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Why Christ stopped the devils speaking the truth

"And devils also came out of many, crying out, and saying, Thou art Christ the Son of God. And he rebuking them suffered them not to speak: for they knew that he was Christ," Luke 4:41.

Today, there is a brand of Christianity which would deem the Saviour's action in this verse as both wrong and unwise!

I am referring to those who believe that they can further Christ's cause by employing the "singing" of men such as Johnny Cash. His singing is deemed popular amongst many who would make no profession of religion and because his repertoire contains that which some would consider gospel "songs", pushing his name and songs to the fore in a "gospel" gathering is considered a wonderful way of getting unconverted souls under the gospel.



Johnny Cash in typical pose.

Now I acknowledge that I am unaware of the format these meetings adopt. I don't know if they play Johnny Cash records or have a band which sings his songs. I suspect that the latter scenario is the case.

However, irrespective of the contents of the meetings, I believe that my observations still stand true.

New Evangelicals

These meetings follow the "New Evangelical" method of slipping the gospel in under a world-pleasing sugary layer of "honey"! It was the method pioneered in more recent times by Billy Graham and which brought him to such a shameful end.

How offensive this all must be to the Lord. How different the mind-set of the apostles as set forth by Paul.

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith," Romans 1:16-17.

"Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; and for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak," Ephesians 6:18-20.

The word "boldly" in verse 20 means to "speak freely, openly and without prevarication." How different from these "New Evangelicals"!

They should give heed to the words of the Saviour Himself. "Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels," Mark 8:38.

Men are ashamed of the words of the Lord Jesus when they substitute His words with the trendy words of a Johnny Cash or a modern perverted translation of the Holy Scriptures.

Fermanagh Revival Church

The "Fermanagh Revival Church", a gathering in Enniskillen of professed evangelicals, many of them with a chip on their shoulders regarding traditional Christian values and standards, is an assembly with Pentecostal



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overtones and an emphasis on every man doing that which is right in his own eyes (Judges 21:25).

It is one such promoter of the "Johnny Cash gospel"!

Members of this fellowship have voiced their approval publicly on Facebook of just such a venture recently held in St Patrick's Roman Catholic hall in Strabane.

I think that the location speaks volumes! One can imagine the welcome given to the gospel message by a Martin Luther or a John Knox or a John Calvin!

When there is a linking of the name of Johnny Cash with the glorious name of our Saviour there is a classifying of the Saviour and His message with the worldliness of this sinful man.

That is wrong and dishonouring to the Lord Jesus Christ.

In such gatherings, Johnny Cash is given the pre-eminence rather than Christ. It is the gospel of Johnny Cash that is being promoted.

The ungodly man knows about Johnny Cash but knows nothing of the Bible and its revelation of the glorious person of Christ the Second Person of the Trinity, He Who was God manifest in the flesh. "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory," 1 Timothy 3:16.

That being the case, the impression given by such gatherings is that Christ is like Johnny Cash and an impression of Christ is formed in the minds of sinners on that basis.

I cannot condemn too strongly such a blasphemy that associating Christ with Johnny Cash and his music and songs truly is!

If the gospel was truly preached at these gatherings then all that Johnny Cash was and stood for would be roundly condemned and repudiated.

As it is, there is this wicked attempt to marry Christ to the world in order to remove the reproach of the cross and so placate the enemies of the Lord.

Last Interview

I viewed "Johnny Cash's last interview," recorded on August 20th 2003, just 3 weeks before he died on September 12, 2003.

In the recording of the interview I listened to, he freely talked about his taking of drugs and engaging in activities which he termed, "crazy, crazy!" He does not express any contrition for his evil ways and the nearest he comes to expressing remorse is to say that looking back he no longer has any regrets. "I forgave myself. When God forgave me, I figured I better do it too. So everything is alright now"

He never mentioned conversion, repentance or being saved or the atoning death of the Lord Jesus at Calvary. Indeed, he never once mentioned the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Great Faith

He did say that he had "great faith." He says that he had never been angry with God, . . . he had never turned his "back on God so to speak." "He never thought that God wasn't there. God was his counsellor, his



The advert above is taken from the Facebook page of a supporter of these enterprises.



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wisdom, all the good things in his life came from Him.”

When asked where he thought we all go when we die, he replied: “Well, we all hope to go to heaven.”

Those were the final words on the recording!

Saving Faith

Not for one moment does what he says constitute a true profession of saving faith in Christ.

“Well, we all hope to go to heaven” is what the Muslim would say, the Hindu would say, the Romanist would say. Even agnostics would say that!

It is not what the truly converted will say.

Rather, the confession of a true convert to Christ speaks of his hope for eternity in words similar to and agreeing with Paul’s words in 2 Timothy 4:6-8.

“For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.”

Or again, as in 2 Corinthians 5:1-4.

“For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: if so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.”

Here is certainty! There is no mere “hoping”, an uncertain longing that heaven will be gained, but rather a blessed confidence born of faith in God’s precious promises.

Does any true believer think that these final words of Johnny Cash indicate that this man had experienced the grace of God in his life and that his singing of what can only be called “songs with religious words”, was a true testimony to the gospel of Jesus Christ as set forth in the Bible?

I have no hesitation in saying that those who promote his style of music and call it the gospel are blaspheming and demeaning the truth of God.

Furthermore, they are misleading poor sinners into a false notion of what it is to be a Christian and what it is to be ready for eternity.

I base my views on the words of Christ which form the text for this article. I will repeat what is stated in Luke 4:41. “And devils also came out of many, crying out, and saying, Thou art Christ the Son of God. And he rebuking them suffered them not to speak: for they knew that he was Christ.”

Please note that:

I. THE DEVILS DECLARED THE TRUTH CONCERNING CHRIST.

What these demons said was far removed from the fleshly waffle of Johnny Cash’s “gospel”.

- 1. The devils were telling the truth.** But their witness was unacceptable to Christ and He silenced them
- 2. They stated the highest possible truth concerning Christ.** “Thou art Christ the Son of God.” This lies



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at the heart of the gospel. Indeed, they are the very same words that Peter uttered in Matthew 16:16. "And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Christ called this statement by Peter the ROCK upon which He would build His church.

Were these not the words of John when he declared the purpose of the written record of Christ's deeds?

"And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: 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.

And yet, Christ stopped the devils stating the same truth as witnessed to by Peter and John and the other apostles as well.

3. The devils had first hand knowledge of Who Christ is. I think that they most certainly had the advantage of Johnny Cash in this. They were the first of God's creation. They were the first created beings to become acquainted with the Christ, the Great Creator. It is little wonder that they recognised the Saviour long before any others when He started His public ministry.

And yet, Christ stopped the devils stating the truth of Who He was.

Paul

We see Paul acting in a similar fashion in Acts 16:16-18. "And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying: the same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation. And this did she many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour."

Why did Paul not see this as a wonderful endorsement of his witness and ministry and a most propitious means of promoting the gospel? Why did he not organise a gathering and feature this girl's "gospel"?

Because such was not the will of God, that is why!

4. The devils are very well acquainted with the truth of God. That is made clear by the way the devil could quote Scripture when tempting Christ. "And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone," Matthew 4:6.

His knowledge of the Scripture is further demonstrated in Revelation 12:12. "Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time," Revelation 12:12.

The devil will know when the coming of the Lord is drawing near. He is well acquainted with the prophecies of the end times though he strives to confuse God's people on these issues!

His knowledge of the things of God is what enables him to pass himself off as an "angel of light."

"And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works." 2 Corinthians 11:14-15.

And yet, despite the knowledge of the truth that the devils have, Christ stopped them from declaring Who He was.

There is a principle here that condemns these "Johnny Cash Gospel Nights"!



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II. CHRIST WAS VERY SWIFT IN SILENCING THEM.

He did not permit this declaration to proceed far. The word "suffered" means 'to allow, to permit'. "And he rebuking them suffered them not to speak." He silenced them utterly. He did this many times for doubtless He encountered different groups of devils during His ministry.

Luke 4:34-35; Mark 1:34, 3:11-12.

1. It is only after we have experienced the saving grace of God that we are permitted to testify of Christ. Part of the wonderful work of redemption is for the Holy Spirit to make us witnesses. "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth," Acts 1:8. Those who have not experienced the new birth are not equipped to testify of Christ.

2. Witnesses to Christ's truth work in conjunction with the Holy Ghost. "And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him," Acts 5:32. These devils could not work in harmony with the Holy Ghost and neither could Johnny Cash, given his lifestyle!

3. To permit the devils to testify would have spread confusion. Were those, who were the source of such wickedness and suffering, havoc and misery to be seen working to promote the name and ministry of Christ would have been to suggest that He was in league with the devils! It would have given rise to the idea that the terrible wickedness and shamefulness that the devils wrought amongst men was acceptable to the One Who proclaimed Himself Messiah, "the Holy One of God," (Mark 1:24), as the devils themselves called him on another occasion.

This cooperation with the devils would have utterly destroyed the work of God!

Folly

When foolish people try to use the likes of Johnny Cash to promote the cause of Christ, little do they realise the havoc they are creating. Johnny Cash is linked to that world of profanity, promiscuity, permissiveness, drug-taking, wantonness - all that the world of show business stands for. To link Him to Christ, to set him forth as an ambassador of Christ, a co-worker with Christ, is to promote confusion and to negate the truth of the gospel entirely.

Separation

Christ has taught His people that they should live and labour in separation from the world and its ways. How can we be doing God's work by proffering one who is a pop "idol" as a witness for Christ!

Surely it can be seen that all we would be doing is indicating to sinners that living as did Johnny Cash is acceptable to God and what being a Christian is all about.

III. IF CHRIST STOPPED THE DEVILS SPEAKING THE TRUTH ABOUT HIMSELF, HOW WICKED IT IS OF THOSE WHO SEEK TO PROMOTE LIES ABOUT HIM!!

Those foolish enough to present Johnny Cash as a Christian role model are guilty of defying the Saviour, they are guilty of "preaching another gospel," of setting forth a "false Christ" and sowing confusion and discord amongst believers.

This is a matter most serious and surely calls in question the whole structure and leadership of any "church" which engages in such an enterprise.

Heed God's Word

"Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good



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tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them. Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it," Matthew 7:15-27.

"As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily," Colossians 2:6-9.

"Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own stedfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen," 2 Peter 3:17, 18.

Ivan Foster.

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