

OUR RADICAL HERITAGE

by Tyranny Powers, M.F.T.

Our spiritual heritage is truly mighty...mighty through God. What the Catholics lost we Bible-believing Christians got through the exploits of God's mighty men of Reformation authority. The Reformation Family is one, big, happy body of Christ and though we don't all agree at all times on all things, we can at least acknowledge the unity of the Spirit that is ours in the joy of Jesus. Even when the white slave owners were oppressing my people, we we're still united in the joy of Jesus through that one, great, big body of Christ which is ours in reformation victory.

Isn't God good? God always has his remnant in reformation glory. Even when the white church was stumbling in the darkness, they regained their vision when the black church was reunited with the white segment of the body. The black church is the eyes of the church. Sometimes when God's people go astray, it takes another people of God rising up to bring back balance to the body. The health of the body depends on the functioning of every part. "That which every joint supplieth," the Word says.

If we look back at the history of the body, we see Brother Martin Luther (not King) spearheading the reformation move of God. But we also see problems...not problems from God's end, but problems from man's end. When men are involved there's always gonna be problems. Even women are not perfect. Only God is. So there's bound to be problems in the way of the move of God.

The problems were many, but they all resulted from men not letting go of the carnal doctrines of men. Brother Luther, as holy a man as he was, could not bring himself to let go of the mistaken idea that some visible entity could be equated with the invisible body of Christ. Christ's body is invisible. It always was and it always will be. The body isn't communion and it isn't even in communion as Luther taught. It's not even in communion in a spiritual sense as the great reformer John Calvin taught. No, the body is elsewhere. It's not found in the outwards. If you look for it, you won't see it. If you try to identify it, it will allude you. Why? Because Christ's body is not made of flesh, but rather of spirit. "A spirit

hath not flesh and bones,” he says. You see, if the head of a body is invisible, so is the body. If it weren’t true, we would have a headless body being visible like the headless horeseman of old. The white, European church couldn’t see it. But the black church could and she does even today.

There was a precious man of God that God raised up to correct the false teaching that still corrupted Brother Luther. His name was Zwingli. Brother Zwingli got the people away from the idea that the outward of communion was in any way to be identified with the body of Christ. It is not. Brother Zwingli restored the true Bible teaching that communion is just a symbol, as it were, a point of contact for the faithful to renew the covenant and receive its blessings in faith believing.

But, you know what? Brother Zwingli missed the boat too because he didn’t go far enough. You see how that man always gets in the way of the true move of God? That’s when God steps in and raises up somebody else, whether another man or another woman, or even another ethnicity to hammer on the truth and break up the lies. But God didn’t just raise up one, he raised up two as a testimony for by the testimony of two or three witnesses shall every word be established. Hallelujah! God raised up two radical reformationists, Brother Felix Manz and Brother Conrad Grebel, and they both began functioning in the unity of the Spirit to reject the lies of infant baptism and a visible church that still clung onto Luther, and Calvin, and Zwingli. Some of their spiritual offspring even attempted to usher in the millennial reign of Christ by seizing control of the city of Munster when they caught hold of the Bible truth of God’s people preparing the way of the Lord. But they lacked a true vision to carry it to fulfilment because the eyes of the church were not as yet reunited to the body.

As Brother Manz and Brother Grebel and their flock began to spread with the wildfire of revival, the devil launched his attack. Satan can bring his attack from the strangest of places—from right inside the camp of the saints. And he did. He even took a hold of Zwingli’s heart, and mind, and body and launched an attack upon these radical-for-Christ reformationists with their “new” Bible-based doctrines rejecting infant baptism and the idea of a visible church. Zwingli and his followers imprisoned these radical believers and tortured them and put them to the sword. Satan also rallied up the camp of the Lutherans against the radical Bible-believing Christians.

Calvin didn't attack them with a sword, but he did mock them and ridicule them for wanting to follow Jesus to the fullest extent of the Word of God.

The radical reformation believers, along with Brother Zwingli, saw the truth of communion as only an outward, external symbol having nothing to do with the invisible, spiritual reality other than to serve as a symbol and point of contact. They rejected the unbiblical teaching of infant baptism. They rejected the lie of apostolic succession being passed on through the arm of flesh rather than through the mighty anointing of the Holy Ghost. They rejected the idea of forcing the faith on anybody, including children. They taught that all should have a choice in spiritual things by being able to make an informed decision at the age of accountability. Many radical believers helped tear down Catholic mariolatry with their Word-based teaching that the body of Jesus did not come from Mary, but came straight from heaven, simply passing through Mary like water through a pipe.

As with any true move of God there will always be an emphasis on holiness. And the believers of the radical reformation stressed holiness in a way that puts us to shame. They taught complete separation from the world by not signing contracts or getting involved in politics or civil government. They taught the precious doctrine of the separation of Church and State. They condemned involvement in the military and they practiced "shunning" or excommunication of anybody who was caught living in sin or falling short of a lifestyle of holiness. They rejected the man-made teachings of Augustine and other so-called "church fathers," understanding that the Word is the only source of faith and practice for the believer. And as they studied the Word, many of them came to reject the Trinity doctrine and the doctrine of two natures in Christ.

But once again, man got in the way and in upsetting the apple cart, the radical reformers, in some ways, jumped out of the frying pan and into the fire and ended up throwing out the baby with the bathwater. You see, even though you can follow God in one thing, you can miss Him point blank in another. Despite the fact that they were getting back into the very heart of the Word, these radical believers missed some essential doctrine. I'm talking about the doctrine of justification by faith alone. In their emphasis on holiness, the radical reformation believers actually rejected the cardinal doctrine of justification by faith alone and, ironically, ended up agreeing more with the Catholics on this matter. The radical

reformationists believed that a person can only be acceptable to God by being transformed and performing good works through the holiness brought about through the working of Christ and the Holy Spirit. They somehow missed the Word and began teaching that people are saved by faithful living rather than simply by faith according to the Word of God.

How is that possible? How could these believers have gone so far in their reclaiming of the truths of God's Word and yet miss the most basic doctrine of Christian living? They even rejected the doctrine of original sin and total depravity. And they taught that any person presented with the Gospel was free to choose to follow Christ and deny the "old Adam." How is it possible that they could be so right about some things and yet so wrong about others?

Part of the problem, I believe, lies in the fact that these true-blue believers in the Word were separatists. They chose to separate themselves, not only from the world, but also from other expressions of the invisible body of Christ. They recognized that they were the spiritual heirs of a long line of various groups all having differing teachings, but united in Spirit and in the study of the Word. But they failed to realize that they could agree to disagree with their fellow, less-radical reformation brethren and sisters and thus guard the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, according to the Word. As a result, they ended up learning a whole lot from the Word while missing the essential basic revealed to Brother Luther.

Despite the fact of their rejection of the key, essential doctrine of justification by faith alone according to the Word, I wish to point out that many of the radical reformation believers were full of the Holy Ghost. They were called "Spirituals" or Inspirationists. Many of these were anti-Trinitarian, baptized in the name of Jesus only, and spoke with tongues. So they are in many ways the forebearers of our United Pentecostal and Apostolic brethren. They spoke in tongues, prophesied, danced in the Spirit, fell out under the power, and laid hands on the sick and saw them recover.

We still have some radical reformation groups continuing on today. Among these are the Amish, the Mennonites, and the Hutterites. Most of them lack the power of God in their midst nowadays, but they still possess some of the truth. Even so, many continue to reject the key Bible doctrine of justification by faith alone. Are they saved? Well, if we believe that those early radical reformation believers were saved, perhaps we can accept

that these people might be saved too. Shouldn't we beware lest we cut ourselves off from them and miss some essential doctrine due to our isolating ourselves from them if they truly are part of the invisible, spiritual body of Christ? After all, Faith Confession Tabernacle owes its Statement of Essential Truths to various elements drawn not only from Luther, Calvin, and Wesley, but also from these crazy-for-Christ, Bible-believing radical reformation believers.

One more thing I can say in their defense. Most of these radical reformation groups such as the Amish and Mennonites were farmers. But, as far as I know, none of them possessed black slaves during the years of slavery oppression in America like so many of the white Baptists did in the South. They were white, but they didn't participate in the oppression of the blacks. Could it be that in some way they remained in spiritual unity with the black eyes of the church? Perhaps they never lost the spiritual vision that other white churches lost when they cut themselves off from the spiritual vision of the black church which serves as the eyes of the church. Brother Myles Munroe has pointed out this visual function of the black church in the invisible body of Christ. Red or yellow, black or white, we are all members of that one, big, happy, invisible body of Christ. 