

**"Tell me nothing but the truth in the name of the LORD!" -1King 22:16**

**The Traditional Party Line**

Years ago, a man from a neighboring church came to the city where I was located, walked into my office and immediately said, "OK, what is your position on the marriage question?" I said, "...whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery." His response? "Yeah, the traditional party line!"



I said, "Wait a minute. All I did was quote **Matthew 19:9**; I've just repeated the words of Christ!" He said, "Well, but is that all the truth?" Almost as he said that, he heard what he had said! "I mean ... I mean, I know Jesus taught the truth ..." His words had already betrayed him. Rather than submit to the clear teaching of Jesus he had chosen to hurl an accusation that impugned my beliefs. But what did he mean by the phrase "traditional party line?" Behind this charge may be at least one of four attitudes:

- 1. I dont like what you teach, I wont accept it so Ill distract you from discussing the Bible by making this charge.** This was certainly the case with the man above. If I spent time defending myself and why I believed what I believed that was time not spent discussing what **Matthew 19:9** means. Clever tactic, yes? If I have close friends or relatives who want to marry, naturally I dont like to hear someone teach something that would question that union. And without any doubt, if I am contemplating a relationship, and you tell me I shouldnt, I wont like that. But instead of just saying, "I dont like what you are teaching," it is much easier (and sometimes more effective) to charge "Well, you are just repeating the traditional party line."
- 2. There are many others who have taught this for many years.** So what? The fact that a teaching has been held for years does not

necessarily prove it is wrong. Being traditional is not always bad. 2 Thessalonians urges us to hold the traditions of the apostles. There are thousands of brethren who have taught the necessity of repentance and baptism for many generations. This says nothing about the validity of repentance and baptism. The number of preachers and/or

writers who have taught a proposition does not minimize its validity, or prove it. Likewise, the number of years something has been taught neither diminishes its truthfulness, nor makes it true.

**3. You havent really studied, and you dont really have your own convictions; you have blindly accepted the word of others.** I would guess this is what is behind the "traditional party line" charge most of time. The charge then is a way of saying that I can read your heart and know your motives. It also says that I know that you are not sincere, nor a truth seeker. The only person qualified to make such a charge is the one who is able not only to know what we teach, but why we teach it. If you are able to know (have real evidence) that someone has put himself under the dominion of others; if you are certain that a man prefers "popular brotherhood thought" (whatever that is) to personal Bible study, then perhaps you are equipped to make this charge.

**4. I dont have any real arguments or response to what you are teaching.** Here is the real problem the man described above had. He had nothing to say in response to **Matthew 19:9**, knew what he was doing was wrong, but wanted to do it anyway. So, he threw charges around to try to save face. When I tell people my belief that the only man (with a living mate) free to remarry is the one who has put away his spouse for fornication I want them show me the error of my position (if it is error). Don't make mindless charges - come to the scriptures and teach me the truth. Help me to see where I've been deceived or made a mistake in my study. Lead me through the passages that pertain to this. Give me something substantial instead of just charging me as a slave to human opinion or party pressure. Often, though, when a disputant makes

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the charge of "traditional party line," he is reacting in frustration over his or her lack of substantial biblical arguments.

I am not prepared to ignore a real danger here. There is a temptation to preach what others are preaching; there is the sin of listening to men and ignoring God; and there is such a thing as a Pharisaic, party-spirit mentality. But when you teach what the Lord said in **Matthew 19:9**, or anywhere else, because you believe in the Lord and want to stand where He stands, don't be intimidated by the charge of submitting to the "party line." And the fact that 95% of the preachers you know and respect teach the same thing is never a reason to throw it out. What do you think?

My good friend Harold Turner wrote about this a few years ago in a journal. His conclusion fits well here: "Personally, I don't give two hoots about traditional or nontraditional in the whole thing, and would like to make an appeal to anyone who might be feeling the pressure of the nontraditional use of the word traditional these days. Don't be too quick to apologize for preaching and teaching that which has characteristically been taught, for there is at least an outside chance that the reason that bit of teaching is traditional is because it is so."

- Warren E. Berkley

## Don't Kill the Messenger!



**"Don't kill the messenger!" - Sophocles (442 B.C.)**

"And immediately the king sent an executioner and commanded him to bring back his head. And he went and had him beheaded in the prison, and brought his head on a platter, and gave it to the girl; and the girl gave it to her mother" (**Mark 6:27-28, NASB**).

John the Baptist was put to death because King Herod's wife Herodias was offended by the truth that he spoke: "For John had been saying to Herod, 'It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife.'" (**Mark 6:18**). Instead of accepting correction and thanking John for their much needed reproof, anger, bitterness, and hatred reigned in the heart of Herodias; so much so, that she wanted John dead! Foolishly, Herodias had blamed the messenger for delivering God's message. Yet, in doing so she did not change the truth of the message one bit. She was still living in sin with Herod and she still needed to repent in order to be saved (**Acts 17:30-31; 2 Pet. 3:9**).

Many people today respond to the messenger of truth in a similar manner as Herodias did to John. Instead of recognizing that reproof and correction often comes from the Scriptures (**2 Tim. 3:16**), the messenger (e.g. preacher, teacher, elder, etc.) is attacked and condemned as a mean person who has no tact or "love." Yet, to tell a person the truth (no matter how offensive the truth may be) is in fact an act of love that may save that person's soul from death (**James 5:19-20**). How sad it is that many people do not desire the knowledge of the truth in order to be saved (**1 Tim. 2:4**), choosing instead to blame the messenger for the guilt they feel inside.

While the messenger of truth is responsible for how he delivers God's word ("*speaking the truth in love*" - **Eph. 4:15**), he is not responsible for "*the word of God's message*" (**1 Thes. 2:13**). Instead of despising or resenting the one who tells you the truth, thank that person for loving you and caring enough about your soul for saying what you needed to hear in order to be saved. - **Mark E. Larson**

*<sup>1</sup> Praise the LORD! Praise the LORD from the heavens; praise him in the heights!  
<sup>2</sup> Praise him, all his angels; praise him, all his hosts! <sup>3</sup> Praise him, sun and moon, praise him, all you shining stars! <sup>4</sup> Praise him, you highest heavens, and you waters above the heavens! (Psalm 148:1-4).*

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