

Chapter 1 : Authentic Christianity Sermon by Stephen E. Trail, 1 John - racedaydvl.com

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September 22, NewsWithViews. You know things are bad when a Christian is unable to explain why he or she believes in Jesus Christ. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. Christians are put on this earth to share their faith with unbelievers. Dodging questions regarding your faith does not get you high marks with God. On the contrary, Jesus said, " Also I say to you, whoever confesses Me before men, him the Son of Man also will confess before the angels of God. Which brings to mind an Old Testament story. Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah were around sixteen years old when Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem and carried the Jews into captivity. Forthwith their names were changed to Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, respectively. Veggie Tales calls them Rack, Shack and Benny. They were also religious. What mattered to them above all else is what the Bible said. It was the ultimate authority in their lives. One day the king decided to have an image of gold made and summoned the governors from the surrounding area to come to the dedication of the image. The king commanded that all of his subjects fall down and worship the gold statue. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were pressured to worship the image but they refused. They chose to remain faithful to God regardless of what the consequences might be. The king threatened to have them thrown into a blazing furnace. Still, they would not relent. It took chutzpah to defy a king. True to his word, the king had the three of them thrown into the blazing furnace. God to the rescue! He sent a heavenly visitor into the furnace with them. Not a hair on their heads was singed. Those boys had fire insurance! The king became an instant convert. The host was quick to point out that while the Apostle Peter stood warming his hands by an open fire he was asked if he knew Jesus and he denied knowing him three times. But what about all the Christian martyrs we read about in the history books, the ones who were marched into a den of hungry lions to be eaten alive, or covered in pitch and used as human torches to light the streets of Rome? The Apostle Paul had his head separated from his body with a sword. Legend has it that Peter was crucified with his head downward because he declared himself unworthy to die in the same manner as the Lord. Joan of Ark was burnt at the stake. Her response was to repeatedly call out the name of Jesus while the flames lapped at her feet! In the old days, Christians chose death over renouncing their faith in Christ. Yet modern Christians should do whatever it takes to skirt death? As I write this piece, Christians around the globe are being tortured, mutilated and murdered for refusing to renounce their faith. They are the real martyrs. Christian martyrs are different from Japanese kamikaze pilots that flew planes into ships or Islamic jihadists who fly planes into buildings. They all chose when and how they will die. Their heads were found some distance from the bodies, the head of one girl discarded mockingly in front of a Christian church. Islam rewards those who are willing to die for their god, "Allah. They expect to be rewarded for their violence with 72 virgins who await them at the gate and offer them a bottle of French wine. Evidently there are vineyards in Paradise. Men and women are willing to strap bombs to their bodies and blow themselves to kingdom come so that they will receive their rewards in heaven, sooner than later. Many jihadists are conditioned from childhood to become killing machines. Albeit their reasoning is warped, these people go willingly to their deaths, taking innocents with them to the grave. They do it because of what they believe in, i. Christians, on the other hand, are murdered because of the person they believe in. When a Christian is martyred and enters into the kingdom of heaven, he or she will be in the presence of their Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Christ is the only reward Christians want or need, or ever will need. Throughout history, millions of martyrs have confessed Jesus before men, and lost their lives over it. Sadly, many Christians today are taking their faith for granted. My God, my strength, in whom I will trust. Those same words convey that we trust in Christ alone as the object of our faith. Those who take their faith seriously need to ask themselves some hard questions: Do you have a Savior worth defending? More importantly, is your Deliverer worth dying for? Give him an earful or Truth. Children as Bombs by Ralph R. Marsha is a freelance

writer specializing in Christian worldview. She is a regular contributor to NewsWithViews. Marsha and her husband reside in historic Jacksonville Oregon.

Chapter 2 : Authentic Christianity

Authentic Christianity Fundamental Christian Doctrines Though Christians should believe everything the Bible teaches, not all doctrines (Biblical teachings) are equally essential (fundamental) in defining what constitutes authentic Christianity.

November 21, at 8: Most who read this blog regularly know that we relocated from the liberal land of California to the Bible Belt of the South a few years back. We were warned that it would indeed be a bit of a culture shock. I point out some of these things in case others reading these words are contemplating a move. We have made many friends and we appreciate the way of life here. Things are slower which took some time to get used to , the cost of living is certainly not as high as it was in California, and in general, no one looks at you as if you have two heads if you bow your head in a public restaurant to give thanks for your food. However, some of the things that are also good to know include the following: It would be nice to go back and retain the naivety that I had then, but that is impossible. It needs to be understood that just because people attend church here Sundays and Wednesdays , it does not mean that they are authentic Christians or that they take their Christianity seriously if they are authentic Christians. For many, being born here means that they simply go to church. It is part of what you do as you live in the Bible Belt. Because of this, too many fail to understand the truth about Jesus or the Gospel message He brought. Many here place a higher value on their association with and longevity in the town in which they live. To them, their connection with their town is what is of utmost importance. Everything stems from that. Those folks are far more concerned with externals. It is what looks good, not necessarily what is good. Someone married to a city council member from the audience will get up to say something that apparently weighs heavily on her heart. This is usually accompanied by some type of theatrics or histrionics. Invariably, the council then takes up the discussion as though no one knew this subject was going to be broached of course, we are to believe that this woman and her city council member husband never once discussed this subject prior to the meeting. Normally, the council will then take up the concerns brought to them by this woman or sometimes someone else, but still related and voila! The woman spoke against the idea that the city council should allow restaurants to serve alcohol by the glass on Sundays. As expected, she also became a bit emotional and insisted that we needed to have high moral standards when it concerned alcohol my paraphrase. There were nods and exclamations of agreement from the audience. As it turned out, the city lawyer informed the council that the current ordinance was actually more strict than state law and therefore, could not be enforced. It may be a moot point in the end because it needs to be rewritten to coincide with state law. But here is where the double standard and duplicity comes into play. They want things to look good externally. Meanwhile, the slander, the gossip “all of it” continues unabated. For this woman who attends the same church I do , she can spend her days during the week gossiping, slandering, and generally stirring up trouble, and sees no problem at all with that. How ungodly is that? There is a huge disconnect with many people who live in the Bible Belt and their understanding of what constitutes authentic Christianity. For many in this small town, it is about power and how much of it they can have. Once they have it, they will fight to keep it. Does it honor God? Do I need to answer the question? It could very well be one of the major reasons God moved us here.

Chapter 3 : Roger Olson on Authentic Christianity | Theology and Church

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In desperate pursuit of God. While officials at the Ronald Reagan UCLA Medical Center in Los Angeles discharged Kanye West about two weeks ago, his reported bout with depression and paranoia caused him to cancel the remainder of his North American tour dates, in addition to the European leg of his tour. Ostensibly, the first verse of J. Chance knows, like many of us do, Kanye needs Jesus. It seems perfectly fitting scores of people would rush to pray for Kanye West. Similarly, it should surprise few Chance the Rapper would lead the charge praying for Kanye. Since the moment Kanye West stepped into the public light, he has embraced some semblance of Christian faith, even if it meant simultaneously squeezing the hallowed and the hellish. He has inveigled his followers to do the same. Chance the Rapper, by his own admission, is one of those eager followers. Notwithstanding, none do so more convincingly than Mr. Bennett, or Chance the Rapper as the world has come to know him. In true Kanye form, Coloring Book boasts a distinct, original voice, timely, emotive content, and an unabashed celebration of Christian cultural roots, sprouting forth from the "gravitational pull of the black church," whose significance on the "culture of black life cannot be denied. Ultra Light Beam derives its title and overarching concept from the blinding "light from heaven [that] shone around [the Apostle Paul]" on the road to Damascus. Saul, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, to the tribe of Benjamin, circumcised on the eighth day, trained "at the feet of Gamaliel," zealously sought to preserve the sanctity of the faith "taught according to the law of our fathers. Thus, Saul of Tarsus became Paul the Apostle. So when Kanye West sings, "We on an ultra light beam," he is claiming to have seen the same light that knocked the Apostle Paul to the ground. The most powerful messenger of the first century Now we stand here twenty centuries later Because he was a traveler Moreover, dismissing his egotistical bombast, that casts aside biblical commands for humility, also proves an arduous task. Some have simply labeled Kanye West as "blasphemous," "satanic," "sinister," and "evil. Nonetheless, Kanye West has always believed; it is what he has told his audience from the beginning. For more than a decade, he has constructed a brand erected upon the foundation of such brazen inconsistencies. Elizabeth Isichei explains this phenomenon by writing, "Wherever Christianity is professed, there is a constant dialectic arising from its relationship with the cultural presuppositions and practices of the cultures where it is located. In that manner, Kanye West continues the pluralistic amalgamation of Christianity with other faith traditions and cultural transmissions. In so doing, he also has endeavored to push the bounds of what qualifies as authentic Christianity. Kirk Franklin sought to explain this when he defended his collaboration with Kanye West. He took to Facebook to say: Kanye is not me. I am not him. He is my brother I am proud to do life with. No sprints, but marathons; like most of us are on. Before one song was released, I was crucified because my brother asked me to take a picture. That is a dangerous message I believe we send to the world when our posture is they have to meet certain requirements before they are worthy to kiss the ring. It says people are not redeemable, forgivable or candidates for grace. That my friend is religious. I will not turn my back on my brother. I will love him, prayerfully grow with him. In his statement, Kirk Franklin hinted at the words of Christ, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. Christ came for this very purpose. The scribes and Pharisees called Christ a "friend of sinners," though in derision, because people often observed Christ among miscreants and outcasts. It is as Jay Electronica once rapped, "You can find the Christ where the lepers and the lames at. He recognized authentic worship emanating from the hearts of those the sanctimonious scribes and pious Pharisees reviled: The Life of Pablo proffers the question what does authentic Christianity look like? Will mere professed belief suffice? In other words, it lacks traditional aspects of gospel compositions. Yet is Christianity bound to the sum total of the formalized patterns of worship such as ritualistic liturgies and sung hymns? Does the faith exceed the spirited exuberance of Pentecostalism bursting forth from stained-glass windows on Sunday mornings? Is the pursuit of Christ more than rigid adherence to cultural interpretations of holiness? Can the "Good News of Jesus Christ" be reduced to standard chord progressions, prototypical rhythmic phrasings, and formulaic

lyrical content? For centuries, the Christian faith has displayed a proclivity towards syncretistic adaptations of pagan worship. The vestiges of paganism in Christianity reveal themselves each winter and spring during celebrations marking the birth and resurrection of Christ. Consequently, creating definitive boundaries for a faith whose history spans millennia has befuddled practitioners and theologians since the first century. Nevertheless, there must be a means with which to constrict the boundaries to determine what constitutes Christianity. What more than professed belief, yet short of the traditions of men can people look for in Kanye West? The aforementioned miscreants and outcasts who encountered Christ demonstrated sincerity of conviction, even if with their dying breath. The dying criminal freely acknowledged his crucifixion amounted to "due reward for [his] deeds," and pleaded with Christ to "remember me when you come into your kingdom. Can this be the Christ? And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold. One of those ten lonely lepers came back to Christ to express his gratitude for having healed him. While each of these men and women received the contempt of the deeply religious for various moral failings, perceived or actual, upon encountering Christ, each one exhibited deep contrition, coupled with a desire to live life anew. The Gospels of the New Testament are replete with such examples. The Life of Pablo is not. He now seems content to spiral slightly coherent rantings on social media and discussing life with the President Elect. The listening public once fully expected Kanye West to create the type of provocative performance Kendrick Lamar offered at the GRAMMYS ; however, Kanye purportedly stewed at home because he could not receive a guarantee to receive the award for "Album of the Year. His ramblings on Twitter, and the middling work he produced with The Life of Pablo appear nothing short of a desperate plea for help. The Life of Pablo is not a gospel album by any customary measure, though people may continue to debate where it sits in the pantheon of art that toes the line of sacred and secular. Indeed, if anything, it communicates how Jesus may walk with Kanye , while inquiring as to whether Kanye walks with Jesus. Perhaps that is why it is no longer just Jermaine Cole calling him a false prophet, and all the more reason why people should still pray for Kanye.

Chapter 4 : The Apostle's Creed: The Minimum for Christian Fellowship? – the archives near Emma

It also makes a compelling case as to what constitutes authentic Christianity. The letter appeared in Trinity's Portico, a Lutheran ministry blog. It presents itself as a letter from a small.

Review of Kevin T. Four Views on the Spectrum of Evangelicalism. Edited by Stanley N. Introduction by Collin Hansen. Four theologians spread along a spectrum speak for different competing factions of conservative Protestants: Each author introduces his own position and then is critiqued [Page 64] in turn by the others, after which there is a rejoinder. In addition, as I point out in detail, each of these authors has something negative to say about the faith of Latter-day Saints. The movement currently known as evangelical was launched in the mids as a large umbrella under which both various diverse opinions and competing factions could join in a concerted effort to replace the older fundamentalism. We are traditional, creedal, biblical, pietistic, anticeedal, ecumenical, and fundamentalist. Hansen then provides his own account of the often told story of how the evangelical movement arose during and immediately after WWII as an effort to blunt the influence of the older movement known as fundamentalism. This new movement was primarily an effort by Billy Graham and his friends who created the magazine Christianity Today which became the flagship publication of the evangelical movement. The goal was to provide an alternative to the older fundamentalist movement. This is, of course, a cautious reference to the fact that more than fifty years ago, Billy Graham and his wealthy associates established a kind of broad tent under which those with different conservative Protestant opinions could, without lapsing into Protestant liberalism, work in a common effort to move beyond fundamentalist ideology. Their efforts were intended to dampen the influence of the fundamentalism they saw as a seriously flawed version of conservative Protestantism. Some evangelical scholars, such as David F. Wells, have even questioned whether an evangelical movement even exists see pp. A Unity in the Diversity? The mutual concern of the three evangelical contributors to Spectrum is to identify what they consider a common core of essential defining beliefs. Each respondent draws somewhat different boundaries and even differs on what constitutes a minimal core of shared belief. They do not deny that there is a spectrum of belief even though a spectrum has no core or center. As part of their efforts to describe and debate the diversity of opinion in contemporary conservative Protestantism, these four distinguished authors manifest a stereotyped anxiety about the faith of Latter-day Saints – each explicitly exclude The Church of Jesus Christ from what they insist is authentic Christianity. It seems that, if well-informed Protestant authors do not agree on what exactly constitutes the authentic conservative Protestant faith, then at least they agree on what to exclude. Put another way, the concern of these four authors about the faith of Latter-day Saints is part of conservative Protestant boundary maintenance. What these authors seem to agree on is the rejection of certain competing truth claims. They struggle over the soundness of theological speculation circulating within conservative Protestantism. What they agree on is that the Roman Catholic Church and the Church of Jesus Christ are [Page 67] not genuinely Christian, while they struggle over the soundness of theological speculation currently circulating within the conservative Protestant movement. So it seems that there is much diversity of opinion even, or especially, in the older fundamentalist camp. He is, however, confident that fundamentalists are concerned about the need for separation from fellowship with apostates pp. And who exactly might do that? Therefore, the adherents of these religions should not be recognized as Christians at all. A fundamentalist must, he insists, avoid fellowship with those who, even while claiming to be Christian, actually deny the gospel. Such are the tides of internecine theological warfare. In this sense, evangelical has been and remains a crucial term because we simply cannot live without it. I take these rather opaque sentences to mean that boundary lines must be drawn to exclude those who presumably are not correctly Protestant and hence also not genuinely Christian. Mohler, with his version of Five-Point Calvinism, 10 writes as if he speaks with a special authority for the entire evangelical movement, and hence for what he believes is authentic historical, biblical, creedal, orthodox Christianity. Instead of showing unity, Spectrum, as the name indicates, demonstrates fragmentation and diversity – that is, a wide range of competing beliefs 12 [Page 69] littering a battleground in which factions with different ideologies struggle for hegemony. But even Roger Olson, who emphatically

opposes Calvinism, 13 refuses to worship with those he does not consider authentic Christians—for instance, Latter-day Saints and Roman Catholics p. Olson might, he indicates, attend a Roman Catholic Mass, but only as an observer p. He also reports that he has attended ecumenical dialogue events with Mormons at Brigham Young University without worshipping with them. However, engaging in face-to-face dialogue with them has proven beneficial to me; I have had to revise some of my opinions about them, which is good because holding wrong opinions of others is a bad thing even if they are apostates or heretics. But if the Saints are not even Christians because of their beliefs and practices, as Stackhouse claims, is this not an indication that they cannot possibly be saved? Or are some non-evangelicals saved despite not being authentic Christians? Who exactly is saved and who wrongly imagines or only pretends here and now that they are saved is a sticky issue for Protestants, but it is not one that Stackhouse cares to address. He offers a reason: What this statement seems to demonstrate is that Stackhouse believes that some evangelical version of Christian faith is normative. This assumption forms [Page 71]the ground for the antipathy set out in *Spectrum* towards the faith of the Saints. Competing Master Narratives According to Mohler, Stackhouse rejects the proper understanding of the label evangelical. The crucial issue is what constitutes authentic Christianity. Only when the boundary issues are settled, can these authors tackle the question of whether moderate fundamentalism or some competing version of the evangelical movement speaks for authentic Christianity. Hence the following bald assertion by Mohler: But even these are not Christians. It turns out that Bauder, Mohler, Stackhouse, and Olson set out objections to the faith of the Saints in their effort to set boundaries to exclude false claims to being Christian. This seems to me to have been done as part of what each considered the crucial defining attributes of their own version of conservative Protestantism, which each author considers the [Page 72]best current embodiment of authentic Christian faith. Each of these four apologists for a different and hence competing brand of evangelical faith sees their way of being evangelical as the key to being genuinely Christian. Be that as it may, both Latter-day Saints, whom these authors deny are Christians, as well as Orthodox and Roman Catholics, do not care to be included under a label that merely identifies a movement within recent conservative Protestantism. In addition, both Roman Catholics and Latter-day Saints deny that contemporary Protestantism or one of its competing factions determines who may or may not use the word Christian, or what constitutes authentic Christian faith. The Orthodox, Roman Catholics, and Latter-Saints each have their own narrative setting out their claim to be the most authentic Christian faith. This proclivity, which each author manifests, demonstrates and explains the diversity and quarrels found in *Spectrum*. Each of the competing claims, both within the evangelical movement and between the four major traditions—that is, Latter-day Saint, Protestant, Roman Catholic, and Orthodox—are necessarily in competition. Instead of a unity of faith and hence a harmony, there is disputation and a cacophony, earlier signs of which once set young Joseph Smith on his prayerful quest for divine assistance, which led from the LDS perspective to the opening of the heavens and a new dispensation of the fullness of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Some of this shows up in *Spectrum*. For example, Mohler objects strongly to the position taken by N. Tom Wright, an Anglican and the foremost Protestant biblical scholar, who self-identifies as an evangelical. Wright insists that the stance taken on justification by Luther and Calvin, following Augustine—that a person is justified and in that sense saved the moment he or she confesses Jesus—is a radical misunderstanding of what was taught by the Apostle Paul. Mohler also defends penal substitution—the dominant Protestant understanding of the Atonement—which is the theory that Jesus of Nazareth somehow became objectively guilty of every sin, past, present, and future—or his death would not have redeemed totally depraved humans by the imposition of an alien righteousness on sinners. Most of the ways of understanding the Atonement, of course, involve the idea that Jesus did for humans what they could not possibly do for themselves. But in the penal substitution theory Jesus is not seen as an innocent, sinless substitute for sinful humanity. He is, instead, pictured as somehow being guilty in a real way of all past, present and future sins of totally depraved humans—he became in our place the focused object of the wrath of God. Martin Luther in a commentary on Galatians 3: He is not acting in his own Person now. Now he is not the Son of God, born of the Virgin. But he is a sinner, who has and bears the sin of Paul, the former blasphemer, persecutor, and assaulter: In short, he has and bears all the sins of all men in his body—not in the sense that he has committed them but in the sense that he took those sins,

committed by us, upon his own [Page 75]body, in order to make satisfaction for them with his own blood. Therefore this general Law of Moses included him, although he was innocent so far as his own Person was concerned; for it found him among sinners and thieves. Thus a magistrate regards someone as a criminal and punishes him if he catches him among thieves, even though the man has never committed anything evil or worthy of death. Christ was not only found among sinners, having assumed the flesh and blood of those who were sinners and thieves and who were immersed in all sorts of sin. Therefore when the Law found him among thieves, it condemned and executed him as a thief. If his bloody death was to be efficacious either 1 for those pictured in Calvinist theology as predestined at the moment of creation out of nothing to salvation, or 2 potentially for all of mankind who may decide to confess Jesus as Lord and Savior in other competing Protestant dogmas, Jesus had to be fully guilty of all human sins. This, of course, flies in the face of what is taught in the Book of Mormon, where Jesus is pictured as having made a wholly sinless sacrifice for all of humanity, which is something they could not possibly have done for themselves. He managed this with a glorious victory over all the demonic powers that beset human beings during their mortal probation by 1 defeating mortal death and thereby opening the door for an eventual universal resurrection, and 2 by also making available merciful forgiveness of sin for all those who choose [Page 76]to follow him, seek and accept sanctification as genuine Saints, and endure faithfully to the end. Mohler sees the penal substitution theory as essential to evangelical identity and hence to his understanding of what constitutes the authentic Christian faith. Those who reject the penal substitution theory of the Atonement, Mohler explains, do so mainly on moral grounds. Mohler insists that Jesus of Nazareth somehow actually became guilty of all human sin, thus drawing the justified wrath of God on him. This explains his brutal torture, extreme suffering, and bloody death. Put another way, God the Father had God the Son slaughtered to satisfy His wrath and thereby in some way reveal His righteousness, as well as make it possible for His righteousness to be imputed to totally depraved sinners, if they either confess His name or were predestined to salvation at the moment of creation out of nothing. The Book of Mormon, I believe, sets out an account of the story of that Atonement that differs in crucial ways from the sophisticated Protestant speculation on this all-important matter. Latter-day Saints, I believe, may find the penal substitution theory of the Atonement especially odd, since the Book of Mormon makes it clear that the Holy One of Israel—the one known before His incarnation as Yahweh YHWH—was sinless and hence also an innocent victim of demonic powers over which He gained a final victory over both the death of our bodies and, on condition of our faithfulness, of our souls—the two deaths that all humans face. All of this is set out clearly in the Book of Mormon. Roger Olson, who describes the central place of penal substitution in the Reformation see pp. His rejection of Open Theism are shared by Bauder pp. Moreover, he also seems to have in mind the great ecumenical creeds and later confessions which Protestants took over from the Orthodox and Roman Catholics. For him as well as for the fundamentalist Bauder the evangelical umbrella is too large for true Christian fellowship, since it includes heretics. Mohler demands a tighter circle. Much of Spectrum is an effort to both understand the metaphor of embracing or facing a supposed center of belief and to delineate the extent of theological boundaries—that is, it is a quarrel over classification logic in which each of those who speak for a competing faction sets out their position in an effort to justify their own theological preferences. It is not clear who or what is to determine whether one is facing or embracing a center, or who or what determines what constitutes a center, or how one distinguishes secondary questions from truly fundamental beliefs. Beyond mere slogans, there is no agreement on what, if anything, constitutes the central core of belief. The center simply does not hold. One reason is that Protestantism has [Page 79]no magisterium, being an anarchy from the start; it is, instead, among other things a diverse and shifting theological movement and hence has a broad spectrum of diverse beliefs. If this is close to being true, we must ask why evangelicals like Olson, whose historical scholarship is often congruent with the larger LDS historical narrative, insist on excluding the faith of the Saints from their understanding of authentic Christian faith.

Chapter 5 : Women in Christ - Book Review - Authentic Christianity by Ray C. Stedman

If it is authentic Christianity that is in view, it will be a fragrance to God of Jesus Christ, no matter what, but to men it is either of death to death or of life to life. Of course, if it is phony Christianity that is manifest, it will simply be a bad smell!

A Journal of Mormon Scripture 3 Review of Kevin T. Four Views on the Spectrum of Evangelicalism. Edited by Stanley N. Introduction by Collin Hansen. Four theologians spread along a spectrum speak for different competing factions of conservative Protestants: Each author introduces his own position and then is critiqued [Page 64]in turn by the others, after which there is a rejoinder. In addition, as I point out in detail, each of these authors has something negative to say about the faith of Latter-day Saints. The movement currently known as evangelical was launched in the mids as a large umbrella under which both various diverse opinions and competing factions could join in a concerted effort to replace the older fundamentalism. We are traditional, creedal, biblical, pietistic, anticeedal, ecumenical, and fundamentalist. Hansen then provides his own account of the often told story of how the evangelical movement arose during and immediately after WWII as an effort to blunt the influence of the older movement known as fundamentalism. This new movement was primarily an effort by Billy Graham and his friends who created the magazine Christianity Today which became the flagship publication of the evangelical movement. The goal was to provide an alternative to the older fundamentalist movement. This is, of course, a cautious reference to the fact that more than fifty years ago, Billy Graham and his wealthy associates established a kind of broad tent under which those with different conservative Protestant opinions could, without lapsing into Protestant liberalism, work in a common effort to move beyond fundamentalist ideology. Their efforts were intended to dampen the influence of the fundamentalism they saw as a seriously flawed version of conservative Protestantism. Some evangelical scholars, such as David F. Wells, have even questioned whether an evangelical movement even exists see pp. A Unity in the Diversity? The mutual concern of the three evangelical contributors to Spectrum is to identify what they consider a common core of essential defining beliefs. Each respondent draws somewhat different boundaries and even differs on what constitutes a minimal core of shared belief. They do not deny that there is a spectrum of belief even though a spectrum has no core or center. As part of their efforts to describe and debate the diversity of opinion in contemporary conservative Protestantism, these four distinguished authors manifest a stereotyped anxiety about the faith of Latter-day Saintsâ€”each explicitly exclude The Church of Jesus Christ from what they insist is authentic Christianity. It seems that, if well-informed Protestant authors do not agree on what exactly constitutes the authentic conservative Protestant faith, then at least they agree on what to exclude. Put another way, the concern of these four authors about the faith of Latter-day Saints is part of conservative Protestant boundary maintenance. What these authors seem to agree on is the rejection of certain competing truth claims. They struggle over the soundness of theological speculation circulating within conservative Protestantism. What they agree on is that the Roman Catholic Church and the Church of Jesus Christ are [Page 67]not genuinely Christian, while they struggle over the soundness of theological speculation currently circulating within the conservative Protestant movement. So it seems that there is much diversity of opinion even, or especially, in the older fundamentalist camp. He is, however, confident that fundamentalists are concerned about the need for separation from fellowship with apostates pp. And who exactly might do that? Therefore, the adherents of these religions should not be recognized as Christians at all. A fundamentalist must, he insists, avoid fellowship with those who, even while claiming to be Christian, actually deny the gospel. Such are the tides of internecine theological warfare. In this sense, evangelical has been and remains a crucial term because we simply cannot live without it. I take these rather opaque sentences to mean that boundary lines must be drawn to exclude those who presumably are not correctly Protestant and hence also not genuinely Christian. Mohler, with his version of Five-Point Calvinism, 10 writes as if he speaks with a special authority for the entire evangelical movement, and hence for what he believes is authentic historical, biblical, creedal, orthodox Christianity. Instead of showing unity, Spectrum, as the name indicates, demonstrates fragmentation and diversityâ€”that is, a wide range of competing beliefs 12 [Page 69]littering a battleground in which factions with different ideologies struggle for hegemony. But even

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It turns out that Bauder, Mohler, Stackhouse, and Olson set out objections to the faith of the Saints in their effort to set boundaries to exclude false claims to being Christian. This seems to me to have been done as part of what each considered the crucial defining attributes of their own version of conservative Protestantism, which each author considers the [Page 72]best current embodiment of authentic Christian faith. Each of these four apologists for a different and hence competing brand of evangelical faith sees their way of being evangelical as the key to being genuinely Christian. Be that as it may, both Latter-day Saints, whom these authors deny are Christians, as well as Orthodox and Roman Catholics, do not care to be included under a label that merely identifies a movement within recent conservative Protestantism. In addition, both Roman Catholics and Latter-day Saints deny that contemporary Protestantism or one of its competing factions determines who may or may not use the word Christian, or what constitutes authentic Christian faith. The Orthodox, Roman Catholics, and Latter-Saints each have their own narrative setting out their claim to be the most authentic Christian faith. This proclivity, which each author manifests, demonstrates and explains the diversity and quarrels found in Spectrum. Each of the competing claims, both within the evangelical movement and between the four major traditionsâ€”that is, Latter-day Saint, Protestant, Roman Catholic, and Orthodoxâ€”are necessarily in competition. Instead of a unity of faith and hence a harmony, there is disputation and a cacophony, earlier signs of which once set young Joseph Smith on his prayerful quest for divine assistance, which led from the LDS perspective to the opening of the heavens and a new dispensation of the fullness of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Some of this shows up in Spectrum. For example, Mohler objects strongly to the position taken by N. Tom Wright, an Anglican and the foremost Protestant biblical scholar, who self-identifies as an evangelical. Wright insists that the stance taken on justification by Luther and Calvin, following Augustineâ€”that a person is justified and in that sense saved the moment he or she confesses Jesusâ€”is a radical misunderstanding of what was taught by the Apostle Paul. Mohler also defends penal substitutionâ€”the dominant Protestant understanding of the Atonementâ€”which is the theory that Jesus of Nazareth somehow became objectively guilty of every sin, past, present, and futureâ€”or his death would not have redeemed totally depraved humans by the imposition of an alien righteousness on sinners. Most of the ways of understanding the Atonement, of course, involve the idea that Jesus did for humans what they could not possibly do for themselves. But in the penal substitution theory Jesus is not seen as an innocent, sinless substitute for sinful humanity. He is, instead, pictured as somehow being guilty in a real way of all past, present and future sins of totally depraved humansâ€”he became in our place the focused object of the wrath of God. Martin Luther in a commentary on Galatians 3: He is not acting in his own Person now. Now he is not the Son of God, born of the Virgin. But he is a sinner, who has and bears the sin of Paul, the former blasphemer, persecutor, and assaulter: In short, he has and bears all the sins of all men in his bodyâ€”not in the

sense that he has committed them but in the sense that he took those sins, committed by us, upon his own [Page 75]body, in order to make satisfaction for them with his own blood. Therefore this general Law of Moses included him, although he was innocent so far as his own Person was concerned; for it found him among sinners and thieves. Thus a magistrate regards someone as a criminal and punishes him if he catches him among thieves, even though the man has never committed anything evil or worthy of death. Christ was not only found among sinners, having assumed the flesh and blood of those who were sinners and thieves and who were immersed in all sorts of sin. Therefore when the Law found him among thieves, it condemned and executed him as a thief. If his bloody death was to be efficacious either 1 for those pictured in Calvinist theology as predestined at the moment of creation out of nothing to salvation, or 2 potentially for all of mankind who may decide to confess Jesus as Lord and Savior in other competing Protestant dogmas, Jesus had to be fully guilty of all human sins. This, of course, flies in the face of what is taught in the Book of Mormon, where Jesus is pictured as having made a wholly sinless sacrifice for all of humanity, which is something they could not possibly have done for themselves. He managed this with a glorious victory over all the demonic powers that beset human beings during their mortal probation by 1 defeating mortal death and thereby opening the door for an eventual universal resurrection, and 2 by also making available merciful forgiveness of sin for all those who choose [Page 76]to follow him, seek and accept sanctification as genuine Saints, and endure faithfully to the end. Mohler sees the penal substitution theory as essential to evangelical identity and hence to his understanding of what constitutes the authentic Christian faith. Those who reject the penal substitution theory of the Atonement, Mohler explains, do so mainly on moral grounds. Mohler insists that Jesus of Nazareth somehow actually became guilty of all human sin, thus drawing the justified wrath of God on him. This explains his brutal torture, extreme suffering, and bloody death. Put another way, God the Father had God the Son slaughtered to satisfy His wrath and thereby in some way reveal His righteousness, as well as make it possible for His righteousness to be imputed to totally depraved sinners, if they either confess His name or were predestined to salvation at the moment of creation out of nothing. The Book of Mormon, I believe, sets out an account of the story of that Atonement that differs in crucial ways from the sophisticated Protestant speculation on this all-important matter. Latter-day Saints, I believe, may find the penal substitution theory of the Atonement especially odd, since the Book of Mormon makes it clear that the Holy One of Israel “the one known before His incarnation as Yahweh YHWH” was sinless and hence also an innocent victim of demonic powers over which He gained a final victory over both the death of our bodies and, on condition of our faithfulness, of our souls “the two deaths that all humans face. All of this is set out clearly in the Book of Mormon. Roger Olson, who describes the central place of penal substitution in the Reformation see pp. His rejection of Open Theism are shared by Bauder pp. Moreover, he also seems to have in mind the great ecumenical creeds and later confessions which Protestants took over from the Orthodox and Roman Catholics. For him as well as for the fundamentalist Bauder the evangelical umbrella is too large for true Christian fellowship, since it includes heretics. Mohler demands a tighter circle. Much of Spectrum is an effort to both understand the metaphor of embracing or facing a supposed center of belief and to delineate the extent of theological boundaries “that is, it is a quarrel over classification logic in which each of those who speak for a competing faction sets out their position in an effort to justify their own theological preferences. It is not clear who or what is to determine whether one is facing or embracing a center, or who or what determines what constitutes a center, or how one distinguishes secondary questions from truly fundamental beliefs. Beyond mere slogans, there is no agreement on what, if anything, constitutes the central core of belief. The center simply does not hold. One reason is that Protestantism has [Page 79]no magisterium, being an anarchy from the start; it is, instead, among other things a diverse and shifting theological movement and hence has a broad spectrum of diverse beliefs.

*What constitutes authentic Christianity? 3. What constitutes authentic Christianity? by Nicolai Frederik Severin Grundtvig
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Modern Christianity has become so corrupted through moral and political compromise that it has been stripped of its vitality. By yielding to the western global agenda to neutralize gender, normalize homosexuality and redefine the family, the modern church has become a repulsive cultural counterfeit. This acculturated apostate Christianity is doctrinally hollow, morally bankrupt and spiritually atrophied. It has been eviscerated of its transcendent core values and precepts. Cultural Christianity is a religious farce with little resemblance to its original counterpart. To illustrate its decadence, one only has to look at the shameful roster of those who lay claim to its membership—sodomites, lesbians, abortionists, evolutionists, transgender advocates, champions of same-sex marriage and other nondescript religious relativists. I unequivocally and unapologetically declare on the basis of scriptural authority that such religious practitioners have no part in the kingdom of God. We must never vindicate or justify those whom God has reprobated 1 Cor. There is no merit in proffering a false hope to desensitized miscreants. Truth is often unpleasant, but lessening its pungency by diluting its meaning only vitiates its redemptive powers of liberation. It is a shameful betrayal of the Christian Faith to sanction what God clearly condemns and tamper with the moral code He has established. Men are stewards, not Lords! In this dread maze of religious confusion, accentuated by moral and spiritual inversion Isaiah5: Unafraid of pejorative labels, let me venture where few would even dare to go—defining the authentic Christian! Who is a real Christian and what are his defining credentials? But you are not the first nor will you be the last to fret against unpleasant truth. Truth is brutally painful, ask any honest person. A Christian is one who has been so convicted of his sins by the Holy Spirit that he is moved to repentance and a vital faith in the redemptive work of the Living Christ. The evidence that a true saving, supernatural work of grace has occurred in the life is threefold: When these features are conspicuously missing from any religious profession that profession is suspect. Much of the sham we call Christianity is an embarrassment to heaven. Authentic Christianity is about reality not stage craft. To profess to be a Christian is no trifling matter. The stakes are too high and the consequences too dire. This is why cultural Christianity which darkens knowledge, muddies understanding, and redefines truth is the preeminent threat to true Christianity. To compromise His truth is to incur His wrath. The expression of that wrath is not necessarily violent as Romans chapter one illustrates. This is exactly the current state of the contemporary world. For those who doubt this assessment, watch your television and read the newspaper and its reality will finally hit home. An enemy has caused this evil and that enemy is cultural Christianity. Only four things can save the day- brokenness, repentance, prayer and revival. Let us weep for the state of the church; it may not be too late. Perhaps the Lord will save us from our own senseless self-destruction. The opinion expressed within are solely those of the writer. Pin It Community Rules antiguaobserver. We will approve any comment that speaks solely to the story to which it is attached and is free from name calling and defamatory statements.

Chapter 7 : Marsha West -- Something Worth Dying For

THE FREE GIFT is about Ken Willig's search to resolve a dilemma with God, religion and Christianity. He wrote it to communicate what he learned and to share with you what constitutes authentic Christian faith.

He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. One of the phrases that has been coined and is being used quite often in the church world today is the notion of "Authentic Christianity. For instance, we have a church about a mile from our campus that regularly advertises the idea that they have "Authentic Christianity. This is subjective and requires a certain amount of judgmentalism, although you would probably get an argument about that. Obviously the only reliable way of knowing what it is would be to find out what God has to say about this subject and that would remove the subjective and replace with the objective. So this morning we will look at what the Scriptures have to say about what constitutes "Authentic Christianity. The Proof of Authentic Christianity v. It is an affirmed truth v. They knew it because they had heard Jesus teach it! It is an assuring truth v. Then you are not saved yourself. Be sure of that The saving of souls, if a man has once gained love to perishing sinners and his blessed Master, will be an all-absorbing passion to him. It will so carry him away, that he will almost forget himself in the saving of others If sinners will be damned, at least let them leap to hell over our bodies. And if they will perish, let them perish with our arms about their knees, imploring them to stay. If hell must be filled, at least let it be filled in the teeth of our exertions and let not one go there unwarned and unprayed for. It is an absolute truth v. If we love our brother then it is evident that we have received the life of Christ and if we do not love our brother then we " The Pattern of Authentic Christianity v. The enlightenment of love v. The example of love v. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father. Maximilian Kolbe was a Franciscan priest put in the infamous death camp for helping Jews escape Nazi terrorism. Months went by and in desperation an escape took place. The camp rule was enforced. Ten people would be rounded up randomly and herded into a cell where they would die of starvation and exposure as a lesson against future escape attempts. A Polish Jew Frandishek Gasovnachek was called. He cried, "Wait, I have a wife and children!

Chapter 8 : Evangelical Controversy: A Deeply Fragmented Movement

So this morning we will look at what the Scriptures have to say about what constitutes "Authentic Christianity." I. The Proof of Authentic Christianity v.

It cannot be otherwise. Many things may lead to that encounter and much of it may be intensely religious, but until a person responds to the promise of Christ and receives him as Lord there is no possibility of eternal life. However it occurs, it must occur before there can be any hope of living a Christian life. That encounter with Christ, so vital to becoming a Christian, assumes a number of things which rest upon the written record of the Bible. It is the biblical account of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus which gives us any reason for believing that Jesus is alive and available to us; that Jesus can, by the Holy Spirit, actually come to live within a human being and so entwine his own life with that person that from then on the two must be regarded as essentially one. It is the biblical account of the life and character of Jesus that gives us any basis for assuming that Jesus is truly the Savior he claimed to be and that he has the power and wisdom to deliver and free all who come to him. You recall that Jesus said, "Come to me all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" Matthew No Other Way But no matter how clearly one may understand who Jesus is and what he can do, and even how he does it by the principle represented in his cross and resurrection, or what some like to call "the plan of salvation" , nevertheless, until the human will responds to the invitation of Jesus and chooses to receive him, obey him, and follow him there can be no impartation of eternal life. All offers of salvation in the New Testament are directed to the will to make the choice of surrendering to the Lordship of Jesus. One does not become a Christian by intellectually comprehending the historical facts about Jesus. By the same token one does not become a Christian by grasping the theological implications of his death and resurrection. One does not become a Christian by adhering to certain moral and ethical standards which Jesus taught. Rather, one becomes a Christian by asking Jesus to come in as Lord and by then believing that he is capable of doing it and has actually done it by means of the Holy Spirit. Whenever and however that occurs, what is essentially a miracle takes place, though it may well be without outward demonstration or feeling. A new quality of life called eternal life is imparted to that individual and he is "made alive in Christ. Signs of Life But that is just the beginning. This is true even though there is much to be learned and experienced before that life achieves anything that can properly be called maturity. Happily, however, certain manifestations of the new life do appear soon. And that sense of peace is made more intense and lasting as we come to realize the full implications of sins forgiven through our relationship to Christ. This release from guilt is a large part of the peace Christians experience. Another element soon present in the new Christian is a sense of belonging to a family. We learn that we are not alone, but have become members of a large and ever-growing family. As members of that family, we have many brothers and sisters to relate to and enjoy while at the same time we have continual access to our heavenly Father through prayer and love. For many the most joyful part of that new life is release from the fear of death and what lies beyond. To have the certain hope of heaven rather than the fear of hell is a relief beyond all expressing. Because of these elements present in varying degrees at varying times, many new Christians experience intense excitement and joy. The Bible becomes a fresh and exciting book, and meeting with other Christians is a continual joy. The change in their own attitudes and outlook is apparent to everyone, and they find it difficult to understand why they did not become Christians years earlier. Three Possible Choices This initial state of euphoria may continue for weeks or even months. But inevitably, sooner or later, the old natural life begins to reassert itself. The glow begins to fade from Christian worship, and Bible reading becomes less and less rewarding. Christian fellowship in meetings and individual contact becomes dull and routine old habits of thought and action reassert themselves. This is a critical time when one of three possibilities may occur. First, the young Christian continues his decline to the point of dropping out of all Christian relationships, neglects his Bible totally, has little or no time for prayer, loses interest in spiritual matters entirely, and is finally living no differently than he was before he became a Christian. It is true there may be occasional periods of remission with the possibility of eventually establishing a fairly consistent Christian life, but in the majority of cases there is no return, at least for many years, and

grave doubt is raised as to whether the individual ever became a Christian at all. This cycle may be repeated many times until it becomes the pattern of his experience and he comes to think of it as normal Christianity. On the other hand he may, happily, learn something from each repeated cycle till eventually his eyes are opened to the truth that will deliver him from his roller-coaster experience and he becomes a settled, stable, Spirit-led Christian. The third and most likely possibility is that the new Christian may discover what millions of others before him have learned: It is possible to avoid the pain and humiliation of repentance and renewal by maintaining an outward facade of spiritual commitment, moral impeccability, and orthodox behavior. In so doing he can preserve a reputation for spiritual growth and maturity that is satisfying to the ego and seems to gain much in the way of opportunities for service and the commendation of the Christian community. Such a Christian life-style is usually so prevalent and so little condemned that the new Christian can hardly be blamed for adopting it and regarding it as the expected thing. He drifts into it with scarcely a pang, little realizing that it is a total fraud, a shabby imitation of the real thing. He would be deeply offended if anyone should call him a hypocrite. To him hypocrisy is a deliberate attempt to deceive others, and his own commitment to the doctrine, moral standards, and practice of Christianity is deep and sincere. But in reality he is a hypocrite because the peace he claims to have is present only while his circumstances are untroubled, the joy he sings about seldom shows on his face, and the love he is forever extolling is reserved only for those who please him. It is all a giant sham, though for the most part an unconscious one. He may be a true Christian in whose heart Christ dwells, but except for rare moments usually of desperation or high ecstasy he does not live the Christian life. The quality of life may be moral, often even generous, and it certainly is religious, but it is anything but Christian. Actually it is virtually the same life he lived before receiving Christ, but now it is covered by a thin Christian glaze, a veneer which quickly disappears when events become irritating, difficult, or distressing.

Different More Than Somewhat This may seem like a harsh judgment to many. True Christianity in certain circles is equated with doctrinal purity, and whenever true teaching is adhered to it is very difficult for those who view life this way to accept the charge that they are not yet living an authentic Christian life. That life is more than mere morality, it is more than doctrinal accuracy, it is more than inoffensive gentility. It is positive, not merely negative; it is radical, not superficial; it is humble, not self-praising; it is compassionate, not indifferent; it is courageous, not retiring. It is a far cry indeed from the mild compatibility that passes for Christianity in thousands of churches across the land. The Great Imitation is so widely accepted as genuine Christianity that the real thing is often regarded as a threat or a heresy whenever it appears. It is the purpose of this book to trace the sharp distinctions between the phony and the genuine. We shall be guided wholly by the revelation of Scripture for the Word of God is the only sufficient guide to distinguish truth from error. In this passage Paul helps the Corinthians to distinguish between authentic Christianity, as he himself lived it and the pale imitation that many of them had mistaken for the real thing. Then the apostle takes them on, step by step and us with them into an understanding of the enormous enrichment that awaits those who learn to live by the New Covenant, which gives life, and not by the Old, which kills. The treatment of the passage will not be theological in the bad sense of that term, nor will it be devotional horrible word, but intensely practical and forthright. If you are interested at all in radical and authentic Christianity, read on. The Real Thing It has always seemed unfair to me that many churches and some individual Christians keep careful records on how many converts they make to Christianity, but never keep any records at all on how many they drive away from Christ. Fairness would seem to dictate that both sides of the ledger should be maintained. For the fact is, churches often turn far more people from Christ than they ever win to him, and frequently it is the most zealous and orthodox of Christians who are doing the driving away. The reason is, as we have seen, that though they may indeed be true Christians themselves, the life they are manifesting is false Christianity. It is as phony as a three-dollar bill. There are many religious frauds who have never been real Christians, and there are apostates who give every appearance of being Christian for awhile and then throw the whole thing over. But surely the most subtle stratagem ever devised by the Tempter to deceive and delude men is to take genuine Christians who truly know Jesus as the living Lord and Savior and mislead them into practicing a sham Christianity which they sincerely believe is the real thing. It is frequently very zealous and feeds upon consecration services and dedication meetings. It uses all the right terms and behaves in the proper, orthodox

manner, but the net result is to drive people from Christ rather than bring them to him. In sharp contrast to this, there is the real thing authentic Christianity as it was intended to be. When it is manifested, it never requires advertisement or publicity. It has a fascination about it that will draw people like flies to honey. True, it may antagonize many when they find out what its secret is, but the initial character of authentic Christianity is to attract and compel admiration. That was certainly its effect in the life of Jesus of Nazareth. There is, of course, no clearer demonstration possible of what real Christianity looks like than was evident in the life of Jesus. This was Christian life in its purest and most utterly consistent form. Since authentic or radical Christianity is the end result toward which all the Scriptures move, there are many passages in both the Old and New Testaments which could be used to guide us to this discovery. In it the apostle gives us insight into his own experiences and reveals to us in the clearest terms the secret of his great ministry. The first one and one-half chapters of Second Corinthians indicate that Paul was being challenged by certain Christians at Corinth. They had been affected by some Jewish Christians from Jerusalem who suggested that Paul was not a genuine apostle at all because he was not one of the original twelve, and because he taught certain things that went beyond the law of Moses. Claiming that he was not a real apostle they insisted his brand of Christianity was not real Christianity. It has, as we shall see, five marks or qualities which cannot be successfully imitated. They have nothing to do with personality or temperament and therefore are attainable by anyone who discovers their secret. And they are not limited to one period of time, but are just as genuine when manifested in the twentieth century as in the first. We shall begin our journey of discovery at the fourteenth verse of the second chapter of Second Corinthians. In this one verse are hidden three of the marks of genuine Christianity, and the remaining two are found in the verses that follow. Unquenchable Optimism The first of the five marks is found in the very first phrase, "thanks be to God. It is a kind of unquenchable optimism. You can see it clearly in the Book of Acts where a note of triumph runs right through from beginning to end despite the dangers, hardships, persecutions, pressures, and perils that the early Christians experienced. The kind of thanksgiving referred to throughout is genuine. It is really and truly felt. There is nothing put on or artificial about it. It is a far cry from the phony imitation that is sometimes seen in Christians today. But that is a long way from Christian thankfulness. It feels all the hurt and pain of adverse circumstances as much as anyone else, and does not enjoy them in the least degree. But it does see an end result being produced not only in heaven, someday, but right now, on earth that is so desirable and glorious it is worth all the pain and heartache. Therefore, it can do nothing else but rejoice. An authentic Christian is confident that the same Lord who permitted the pain to come will use it to bring about a highly desirable end, and can, therefore, be genuinely thankful even in the midst of perplexity and sorrow.

Chapter 9 : What Makes for an "Authentic" Christian? - Discipleship

The Bible is an extraordinary work of literature, and it makes some astonishing claims. It records the details of the creation of the universe, the origin of life, the moral law of God, the history of man's rebellion against God, and the historical details of God's work of redemption for all who trust in His Son.

December 30, Author: I have asked whether or not I should affirm any or all of the seven ecumenical creeds here. In part, this is because I have wondered whether or not the biblical canon is enough to be the final word of doctrine and practice for the church. When I consider that the canon formed over a similar time period as something like the doctrine of the Trinity here what would lead me to see the church as correct about the canon and wrong about this or that major doctrine? In other words, why accept that the canon was formed correctly while denying that all or any of the councils were correct? What is the role of tradition? Why would I consider Athanasius of Alexandria to be someone I should respect while Bartholomew I as an important Christian leader, but not one whom I ought to submit myself? I simply do not believe it. So what is it upon which I base my understanding of orthodoxy? This is something a good friend asked me the other day. Where do I draw the line? Who do I see as orthodox, heterodox, or heretical? Does the thesis of scholars like Bart D. Ehrman and Elaine Pagels stand true: How do we know we are faithful to the doctrine of the apostles or that we are going toward heresy? It is unlikely that it came directly from the apostles, but it does not address later doctrinal debates like we see in the Nicene Creed, for example. This leads most to see it as a fairly early reflection of shared orthodoxy. It states the following: He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again. He ascended to heaven and is seated as the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit. This is what twelve months of thinking about the Scriptures, Patristic thought, creeds, and councils has gotten me: I think I am still a doctrinal minimalist when it comes to what constitutes authentic Christianity.