

11. Reformation: Thinking New Thoughts (3Q 2013—Revival and Reformation)

Biblical material: Col. 3:1–4; 2 Cor. 3:17, 18; 10:3–5; Rom. 12:2, 3; John 10:10; Matt. 5:13–15.

Quotes

- A reformation happens every time you open the Bible. *Darienne Hall*
- If you keep thinking about what you want to do or what you hope will happen, you don't do it, and it won't happen. *Desiderius Erasmus*
- A nail is driven out by another nail. *Desiderius Erasmus*
- How aware are we of our own inner life, our spirituality—something so intangible yet so priceless? How much effort do we make to perceive that which is not obvious, which can neither be seen nor heard? I believe the exploration and enrichment of the human spirit is what determines our very humanity. *Daisaku Ikeda*
- We can't solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them. *Albert Einstein*
- Thinking is the hardest work there is, which is probably the reason why so few engage in it. *Henry Ford*

Questions

Why is it important to be thinking new thoughts? What are the dangers? How are we to think like the Lord, and reflect him to the world? How is it possible to be “transformed by the spiritual renewal of your mind”? What are the new thoughts we should be thinking? How might a stress on reformation “backfire” on church leaders?

Bible summary

Paul tells the Colossians: “Fix your mind on what's above, not what's here on earth.” Col. 3:2 FBV. To the Corinthians he says, “Now the Lord is the Spirit, and wherever the Spirit of the Lord is, there's freedom. So all of us, with our faces unveiled, see and reflect the glory of the Lord as in a mirror. We are being transformed into the same mirror image, whose glory grows brighter and brighter.” 2 Cor. 3:17, 18 FBV. The weapons we use in our spiritual warfare are not of this world (2 Cor. 10:3-5). This is how we should think: “Don't follow the ways of this world; instead be transformed by the spiritual renewal of your mind so you can demonstrate what God's will really is—good, pleasing, and perfect.” Romans 12:2 FBV. Jesus came to bring abundant life (John 10:10). Consequently, we are to be like salt, and like lamps. We are to let our light shine! (see Matt. 5:13–15).

Comment

That we should be encouraged in this lesson to think new thoughts is truly amazing! All too often organized religion thinks it safest to stick with old formulas and well-worn clichés. So to be told that reformation means thinking new thoughts is a wonderful new day!

So let us consider some possible new thoughts. Could it be that we do not have a monopoly on the truth? Does reformation also include the way we “do” church? What of

the role of women in ministry in our church—do our ideas/practices need reforming? Do we need to reform our administrative structures to make them more gospel-orientated?

We can certainly choose to think new thoughts as the Lord leads us! According to the lesson, “the mind matters.” If we accept this as being a fundamental truism, then what follows? That it’s wrong to exclude thinking from our religious experience, in fact we should encourage it. That we should emphasize clear thinking in our theology, rather than make use of “dark speech.” We worship a God who makes sense, not a God who is fickle, capricious, and non-sensical. We need to make it clear that we reject the ideas suggesting:

- that religion does not have to make sense,
- that divinity can demand whatever it wants without reason,
- that life can be lived only by abandoning logic and rational thought,

This is greatest perversion of belief, for it denigrates the human brain that God created, and makes it operate at the level of mindlessness.

Ultimately, true knowledge, meaningful experience, and even the beginnings of science itself, depend on belief in a God who makes sense. In other words, without a God who makes sense, a Being who is rational and reasonable, then there is no ability to understand the world in this way. Such a world view depends on reproducible behavior—the concept that experiments can be repeated with consistent results. Only if cause and effect are established in a repeatable way can we make any sense of our environment. Only if the material world is seen as operating under natural laws can it be understood and harnessed for benefit and progress. Only if God is seen as logical and dependable and trustworthy as the Creator of natural laws can such concepts develop.

Otherwise we are in an unpredictable, confusing, and chaotic world in which all is magical and incomprehensible, with beliefs based on superstition and “lucky chance.” Survival is based on placating the unpredictable whims of gods and spirits; meaning and purpose make little sense; and the philosophy of life is fatalistic.

So this is the thesis: God is not irrational. He does not require his created beings to be irrational. Above all, faith is not irrational, and must never be portrayed as irrational. Faith is not “believing what you know ain’t so.” Nor is faith to be superstitious, gullible, or non-sensical. Nor is faith opposed to evidence, or investigation, or questions.

Ellen White Comments

We must not for a moment think that there is no more light, no more truth to be given us. We are in danger of becoming careless, by our indifference losing the sanctifying power of truth, and composing ourselves with the thought, “I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing.” [REV. 3:17.] While we must hold fast to the truths which we have already received, we must not look with suspicion upon any new light that God may send. {GW92 389-90}

...the leaven of truth works secretly, silently, steadily, to transform the soul. The natural inclinations are softened and subdued. New thoughts, new feelings, new motives, are implanted. A new standard of character is set up—the life of Christ. The mind is changed; the faculties are roused to action in new lines. Man is not endowed with new faculties, but the faculties he has are sanctified. The conscience is awakened. We are endowed with traits of character that enable us to do service for God. {COL 98-9}

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