

*What We Believe... Why We Believe It*

By  
*Joe Sixpack*



## **Yankees Is Differ'nt**

I was once having a conversation with a friend from the Deep South. I made the mistake of telling him something that wasn't quite clear enough for him, and he seemed very surprised by what I said. I clarified for him what I meant, then followed my clarification with, "What on earth did you think I meant?" He replied, "Well, I weren't fer shore, but ya know Yankees is differ'nt."

Yeah, I guess from his perspective, Yankees are certainly different. And his definition of Yankees includes anyone not from Alabama, Mississippi, or Louisiana. Even people from Georgia are suspect to him.

But this got me thinking about how we tend to classify people. I'm not at all saying classifications are wrong or bad. Indeed, classifications are often quite useful. Without them we'd have to give people long explanations when trying to describe someone or something. With classifications, all we have to do is say a word or two. And perhaps the classifications most in the forefront these days are in the political and religious spectrums. We often hear about the political left and right, or the religious left and right. Let's talk about both.

The political left are all about equality. I'm not on the political left, but I'm all about equality too. I think the vast majority of people are in favor of equality. Equality and liberty actually go hand-in-hand. Unfortunately, though, the political left's idea of equality is with the use of government enforcement, always favoring the "protected class" at the expense of the personal liberty of others. For example, equality in education means allowing minorities into an institution of higher learning on the basis of race, creed or color. Without this "equality", those students could not otherwise be admitted to the institution. The problem with that is, the students who would qualify on their own, without relying on their race, creed or color, are actually being forced to forfeit a part of their liberty. They applied for admission to the institution because of its reputation for academic excellence, but because of the government enforced "equality", what these students end up with is an education from an institution that had to lower its academic standards. So the liberty to get a fine education is forfeited in favor of "equality". This is neither equality nor liberty.

Then there's the political right. They believe in equality just as strongly as the political left. The difference is the manner of application. But the political right, allowed to run amok, would bring about the exact opposite and equal consequence as we currently see in the political left. Neither side wants to be unfair in any situation. This is just the nature of the way things are, and that's because of our fallen human nature.

That leads me to the religious left and right. When we talk about the religious left and religious right, the reference is usually meant to describe Christians. The problem with these labels is, you really can't tell the difference between the religious left and right from the political left and right. Each side has some valid merit in the various argument, I suppose, but these "sides" really don't apply to all Christians.

To whom do the religious left and right labels not apply? Catholics, of course! Because Jesus left the entire deposit of faith with the apostles, and because nothing can be taken away from or added to that deposit, all of the Church's teachings are perennial. Unlike Protestant churches, our doctrines aren't open to the left or right opinions, and no one can come along and change them. So rather than use the labels assigned by society of left or right, the Church has always had her own terminology. She calls these classes of people orthodox or heterodox.

A person who adheres to heterodoxy is someone who believes something contrary to the perennial teachings of the Catholic Church. For example, people who think women can be ordained, or think non-Catholics can receive Communion, hold heterodox views that are clearly in contradiction to the constant 2000 year teachings of the Catholic Church. Although the proper ecclesiastical authorities seem to fear calling a spade a spade in these contentious times, such persons are heretics.

There are two types of heretics: formal and informal. A formal heretic is someone who obstinately holds heterodox views (heresy), and they've been declared such by a bishop or a pope. These people are outside the Roman Catholic Church and, absent of a good confession and renunciation of their heresies, they will end their lives going before Almighty God already judged by His Church.

Informal heretics are no less heretics, and I've known even some bishops, priests and deacons, as well as a good many lay people who are informal heretics. This classification of heretic just hasn't been declared such officially, but they equally place themselves outside the Church. And they will have the very same experience at death, assuming they knew that the heterodoxy they held to was indeed contrary to the Catholic faith. Therein lies the biggest difference between a formal and informal heretic: the formal heretic *knows* he's a heretic because proper ecclesiastical authorities have told him so. An informal heretic may adhere to heresy out of ignorance.

The only way to be assured you are free of heterodox (heresy) views is to learn the Catholic faith well. Of course, since you can also be a heretic in actions as well as words, you need to *apply* what you learn. For instance, if you're practicing artificial contraception, you're in trouble. I know a man who claims to believe the use of artificial contraception is a sin, yet he allows his wife to use it—thus making him equally guilty of her sin. And I can only assume the wife believes the use of artificial contraception is morally acceptable, despite that I've heard the same preaching against it she has. So we need to determine if we are (1) in willful disagreement with the Church, and (2) do whatever we have to in order to correct the situation. That's because this is What We Believe... Why We Believe It.

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