

TRUE RELIGION

TRUE RELIGION is GOD-CENTERED, not just OTHER-CENTERED and not SELF-CENTERED. The word RE-LIGION itself shows this, meaning RE-ALIGN, RE-ATTACH or RE-CONCILE with God. (See also LIGAMENT which connects bone to muscle).

The simplest illustration of TRUE RELIGION may be in this paradigm: Jesus - with its implications for
Others the 3 degrees of glory
You (D&C 76)

In living and teaching the Gospel we often vacillate between other-centered and self-centered, and rarely consider God-centered. We have fallen for the false idea that "Before you can love or serve or have faith in others or God you must first learn to love or serve or have faith in self." It becomes self-image, self-love, self-confidence or, at least, POSITIVE MENTAL ATTITUDE as the means to raising self-esteem. Only then, we falsely assume, are we in a heightened condition to love and bless and serve others. And our only nod to God in all this is that "When we are in the service of [our] fellow beings, we are in the service of our God" (See Mosiah 2:17). But full worship and knowledge of God seems to be on hold until much later, we seem to feel, - until after we have dealt fully with the proper business of this life in this world. All of this, of course, is flawed thinking; it is false doctrine, - and is from the father of lies. We falsely assume that we start from where we are at, and gradually practice self-improvement and self-development until we have learned higher, better, and nobler "values". But true religion, the Gospel that saves, starts with God, not man; with FAITH not positive attitude or self-esteem or self-confidence; with SELF-FORGETFULNESS, not self-awareness; with SELF-CONTROL, not self-indulgence; with SUBMISSION, not ambition; with YIELDING TO THE HOLY SPIRIT, not asserting one's rights or prerogatives or one's own program. It is centered in GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS not our own righteousness (see Rom. 10:1-4; and D&C 1:16). And God's righteousness can only be known by revelation, thus mandating our humility and receptiveness.

When we thus properly start with God as the center of our attention and affections we find a power not of ourselves, we find the power of God unto salvation; we find the Gospel of Christ (Rom. 1:16), and this power - the gospel - is found in no other way. It is not gradually discovered as we improve ourselves or as we serve others; it is given unto us by revelation, by power, as we seek and identify God and his work before all else. Our concern for others then becomes a result, a natural inclination, a fruit, a righteous desire to bless others with what we have discovered: the power and love of God. And it can only work from the top down; heaven to earth, spiritual to temporal. The order is set and limited by law and order. And there is the crux of the matter: ORDER, LAW & ORDER, or DOCTRINE and ORDINANCES, and COVENANT. Heber C. Kimball's biographer, his son-in-law, Orson F. Whitney wrote of the vital need and the crucial nature of ORDER in the Gospel. "...and if that order is sublimated (ignored or reduced) then chaos reigns." The order is the order of creation: spiritual first and temporal second. In this world everything has become subverted, chaotic, out of order. Our job is to get the Spirit, which will restore us to an understanding of the order of eternity, the order of the spiritual, the holy order of God, the true priesthood way of seeing and doing things.

Just as a thing does not have to be evil to be wrong (see Robert J. Matthews, "The Meaning of the Atonement"), so it just needs to be out of order to be wrong (see Acts 16:15-19). Order, propriety, sequence, these are vital matters if we are to enjoy the Spirit which governs the work of God. Eve was out of order in partaking of the fruit ahead of Adam and in view of its being "delicious to the taste and very desirable." She was out of order, even though the partaking was the right thing. She partook without proper understanding and contrary to the ordained procedure, the true order, the priesthood way. She (and her daughters are placed back in the true order through an ORDINANCE which, by covenant, places her in a proper- and true suBORDInate place to be to her husband, as he proceeds in righteous order before the Lord. Eve and her daughters are then blessed only in accordance with priesthood law and order, not by their own initiative of righteousness (Rom. 10:1-4). "And if it be by some other way, it is not of God (D&C 50:21). Order, ordained, ordinance - these are the true way of God in blessing his children, - everything else is "a thief and a robber," climbing up the back way, trying to get the blessing by false pretenses (see John 10:1-12) and by inappropriate, unsanctioned means. "And shall I receive at your hands that which I have not ordained? saith the Lord" (D&C 132:7-8). "Mine house is a house of order, and not of confusion." (Paraphrase).

In this same vein, true Gospel teaching is like an ordinance. Unless it is by the Spirit, it is not of God. This says a lot about gimmicks, games, puzzles and procedures which are designed to sneak up and trick students into participation and involvement, instead of truly honoring their agency and their nobility by coming out and speaking plainly of spiritual [or eternal] things, and proceeding on the proper assumption that they will recognize and accept the true message. Why did the Lord speak of the creeds and doctrines of men as an abomination in the First Vision? It is because they lead men away from the atonement and redemption of Christ, fixating upon other human means of salvation, on things that are at least lesser matters, if not outright false matters. Either way, they are an abomination. The things of God in the matter of salvation are specific, strict, ordained before the foundations of the world (pre-existence); they are set, pre-determined, and are not subject to negotiation, change, whim or caprice. God and his plan are unchangeable, and for any man to seek to presume to change in any degree a doctrine or an ordinance or a covenant for God should be considered a sad reflection on that man's intelligence (see J F Smith, DS).

SWB