

Persecution—Or Suppression of the Truth?

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There exists within the Christian community certain groups of individuals who think that they do God a service by attacking other Christians and their differing beliefs. Not only does the Sabbath-keeping community of believers attack others who believe 99% or more the same thing, something that should never be, but also attacks on the Sabbath-keeping community are coming from the outside.

Our brother Calvin Burrell, in his editorial in this edition, rightly points out that we who accept and obey 9 of the 10 commandments of God should find ways to work together to spread the Good News of the coming Kingdom of God. We should not dwell on the very small doctrinal differences that we have—allowing, instead, God the room to correct error as HE sees fit.

However, there are some who believe that they alone have the truth. They go out of their way to interfere with the efforts of others, whose beliefs differ from theirs, to preach the gospel and make converts to Christ. One such individual who works against other Christian groups is a man named James Kieferdorf (“JK” hereafter) of Dallas, Texas.

JK seems to work in tandem with a “Dr.” Robert L. Sumner of “The Biblical Evangelist.” He has also published his materials via “Media Ministries Outreach” which is currently under the direction of Richard and Cheryl Schatz. At times he has written under the pseudonym “rushtyping.” Whatever the forum or name, the purpose seems to always be the same—attack those with beliefs he does not consider to “at least meet the basic criteria of orthodoxy,” as defined by JK, Sumner and others in their small band.

The main thrust of JK’s “ministry” seems to be to attack any Church that teaches that the Bible does not teach the existence of the “Holy Trinity” as defined by them to be

the existence of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit combined as a triune God. These attacks never come with proof of the existence of the “Holy Trinity.” Instead, the truth of that dogma is assumed by JK in all of his writings to the various media outlets, upon which platform he then presumes to relegate organizations who teach differently to the realm of heretics.

There are numerous instances shown via internet searches of JK’s name that he both writes, and encourages others to write, to media complaining about the teaching of “heresy” by various Church of God groups, including Christian Educational Ministries, the United Church of God, Church of God International and pretty much any other of the Sabbath-keeping groups that have come into existence since the death of Herbert W. Armstrong.

One such website to which the reader can turn for information on JK is:

http://mmoutreachinc.com/cult_groups/kieferdorf.html. JK’s venomous attacks on the various groups is undisguised. JK does not even get some of the doctrines to which he takes exception properly stated, which gives rise to the probability that he doesn’t even understand what those groups teach.

More of JK’s incessant ranting against certain Sabbatarian organizations can be found as recently as this year at Sumner’s website:

<http://www.biblicalevangelist.org/index.php?id=517&view=Guest+Editorial>.

As usual, the thrust of JK’s actions is to bombard, and encourage others to bombard, media outlets that televise or broadcast the evangelistic programs of many of the Churches of God with letters demanding the shutting down of their programs. In the above recent article, “Dr.” Sumner lauds JK for taking action to contact many television outlets and “*doing a tremendous job telephoning and*

writing these stations at his own expense, giving documentation of their heresies, and very kindly begging them to take these heretics off their stations.” Sumner then goes on to list many of the Church of God groups stating this, “Although there are some details in these Armstrong groups’ teachings that differ from the old Herbert and Garner Ted Armstrong doctrines, these new cults and others hold to the primary ones, such as a denial of the eternal Sonship of Christ, the denial of the full deity of Jesus Christ (i.e. The Living Church of God, The Church of God Internationally affiliated associates, Wade Cox’s Christian Churches of God, and Anthony Buzzard’s Restoration Fellowship).”

The problem with JK, Sumner and those of his ilk are that they have set themselves up as arbiters of what passes for “the Faith once delivered.” A doctrine that is not in accordance with their beliefs is, by *their* standard, heresy, and worthy of their concerted action to silence the truth as understood by the various Churches of God.

Admittedly, some Churches of God groups have brought some of the venom on themselves. They’ve done this by calling teachings of mainstream Christianity “damnable lies.” These types of statements should not be among those used by Christians. As I stated in a previous editorial, there is not a one among us who has not learned that they were in error on some point of doctrine in the past. The truth in that statement is that, if we were doctrinally wrong before, then we can be just as wrong today. JK and those like him are just another set of self-proclaimed Christians who don’t understand that truth.

An interesting point related to JK, Sumner and others is that the largest Sabbath-keeping organizations, i.e., Seventh Day Adventists, Church of God Seventh Day, and Seventh Day Baptists, seem to have escaped their notice despite nearly identical doctrines. Most likely this is because their evangelistic efforts are primarily done through the print media, local evangelistic campaigns and with direct face-to-face teaching about the Gospel.

There are several scriptures that come to mind that are relevant to this situation. The first is in Mark 9:38-42: “And John answered him, saying, Master, we saw one

casting out demons in Your name, and he does not follow us. And we forbade him, because he does not follow us.

“But Jesus said, Do not forbid him. For there is no one who shall do a work of power in My name who can lightly speak evil of Me. For he who is not against us is for us.

“For whoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in My name, because you belong to Christ, truly I say to you, He shall not lose his reward.

“And whoever shall offend one of these little ones who believe in Me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged around his neck and he were cast into the sea.”

The context is found just after Jesus had just admonished the disciples to receive little children. The point here is that there were people doing a work for God who did not follow the Jesus the disciples followed and Jesus told them to leave those people alone because they were on the same side.

There is another relevant scripture which is found in Acts 5:38-39: “And now I say to you, Withdraw from these men and let them alone. For if this counsel or this work is of men, it will come to nothing. But if it is of God, you cannot overthrow it, lest perhaps you be found even to fight against God.” Gamaliel, the teacher of Saul who became the apostle Paul, wisely instructed the leaders in the Sanhedrin to leave Peter and the apostles alone. Why? Because they could not know for certain that they would not be working against God.

In this case, JK and his band are ignoring the plain admonition of scriptures to leave those who are preaching Christ alone because they ARE preaching Christ and it isn’t known who has the exact truth.

What should we do, then? Two things come to mind. First, pray for these misguided men who have not learned some of the simplest things of scripture. Second, where we find these media broadcasts and telecasts, offset the evil by writing or calling the stations carrying them and thanking them for allowing the good news of Christ’s Kingdom to be preached through them.