellowship with you? Not at all. He would, no doubt, address you as he did the Galatian Church—“Oh foolish _____ (you fill in your church’s name), who hath bewitched you, etc.”.

Why? Because, they (you, or whoever) have failed to check whatever they have learned or been taught, by not “searching the scriptures daily to see if those things be so”, and with millions of others, irresponsibly accepted the word of man, unproven by the word of God!

And, who do you think the Rev. 3 Laodicean church prophecy applies to, and typifies? It is, in all of its pathetic description, practically all of today’s church. Hence, the admonition to repent, in the words “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.” Which, few ever do, or can be expected to—as the prophecy itself implies.

Further questions:

1. Are you driven by your adopted ideology (“gospel” concept), or the truth?
Apparently, very few can state the latter, or they wouldn’t be guilty of the doctrinal error they are immersed in.
2. Do you dare to think “outside the box”, as they say in modern terms?

Think of good boxes, and bad boxes! You couldn’t deny that the original church was in a

good box. But, as it happened, that good box later got corrupted by someone that went outside of it, and introduced something wrong, or foreign, which was accepted or adopted, and the typical church became a bad box (at least, in its gospel doctrine). Which, unfortunately it still is today in the main, because nothing has reformed it.

Your position in all of this should be self-evident, but, if you mistakenly think that you or your church is an exception—a serious, honest examination of your gospel doctrine will tell the truth! Which, though late in coming, would be a fulfillment of the injunction of II Tim. 2:15. How else can one be assured that he has God's approval for what he believes?

It isn't a hope-so, assume so, because-practically-everyone-else-believes-like-you-do, matter! It's a study-to-show-thyself-approved, know-so requirement. But the modern church, living by former fleshly principles is largely a failed institution! By this, I am not referring to eternal salvation, but to testimony, and works—based on soundness of doctrine—and the resultant rewards, or loss of same if an integral part of one's beliefs is seriously wrong. And more important than that is the disservice and dishonor to God during a Christian's life, by misrepresenting Him, and His truth!

Rather than reacting defensively by either ignoring, or discounting what I have said as some kind of fanatical, extreme, and thus wrong concept—dare to prove your own gospel beliefs by an honest, objective study of the subject scriptures, until the question is truly answered and settled, one way or the other. Which is, of course, what should have been done in the first place!

Why any Christian doesn't think he is always personally obligated to learn the truth of all of God's revealed principles and doctrine, is a head-shaking mystery to me. Indwelt by the spirit of God, by which the truth may be determined, but instead resorting to one's old nature (the flesh) and believing a lie, and then staying with that false belief is what I am talking about.

The title of this article is "An Identity Crisis". Do you see how important the implicit question is? Can you conceive of the possibility that as much as 95% or more of the contemporary church is identified with wrong gospel doctrine? That being the erroneous Arminian concept of universal atonement, and free will salvation opportunity. How can the great majority of believers let themselves become indoctrinated with false teaching, from which, if they ever suspect the fallacy of—never do anything to extricate themselves from the trap they are in?

Why? Essentially, because they are followers of misguided men, and with them, being judges of God's word—not faithful students of it! Or else, they would know the truth, and not be in the "snare of the devil." Do you dare to think it's not that serious? Technically, Satan can't cause it—but can exploit it and control us, as long as we allow him to have access to our minds, and thereby keep us captive!