

God's Grace and my Personal History

By Robert Schmid, May 1976

I have always believed in a god. I grew up in Germany in a basic Lutheran environment that was teaching about The God. I have not been totally ignorant about God's Son Jesus Christ. I have attended church on many a Sunday morning and have attended church three times a day while living for 1 ½ years in a strict Catholic environment. I have heard about the devil, heaven and hell, confession, Martin Luther, the Pope, and oh-yes the Bible. The Bible was that black book the minister read from Sunday mornings.

A typical Christian? Perhaps.

Then one day – carefully at first – I began to listen and read with my mind (instead of only with my ears and eyes). My mind – well now lets see, what is my mind, where does it come from, what is its purpose and its potential? A lot of question and not too many answers.

Let's see now – what did they always say in church – believe – just believe and you go to heaven. But believe what? Talking about a million dollar question. There is available a religious supermarket that has a never ending variety to choose from. It makes your head spin. Talking about confusion, mysteries and paradoxes.

To begin with, what denomination is one to choose? There are some 250 different ones in America alone. Well – the little church up the street has a good sounding name, its close enough to walk to – but wait, there are only 15 people attending even though there is room for 50? Maybe something is wrong there – well, lets try another one. What about the one on TV which always shows a lot of people – sure that must be the one – maybe they have a direct line to God for a quicker way to heaven? But – I have to drive 15 miles round-trip and many times I can't get a seat. Don't complain – remember you are doing it for God!

Fortunately, my mind continued its efforts to gain some independence, and so I found myself with questions such as: Why are there so many denominations? If they all believe in ONE God – why are they divided? Is God divided? Does He have many different beliefs and different ways to practice these beliefs?

Well, the problem is obviously not with God, for He is represented by only ONE Spokesman – His Word – the Lord Jesus Christ.

After becoming convinced that the Bible is the only true word of God, I decided to look to it as my sole source of authority, for the shortcomings of humans are all too obvious.

God's grace really began to work now.

First I determined that salvation is not free as popularly thought – for nothing is ever free. Salvation, I found out, is conditional, for the apostle Peter on the day The Church was founded said:

“Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38).

So, in order to receive God’s gift of the Holy Spirit, I have to REPENT and have FAITH.

But, what am I to repent off and what am I to believe – have faith in? Well, that brings me back to my original question: Believe in what? Should I believe in my Minister? The Pope? Denominational doctrines? Customary religious believes and practices? Surely, the guy with a PhD in Theology, who wrote many books and was a Minister in different churches with a full schedule of speaking engagements, can be relied upon?

Wait just a minute, didn’t I already, by the grace of God, decide I would only believe the Word – the Bible – Jesus Christ? Of course – and there it is, God plainly tells me that it is not the wise, the mighty or the noble that He is calling to an understanding of His Word now (1 Cor. 1:22-28). That’s good, that means that brain is not the primary requirement, just simple, childlike belief in the Word of God.

But, what part of the Word am I to believe? The Old Testament or the New Testament? Again, God through the power of His Holy Spirit impressed upon me:

“ALL scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work” (II Tim. 3:16-17).

Well, that sounded simple enough, however, it was only the beginning of coming face to face with the reality that the teachings of organized religion and many of our denominational doctrines are either confused or in complete opposition to what the Bible says. For example:

The Bible says *“the soul that sins shall die”* (Gen. 3:3; Ezek. 18:4, 18-20), but the world has been told and believes that man has an immortal soul, or is an immortal spirit.

God says: *“blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth”* (Matt. 5:5) and that: *“No one has ascended into heaven..”* (John 3:13), but the churches teach that we will go to heaven upon death, and that death does not really mean death, but life in heaven, hell or purgatory.

Christ said, *“I and my Father are ONE”* (John 10:30). The churches teach the trinity.

God said: *“For truly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, nor a dot, will pass from the law until all is accomplished,”* and called it the *“law of liberty”* (James

1:25). Today's Christians are left hanging with the idea that the law is done away with, that the law is bondage, that the law was applicable only to Old Testament Israel.

When the Pharisees demanded to see a sign from Jesus to prove His Messiah ship, He told them:

“An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonah: For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.”

But, what do the churches teach – that Jesus was in the grave from Friday afternoon to Sunday morning – 1 ½ days at best. Are they believing in the true Messiah?

But one of the most tragic abominations in the eyes of God is their refusal to observe His (weekly and annual) Sabbaths. God's Fourth Commandment is a spiritual, eternal law. Read about His fury in Ezekiel 20. Read about the commandment of His – God's (not the Jew's) seven Holy Days in Lev. 23, 19:30, 26:2. What about the plain scripture that *“the Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath”* (Matt. 12:8). Where in the Bible has God changed His Holy Day from the **Sabbath-day to the Sun-day?** Where does the Bible teach a change from **God's Holy Days** to the **worlds holidays?**

As I became confronted with these contradictions, I had to make a choice whom to believe, God or man? Through the grace of God, I made the right choice and consequently I also believe that *Satan is the deceiver of the whole world* (Rev. 12:9), that the *deceiver is called the prince of the power of the air* (Eph. 2:2), that *Satan is the god of this present world* (II Cor. 4:4), and I believe when Jesus warned His disciples *that many* (not the few) *would be deceived, and going in the broad, wide easy way – the way of following that which seems right to a man – to destruction* (Matt. 7:13).

The promise of the gift of salvation is available to all who repent and believe, but God demands that we *worship Him in Spirit and in Truth* (John 4:24), *for if we continue in His Word, then we are His disciples and we shall know the truth and the truth shall make us free* (John 8:31-32).

Through God's grace, I have come to love Jesus – the Word of God – the first born Son of God – the Spokesman – the Bible – the Law of God – my elder brother Jesus the Christ, and consequently all my potential brothers and sisters on this earth. Someday we will have an opportunity to present all our reasoning, arguments and compromises face to face to Jesus Christ. But, I am afraid that He will only remind us as to what He said long ago in Eccl. 12:13-14:

“The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God, and keep His commandments; for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil.”

Praise be to God.