

Biblical Doubts

“Who first coined the saying 'A camel is a horse designed by a committee'?

I don't know, but I expect it was the same person who said, “An elephant is a mouse designed to government specifications.” (1)

This bit of trivia induces laughter. However, French philosopher Jean Baudrillard (1929-2007) applied this saying to truth. It developed into the creed for our culture today.

He declared that truth results as a product of a consensus of values. His declaration fostered a revolution in the nature and formulation of truth claims. Now, culture believes that all claims of truth develop within a group or culture, not from an objective standard. Ironically, no standard converted into the standard.

Cultural Truth Claims

Baudrillard's theory developed into today's benchmark for truth claims with far reaching effects. It brings us to the following conclusions:

- the rejection of any objective standard for determining truth claims;
- the belief of many interpretations of “truth”, i.e., every group and culture possesses its own “truth”; and
- the rejection of any one explanation of life as THE truth.

One does not have to look far to see the suspicion of truth in our culture. An intense resistance to truth claims of almost any kind demonstrates the lack of trust present in our society. No one possesses THE TRUTH.

Adaptation of Christians to Culture

Sadly, the Christian Church and its members exhibit these characteristics, too. I remember when it all started. It sounded so inclusive in our group Bible studies. Instead of the leader proclaiming the truth of a passage, (s)he asked, “What does this passage mean to you?”

Everyone shared his or her opinion, and the leaders failed to point to the true meaning of the passage. Everyone's opinion had equal value. Biblical uncertainty crept into believer's lives, because no one discerned the warning signs of skepticism.

Baudrillard's claim turned into common practice for the Church. The church now commonly follows the culture. For example, the Church:

- rejects any objective standard for determining Biblical truth claims;
- accepts many, virtually any, interpretations as “truth”; and
- denies any one explanation of a Biblical text as THE truth.

Sadly, this practice plays a significant role in the Church's spiritual decadence. She cannot resist culture's fallacies and decays from the inside. In fact, the Church proudly mimics the culture to the delight of multitudes of churchgoers and to the sorrow of only the few.

The Christian Church bought the lie that to win the culture She must conform to the culture.

Jesus vs. the Scribes

The Christian Church did not learn this pattern from Jesus, the Lord of the Church. Jesus confronted His culture with bold declarations of the truth. For example, we read the reaction of the people to Christ's Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 7.28-29:

“...when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: For he taught as one having authority, and not as the scribes.”

To grasp the contrast between Jesus and the scribes, we must first understand the methods of the scribes. They never expressed any ideas without reference to a rabbi. (2) The interpretations of the rabbis varied among them. They disagreed on many doctrines.

Since a scribe followed a favorite rabbi and his teachings, a scribe would quote the rabbi's positions on the scriptures and other issues. Thus, the scribes differed among themselves, too. They divided into groups or schools depending upon the rabbis they followed. No one declared the truth, only the opinions of their group.

Sound familiar? Solomon said,

“There is no new thing under the sun. Is there anything whereof it may be said, See, this is new? it hath been already of old time, which was before us.” (3)

The scribes preceded today's culture by thousands of years yet pursued our current pattern. Their “truths” came from their particular groups, followed no objective standard, and no one declared THE truth...only opinions.

In contrast, Jesus spoke with authority and proclaimed unequivocally the truth. He embodied all of the treasures of wisdom, knowledge, and the truth. (4) Further, He quoted extensively from the Old Testament and confirmed it as truth. Often, His sermons produced the same effect as in Matthew 7.28-29. (5)

The Christian Church's Path Forward

How then must the Church respond to our culture? Without fear or intimidation, we need to follow the example of Christ, the Lord of the Christian Church.

Christ promised and sent the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth, to guide believers into the truth. (6) We can know the truth through the ministry of the Holy Spirit in our lives. He reveals it to us from His inerrant, inspired, infallible word, the Bible, including the Old and New Testaments.

Like Christ, we must proclaim the truth, all of the truth, from both the Old and New Testaments. The Holy Spirit, Who empowered Jesus, will enable us to know the truth and to proclaim it with authority.

To our detriment, we have conformed to the world instead of resisting it. Without the truth of God revealed by the Holy Spirit and proclaimed under the power of the Holy Spirit by the Church and believers, the Church will continue its decline.

Nothing else will prevail.

References

1. <http://www.theguardian.com/notesandqueries/query/0,5753,-1459,00.html>. 03/09/2015.
2. *WORDsearch Bible Software, v. 10*. Powered by Lifeway. “Word Pictures” @ Matthew 7.29.
3. Ecclesiastes 1.9-10.
4. John 14.6; Colossians 2.1-3.
5. See Mark 1.22, Luke 4.31-32, and John 7.40-46.
6. John 14.16-18, 26.