

**~Other Speakers S-Z: Andrew Strom:**

In the great outpouring of grief and eulogy that have accompanied the death of the Pope, there is something that disturbs me greatly. I hate to always be the one to "rain on the parade", but there are some pretty basic issues that I believe we need to look at here.

There is no doubt that the last pope was a man of very great accomplishments. He broke through many barriers and was truly one of the most effective leaders the Catholic Church has had in modern times. I don't think we can question that.

But what I would like to question is the organization that he was heading, and the 'gospel' that he represented. It truly disturbs me when I hear of Evangelical leaders praising his overall message and even calling him a 'great evangelist' or a 'great Christian leader'. Is the Reformation null and void, then? Shall we simply fold up our tents and go back to Rome?

There is something very disturbing in the reaction that has come from these quarters - including the 'prophets', the Pentecostals and the "Protestants" (so-called). It makes me very uneasy.

Much has been made of the estimated 100 million Catholics who have now been baptized in the Holy Spirit. This is certainly worth rejoicing over. But what of the other 900 million who are locked inside a system that preaches no "new birth" and no conversion - but rather salvation by works, rituals and the 'sacraments' of the church? Is such a "gospel" acceptable?

Is it acceptable to 'sprinkle' little babies and then tell them they are "saved" so long as they go to Mass and go to 'confession' and receive the other 'sacraments'? Is it acceptable to pray to Mary (the 'Queen of Heaven') or to the saints, or to ivory statues? Is it acceptable to call a man 'Holy Father'? Is it acceptable to forbid ministers from marrying, thus bringing about a deluge of sexual abuse and scandal? Is any part of the way the Catholic system is set up actually acceptable at all? Does any of it have even the slightest resemblance to the New Testament?

The fundamentals of Catholicism have not changed since Luther's day. The last pope altered little or none of these fundamentals. They have not changed since the Dark Ages. And they make up a system that is sending millions upon millions of people to an eternal Hell. They simply offer NO SALVATION WHATSOEVER. But what they do offer is a "counterfeit" version of salvation - that keeps millions in chains of darkness.

Go and visit Latin America sometime, and see the dark superstition that often passes for Catholicism in those countries. Watch as they parade their statues through the streets for the crowds to bow down to. This is no "Christianity" at all. And it holds MILLIONS in its sway.

We need to remember that when elected Pope in 1978, Karol Wojtyla dedicated his papacy to Mary and had words of devotion to her embroidered on his papal robes. In his 1994 autobiography he said: "During the Second World War, while I was employed as a factory worker, I came to be attracted to Marian devotion.... Mary is the new Eve, placed by God in relation to Christ, the new Adam." John Paul II venerated Mary on every occasion, private and public. It was his custom to pray the Rosary before an image of Mary on the first Saturday of every month. He continually exalted Mary in his sermons. We are told that on his trip to Latin America in 1996 he "ended every speech by exalting Mary" (Christianity Today, April 8, 1996, p. 94).

I knew an intercessor in New Zealand who was an ex-Catholic. She was one of the most anti-Catholic people that I knew. Why? Because she spent over 20 years of her life brought up in that system - diligently seeking God. Going to Mass, saying the 'Rosary', going to confession and so-on. And she was in complete spiritual DARKNESS until she came out and embraced the true gospel. If she was still in there she would probably be UNSAVED STILL.

I am sorry to have to be the one to point out all of this. But why is it that the current crop of leaders seem so willing to give up 500 years of Reformation truth in order to be "politically-correct" and find "unity" with the Catholic system? I received the following email last week, which helps bring all of this into focus:

(From an Ex-catholic priest):

When a man bows before an idol of ivory, begging for salvation, and you tell him it cannot answer - is this hate?

**RE-THINKING THE POPE??**

**When someone's little girl...must tell her thoughts, her emotions and temptations to an unmarried priest in the confession box, and you tell her she need only confess to Jesus - is this hate?**

**When a poor grieving widow pays from her meagre substance for Masses for her dead husband, desperately hoping to end his pain in purgatory, and you tell her there is no purgatory - is this hate?**

**When one billion souls, for whom Christ died, trust a well-fed pontiff dressed in gold and fine linen to give them the keys to Heaven, and you tell them they need no one but Jesus - is this hate?**

**When Jesus, God's gift of love to all mankind, pointed his finger at the Pharisees and called them so many snakes - was this hate?**

**When the Apostle Paul stood on Mars Hill and dared tell the philosophers of pagan mystery religion that they were too superstitious - was this hate?**

**NO!**

**To free a man from Satan's chains, you must first tell him he is a prisoner. You must convince him that he is lost and without hope... There are those who call [evangelical] literature "hate literature." But they do not know the true meaning of hate.**

**True hatred hides the gospel in beautiful words that upset no one, and therefore bring no conviction of sin. True hatred stands in selfish silence as hell's population grows.**