



The Burning Bush—Online article archive

Jude and his 1st century medicine for a 21st century malady.



Mr. Peter Steiner (seated), conference chairman, Rev. Ivan Foster and Rev. Ralph Baumann interpreting at one of the conference meetings.

The synopsis of a series of three messages preached by Rev. Ivan Foster at a Protestant Bible Conference in Zurich, Switzerland, March 22nd-23rd

“Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ,” Jude 1:3-4.

The relevance of the Word of God to the needs of the child of God is beyond dispute for the true believer. The Lord Jesus said: “Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away,” Luke 21:33. The Word of God will never become irrelevant. Proof of that is seen in Luke 21:28. “And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.” These words, spoken some 2000 years ago by the Saviour, were recorded for the benefit of a specific people in a specific location who will live in the days just prior to the Saviour’s return. You cannot be more up-to-date than that!

In the epistle of Jude, we have preserved for us instructions that we would do well to heed. His epistle deals with the tactic of the devil which he frequently uses to advance his cause. He ever seeks to infiltrate the ranks of God’s people and mingle his lie with the truth of God that it is our duty to proclaim. The Bible is filled with instances of his employing this tactic. The parable of the “Tares and the Wheat” in Matthew 13:24-30 is specifically set forth to combat this tactic.

History

History records the consequences of the devil successfully employing this device. The great Protestant Reformation was the result of God opening the eyes of His people to Romanism and its true nature. The Reformers and their followers saw that Rome was a system of religion which was nothing more than the lie of the devil concealed beneath a garment of Biblical terms and phrases. Within the last 100 years this same tactic has once again been very successfully employed. Major denominations have fallen into apostasy by embracing the devil’s lie which lies at the heart of the ecumenical movement.

Recent times

Even more recently, we have seen this tactic used again. Modern evangelical ranks have been effectively infiltrated by the devil’s agents and the mixing of truth and error has been the result.



The Burning Bush—Online article archive

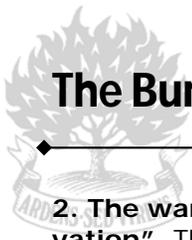
If we trace the career of Dr. Billy Graham there will be seen the pattern of mixing the lie with the truth. Here is a sample of his deceitfulness. As early as 1944, Billy Graham was befriended by one of the most influential Catholic leaders in America, Archbishop Fulton Sheen. "When Sheen died in December 1979, Graham testified that he had "known him as a friend for over 35 years" (Religious News Service, Dec. 11, 1979). Fulton Sheen was a faithful son of Rome. In his book *Treasure in Clay*, Sheen said that one of his spiritual secrets was to offer Mass every Saturday "in honor of the Blessed Mother to solicit her protection of my priesthood." Sheen devoted an entire chapter of his biography to Mary, "The Woman I Love." He said, "When I was ordained, I took a resolution to offer the Holy Sacrifice of the Eucharist every Saturday to the Blessed Mother ... All this makes me very certain that when I go before the Judgment Seat of Christ, He will say to me in His Mercy: 'I heard My Mother speak of you.' During my life I have made about thirty pilgrimages to the shrine of Our Lady of Lourdes and about ten to her shrine in Fatima" (Fulton J. Sheen, *Treasure in Clay*, page 317). In his autobiography, Graham describes the first meeting with Sheen, though he doesn't give the exact date. He says he was travelling on a train from Washington to New York and was just drifting off to sleep when Sheen knocked on the sleeping compartment and asked to 'come in for a chat and a prayer' (Graham, *Just As I Am*, p. 692). Graham says: 'We talked about our ministries and our common commitment to evangelism, and I told him how grateful I was for his ministry and his focus on Christ . . . We talked further and we prayed; and by the time he left, I felt as if I had known him all my life.' Thus, Graham claims now that he accepted Fulton Sheen's sacramental gospel as the truth even in those days. There is a serious problem with this, though. There was a deception in this. While Graham was meeting with Fulton Sheen and befriending him as a fellow evangelist, Graham was assuring fundamentalist leaders, such as Bob Jones Sr. and John R. Rice, that he was opposed to Catholicism and that he was a separatist and a Fundamentalist. It is obvious, though, that Billy Graham never was committed to that in his heart." (*Evangelicals and Rome*, by David W. Cloud). Billy Graham started off as a professed preacher of the simple message of Christ. But today, some 50 years later, he has mixed much error into his message until it must be said that he does not preach the gospel at all. There are elements of gospel truth in what he says but these are seriously compromised by the lies that he has embraced and proclaims alongside the elements of the gospel that may be observed in his messages. Water mixed with a little poison is no longer water but poison! Billy Graham is a victim of the devil's scheme of infiltration and has, in turn, become a promoter of that wicked scheme. Having caught the leprosy, he is now passing it on to those who follow him. Had the warning of Jude been observed and obeyed by God's people, the corruptions that have taken place within modern evangelicalism would not have advanced to the degree they have.

Let us consider what Jude teaches.

I. CONSIDER THE MAN WHO ISSUED THIS WARNING

It is customary to categorise the preacher who warns against the errors of Romanism and ecumenism as a hate-monger and a rabble-rouser; a disturber of the peace of the Church of Christ. Is that the sort of person Jude was? Most certainly not, and yet we today seek only to repeat his warnings to the believers of the 1st century to believers in the 21st century.

1. His warning was issued out a love for God's people. He calls them his beloved, verse 3. The love that moved Jude to issue this warning and endure the odium that was heaped upon his head for so doing, flowed from the heart of Christ. The love that brought Christ into this world and unto the cross, there to bear the sins of His people, is the love that moved the heart of Jude to issue this warning.



The Burning Bush—Online article archive

2. The warning came from a heart that desired to instruct them in the “common salvation”. This was what he had planned to deal with in his epistle —the common doctrines of the gospel of grace, the mercy of God set forth in Christ crucified. This was the topic that he desired to teach them more about.

3. See how zealous he was in this matter. He was a good pastor. He showed diligence, verse 3, in his duties of teaching the Word of God. But this tender-hearted, diligent pastor felt compelled to set aside his intended subject and was moved by the Holy Ghost to deal with the issue of those who were intent upon working harm amongst the flock of God. There is a need for those with the heart and soul of Jude today in the Church of Christ.

Please consider with me the fact that:

II. THERE ARE OCCASIONS WHEN CONTROVERSIAL SUBJECTS MUST BE DEALT WITH.

Jude was obviously of this opinion so I am in good company when I call for God’s servants to lift up their voices in opposition to the devil and his lies today. Peter shared Jude’s idea of what was needful, 2 Peter 1:12; 2:1 and 3:1. Here is the same spirit of diligence as that seen in Jude manifested in Peter’s warning against false prophets and deceivers. It is the spirit that we should show in our opposition to error in these days.

1. Jude said that it was “needful” for him to speak so. The Greek word carries the meaning of being “encircled in the arms of necessity.” He was compelled to issue this warning. The word is translated “distress” in 1 Thess 3:7. “Therefore, brethren, we were comforted over you in all our affliction and distress by your faith.” Jude was distressed and imprisoned by an urgent need to issue a warning to God’s people about the danger they faced. Would God we had more ministers who felt this distress of mind and soul for God’s people in these evil days. There is a time for the shepherd to become a soldier, as did David when the lion and the bear attacked his flock. “And David said unto Saul, Thy servant kept his father’s sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock: And I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him,” 1 Samuel 17:34-35. The war in Iraq has turned some of my fellow Ulstermen who are army reservists, from mechanics, butchers, carpenters into soldiers, as they have been called up for service by our government. God is calling for His servants to arm themselves as soldiers and go forth to meet those who threaten His flock.



Some of those who attended the conference with members of a young people’s choir from the “Friedensstimme Mission” sitting in the front

2. Let us remember that much of the New Testament came into being as a result of this call to arms. How many epistles were written in response to the attacks of the devil? Please consider the following texts as an example of what I mean. 1 Cor 1:10-11; Gal 1:6; Philippians 3:2, 4:2; Col 2:8, 16, 18; 2 Thess 2:1-3; 1 Tim 4:1-7; 2 Tim 3:1-9, 4:1-5; Titus 1:10-16. Think also of the seven letters from Christ to the churches in Asia, Revelation chapters 2-3, not to mention the rest of the book of the Revelation. These are but a few of the errors and lies of the devil which required a warning word from God’s servants. The cause of righteousness has been well served indeed by those who raised their voices to combat the errors of their age. Such voices are needed today. We need men such as David who did not run and hide, as did



The Burning Bush—Online article archive

the rest of the men of Israel when Goliath shouted out his blasphemous challenge (1 Sam 17:11, 24). Men who will swiftly go forth in the name and power of Jehovah against such proud boasters and bring them tumbling down by the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God.

3. The particular matter Jude was dealing with was an invasion of “creepers.” Jude was warning of those who had come in and established themselves within the church of Christ. They were the sort that Paul mentions in Galatians 2:4. “And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage.” Like thieves who scout out potential victims by entering bank premises as customers etc, so these deceivers come in as pretended Christians. In truth, they were “ungodly men” who would turn “the grace of our God into lasciviousness” by “denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.” How careful God’s servants must be in these days. Let all Christians be on their guard against such deceivers and not embrace everyone and anyone who comes in the name of Christ. Rather, let us remember the words of Christ: “Take heed that no man deceive you,” Matthew 24:4. And again, the exhortation of John: “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world,” 1 John 4:1. Let us “prove all things; hold fast that which is good,” 1 Thess 5:21. History tells us that woodworm so destroyed one of Christopher Columbus’ ships it had to be abandoned. That is why we call for an abandoning of churches riddled with the woodworm of apostasy. Those who stay in will sink to perdition with the apostasy.

4. Note how these “creepers” attacked the heart of the gospel. They would turn the “grace of God into lasciviousness.” The Greek word from which we get “turning” is the root of the word “metamorphosis.” The change that these evil men would attempt is one as dramatic and as fundamental as the caterpillar turning into the moth. They would turn truth into a lie. Do you remember the evil plan of Ahithophel? “Moreover Ahithophel said unto Absalom, Let me now choose out twelve thousand men, and I will arise and pursue after David this night: And I will come upon him while he is weary and weak handed, and will make him afraid: and all the people that are with him shall flee; and I will smite the king only,” 2 Samuel 17:1-2. Apostasy strikes at the King. These men were “denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.” Christian, arise to the defence of the name and honour of your King, even Jesus Who died on the cross for our salvation.

As we continue our study note that:

III. THE CHRISTIAN’S DUTIES NEED TO BE EMPHASISED

Our duty is summed up in one word, “contend.”

1. What is it we must contend for? “The faith.” It is the doctrines of the gospel. It is that which is set down by Luke in his gospel. “Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us,” Luke 1:1. It is the revelation that God has given us of His person, power, purpose and promises. It is the Bible we must contend for. It is that which Paul told Timothy to hold on to. “Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me. That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us,” 2 Timothy 1:13-14. Could we be engaged in the preservation of anything more precious, more vital, more important? This is a precious gift from the Lord and must be treasured. “But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name,” John 20:30-31. The Bible is the Word of Life. Lose it and men are without hope of eternal life.

2. Why should we contend for the faith? Because it has been given “once.” This adds to



The Burning Bush—Online article archive

the preciousness of the gospel. Once lost, it is never recovered. We speak of Africa as the dark continent. It had the gospel before England or Ireland or Scotland or Wales. But the gospel has largely gone. India too had the gospel. France as well, yet where is the gospel light in these lands today? Recall what the Saviour repeatedly said to the church in Ephesus: "Repent, . . . or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent," Revelation 2:5. Where is the church at Ephesus today? God will not preserve for a people that for which they do not consider it worth contending. If we place more value upon our good name amongst men, our business prospects, a peaceful existence here on earth, than we do on the blessed gospel of Jesus Christ, then we may well lose the benefits of the gospel. Remember Esau. "Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears," Hebrews 12:16-17.

3. How should we contend for the gospel? The word "contend" is taken from the Roman games, the wrestlings and struggles of the athlete. It comes from the same source as "agony." It is a struggling unto pain. Remember what Paul said in Hebrews 12:4. "Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin," Hebrews 12:4. It is a resistance in which we hold nothing back. It is a resistance which requires the death of the flesh. It is standing for Christ in that spirit manifested by Paul when he said: "But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God. And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more. Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God," Acts 20:24-27. We stand publicly, unashamedly, unwaveringly, for Christ and the crown jewels of His gospel. It is contending with that spirit that was seen in the martyrs of the days of the Reformation and in those times since, when men and women were called upon to seal their testimonies with their blood. It is to stand constantly. In our homes, our neighbourhoods, our businesses and places of employment. This is the contending to which we are called in these days.

Finally, consider how that :

IV. IT IS AS WE CONTEND THAT WE GROW IN GRACE.

Our friends from Russia, who have known so much of suffering for Christ under the evils of communism, will tell you that spiritually their church lived in victory amidst the fire. Now that persecution has eased, they face an even worse enemy — ease in Zion!

1. Contention tends to make God's Word take on a special freshness. "But, beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ," verse 17. The church of Christ in Europe has largely forgotten the battles of former times. To many Christians, the history of the contendings of our forefathers is less real than the television soap opera! They view those who admire and study the history of our forefathers as foolish. In the midst of the battles that our little church has gone through in Northern Ireland in the 1950s, 60s and 70s, there was a living again, an experiencing again, a fellowshiping in the blessings and victories of the past. How real the psalmist's prayers become! Little wonder our Presbyterian forefathers, in times of persecution in Scotland in the 17th century, loved to sing the psalms as they faced the fury of the enemy. They were living in the spirit of David and the battles of long ago. So too was Martin Luther when he sang out: "A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing." Such hymns are falling into disfavour with today's non-contending gen-



The Burning Bush—Online article archive

eration. They prefer the sentimental mish-mash of the modern hymn writer.

2. Contention requires us to build ourselves up. We must seek to “grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2 Peter, 3:18) if we are to survive the enemies’ opposition. Like those soldiers that have been giving attention to their fitness as the activities of the battlefield in Iraq drew nearer, so engaging in the battle of the Lord causes us to give attention to our spiritual fitness. It was to this Paul referred when he said to Timothy: “No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier,” 2 Timothy 2:4.

3. It makes us pray. What urgency the battle gives to the business of prayer! Few Christians know anything of this today and the flesh would have us avoid anything that might cause us to be so cast upon the Lord. If you stand for Christ in these days, then you will soon feel your own weakness and your need of the fulness of the Holy Ghost. That will drive you to your knees. The church at war with the devil is a church in fellowship with God. earnest prayer Did Peter ever pray more earnestly than when he felt himself sinking into the waves (Matthew 14:30)? When we find ourselves wrestling against the wiles of the devil then we will be found: “Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints,” Ephesians 6:18. How mightily the early Christians prayed in Acts 4:23-31. What a prayer meeting followed a release of God’s servants from jail where they had been incarcerated for standing for Christ! How few of God’s people know anything of this utter dependence upon God for deliverance. The “contender for the faith” knows of such dependence and praying.

4. Contending keeps us in the love of God. Danger makes us careful not to offend our only Friend and Guardian. The word keep means to carefully attend. Little is thought of offending God today. His Day, His Word, His Name, His Honour — all count for little, even amongst professing Christians. How different is it for those who have cast their all in with Christ. They have no “fall-back” position. They have burned their bridges. All they have is Christ and they will do all they must to keep themselves in the experience of His favour.

5. It makes us long expectantly for the return of Christ. The soldier in the midst of battle, outnumbered by the enemy and being pressed hard, will look longingly toward that direction from which reinforcements have been promised. So the believer in the midst of the battle for Christ’s name and message will take up the cry of John: “Even so, come, Lord Jesus,” Rev 22:20. What expectation and sweet contemplation of the return of Christ is found amongst those who are “holding the fort for Christ.” The teaching of the Bible on this most glorious subject is not a matter of indifference but rather, of intense joy.

6. Contending for the faith makes us tender-hearted toward sinners. “And of some have compassion, making a difference: And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh,” verses 22-23. true compassion It is not the “lovey-dovey” proclaimers of ecumenical love who are the truly compassionate today. No, they are those who are prepared to lose their name and honour, rest and ease, even their life itself, in order to preserve for their fellow human beings the true gospel of Christ. They are those who are prepared to risk all, even when wickedly criticised and slandered by those they seek to help, in order to thwart the devil’s attempts to leave mankind without the gospel of saving grace.

“Love your enemies”

None serve their enemies so well as those believers who give their all in order to preserve and publish the good news of the gospel to their neighbours and enemies. This was the spirit of



The Burning Bush—Online article archive

Stephen as he died under the stones of the gospel-hating mob. "And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep," Acts 7:60. Few will believe that Bible-believers, so often called bigots by their opponents, have been the true friends of those who hated them and their message. Stephen was a true contender for the faith. He was a true follower of the Lamb. May God give us grace to live, and die if necessary, as did he.