

ORTHODOXY IN CANADIAN ANGLICANISM

A recent article in the Vancouver Sun entitled "What is orthodox Christianity" brings to the public eye again the ongoing struggle that is splitting in the Anglican Church in Canada. Conservative theologians who have dissented from the Anglican community in Canada are fighting for the right to retain their multi-million dollar properties in Vancouver and the Fraser Valley. The battle has now spilled over into the secular courts and no less a court than the BC Supreme Court. An issue raised by the Supreme Court is one that has been ignored for too long by Anglicanism; what is orthodoxy. It is a sad commentary on the Church when the world has to hoist the red flag and shout "reality check!"

The issue raised by the Supreme Court is no small matter; it addresses the heart of Christianity and I believe brings the Anglican Church to the same position that Roman Catholicism found itself in the years after the Protestant Reformation, when it had to define What Christianity is after the opposition of the Reformers.

Bishop Michael Ingham defined orthodoxy before the court as being "broad, not narrow," and added that it ought not to exclude people from the Church. In this definition he was following his colleague in England, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams who said that orthodoxy "contains many points of view..." Such a universal gospel is no Gospel at all, but a denial

of the way of Salvation in Christ alone, and a contradiction of the words of Christ in Matthew 7:14.

The so-called conservatives in this fight had no more to say than the liberals. Professor Stackhouse of Regent College, Vancouver, according to the Vancouver Sun, jested before the court when asked the definition of orthodoxy; he said it is “the Christianity I like.” Professor Stackhouse went on to say that the dispute over the meaning of orthodoxy is a complex and unprecedented.

There are areas of theology that are complex; orthodoxy is not one of them. The issue that faces the Anglican Church is not morality Vs. immorality or conservatism Vs. liberalism, it is a matter that runs much deeper, a matter of the Gospel, the way of salvation, the essence of our relationship to God through Christ.

If what the conservatives are reported to have said is true, that Bishop Ingham is unorthodox, that raises another question; Why have they not “come out from among them” (II Corinthians 6:17)? J. I. Packer now involved in this debate, was called to do this over forty years ago in England. Packer has been able and prolific in *defining* the Gospel in his numerous books, but his refusal to go beyond that and *defend* the Gospel (Jude 3) renders him impotent in this debate. By his association he *mélange*s truth with error and makes the gospel no longer an exclusive gospel.

The compromise of these conservative theologians has placed them in the same position as the Liberals; they

have a gospel that is all inclusive, some by definition (as Bishop Ingham) and others by practice (as Professor Stackhouse). It is time for these men to take the advice of their great predecessor in Liverpool, Bishop Ryle and return to the "Old Paths" (Jeremiah 6:16) recover the gospel and preach it without compromise. It is time for them to fight moral issues from the only safe platform; the absolute authority of the Word of God. It is time for them to stop equivocating with the truth and begin at the heart of the issue; a right relation with God through Christ, exclusively. In short it is time for them to define orthodoxy without complexity, but in the simplicity and perspicuity (to use a word that Professor Stackhouse should already know, meaning "*clarity*") of the Word of God.

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