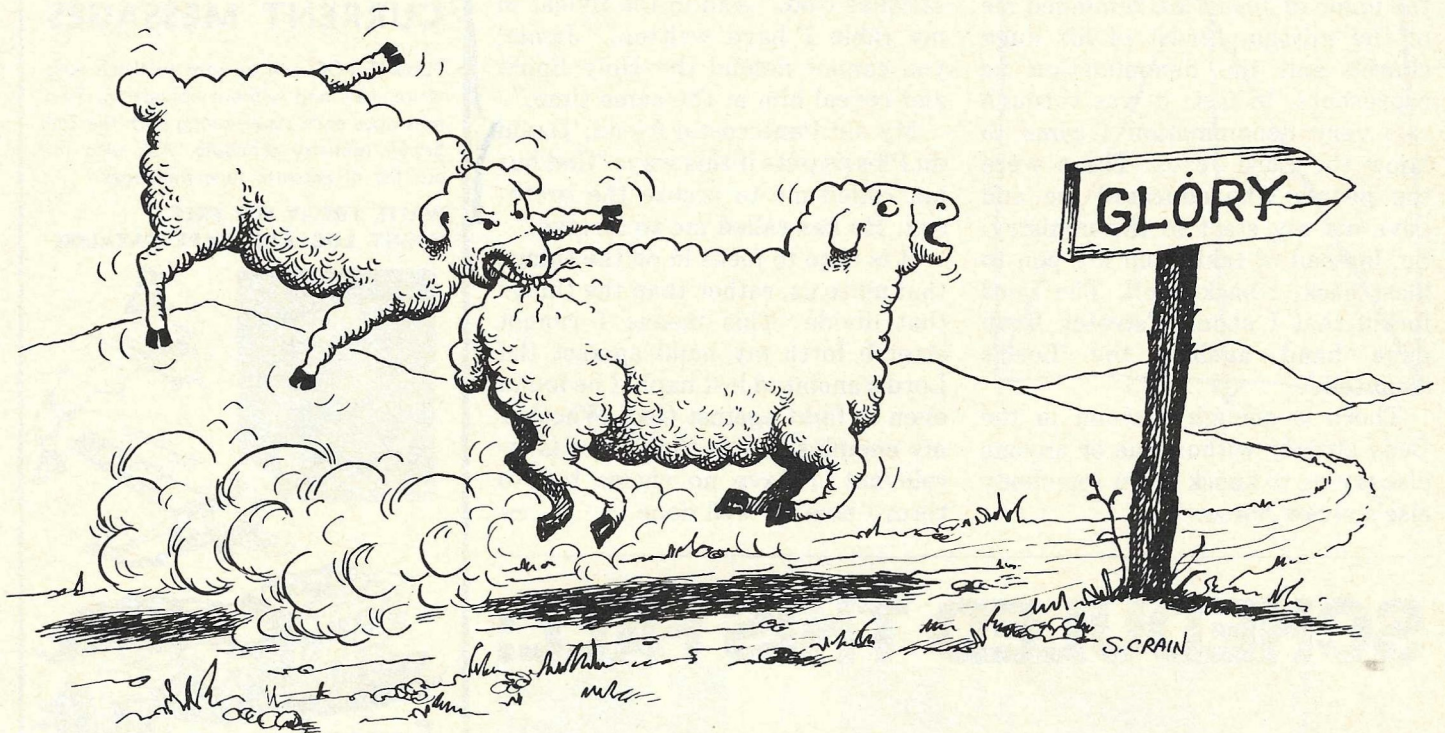


the last word



Jamie Buckingham

I HAD JUST finished speaking to a large group in the Atlanta Civic Auditorium. The subject was "Restoration"—the fresh move of God's Spirit today.

Still flushed with the excitement of ministering under God's anointing, I stepped off the stage to speak to the usual flock of well-wishers.

"Thank you...yes, God is good... yes, I remember you from Cincinnati...it's nice to know your husband reads *Logos Journal*...so glad to see you again...sorry, I don't have time to read your 400 page manuscript before dinner..."

Suddenly I was looking into the narrowed eyes of a very intense man. His lips were pursed and grayish in color. His Bible was open to Peter's warning about false teachers.

"You almost told these people to

come out of their dead denominational churches," he said in a thin voice.

"You're right," I answered. "I almost did. But I didn't."

He pointed his finger at the Bible. "But why didn't you tell them the denominational church is Babylon? They need to be warned before it is too late."

I suspected I was about to waste my breath, but I could not let the question go begging.

"I'll tell you why," I said. "For the same reason King David refused to take action against King Saul, even though Saul had turned his back on God. David knew it was God who set Saul in his position; and it was God who would have to remove him. Besides, Saul gave David his start in the ministry. When Saul turned apostate, David's soldiers wanted to take his life. David prevented it. 'For who can stretch forth his hand

against the Lord's anointed, and be guiltless.'"

As I suspected, the man didn't hear me. He walked away, muttering something about preachers who had lost their salt. But the principle remains valid. God will not hold us guiltless if we take up the sword against his anointed—even if they are attempting to kill us.

Recently the pastor of one of the world's largest evangelical churches lashed out against those who speak in tongues. He was quoted on the front page of the *Dallas Times-Herald* as saying that speaking in tongues is "senseless, idiotic, heretical, divisive and hurtful."

He added, "Not in the history of Christianity is there an example of a great Christian leader who ever spoke in an unknown tongue."

"Stop the women from speaking

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in tongues," he said with insolence, "and you'll never hear about it again."

Of course that's just the kind of bait I rise to. My salivary glands worked overtime as I tasted the words I would use to defend the Holy Spirit. After all, I had the facts working for me—and the Bible, too.

Then God reminded me of the great work this pastor has done in the name of Jesus. He reminded me of the mission thrust of his huge church and the denomination he represents. In fact, it was through this very denomination I came to know the Lord Jesus. These were the people who educated me and gave me my start in the ministry. So, instead of taking up my pen to blast back, I backed off. The Lord forbid that I should "stretch forth mine hand against the Lord's anointed."

There is enough division in the Body already without me or anyone else trying to knock down somebody else's straw horse.

If a man does not agree with my doctrine, that is his problem. Not mine. Like Nehemiah, why should I come down from the task God has given me, to debate silly questions. Instead of proving him wrong I should love him, pray for him, encourage him where he is right and forgive him where he is ignorant.

A wise man once told me, "To be right satisfies the ego. To be kind satisfies God." And in the flyleaf of my Bible I have written, "Jamie, you cannot defend the Holy Spirit and reveal him at the same time."

My old Pentecostal friend, David du Plessis puts it this way. "God has not called me to accuse the brethren. He has called me to forgive."

It is time to focus in on the things that unite us, rather than the things that divide. This means I cannot stretch forth my hand against the Lord's anointed lest haply I be found even to fight against God. Whether my enemies return that grace is irrelevant. I have no choice but to return love for evil done. α