

# Integrity

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*INTEGRITY seeks to encourage all believers in Christ to strive to be one, to be pure, and to be honest and sincere in word and in deed, among themselves and toward all men.*

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May 1975

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## FACTS FIRST

You may have heard—perhaps from the pulpit or the church bulletin—that the FCC is considering a petition to eliminate religious broadcasting. This rumor has incited thousands of church people to send letters of protest to Washington, and some have been busy collecting signatures on petitions. One petition circulated in our area says (in part):

There will be a federal hearing in Washington starting on Monday, March 17, to try to bann any religious broadcasting on radio and television!

This covers all Sunday worship services that are broadcast over the radio and the Sunday services on television. It will also include banning the Norman Vincent Peale programs, the Hunter Ministry programs and Billy Graham Crusades and Oral Roberts' presentations.

Unfortunately there is more error in this than the spelling. While it is true that two California broadcasters, who feel that the FCC should order religious groups to get rid of their *reserved educational channels*, did file a petition, it *says nothing about religious broadcasting on commercial stations*, and no hearing has been held.

We need to be more careful. This is not the first time in recent years the church has spoken hastily to its embarrassment. And we have enough trouble already with our credibility without giving our critics more ammunition.

Surely the church, "the pillar and bulwark of the *truth*," has no business spreading unfounded rumors. Does not the Bible commend to us the Bereans, who checked "daily to see if these things were so"? But sad to say, we cannot always believe what we read in church bulletins—especially those

that borrow material which may be several steps removed from its original source. The publishers of such vehicles need to assume more responsibility for accuracy.

This concern for accuracy should also be applied to our internal controversies. Sometimes, in our eagerness to disarm the opposition, we become victims of selective perception. Perhaps unconsciously we hear what we want, or expect, to hear, not what is actually said. I suppose this, rather than less honorable reasons, is why our positions are often grossly distorted. Putting the adversary in as bad a light as possible may give us a momentary polemical advantage, but it will bankrupt us ethically, and will be a definite hindrance to convincing the discriminating. Integrity is always the best policy, provided it is not merely a policy.

One brother recently dismissed another's position on a controversial point by saying, "That does away with what the church has always taught." He resorted to a common means of shoring up one's defenses, but he was quite wrong. He incorrectly generalized from a limited experience and assumed that the church is coextensive with the papers he has read and the teachers he has heard. Unless we assume the church's leaders have always been infallible, there is no virtue in an unchanged doctrinal tradition. But if we are going to defend an unchanged catechism, we need to have our facts straight. It comes as a shock to many of us, when we expand our sources of information, to find that we are not doctrinally compatible with our spiritual forefathers. —HL

# The Super-Preacher Threat at Corinth

MICHAEL HALL

Niles, Michigan

At Corinth Paul heralded the Good News of God's redemptive work in his Son Jesus and begot many children. A new community was then born. It was a spiritual fellowship of believers indwelt by the Spirit and governed by the Lord Jesus (1 Cor. 15:1-4; 4:17; 6:19-20). But then some "super-preachers" came to town. Oh, they probably didn't go by that title, but that's how Paul sarcastically referred to them (2 Cor. 11:5; 12:11). These super-preachers didn't take too well to Paul, and they were cruel in their ministry, robbing others of their freedom in Jesus. We don't know who they were, nor exactly what they did, but we do have Paul's "Harsh Letter" (2 Cor. 10-13) which mentions them. They were the ones who tried to police the brotherhood, who criticized everything in which they had no part, and who used underhanded methods in trying to discredit another's ministry.

## Those Lording Super-Preachers . . .

If *anyone* ever had the right to lord it over another, it would have been a real live *apostle*! But even they were oh so careful not to play "god" over another in Christ. Paul had threatened that he would "spare not" when he came, but then softened up and confessed: "To spare you, I came not as yet unto Corinth. Not for that we have *dominion* over your faith, but are helpers of your joy; for by faith you stand" (2 Cor. 1:23-24; cf. 13:1-3). Our standing in Jesus depends upon our faith, our personal commitment and trust in Jesus, and not upon the favor of any preacher! Preachers are

only "helpers of our joy." So even apostles did not have the right to use their power to destroy, but to build up (2 Cor. 10:8; 13:10).

These super-preachers, however, were of a different spirit and sought to be bosses. Marvel at their boldness, their gall, their actions, and their cruelty in these terrifying words: "You tolerate a man even when he enslaves you, when he plunders you, when he gets you into his power, when he puts on airs of superiority, when he strikes you in the face!" (2 Cor. 11:20, Twentieth Century N.T.). They first enslaved the people—to their opinions, viewpoints, and preferences—and the people became unthinking robots that parroted their preacher! They "devoured them"—used them for their own self-glory and prestige. They weren't really interested in their spiritual growth or maturity. In fact, they kept them ignorant and didn't encourage free thought. They "took of them." They didn't *feed* the flock, they wanted to *fleece* the flock! They "exalted" themselves and, to climax the whole spiritual cruelty, they "smote" them on the face. That is, they "browbeat" those who came to them for spiritual needs. Instead of being uplifted with the Good News of God's Tender Grace, they were browbeaten and "boxed in the mouth" with a list of "thou shalt" and "thou shalt not." Here is spiritual oppression at its worst.

These preachers had confused the fact that all truth is absolute with their knowledge of the truth, thinking that they themselves were absolutely perfect. They didn't want the brethren to think for themselves.



They wanted to monopolize the faith. Paul sarcastically inquired: "What? Came the Word of God out from you? Or came it unto you only?" (1 Cor. 14:35). Yes, they acted as if they were the only ones who knew the truth. They put on as if the "true understanding" of the Scriptures began with them! And as it was then so it is today. There are still some who think that their knowledge of truth is absolute and despise all other viewpoints! They are not only intolerant of listening and impatient with a different hermeneutic, but they think that the way to combat "error" is to discredit the speaker. And that is exactly what these super-preachers did to Paul. They discredited his background (2 Cor. 11:22ff.), judged him unfit to be a minister (2 Cor. 10:7; 11:6; 1 Cor. 4:1-6), said he was two-faced, writing in a powerful eloquence but being weak and contemptible in person (2 Cor. 10:10-11), called him a reprobate (2 Cor. 13:6), and reproached his whole ministry and even his sonship in Jesus (2 Cor. 10:7). No wonder Paul was no little perturbed with them!

### Those Trafficking Super-Preachers . . .

Peter once witnessed to the fact that unstable souls often wrest the Scriptures to their own destruction (2 Pet. 3:16), and Paul brought this charge against the super-preachers at Corinth. He said that they "traffic in the word of God" (2 Cor. 2:17). They were taking it out of context, weaving neat little passages together in dishonest ways, and perhaps turning the new covenant Scriptures into some kind of detailed and most involved "blueprint"; and by whittling they could paste together a number of disjointed verses to "prove" their point. But Paul's ministry was different. "This is the ministry which God in His mercy has given us and nothing

can daunt us. We use no hocus-pocus, no clever tricks, no dishonest manipulation of the Word of God" (2 Cor. 4:1-2, Phillips).

### The Super-Preachers and Politics . . .

There is simply no place for cheap politics in the community of believers (Mt. 20:25-28). Biblical leadership is not measured by the power of dictating and controlling, but *by shepherding and serving!* Part of the pressure the super-preachers created in order to manipulate Paul was that of starting fusses and judging him to be unfit (1 Cor. 4:1-6; 11:18). There were gossip campaigns, slander denunciations, and judgmental nitpicking underway (2 Cor. 12:20-21). Such political tactics caused Paul to write his "Painful Letter" "out of much affliction and anguish of heart . . . with many tears" (2 Cor. 2:4). The super-preachers brought such "partyism" and sectarian spirit into that fellowship that the brethren didn't even know to whom they belonged! They couldn't even "say the same thing" and be of the "same mind" about who was their Lord (1 Cor. 1:10-13). Cheap politics always creates divisions and parties (3 Jn. 9-10).

### Conclusion . . .

Now of the things which we have spoken, this is the sum: Christian liberty is precious (Gal. 5:1). And one's standing depends upon his own "faith"—convictions—and nothing else (2 Cor. 1:24). What is needed today are free men and women in Jesus who think for themselves and are not enslaved to any preacher, editor, paper or school of thought! We have one teacher (Jn. 13:13) and should let HIM capture our thoughts and minds by His Word and His Spirit! Beware, then, of super-preachers. They are still around and will "dominate" our faith if we are not careful! □

# Culture and Interpretation

BRUCE WADZECK

Radford, Virginia

There is a great deal being written today about the cultural influence of the first century world upon the early church. It is certainly an undeniable fact that the sociological context of the New Testament disciples had an appreciable effect on their expression of "faith in Christ." However, there is an ever-present danger of relegating eternal truth to the realm of cultural phenomena, as well as making an eternal truth of a purely cultural situation. Some seem to think that our evidence of the sociological conditions of the first century are so complete and uniform that we can easily pass sentence on the essential or nonessential nature of various New Testament beliefs and practices. Yet the fact is that our first century cultural evidence must be "interpreted" and "broad inferences" must be made to deal with the individual issues.

"Culture Advocates" point to the early churches' *Sitz im Leben* to explain the absence of instrumental music in their assemblies. Because instruments were absent in the synagogue worship and were associated with pagan Greek religious immorality, the early Christians are seen as rejecting their use. Any uniformity seen in the area of "church government" is explained on the basis of New Testament congregations' tendency to pattern themselves after the Jewish synagogue with some adaptations to the Greek thinking about *ekklesia*. The contemporary Greek and Jewish attitudes toward women are seen as the sole reason for the Pauline prohibitions and the general New

Testament view of women's role. But "Culture Advocates" need not stop here!

The New Testament's teaching on baptism can be explained by a cultural hypothesis, as merely an extension of Jewish proselyte baptism with certain Greek mystery religion's ideas incorporated to give it a universal appeal. The ethics found in the New Testament scriptures can be explained upon the basis of culture also. A parallel to nearly all the teachings of Jesus and the apostles on ethics can be found in rabbinic literature and/or in Greek and Roman philosophic thought. Paul's list of deeds of unrighteousness can be seen as his cultural bias in favor of "Jewish Puritanism." But "Culture Advocates" need not stop here!

The early church's understanding of the nature, person, and mission of Jesus Christ can be questioned in the light of its cultural context. For example, the reality of the resurrection of Jesus can be doubted because of the general atmosphere of superstitious belief in the Jewish and Greek world, and the possible adaptation of the story of the Greeks' conception of their gods dying and being resurrected. Paul's defense in 1 Cor. 15 of Jesus' resurrection can be seen as his "Pharisaic bias" in favor of a bodily resurrection in opposition to the more realistic thinking going on in Corinth. "Culture Advocates" need not stop here!

The whole phenomena of the origins of Christianity can be explained as a natural sociological development without "divine trappings." Christianity can be seen as



beginning as a sect of Judaism, whose main drawing card was an openness toward Gentiles. In other words, the "Culture Advocates" can use "certain sociological evidence" to explain away as little or as much of the New Testament as they choose.

Although we should not discount the value of the sociological evidence bearing on the origins of Christianity, we need to be aware of certain limitations. (1) The diversity in the sociological evidence must be interpreted. We may not even have enough evidence to make a sound judgment in many areas. (2) *If we assume* that sociological factors could influence the writers of scripture who were under the guiding hand of the Spirit to write "false theology" on some points, who can be sure of "accurate theology" on any point? It is the opinion of this writer that "inspiration" insures correct

theology, although the expression of this correct theology may vary from culture to culture. In other words, if we decide that a practice is merely a cultural expression, there is still an *eternally valid principle* behind it. (3) The assertion that the writers of the New Testament were prejudiced in their general outlook by their cultural environment is more applicable, in my opinion, to *our attempts to interpret the scriptures* than to men guided in the writing of scripture by the Holy Spirit. For example, I am persuaded that the American cultural climate 75 years ago was such to prejudice men against the liberty women have in Christ according to the scriptures. On the other hand, the current American setting is ripe to prejudice us to be more libertine than eternal truth will allow in the area of women's God-given role. I am more concerned with my cultural environment prejudicing me in my approach to the Christian message in scripture than the Holy Spirit allowing the writers of scripture to "pawn off" their prejudices on future generations. (4) If the New Testament message is riddled with cultural bias, *this makes the idea that the Bible should be in the hands of the common man absurd*. How can he possibly interpret it correctly? The Bible in the hands of ignorant "laymen" could be extremely dangerous. They might form a movement like the Restoration Movement, and end up believing and practicing Christianity similar to the way contemporary churches of Christ do!

The remarks in this article should not be understood as an attack against the need to reevaluate our interpretations of scripture in the light of the sociological evidence. I have only tried to list some of the consequences of too much confidence in sociological answers, by showing some limitations as I see them. □

### A FORM OF GODLINESS

*So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth* (Revelation 3:16).

He came to the full-gospel teacher  
Secretly by night,  
Seeking insight into evidence of a  
Spiritual power which  
He could neither comprehend nor deny.  
Should he believe or defy?

Staggering odds for a man of prudence!  
(And he was a very prudent man.)  
The scornful clamor of his contemporaries  
Swallowed up his timorous inquiry of  
Whether a man is convicted before tried.  
Should he quietly withdraw, or risk his  
hide?

Silence fed the "wise," sating their hunger  
For counterfeit peace.  
As the Son of Glory briefly waited to arise  
Victoriously from the heart of the earth,  
Nicodemus came openly, ministering to a  
dead body,

Still legally protected by the veil.

—PATRICIA ALLBRITTEN

# Suicide, Power, and Christ

CRAIG M. WATTS

*Flint, Michigan*

Several years ago a young man barricaded himself in a tower on a college campus in the South. He had with him several guns and a large supply of ammunition. For no apparent reason he started shooting at those who were passing by, killing some and wounding others. He had no hope of escaping, and there was no evidence that he had made any provision for escape. He simply held out as long as possible, shooting as many others as possible, until in the end he himself was shot and killed by the police. It all seemed so meaningless, so pointless, so pitifully absurd. Why did it happen at all?

We would like to think such individuals are insane. That is what we *want* to believe. But are they really? Is it not possible that they sat down and seriously thought about what they were going to do and that their own death was the climax of the plan? Is it not possible that their death—a virtual suicide—is a very large part of their goal? We don't feel very comfortable with that suggestion. We resist believing a person could *reason* himself into such a position.

Albert Camus opened his essay *The Myth of Sisyphus* stating: "There is but one truly serious philosophical problem, and that is suicide." How true. But not only is suicide a serious philosophical problem; it is an equally serious psychological problem. The reasons and motives involved in suicide are far more numerous and complex than most would suspect. Though, of course, there are similarities, each case has its peculiarities in

cause. Perhaps there are as many causes as cases. Suicide is more than self-aggression. It is more than escapism pushed to its ultimate. It is bigger than any one label we would like to put on it.

But of the multitude of things it is related to, for many suicide means power. As one of the characters in Dostoevski's *The Possessed* proclaimed, "Whoever would desire the supreme liberty must dare to kill himself . . . He who dares kill himself is indeed God!"

Though perhaps many will promptly reject the suggestion that there could be a vital link between suicide and power, nineteenth century philosopher Nietzsche would be very pleased with such implications. The philosophy of Nietzsche sets upon his psychological observations and formulations, primarily of his concept of the Will to Power. He maintained that the mainspring of man's actions is the seeking after and experiencing of power. Even self-sacrifice and humility are seen as dishonest expressions of the Will to Power. He would, no doubt, view suicide in similar light.

For the one who has decided in favor of suicide there is no limit on his life that he needs to recognize. He has within his own power the freedom to do anything physically possible—other people's lives and property are at his mercy to do with whatever he will. There is no authority on this earth that can threaten him. No law can touch him. He has power, more power than he has ever



experienced before. Because he has made a choice to die, others can do *nothing* and he can do *anything*.

But we really shouldn't be shocked at the possible connection between certain cases of suicide and power. It is suggested in some of our Lord's teachings. Nearly two thousand years ago Jesus observed the connection when he said, "He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for my sake will find it" (Mt. 10:39). Or in the often quoted words of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, "When Christ calls a man he bids him come and die."

In Christ we must commit suicide. It is his demand. We must die to self. But in that decision for death we find life. It is not a life negating decision but quite the opposite. A fuller, freer, more powerful life is found in Christ as we die to self. The restrictions that have previously confined us fall away. Our orientation changes; our vision is caught up in the eternal. The threats of men melt away as meaningless. Freedom is experienced. Power is known. And though it is a paradox, we find life and power in Christ by way of suicide. □

## Balaam's Mistake

F.L. LEMLEY

*Bonne Terre, Missouri*

Balaam made the fatal mistake of being born 3500 years too soon. He should have waited until the 20th century to be born; then his brethren in the churches of Christ would have hailed him as a true and loyal prophet of God.

In Numbers 22:18 Balaam said, "If Balak should give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord, to do less or more." This is repeated in chapters 22:38 and 23:12. Balaam conveyed the word of the Lord faithfully and accurately! Then why is he held up in scripture as being a "false prophet"? For the simple reason that he had a character defect that rendered the man, Balaam, a false man. It was the prophet who was false, not the message. Balaam had a false heart but a true tongue!

Now to apply this satire to our situation today. Many godly men with pure hearts have been ostracized from some segment of our brotherhood because they honestly differed with other brethren on the interpretation of some verse of scripture. Such have mistakenly been branded as heretics, while others who have spoken what was judged a true message were condoned while having hearts as impure as a garbage dump. Adulterers, thieves, cheaters, and unbearable husbands and fathers have been accepted as faithful and loyal preachers of the gospel, because they could accurately say the party shibboleth and deliver the correct plan. We do err not knowing the scriptures concerning heretics. Every heretic described in scripture has been a false man in that he has had some moral or psychological character de-

fect. Of course it is conceivably possible that a true man could be so far off the truth as to render him dangerous to the flock, but this is not the usual case. At least this is not the case in so many of our divisive issues. It

is by the fruit that we can know and distinguish between the true and the false, not by adherence to party doctrine. Mistakes of the intellect should not be confused with depravity of heart. □

## The Man, the Method, or the Message?

A. HUGH GRAHAM

*Dallas, Texas*

Out of one side of our mouths we have taught that "the way is just so plain that the wayfaring fool can understand it" (an obvious corruption of Isaiah 35:8), but out of the other side we have insisted that unless some of us are there to tell him what the Word means, there is no way he can understand it.

In order to justify the professional clergy system we have leaned heavily upon the following:

(1) ". . . it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (1 Cor. 1:21). But according to W.E. Vine and other lexicographers, the word "preaching" means the "substance of what is preached as distinct from the act of preaching" (*Expository Dictionary of N.T. Words*, Vol. III, p. 202). Why then use this to call down divine sanction for the "lecture method" of instruction given only by the "ordained pulpiteer"?

(2) ". . . How can they hear without a preacher?" (Rom. 10:14). But is not Paul speaking of a *prophet*, an inspired man? If it is true, as we have taught, that during the

first century the treasure was in earthen vessels (2 Cor. 4:7)—i.e., the inspired message was in the inspired *man*—but now the inspired message is in the inspired *Book*, then why not give the wayfaring man the Book in his own language? If he is illiterate, teach him how to read. Why confuse him with our theology? Is the potency of the Word contingent upon our interpretation?

Admittedly, in the days of the apostles and well into the Middle Ages many converts were illiterate, and even if they could read, the manuscripts were incredibly expensive and not readily available. Quite naturally then the chief means of instruction were oral and later pictorial. Moreover the illiterate masses often needed the authoritarian figure of the prophet or priest to make them feel secure. Public worship finally became unthinkable without a professional "man of the cloth" officiating.

In contrast, today many Christians have academic backgrounds comparable to that of the preacher and are well able to function in the context of the "universal priesthood of all believers." Is it any wonder then that



many preachers are reacting to the traditional clergy-laity system with serious misgivings even to the point of “copping out”? They eventually find the role-playing of “prophet and priest” to be intolerable.

This is not a plea to end all “speaking”

(there is always a need to exhort, encourage, even to rebuke one another), but rather a plea to redirect some of our talents and energies and reorient some of our programs so that we share the message without deifying either the method or the man. □

## Worthy Worship

MARK IDE

St. Louis, Missouri

First, I would like to note the fact that each Christian is a priest of the kingdom of God (1 Pet. 2:9). As priests, we have certain duties that must be fulfilled, one of which is worship. Each of us is responsible for worship to God.

The main thrust of the Restoration Movement was to restore the church to a pure form as seen in the first century church (excluding its faults). H.A. (Buster) Dobbs in *What Lack We Yet?* states: “The restoration became an accomplished fact. There was nothing more to restore.” If the church reached perfection at the time to which he refers, then it must have been a fleeting moment. I agree that we have arrived at a fine, scriptural external form of worship, but we are faced with other problems in our worship. The external forms are of value, but they are the means and not the end. We are often content with the form and do not look at the real issues.

God made an important point to Samuel, and to us, when he told him not to jump to conclusions based on the appearance of

things, because God looks into men’s hearts and at their true motivations, not at the externals (1 Sam. 16:7). In the same way, God looks at our hearts and motivations when we worship. It is very easy to put the external fronts up, while being far from God in reality. We might call this religious camouflage—to make the surface look a certain acceptable way, in an effort to deceive all observers as to what is really there. Read Matthew 23:27-28.

The Jews had all the forms of worship down pat. Amos 5:21-24 and Jeremiah 6:20 show that the people kept all the feasts, solemn assemblies, burnt offerings, cereal offerings, songs and music, but their hearts were corrupt. It was the condition of their hearts that rendered their worship useless, not the externals. God says that he would have the doors of the churches locked so that we would not worship in vain, because of our evil hearts (Mal. 1:10).

We are not above the standards that God places on his people, and history demonstrates that the external observances are

dispensable (Lk. 6:1-5), while the condition of the heart is essential. Jesus warns that “where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Lk. 12:34).

My brother-in-law told me of a Japanese girl who recently visited a Bible class in America in which each member was to share something for which he was particularly thankful to God. This girl, a recent convert, said she was grateful for hearing about Jesus. What would we have said?

### Ultimate Concern . . .

Where, and what, is our treasure? What is that object (or objects) upon which we make our decisions? I have heard it said that our god is our *ultimate concern*. Whatever our ultimate concern is, when we are faced with a decision or a problem, that is our god. If our ultimate concern is expense, time, inconvenience, family, or God’s will, then that indicates our treasure. If our treasure is something other than the Lord, then our heart will be where it is, and when our heart is not with God, we are worshipping idols.

God offers a test to help us find out where our hearts really are. In Malachi 1:8-9 he tells his people to take their offerings to their governor and see if he is impressed! The implication being that he would be insulted if they were to offer him what they offer to God. I wonder how we would pass this test. Do we give more in taxes than we do toward spreading the gospel? Or, if we took all of the time, effort, money, energy, devotion, affection, and love that we give to God and tried to give the same to a loved one, how long would he be a loved one? Would we communicate love? Would my wife feel secure in my love if I only spoke with her for a few minutes each day?

I recently heard a story about a couple and their son driving home from church. As

the two adults complained about everything from the choice of songs to the preacher’s lisp, the son became quite frustrated and remarked, “Well, I thought we saw a pretty good show for only a dollar.” Doesn’t that really tell the story?

In Malachi, God actually accuses the priests of getting bored with worshipping him! “‘What a weariness this is,’ you say, and you sniff at me, says the Lord of Hosts” (Mal. 1:13). Many times after services we have heard or said, “I didn’t get anything out of that today” or “That sure was dull.” This attitude remains with us in many places. The most predominant postworship state of many of our members is that of discontent and boredom.

I feel that the solution rests in the attitudes with which we approach worship. The question we might ask is, “*Why* don’t I get anything out of worship anymore?” The answer is that we are not supposed to get anything out of worship. Our duty as priests in worship is to give to God our praise, thanks, love, and adoration. Worship is our effort of proclaiming the *worth-ship* of God, to communicate to our Lord the worth that he is to us. I firmly believe that we should each approach worship with an attitude of seeking every opportunity to communicate that our hearts are with God and that he is our treasure. It may sound trite to say that we only get out of it what we put in, but we are only expected to give. That is characteristic of our new nature. When we truly seek to give ourselves in worship to God, with no expectations, then is usually when God showers us with his blessings. Praise his Name!

Let us examine our values and make God truly Lord in our lives. May Jesus be our treasure, and may our hearts dwell with him in all that we do, especially in worship. □



# Slipping Away--Our Priceless Heritage of Freedom

DON REECE

Radford, Virginia

It is increasingly difficult to teach the Bible these days. Every one has his own Bible. The Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, Christian Scientists and others have long since published their own Bibles to teach their doctrine. Now the denominations are doing the same thing. In view of this we request that all teachers and those who have a public part please confine their teaching to a use of the King James Version or the American Standard Version (1900-1901 edition).

Any use of so called modern versions will be limited to that which is personal and private.

We feel sure that we will have your co-operation in this matter.

The Elders.<sup>1</sup>

The above statement, by the elders of a Florida congregation, recently appeared in one of our brotherhood papers as part of an article by a well-known brother, in which he not only praised the elders for making it, but also went on to suggest that other congregations should do likewise, and that professors in our Christian colleges should be restricted, except in private, to the use of the two same versions.<sup>2</sup> I am reminded of the words of a popular song:

*And I feel it slipping away,  
Slowly, slowly slipping away;  
It'll be gone in a few more days  
If we don't stop this love of ours  
from slipping away.*

Our brotherhood had its genesis in the North American Restoration Movement—a movement that was characterized by, among other things, a deep and unflinching commit-

ment to the concept of Christian Liberty. The thinking on this point of our Pioneer Fathers was clearly and unequivocally set forth in such ringing statements as these:

We are . . . persuaded that as no man can be *judged* for his brother, so no man can *judge* for his brother; every man must be allowed to judge for himself. . . .<sup>3</sup>

. . . nothing ought to be inculcated upon Christians as articles of faith; nor . . . admitted, as of Divine obligation, in their Church constitution and managements, but what is expressly enjoined by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ and his apostles . . .<sup>4</sup>

We will, that our power of making laws for the government of the church, and executing them by delegated authority, forever cease; that the people may have free course to the Bible, and adopt *the*

*law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.*<sup>5</sup>

Resume that precious, that dear-bought liberty, wherewith Christ has made his people free; a liberty from subjection to any authority but his own, in matters of religion . . .<sup>6</sup>

We can only wonder what they would think of our Florida brethren's statement, or what their reaction would be to our brother's suggestion that college professors be told what versions to use in their classes! We can only wonder, too, what they would think of those who, while claiming to be their spiritual descendants, permit themselves to be bound by, or subjected to, such restrictions!

Inasmuch, therefore, as these statements and proposals have been made and published to our brotherhood, I, too, as a member of the brotherhood, would like to make some statements and suggestions. If the elders of a congregation with which I was identified should—although they never have—attempt to tell me what versions I could or could not bring to Bible school or worship, I would tell them quite frankly and bluntly that this is not theirs to decide. The Scriptures tell us quite plainly that elders are not to be “lords over God's heritage” (Phillip's translation says “dictators”).<sup>7</sup> And this idea that elders,

by virtue of the fact that they are elders, can tell the members of their respective congregations what translations they can or cannot use, what papers they can or cannot read, write for, or give to their friends, what congregations they can or cannot visit, whom they can or cannot recognize or treat as a brother, and a host of other things, has gone the rounds unchallenged in the Churches of Christ long enough.

“For freedom Christ has set us free; stand fast therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.”<sup>8</sup> These words from the pen of St. Paul, while addressed to the churches of Galatia in a somewhat different context, are just as applicable to us in the situation under discussion. Freedom once lost is seldom regained—and with statements such as that quoted being bound on local churches, and suggestions such as those following it being made by nationally known brethren, it should be obvious to any thoughtful person that a very precious part of our heritage is slowly, but surely, being lost! It should also be obvious to any thoughtful person that it is time for those of us who value that heritage to tell such elders and brethren they are *not* our Masters and Lords! □

1. Note: The statement does not say which version, or versions, is to be considered false and misleading. Since, however, only the *King James* and *American Standard* are to be permitted, the group to be so considered would, presumably, include such works as the *Revised Standard*, the *New English Bible*, and *Today's English Version*. To attempt to put works such as these on a par with the pseudo-scriptures of Mormons and Christian Scientists is little short of preposterous. The Jehovah's Witnesses' *New World Translation*, on the other hand, while perhaps biased in some respects, has generally been considered by critics to be a fairly good and accurate translation.

2. G.K. Wallace, “Brandon Elders Commended,” *Gospel Advocate*, CXVI/7 (February 14, 1974), pp. 106, 107.

3. Thomas Campbell, *Declaration and Address* (St. Louis: The Bethany Press, 1960), p. 23.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 45.

5. Barton W. Stone, *The Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery* (St. Louis: The Bethany Press, 1960), p. 19.

6. Campbell, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

7. 1 Peter 5:3.

8. Galatians 5:1.



# LETTERS

## More on the ERA

Homosexual marriages will be legalized by the passage of the federal ERA. "So what?" say some, for that is the very reason they support its passage. All who know and love the Bible, however, realize that homosexuality is against the will of God (Rom. 1:24-25). Others, like Bro. N.L. Parks, would call this a "scare tactic" or the "big lie." Well, in Colorado last week two men *were* granted a marriage license on the basis of a state ERA. Is this still a "scare tactic"?

There may have been some false information circulated by a few overzealous opponents of the ERA. This *does not* mean, however, that it should go unopposed. This short yet deceptive piece of legislation for too long has slipped by the people while they erroneously thought it to be a worthwhile addition to our national constitution.

The fact is that we *already* have sufficient legislation to take care of the problem of inequality of the sexes in the area of employment. What we need is *not* additional legislation, but enforcement of what we now have (Civil Rights Act, 1964; Equal Opportunities Act, 1972).

Bro. Parks obviously didn't do his homework before writing his article. Even the *proponents* of the ERA admit that its passage will cause the drafting of women. Also, his "arguments" are merely assertions. When one wants to know how a constitutional amendment will affect the nation, he should ask a *constitutional lawyer*; the constitutional lawyers say that *all* the things mentioned in Bro. Parks' article (and many more that are equally bad) can happen. I suggest that many people need to re-evaluate their position on the passage of ERA!  
Mansfield, Texas JEFF HOOD

## Beware Ide's March Article!

The title to Mark Ide's article in the March issue, "Christ Is Enough," has a very good ring, but the content has some very serious implications, which, if followed to their conclusion, could be very devastating.

Under the heading "Exalting Knowledge," he would make Paul an advocate of ignorance. Paul did not say, "What we know is not what matters." They still needed to know some other things about

the effect of their actions on others (1 Cor. 8:1-3). Again he cites John 4:23 and, of all things, puts the mountain or place of worship in the same category with doctrine. Jesus does just the opposite, showing that knowledge of what is worshiped is very important. He says, "It matters not which doctrine we worship on," just so it is in spirit and in truth. Jesus did not say in John 4:23 that the doctrine was unimportant. In fact, how could a person worship in "truth" without a doctrine of "truth"? Even Mark has a doctrine (teaching), though it is a doctrine of "no doctrine." So, if doctrine is not important, his doctrine of "no doctrine" is unimportant. That which proves too much proves too little. One thing he needs to remember is that just because some have been inconsistent in the past does not prove all doctrine is unimportant.

Under his next heading, "Doubting Christ's Sufficiency," his reference to Gal. 5:4-5 shows very clearly that the "issue" of going back to the law of Moses for some acts such as circumcision could effect their salvation. But he seems to be saying, don't make an issue out of such things; they have nothing to do with salvation. But if such be the case that he puts circumcision and music in worship in the same area (and he says "anything else") then Paul declares it does make a difference.

Perhaps some of his confusion may be expressed under his next heading, "Desire for Uniqueness." He says he "wonders if our needs are not shared by God." Thinking that God sees things like we do, has the same needs we do, would bring God down to the level of man. Yes, man needs other men and all of us together need God but God is all sufficient in Himself. . . .

From the remainder of his article it would seem Jesus' prayer for unity in John 17 should go something like this: Father, I pray that Peter, James, John, etc., will all be able to get along with their differences . . . that they won't all try to teach the same thing. After all, we need diversity and perhaps those who won't accept what John preaches will like what Paul says, or if they can't stomach Paul's teaching, James will be accepted.

This sounds too much like the old denominational plea that, after all, it really doesn't matter anyway; we are all going to the same place, just travelling different roads.

Plymouth, Michigan LOUIS RAY PIPPIN

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