

# Rebellion Against Authority

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The challenges of recent decades to authority in home, school, marketplace, and military were bound to have their parallels in religion. The very foundation of pontifical authority in Roman Catholicism have been jarred with unprecedented open debate between priest and Pope. Over four decades ago, Italians ignored the Pope's objections and passed a law allowing divorce. Among other results, many sources indicate that previously unheard-of numbers of priests and nuns are deserting their orders. Some predict that within a few years Catholicism will not be distinguishable from Protestantism. All this is happening because one by one, the legs are being knocked from under the pontifical chair, the seat of Roman Catholic authority.

Protestantism has felt the effects of this challenge, too. Until a few decades ago, most Protestant preachers and churches claimed to believe in the Bible and its authority, but in the intervening years, the seminaries have all but destroyed that faith by producing a constant stream of unbelieving pulpитеers. Many Protestants have quit in disgust, but many others have gladly embraced the non-authoritarian approach. The Protestant slogans professing that "one church is as good as another," and "it makes no difference what you believe as long as you're sincere," did an effective job of preparing the hearts of millions to despise authority. This philosophy has drawn Protestant theology ever nearer that of Catholicism. Many other Protestants are bewilderedly hanging on to the only vestige of religion they know, sickened at what they see and hear on Sunday, but knowing nothing better.

In the church of our Lord, the source of religious authority has never been a matter of discussion on any great scale. There have been those in every age since Pentecost (in both pulpit and pew) who would not endure sound doctrine and have turned away from the Truth, but upon exposure they have either been restored or left the church entirely. It now appears, however, that we live in a day when the question of religious authority is an open issue, even a divisive issue, in the church. Such statements as "Not one of us can give chapter and verse for everything we do in our worship, nor do we need to." "The right spirit is more important than the Truth" And "There is no right way," are frightful indications. It is a sad fact that some of our brethren (including elders, preachers, professors, and editors) have decided they have "outgrown" the need for Biblical authority.

Even more sad is the fact that they feel comfortable among and are tolerated by brethren in many quarters. Some have fallen into the error of conceiving of the church as merely a human denomination. Some no longer have a conscience about instrumental music in the worship or the observance of the Lord's Supper every Lord's Day and only on that day. This same loose attitude toward Scripture has set some up for embracing neo-Pentecostalism and premillennialism and for denying the doctrine of Hell. Others have a difficult time deciding what to tell people to do who want to become Christians.

At the root of this grave problem is a revival of romanticism that makes emotions and feelings the final court of appeal. This approach casts off a reasoned approach that appeals to the only objective standard of religion and morals, **the Bible**. We have many among us nowadays (Some in high places) who are so bogged down in sentimentality and hyper tolerance and who care so little for "thus saith the Lord" that they are unwilling or unable to take a firm position on any subject anymore. This explains in a large measure why so many are being swept away by unorthodox views on marriage, divorce, and remarriage. The grave result is the acceptance of impenitent fornicators and adulterers in local churches, not to mention the eternal consequences for those involved.

Brethren on both sides of most issues of bygone days agreed on one point: the only and final court of appeal was the **Word of God**, handled aright. Its authority has been appealed to in countless sermons, debates, and articles. Because of this appeal to God's authority, the Truth on these matters has shone forth to the majority of God's people and one by one, most of these issues have faded in its bright light.

The crisis before the church now is not so simple or singular as in days past. It revolves around a certain type of "worldly wisdom." It thrives upon what it considers to be super-intellectualism. (Let none understand me to be opposed to either wisdom or scholarship, except as they operate at the expense of Biblical Truth.) It is fostered by a new approach to hermeneutics that seems to be bothered not at all that its tortured interpretations of Scripture make it a confused and contradictory document. Its proponents are loud on "spirituality" (by their own definition) and are correspondingly soft on strict adherence to God's Word (as if these were at opposite poles). It aggressively opposes authoritative, "book, chapter and verse" preaching with such smokescreen charges as "negativism" and "legalism."

All the saints should weep that the time has come in the kingdom when there are those who almost boastfully disregard the finality of Scriptural authority. It is now being spewed

from the pulpit, lecture platform, and pen, that one cannot take a definite stand on any Scriptural Truth because what we “think” is Truth may only be our “subjective interpretation.” (After all, our differences with the Baptists on baptism may only be a matter of “semantics.” We may actually be teaching the same thing without knowing it!) If such is true, then that which by Scriptural definition has been termed “error” may also be merely our “subjective interpretation,” and in reality, may be Truth. If this line of poisoned illogic is followed, there is no way to discern error from Truth with any certainty. Therefore, to emphasize sound doctrine is “legalistic” and “traditional.” To contend for such makes one “judgmental,” “intolerant,” and “Pharisaical.”

To stand firmly upon God’s definition of a Christian and upon what terms the Lord adds redeemed sinners to His church is to “play God” or to invite the derision of “five steppers,” from those loose thinkers. If “contending earnestly for the faith once for all delivered” makes me a legalist, then that’s what I must be, for the Lord gave that directive (Jude 3). If insisting that only those immersed for remission of sins, following a confessed faith and repentance, are in the Lord’s church means that I am an intolerant judge, then I am such with Heaven’s approval. If standing for the Lord’s terms of spiritual fellowship with either brethren or unbelievers is to “play God,” then so be it. Better to “play God” than to “play the devil” as the “bleeding hearts” among us who care more for the approval of men than the approval of God are doing. **Don’t forget; the issues of today center upon Biblical authority!**