



The Burning Bush—Online article archive

"The Protest against Ecumenism"



Based upon a sermon preached by Rev. Ivan Foster at the 17th Annual Kilskeery Conference on Lord's Day, September 18th 2005.

In Jude, in verses 3-4, we read: "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."

This exhortation to earnestly contend for the faith is directed to all the saints in every age. Verse 1 describes in detail those to whom this epistle was sent. "Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called." This description embraces all God's people in all ages.

When a nation is at war, not every person dons a uniform. Not everyone who does don a uniform is sent to the fighting front. But everyone within the nation is engaged in helping the war effort.

God's people are at war and everyone of us is required, according to our talents and gifts, to labour and support the war effort.

Being creatures of ease by nature, we avoid the idea of publicly protesting against that which is popular with the majority of our neighbours. We do not like the idea of acting and speaking so as to turn every man's hand against us. Such reproach was wearisome even to a man so used to being the target of hatred and criticism. Jeremiah said: "Woe is me, my mother, that thou hast borne me a man of strife and a man of contention to the whole earth! I have neither lent on usury, nor men have lent to me on usury; yet every one of them doth curse me," Jeremiah 15: 10.

This is the lot of the protester.

Protesting against that which is evil and anti-God is not a matter of personal disposition. It is a necessity laid upon all of God's people.

We have heard of the evil of ecumenism in the messages preached so far in our conference. It is an ecclesiastical plan devised in hell and that for the purpose of overthrowing the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Against such a movement all of God's people must engage in resistance.

Let me give you the biblical basis for such an assertion.

I. TO PROTEST AGAINST SIN IS AN ESSENTIAL ELEMENT OF OUR NEW NATURE.



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The Christian is someone who has been miraculously renewed by the power of God. "All those whom God hath predestinated unto life, and those only, he is pleased, in his appointed and accepted time, effectually to call, by his Word and Spirit, out of that state of sin and death in which they are by nature, to grace and salvation by Jesus Christ: enlightening their minds, spiritually and savingly, to understand the things of God, taking away their heart of stone, and giving unto them an heart of flesh; renewing their wills, and by his almighty power determining them to that which is good; and effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ; yet so as they come most freely, being made willing by his grace," WCF-10:1.

An essential element of that new nature that is created at regeneration is the inclination to disassociate from and resist sin. Genesis 3:15 indicates that clearly. "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." God has put enmity between Christ and His people and the devil and his seed.

1. The regenerated sinner has been given the disposition of God. "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust," 2 Peter 1:4.

The regenerated sinner is not a partaker of the divine essence of God, for that is not possible, for it cannot be communicated to any creature. But we have a nature which shares His moral values.

2. We have the Lord's disposition toward sin. "Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows," Psalm 45:7. These words were spoken of Christ. Hebrews 1:8-9 makes that very plain. As Christ loved righteousness and hated wickedness, even so it is with the Christian. "For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit," Romans 8:5. This is emphasised in Galatians 5:17. "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would."

3. Such a disposition forces a cry of protest from our mouth. The blasphemous cries of Goliath stirred the soul of David and caused him, mere teenager and all that he was, to sally forth to meet the challenge of the giant. That event in turn reminds us of Christ Who came forth to meet the challenge of the devil against the Kingdom of God. "He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil," 1 John 3:8. Recall the reaction of Moses upon coming into the camp of Israel and seeing the rebellion taking place around the golden calf. "And it came to pass, as soon as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the calf, and the dancing: and Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount," Exodus 32:19. This anger was akin to the anger that God expressed over this incident. The verse 10 of that chapter records God's anger. "Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them," Exodus 32:10.

Rev. Colin Mercer directed our thoughts to Numbers 25 and to the verses 6-8 and 11.

There we see the man Phinehas acting in judgment, in accordance with the law of God as had been set forth in the statutes which governed Israel at that time of theocracy, and repeated by the Lord in verse 4. The acceptance of the actions of Phinehas by God may be



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seen in the verse 11. "Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, hath turned my wrath away from the children of Israel, while he was zealous for my sake among them, that I consumed not the children of Israel in my jealousy." His thinking and action were in keeping with the values and views of God. We see the Lord Jesus acting in such a spirit in John 2: 14-17. Christ "found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting: and when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables; and said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise. And his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." We who are born of God's Spirit will partake of His moral views and must therefore share His protest against sin.

II. GOD HAS GIVEN US CLEAR DIRECTIONS HOW WE SHOULD PROTEST AGAINST SIN

1. God has legislated against sin. The disposition of God is written large in the moral law set down in the ten Commandments. Sin is forbidden and penalties in time and eternity clearly stated. Some sins, such as murder, carried an immediate death penalty under the theocratic government of Old Testament Israel. All sins will bring eternal death unless deliverance is sought through the blood of Christ, Revelation 20: 15. The setting down of these laws and penalties indicates that sin ought not to be tolerated by those who are God's people. We are not under a theocracy today, but many governments have been guided by the law of God when formulating civil laws within modern democracies. Sadly, many countries are, under the influence of ecumenical apostasy, overthrowing those laws which reflect the moral values of heaven. However, the child of God must continue to be governed by the morality of God's law. We are required to denounce that which God denounces and commend what He commends, irrespective of society's changing standards.

2. The Holy Spirit prompts the believer when to protest. The blessed Spirit of God will move the child of God to speak out against sin. Paul's protest against Elymas was prompted by the Holy Ghost. "Then Saul, (who also is called Paul,) filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him, and said, O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand," Acts 13: 9-11.

It was the Holy Ghost Who prompted Paul to write a protest against the departure of the Galatian churches. Likewise, it was the Holy Ghost Who moved Jude to write what he did in his epistle. Much of what is written in the Bible is the result of the Holy Ghost's promptings of God's servants to protest against the sins of their day.

3. The example of God Himself. "For I earnestly protested unto your fathers in the day that I brought them up out of the land of Egypt, even unto this day, rising early and protesting, saying, Obey my voice. Yet they obeyed not, nor inclined their ear, but walked every one in the imagination of their evil heart: therefore I will bring upon them all the



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words of this covenant, which I commanded them to do; but they did them not," Jeremiah 11:7-8. Note God protested even when His protests were ignored and rejected.

III. PROTESTS ARE NECESSITATED BY THE ACTIVITIES OF THE ENEMY

As we brace ourselves against the wind on a stormy day even so there is an instinctive reaction to the actions of the enemies of righteousness around us. We brace ourselves against them.

1. The honour of God impugned demands that we protest. David was moved to go and fight against Goliath by the blasphemous mouthings of the Philistine giant. "And David spake to the men that stood by him, saying, What shall be done to the man that killeth this Philistine, and taketh away the reproach from Israel? for who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?" 1 Samuel 17:26. "Then said David to the Philistine, Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied. This day will the LORD deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; and I will give the carcasses of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel." 1 Samuel 17:45-46.

Goliath's voice is heard in the land today. May we respond in defence of the honour of God.

2. The heritage of God endangered demands that we protest. The gospel is under attack today by the errors of ecumenism. As the apostles were engaged in defending truth as is seen in the epistles of Paul, Peter, John and Jude so must we rally to the cause of God. "Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision." Philippians 3:2. So wrote Paul. "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," 2 Peter 3:17. So wrote Peter. Christ constantly issued warnings and protests. "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves," Matthew 7:15. So must we take heed to these warnings and pass them on. Such is the action of a good minister, 1 Timothy 4:1-6.

3. The purpose of God resisted demands that we protest. As the enemy is stirred by news of God's work advancing so we must protest against every effort made by the enemy to resist the purpose of God amongst men. "When Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, heard of it, it grieved them exceedingly that there was come a man to seek the welfare of the children of Israel," Nehemiah 2:10. "But it came to pass, that when Sanballat heard that we builded the wall, he was wroth, and took great indignation, and mocked the Jews," Nehemiah 4:1. "Now it came to pass, when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and Geshem the Arabian, and the rest of our enemies, heard that I had builded the wall, and that there was no breach left therein; (though at that time I had not set up the doors upon the gates;) that Sanballat and Geshem sent unto me, saying, Come, let us meet together in some one of the villages in the plain of Ono. But they thought to do me mischief. And I sent messengers unto them, saying, I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you? Yet they sent unto me four times after this sort; and I answered them after the same man-



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ner," Nehemiah 6:1-4.

Such also was the experience of the people in the days of Ezra. "But Zerubbabel, and Jeshua, and the rest of the chief of the fathers of Israel, said unto them, Ye have nothing to do with us to build an house unto our God; but we ourselves together will build unto the LORD God of Israel, as king Cyrus the king of Persia hath commanded us. Then the people of the land weakened the hands of the people of Judah, and troubled them in building, and hired counsellors against them, to frustrate their purpose, all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia," Ezra 4:3-5. (See also Acts 4:1-3; 16:16-24.) The enemy reacts to the advances of the cause of God, and God's people must in turn react to their reactions.

This is God's way. "When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him," Isaiah 59:19. God reacts to the devil's attacks and we must see to it that we offer ourselves unto God in order that we might be part of God's counter-attack against ecumenism.

Join the Lord in raising a standard against the wickedness of the enemy today. Be much in prayer. Support at every opportunity the advance of the gospel and take your stand outside the ecumenical camp of apostasy.