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“To testify the gospel of the grace of God.” Acts 20:24

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FREEDOM OF CONSCIENCE: A Sacred Baptist Principle

By Eld. John Kohler

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

A few month's ago, while traveling to Independence, Kentucky, for a meeting with Bro. Ron Crisp and the First Baptist Church, I left early enough to spend a few hours in the library at Union University (a Southern Baptist College) in Jackson, Tennessee. As I searched through their books, I was amazed at the number of books that I found which dealt in part or in entirety with the matter of "soul liberty" or "liberty of conscience." This has been a cornerstone of Baptist doctrine and practice from our earliest history.

As I sat and read parts of several of these books, I was reminded of an early Seminary class in Church History. Dr. Paul Goodwin, my Church History instructor at the Missionary Baptist Seminary in Little Rock, Arkansas, said something to this effect, "I will fight what Roman Catholics believe, but, at the same time, I will fight for their right to believe it." He was referring to the subject of **soul liberty** and the fact that Baptists have long been champions of this concept. He was dealing with the influence Baptists had on the fight for freedom of conscience that is guaranteed in the Constitution of the United States.

I am happy that Bro. Richard and Greg Eckstein, *The Historic Baptist*, and Berea Sovereign Grace Baptist Church of Bloomfield, New Mexico, are publishing **THE GREAT CONFLICT: A Discourse Concerning Baptists and Religious Liberty** by George Lorimer (See ordering information at the end of this article).

Bancroft who is quoted in *The Great Conflict* wrote, "Freedom of conscience, unlimited freedom of mind, was, from the first, the trophy of the Baptists."

Sadly, many of our Baptist brethren and churches no longer champion this cause for "soul liberty" and "liberty of conscience." We often do not even allow this liberty among our own brethren. I was reminded of this again recently when I read the following statement. "The people that feel they are appointed by God to be His personal sheriffs usually do not like to have their authority challenged in any way." Eld. John Reisinger, *Editorial, Sound of Grace*, (December 1999).

It is often easier to attack the person with whom we disagree than it is to disprove his position. One of the fallacies of which some are guilty when arguing a point is known as **argumentum ad hominem**. This is committed by directing the argument against the character of the person who is the opponent instead of proving one's point with valid evidence or disproving the opponent's point with valid evidence. If you disagree with someone and cannot effectually answer their argument, just call them an ignoramus, an idiot, a heretic, an apostate, or something else that reflects on them and takes attention away from **YOUR** inability to answer what they say.

I am not suggesting that we should compromise. I am not suggesting that we should not expose what we deem to be error. But, especially where brethren are concerned, we need to do our disagreeing in a gracious,

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introduction for *The Great Conflict*. It, with an introduction by Bro. Greg Eckstein, is presented here for your edification. I pray that this introduction and this re-published book will awaken anew the love of "soul liberty" in all of us. As Lorimer said, "**LIBERTY is one of those words which challenge love and devotion. It needs no recommendation; for it belongs to the same category as order, as progress, as truth, as law.**"

INTRODUCTION BY GREG ECKSTEIN

"The Great Conflict" is a treatise which deals with Baptists and religious liberty. Religious, (or soul liberty), is the freedom to worship God according to the dictates of each individual's particular conscience, and has always been a Baptist distinctive. This contention, has at times, conflicted with the wishes of those in power, causing Peter to say: "We ought to obey God rather than men." (Acts 5:29).

Anyone with a knowledge of history knows of the past persecution of Christians by both civil governments and organized religion for failing to worship according their established criterion. Baptists have historically believed that men have no business meddling with the religious beliefs of others and have zealously championed the cause of soul liberty. Aside from refusing to bow to the demands of others, this means we also advocate the right of everyone else to worship as they see fit. The application is universal, whether people look to the Lord Jesus Christ as their Head, or whether it be Muhammad, Buddha, or David Koresh. Needless to say, this usually incurs the wrath of those who set themselves up as the final authority on all things divine,

What is appalling today, is that some *Baptists* are elevating themselves to positions once reserved for ungodly governments and religious institutions, and are persecuting their own brethren! Rather than embrace one another in Christian love, they refer to those who differ with them on certain matters as "enemies", "heretics", and "apostates". James warns: "My brethren, these things ought not so to be." (ref. James 3:9,10).

brotherly manner. We may be wrong and the other brother may be right, or, we could both be wrong.

B. H. Carroll, a strong, local-church-only Baptist, refused to break fellowship with brethren (such as J. M. Pendleton) who held to a universal, invisible church. As long as they gave prominence to the local church, he continued to fellowship with them though he considered them to be advocating a potentially harmful doctrine.

Bro. John Kohler has written/edited a new

As you read Brother Kohler's foreword, his research on this topic is readily apparent. By quoting a number of old Baptist writers, we see the concept of religious freedom continuously reinforced. Deeming it worthy to stand on its own in booklet form, we hope it stimulates the interest of some to acquire this much-needed reprint.

Greg Eckstein
Editor, The *Historic Baptist*

**FREEDOM OF CONSCIENCE: A Sacred
Baptist Principle**
By Eld. John Kohler

Freedom of conscience may be defined as "the God-given right of every individual human being to believe whatever he chooses without restraint or repression from any of his fellow human beings." History reveals that Baptists have continually stood at the forefront in the ongoing struggle for individual soul liberty and have been among the leading proponents of the sacred principle of freedom of conscience.

British historian Herbert S. Skeats has written as follows on this particular point: "It is the singular and distinguished honor of the Baptists to have repudiated, from their earliest history, all coercive power over the consciences and actions of men with reference to religion . . . They were the proto-evangelists of the voluntary principle," (*A History of the Free Churches of England*, p. 24).

This unwavering commitment on the part of Baptists to the promotion and protection of freedom of conscience is evidenced in the following quotations from various Baptist writers:

"Do not lay a burden on my conscience, for faith is a gift freely from God, and is not a common property. The mystery of God lies hidden, like the treasure in the field, which no one can find, but he to whom the Spirit shows it. So I beg you, ye servants of God, let my faith stand free." (Hans Muller, 16th century A. D., in *Emil, Die Zunscher Wiedertaufer*, p. 76)

"The burning of heretics cannot be justified by the Scriptures. Christ Himself teaches that the tares should be allowed to grow with the wheat.

He did not come to burn, or to murder, but to give life, and that more abundantly. We should, therefore, pray and hope for improvement in men as long as they live. If they cannot be convinced by appeals to reason, or the Word of God, they should be let alone. One cannot be made to see his errors either by fire or sword. If it is a crime to burn those who scornfully reject the Gospel of Jesus Christ, how much more it is a crime to burn the true expounders and exemplars of the Word of God. Such an apparent zeal for God, the welfare of the soul, and the honor of the church is a deception. Indeed, to every one it must be evident that the burning of heretics is device of Satan." (Balthasar Hubmaier, A. D. 1524, *Von Ketzer und Verbrennen*).

"Our Lord the king is but an earthly king, and he hath no authority as a king but in earthly causes, and *if* the king's people be obedient and true subjects, obeying all human laws made by the king, our lord and king can require no more: for man's religion to God is between God and themselves; the king shall not answer for it, neither may the king be judge between God and man. Let them be heretics, Turks, Jews, or whatsoever, it appertains not to the earthly power to punish them in the least measure." (Thomas Helwys, *A Short Declaration of the Mystery of Iniquity*, p. 69).

"How much more ought Christians, when as the Turks do tolerate them? Shall we be less merciful than the Turks? or shall we learn the Turks to persecute Christians? It is not only unmerciful, but unnatural and abominable; yea, monstrous for one Christian to vex and destroy another for difference and questions of religion." (Leonard Busher, *Religion's Peace: A Plea for Liberty of Conscience*).

"Compulsion of conscience makes differences to rise to a great height, which if men were left to their own light, what is not of God would far more easily fall." (Christopher Blackwood, *The Storming*, p. 21).

"Christian liberty lies in worshipping God according to the dictates of conscience, without the fear of men, which indulged to, brings a snare, and leads to idolatry, superstition, and will-worship: though Christians are obliged to

regard the laws of men, respecting civil matters, yet not what regard religion and conscience, and are contrary thereunto; by such they are not bound, but should serve God rather than men; as the cases of the three companions of Daniel himself, and of the apostles, and of the martyrs and confessors in all ages, shew; who chose rather to suffer imprisonment, confiscation of goods, and death itself, than part with this branch of Christian liberty, to serve God, according to his word, and that light which they had in it. Nor does it become the rulers and governors to infringe this liberty of theirs." (John Gill, *A Body of Doctrinal and Practical Divinity*, p. 527).

"No such believer, or Servant of Christ Jesus hath any liberty, much less Authority, from his Lord, to smite his fellow servant, nor yet with outward force, or arm of flesh, to constrain, or restrain his Conscience no nor yet his outward man for Conscience sake, or worship of his God. . . every man being such as shall appear before the judgement seat of Christ, and must give an account of himself to God, and therefore ought to be fully persuaded in his own mind, for what he undertakes." (John Clark, *III Newes from New-England*, p. 10).

"It may now be asked, What is the liberty desired? The answer is: As the Kingdom of Christ is not of this world, and religion is a great concern between God and the soul, with which no human authority can intermeddle, consistently with the principles of Christianity, and according to the dictates of Protestantism, we claim and expect the liberty of worshipping God according to our consciences, not being obliged to support a ministry we cannot attend, whilst we demean ourselves as faithful subjects." (Memorial from the Warren Association in Isaac Backus', *A History of New England with Particular Reference to the Denomination of Christians Called Baptists*, 2:201 n).

"Every man must give an account of himself to God, and therefore every man ought to be at liberty to serve God in a way that he can best reconcile to his conscience . . . Government had no more to do with the religious opinions of men, than it has with the principles of mathematics. Let every man speak freely without fear,

maintain the principles that he believes, worship according to his own faith, either one God, three Gods, no God, or twenty Gods; and let government protect him in so doing." (John Leland, A.D. 1791, *The Rights of Conscience Inalienable*, pp. 181, 184).

"We accordingly have ever believed that the state has no authority to legislate in matters pertaining to the conscience. When man violates the rights of man, the state may interfere, and prevent or punish the wrong. But, in matters which concern our relations to God, the state has no jurisdiction. It has no right to take cognizance of our duties to God. Hence, it is guilty of wrong, if it prohibit or annoy any form of religion, if it favor one more than the other, if it restrict the exercise of any form or devotion, either public or private, or in any manner whatever interfere in the matter of religious belief or practice . . . Here, then, is the peculiar glory of the Baptists. While they have suffered persecution at the hands of almost all the dominant sects that emerged from the Reformation, their garments have never been defiled by any violation of the rights of conscience." (Francis Wayland, *Notes on the Principles and Practices of Baptist Churches*, pp. 134-35, 137).

"This follows from individual responsibility. If one be responsible for himself, there must be no restraint or constraint for himself, there must be no restraint or constraint of his conscience. Neither parent, nor government, nor church may usurp the prerogative of God as Lord of the conscience. God Himself does not coerce the will. His people are volunteers, not conscripts." (B. H. Carroll, *Baptists and Their Doctrines*, p. 18).

"Baptists protest that the State has nothing to do with the control of religion; but that it must give unrestricted religious freedom to all, as their sacred and natural right in the exercise of a free conscience. All true soul-liberty arises in that purity of conscience, which, unbound itself, leaves all other consciences free. Our idea is, that as the untrammelled conscience is the inalienable right of man, he can be made accountable only to God for its exercise. Hence, when any human power proscribes or persecutes man, by putting him under pains or

penalties for following his convictions of duty in obeying God, such interference is an usurpation. When a man follows these convictions, he is entitled to the honest respect and love of all; and he is bound to extend the same right to others which he claims for himself." (Thomas Armitage, *A History of the Baptists*, pp. 153-54).

"Baptists have one consistent record concerning Liberty throughout all their long and eventful history. They have never been a party to oppression of conscience. They have forever been the unwavering champions of liberty, both civil and religious. Their contention now is, and has been, and, please God, must ever be, that it is the natural and fundamental and indefeasible right of every human being to worship God or not, according to the dictates of his conscience, and, as long as he does not infringe upon the rights of others, he is to be held accountable to God alone for all religious beliefs and practices. Our contention is not for mere toleration, but for absolute liberty. There is a wide difference between toleration and liberty. Toleration implies that somebody falsely claims the right to tolerate. Toleration is a concession, while liberty is a right. Toleration is a matter of expediency, while liberty is a matter of principle. Toleration is a gift from man, while liberty is a gift from God. It is the consistent and insistent contention of our Baptist people, always and everywhere, that religion must be forever voluntary and uncoerced, and that it is not the prerogative of any power, whether civil or ecclesiastical, to compel men to conform to any religious creed or form of worship, or to pay taxes for the support of a religious organization to which they do not belong and to whose creed they do not believe. God wants free worshippers and no other kind." (George W. Truett, Religious *Liberty*, a sermon preached on the steps of the Capitol Building in Washington D.C. in May of 1920).

"If each human soul alone is responsible to God for the discharge of its duty, then no human authority has a right to come between that soul and its God, and therefore, all interference with the faith and practice of man in matters of religion, whether that interference be from human government, parental authority, or religious teachers, under the name of priests, pastors, or what-not, is a violation of the sacred

rights of conscience, and not to be tolerated . . . If the Bible is our supreme and exclusive role of duty, then it follows, as a logical necessity, that every man has a right to read and interpret the Bible for himself." (Thomas Henderson Pritchard in Charles Jenkens', *Baptist Doctrines*, pp. 312, 314).

"Each individual, according to the Baptists, must give account of himself to God. Being responsible to God alone, he can have no priestly Mediators or Church between his soul and God. Holding to this religious axiom, that all souls have an equal right of direct access to God, the Baptists rise up in indignation at any effort on the part of domineering ecclesiastics or political demagogues to stifle the divinely-given right of every man to freely express the thoughts of his soul. Tyranny of any kind, be it ecclesiastical or political, is an insult to the Baptist conscience. Baptists may not agree with all who speak and write their opinions, but they will die that all men may have that right. Therefore, Baptists believe in absolute Freedom of Speech, Freedom of the Press, and in Freedom of Conscience and Religious Liberty for all. The Jesuit hammer, in trying to stifle men's consciences, has been broken, and will continue to be broken, on the anvil of the Baptist Conscience ... The Roman Catholic system is built upon the false principle of ecclesiastical totalitarianism, grafted on to Christianity. With Baptists, Christ alone is Head of the Church and Lord of the consciences of Christians." (Wendall Holmes Rone, *The Baptist Faith and Roman Catholicism*, p. 171).

"Although Baptists believe in the divine right of every individual Christian to interpret the Scriptures for himself, and to act freely according to the full persuasion of his own mind, how scantily is this freedom, as a general thing, accorded! Baptist churches have a standard of orthodoxy, partly written, partly traditional, the aim and effect whereof is in many cases to hamper the freedom of individual consciences. The amount of bigotry and intolerance to be found in Baptist churches is, when compared with the fundamental principles of Baptists, appalling!" (Albert H. Newman in Charles Jenkens', *Baptist Doctrines*, p. 280).

The historic devotion to the sacred principle

of freedom of conscience is not only made obvious by the above quotations from Baptist writers, but it is also clearly manifested in the following statements from various Baptist confessions of faith:

"The magistrate is not by virtue of his office to meddle with religion, or matters of conscience, to force or compel to this or that form of religion, or doctrine: but to handle only civil transgressions (Rom. xiii), injuries and wrongs of man against man, in murder, adultery, theft, etc., for Christ only is the king, and lawgiver of the church and conscience (James iv. 12)." (**1612 General Baptist Confession of Faith**).

"Thus we desire to give unto Christ that which is His, and unto all lawful Authority that which is their due, and to owe nothing to any but love, to live quietly and peaceably, as it becometh saints, endeavoring in all things to keep a good conscience, and to do unto every man (of what judgement soever) as we would they should do to us, that as our practice is, so it may prove us to a conscionable, quiet, and harmless people, (no ways dangerous or troublesome to human society) and to labor and work with our hands, that we may not be chargeable to any, but to give to him that needeth both friends and enemies, accounting it more excellent to give than to receive. Also we confess that we know but in part, and that we are ignorant of many things which we desire and seek to know: and if any do show us that friendly part to show us from the Word of God that which we see not, we shall have cause to be thankful to God and them. But if any man shall impose upon us anything that we see not to be commanded by our Lord Jesus Christ, we should in His strength, rather embrace all reproaches and tortures of men, to be stript of all outward comforts, and if it were possible, to die a thousand deaths, rather than do anything against the least tittle of the truth of God, or against the light of our own consciences. And if any shall call what we have said heresy, then do we with the Apostle acknowledge, that after the way they call heresy, worship we the God of our Fathers, disclaiming all heresy (rightly so called) because they are against Christ, and to be steadfast and immovable, always abounding in

obedience to Christ, as knowing our labor shall not be in vain in the Lord." (**1644 London Confession of Faith**).

"The Lord Jesus Christ, who is King of kings and Lord of all by purchase and is judge of quick and dead, is only Lord of conscience; having a peculiar right so to be. He having died for that end, to take away the guilt and to destroy the filth of sin that keeps the consciences of all men in thralldom and bondage till they are set free by His special grace. And therefore He would not have the consciences of men in bondage to, or imposed upon, by any usurpation, tyranny, or command whatsoever, contrary to His revealed will in His Word, which is the only rule He hath left for the consciences of all men to be ruled and regulated, and guided by, through the assistance of His Spirit. And therefore the obedience to any command or decree that is not revealed in or consonant to His Word in the Holy Oracles of Scripture is a betraying of the true liberty of conscience. And the requiring of an implicit faith and an absolute blind obedience, destroys liberty of conscience, and reason also, it being repugnant to both and that no pretended good end whatsoever by any man, can make that action, obedience, or practice, lawful and good, that is not grounded in our upon the authority of Holy Scripture or right reason agreeable thereunto." (**1679 General Baptist Orthodox Creed**).

"The liberty which Christ hath purchased for believers under the gospel, consists in their freedom from the guilt of sin, the condemning wrath of God, and rigor and curse of the law, and in their being delivered from this present evil world, bondage to Satan, and dominion of sin, from the evil of afflictions, the fear and sting of death, the victory of the grave, and everlasting damnation; as also in their free access to God, and their yielding obedience unto Him, not out of slavish fear, but a childlike love, and willing mind. All which were common also to believers under the law for the substance of them; but under the New Testament the liberty of Christians is further enlarged in their freedom from the yoke of the ceremonial law, to which the Jewish church was

subjected, and in greater boldness of access to the throne of the free Spirit of God, than believers under the law did ordinarily partake of.

"God alone is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are in any thing contrary to His Word, or not contained in it. So that to believe such doctrines, or obey such commands out of conscience; and the requiring of an implicit faith, and absolute and blind obedience, is to destroy liberty of conscience and reason also.

"They who upon pretence of Christian liberty, do practice any sin, or cherish and sinful lust, as they do thereby pervert the main design of the grace of the gospel to their own destruction, so they wholly destroy the end of Christian liberty, which is that, being delivered out of the hands of all our enemies, we might serve the Lord without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him, all the days of our lives." **(1689 London / 1742 Philadelphia Confession of Faith).**

"We believe that civil government is of divine appointment, for the interests and good order of human society; and that magistrates are to be prayed for, conscientiously honored and obeyed; except only in things opposed to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ who is the only Lord of the conscience, and the Prince of the kings of the earth," **(1833 New Hampshire Confession of Faith).**

"God alone is Lord of the conscience; and He hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men, which are in anything contrary to His Word, or not contained in it. Civil magistrates being ordained of God, subject in all lawful things commanded by them ought to be yielded by us in the Lord, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake." **(1858 Abstract of Principles).**

"We believe that civil government is of divine appointment for the interests and good order of human society; that magistrates are to be prayed for, conscientiously honored, and obeyed; except in those things opposed to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who is the only Lord of the conscience, and the coming King of kings." **(GARBC Articles of Faith).**

"God alone is Lord of the conscience, and He has left it free from the doctrines and

commandments of men which are contrary to His Word or not contained in it. Church and state should be separate. The state owes to every church protection and full freedom in the pursuit of its spiritual ends. In providing for such freedom no ecclesiastical group or denomination should be favored by the state more than others. Civil government being ordained of God, it is the duty of Christians to render loyal obedience thereto in all things not contrary to the revealed will of God, The church should not resort to the civil power to carry on its work. The gospel of Christ contemplates spiritual means alone for the pursuit of its ends. The state has no right to impose penalties for religious opinions of any kind. The state has no right to impose taxes for the support of any form of religion. A free church in a free state is the Christian ideal, and this implies the right of free and unhindered access to God on the part of all men, and the right to form and propagate opinions in the sphere of religion without interference by the civil power." **(1963 Baptist Faith and Message).**

Although Baptists throughout their history have been firmly committed to the vital principles of individual soul liberty and freedom of conscience, there is among too many contemporary Baptist churches and pastors a legalistic, "fighting Fundamentalist" spirit that poses a serious internal threat to the religious liberty and prosperity of Baptist people everywhere. This is such a prevalent threat that it would almost appear the greatest dangers faced by Baptists today are not to be found outside the camp, but within various circles of Baptist fellowship.

The spirit or attitude warned above is not a "legalistic" spirit in the sense that it denies salvation entirely by God's grace or promotes works-salvation, but in the sense that it treats matters of Christian liberty as matters of Christian obedience, and turns subjective interpretations of the Holy Scriptures . . . interpretations that often go far beyond Scripture and are based upon the poor hermeneutical practice of eisegesis ... into objective rules or laws for all Baptists and, in some cases, for all Christians. It is a "legalistic" spirit in the sense that it mistakes human interpretations of

the Bible for the supreme and final authority of the Bible itself and fails to see that these are not one and the same. At times, it even goes so far as to declare that one cannot be a sound or true Baptist without embracing these human interpretations of God's Word.

This unbiblical and "un-Christian" spirit or attitude is the spirit of the "fighting Fundamentalist" in the sense that it uses fear, threats, intimidation, and other bully tactics to try to force others to accept its subjective interpretations of the Holy Scriptures as "*ex cathedra*" pronouncements, and labels those who cannot in good conscience buy into these

teachings as "heretics," "infidels," "apostates," and "sowers of discord among brethren." In this process, the fruit of the Spirit is all but forgotten and the works of the flesh are made manifest in a sickening, repulsive way.

ORDERING INFORMATION

The price on *The Great Conflict* is \$11.00 per copy. On orders of 5 or more, the cost is only \$8.00 each and will include a free copy of *Random Remarks!* (All orders postpaid). *Random Remarks* is \$5:00 per copy. You may order the books from *The Historic Baptist*, PO Box 741, Bloomfield, NM 87413.

AN OPEN LETTER TO A COUPLE OF DECEIVED CHARISMATICS

(Editor's Note: In 1973 I wrote the following letter to the parents of a little boy who had died after his parents refused him insulin though he was a diabetic. Supposedly, he had been healed by a traveling preacher who skipped the country when the boy died. I never received an answer of any kind from these folk).

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Parker,

I read today (Sunday, Sept. 2, 1973) of you and of your son, Wesley, who recently died. The *Peoria Journal Star* carried an Associated Press story by Linda Deutsch.

Please accept my sympathy for your situation, for I perceive by your statements in the paper that you have been deceived by Satan, causing you to let your son die when a simple shot of insulin would have kept him alive. Only Satan would have caused you to squirt that life preserving insulin into a wastebasket, ignoring the plain words of Jesus who declared, "***They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick.***" Your son was sick and willing to take that which the physician had prescribed for him. Under Satanic deception, you have taken his life into your hands and robbed him of it.

As you sit there in a cell, you will have time to

think. May you pray for wisdom and spiritual perception. Satan has blinded your eyes to several important truths. May I point them out?

"TRY THE SPIRITS"

Satan had deluded you into believing that the impulses and feelings that you received were of God. You need to be aware that there is a grave necessity to "***believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world***" (*I John 4:1*). Where is that traveling preacher who "appeared at church, anointed Wesley Parker's head with oil, and prayed in the trance-like mystery of tongues?" (AP article, *Peoria Journal Star*, Sept. 2, 1973). According to the article, the "authorities are still seeking" this man. Is he of God or is he of Satan?

Where is the one who, while this traveling preacher prayed, cried, "Praise the Lord? Wesley is healed!?" Who deceived that individual? Surely it must have been that master of deceit, Satan, whose "***false apostles and deceitful workers***" have been guilty of "***transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light***" (*II Corinthians 11:13, 14*). Your son was not healed! That person who cried out that he was

is an accomplice in his death. God does not lie. That person was lying under the influence of the father of liars—the Devil (John 8:44).

That you were and are deceived is revealed by your statement: "God gave us the faith that Wesley was healed" (AP article). Is God a deceiver? Did he lead you to believe that Wesley was healed when he knew all the time that Wesley would be dead in three days? You charge God with a deception. He is not guilty. Satan deceived you again.

The fact that Satan had you in his control is again manifest when, as you wondered what would happen if Wesley's daily urine test was positive, you say: "The Holy Spirit welled up in me. And I said, 'Even if it's positive, that's the work of the devil, and I won't believe it.'" Well, Mr. Parker, the test was positive, and it was no lie. The Devil used you as his pawn to deceive an innocent 11-year-old boy when you declared: "Wesley, this is a lie of Satan." Did you not know, Mr. Parker, that Satan **"was a murderer from the beginning (John 8:44)?"**

You should have tried the spirit that "welled up" in you. It was not of God. God would not have deceived you or caused you to deceive your son.

THE PURPOSE OF MIRACLES AND TONGUES

The quotes from you folks in the AP article indicate that you have also been deceived as to the purpose of miracles and tongues. The Bible is very specific as to the purpose of each.

MIRACLES

The purpose of miracles was that unbelievers **"may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins" (Mark 2:1-12)**. They were manifest that men might **"know"** that Christ was **"a teacher come from God" (John 3:1-16)**. They were given for the purpose of **"confirming the word" of the apostles. (Mark 16:17-20)**. When the apostles preached, God was **"also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will" (Heb. 2:4)**. These signs were called **"the signs of an apostle (II Cor. 12:12)**. **"And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders**

and signs were done by the apostles" (Acts 2:43). God had men, moved by the Holy Spirit to write down a record of these signs so that those reading the Scriptures **"might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing they might have life through His name" (John 20:30, 31)**.

TONGUES

The purpose of tongues was clearly demonstrated on the day of Pentecost. The Lord's people were commanded to tarry in Jerusalem until they were empowered to be witnesses unto all the world. When that power came and a multitude gathered to see what was happening, **"they were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galileans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? . . . we do hear them speak in our own tongues the wonderful works of God" (Acts 2:7-11)**.

The gift of tongues was set in the church for the purpose of witnessing to those who speak other languages, not for the purpose of praying over the sick who speak the same language as the one praying.

Did anyone interpret the traveling preacher's prayer when he prayed in tongues? **". . . if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church" (I Cor. 14:28)**.

According to the AP article, Mrs. Parker, you "prayed in tongues for the first time" on June 6, 1965. This was on a Sunday, I believe. Was it in the church? **"Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law . . . for it is a shame for a woman to speak in the church" (I Cor. 14:34, 35)**.

Paul declared: **"In the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand in an unknown tongue" (I Cor. 14:19)**.

THE DURATION OF THE GIFTS OF TONGUES AND HEALING

Mr. and Mrs. Parker, the article further

revealed that you have been deceived as to the duration of these gifts of the Holy Spirit that were set in the church.

"Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant," said Paul (I Cor. 12:1). In the last verse of the same chapter, Paul said: **"But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet show I unto you a more excellent way" (v-31.)**

In chapter 13, Paul tells what this **"more excellent way"** is. He tells us that when **"that which is perfect"** was come, all the spiritual gifts set in the church would cease except three—**"faith, hope, love" (v-8-13).** **"That which is perfect"** is the Bible, **"the perfect law of liberty" (James 1:25).** Peter calls the scriptures a **"more sure word of prophecy" (II Peter 1:18-21).** He declared it is even surer than a voice from heaven.

"And now abideth faith, hope, charity [love], these three" (I Cor. 13:13). Not two, not four, but **three** spiritual gifts remain in the church today. The gift of healing which this disappearing traveling preacher sought to exercise would make five. God inspired Paul to say, **"faith, hope, charity, these THREE."**

WHENCE THEN THE MIRACLES AND TONGUES OF TODAY?

I am sure you are now asking: "Mr. Camp, what about the tongues? What about the miracles that are worked? If not of God, of whom?"

THE DEVIL IS A MIRACLE WORKER

Many come who work in the pattern of Satan demonstrating **"all power and signs and lying wonders" (II Thes. 2:9).** **"They are spirits of devils working miracles" (Rev. 16:14).** They may even make **"fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men"** deceiving them **"by the means of these miracles"** which they have the power to perform (Rev. 13:13-16).

Paul declares that **"such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. 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" (II Cor. 11:13-15). Jesus said: **"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" (Matt. 7:22, 23).**

NOT A DENIAL OF GOD'S POWER

Mr. and Mrs. Parker, please do not construe this letter to be a refutation of the power of God. I believe God is all-powerful. Satan is very powerful, and the evidence is that he has deceived you causing you to believe that Wesley was healed, that his urine test was a Satanic lie, that he would rise in four days after death, that he would rise after four days in the grave. He will rise again. That resurrection will either be at the return of Christ in the air (I Cor. 15:23) or at the end of Christ's reign on earth (Rev. 20:1-15).

Mr. & Mrs. Parker, I pray that you might study the Scriptures presented in this letter and give serious consideration to these things set forth. The Bible has the answer (II Tim. 3:16, 17).

Sincerely, Wayne Camp

P.S. If I may be of help to you, please feel free to write.

Bouquets and Brickbats

KENTUCKY: I am writing this letter for two reasons. First, I want to tell you how much I have enjoyed the last few issues of the Grace Proclamator. Your series on Baptist Giants of the Past has been excellent. I believe your newsletter is the best Sovereign Grace, local church paper I know of. Most Landmark Baptists today hold extreme positions concerning the church that are not defensible scripturally, historically, or logically. Your paper is one of the few exceptions to this I know of. Please, keep the trumpet sounding!

Second, I would like to give you the addresses of a couple of pastor-friends of mine who could greatly benefit from your paper. Sadly, I see so many "Calvinistic" Baptists going

into the Reformed Baptist camp and leading toward their Protestant concepts of the church. That's why I think your paper is so valuable in our day and age.

OHIO: Please add my name to your mailing list.

INDIANA: HURRAH FOR YOU ON YOUR CHRISTMAS WEBSITE. I have not observed it from the time I was 15. Dad struggled with it and asked me if I would mind not doing it. I said no. Then before going off to Bible College I studied it and continued to do so for 4 years. The proof is there for seekers.

I was doing research on another paper on it and saw your article. Thank you. I had one written years ago and some one stole it and must have destroyed it. It was thousands of hours of research with a bibliography that was extensive. I have decided to write another and I will have some of the same arguments as you but approach it in yet another way that I have found to be very effective. Thanks again.

SPAIN: I'm writing to answer your article. First of all I must say I disagree with it although you got some good and interesting points that deserves further discussion.

The command by Jesus: It's true, Jesus never told us to celebrate his birthday, he actually never told us to celebrate easter or pentecost, but we still do it. Jesus told us to baptise people and to celebrate the Eucharist ("This is my body...this is my blood... do this in memory of me"). So the commandment Jesus gave us means we can't do anything or teach anything he taught us? I don't think so; Jesus came at a particular time, and now times have changed. Jesus never preached against abortion, I guess it didn't exist in those days, and yet every christian church defends life of the unborn, because we are sure Jesus would have done that if he was fissionally on earth. Actually he still is, if you remember the scripture, when Saul was an enemy of the church Jesus told him why are you against ME? (I apologize, english is not my native language so I don't know the exact translation). So I guess Jesus left his Church as a sacrament of

himself, the church he founded is the Catholic Church (Universal Church) with a pope (St. Peter).

The date: Since no one really knew Jesus birthday they just picked one. The pick was during the northern's hemisphere winter because it wanted to represent that God came to the world at the world's darkness. And since in late december you got the longest nights in the northern hemisphere, the 25th of december seemed a good idea. You also say it used to be a pagan holiday, then the decision of the Church at those days was brilliant, because people started to forgive their pagan past.

About the Christmas tree: That's an invention of the anglo saxon countries. In latin countries such as Spain, Italy and Latin America we didn't used a Christmas tree until we started copying you, instead we used a nativity recreation, with images of Mary, Joseph, baby Jesus, the wise men and the shepherds. It has nothing to do with the celebration of Christ's birth.

As a Catholic I'm honoured to know the real meaning of the word Christmas. In spanish the translation is Navidad and in portuguese is Nöel (both meaning nativity), so the word Christmas is a problem of your language and not of the celebration.

And finally as a catholic I'm surprised about your ignorance about the celebration of the Holy Mass. Mass is a memorial of Jesus' sacrifice. Because you know nothing about Catholic theology I'll explain you that the word memorial means "to make present" which is an idea different from remembering. In Mass we make present the sacrifice of Christ. Christ sacrificed himself once, but we make it present every day (except in good friday). In the celebration of Mass we fulfill Jesus command "do this in memory of me" so it means, make the Eucharist present. And as you know the Eucharist is the celebration of Easter. Jesus celebrated Easter before Easter, just like the israelites celebrated Passover before Passover.

I'd like to end this letter reminding you that by insulting Jesus' creation you are insulting Jesus himself, and that the Catholic Church is the only Church founded by Jesus himself. The papal institution was Jesus' command, when he told

Peter he was going to be the rock of the church. If you check the catholic liturgy for Cristmas or Christ's Mass you'll see that we celebrate both, Jesus birthday and Jesus promise of his return to Earth.

WWW: I found what you wrote to be very interesting. It points out many things people do not know about mixing our culture with our religious beliefs. You have written a very precise and scholarly work here. My compliments to you.

From the reading I was not sure of what faith you were. A Baptist perhaps?
In the grip of grace.

PLANNING TO MOVE? If at all possible, please notify us three weeks in advance of your change of address so that we may keep your paper coming. It costs us 50 cents to get your new address from the Postal Service and that may take long enough that two papers are returned at a cost of \$1.00 before we get the correction. This will mean you miss one or two papers. Your help in saving us this expense will be appreciated.

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[Editor's note: Due to a bad case of flu that kept the editor inactive for over a week, the services scheduled for January had to be rescheduled. I am sorry for the inconvenience but it could not be helped. See you in Brandon Feb. 23-27, 2000 RWC