

# COLLISION COURSE

By

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***“He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem”*** (Luke 9:51)

The light of truth and the darkness of error are incompatible. It was because Jesus spoke the truth that he got into trouble with the religious leaders of his day (John 8:43-59). when he set his face toward Jerusalem his disciples tried to restrain Him, knowing that to present His message among the tradition-bound scholars was to invite collision from which there could be no escape (Luke 18:31-38).

It was not for His personality that He was opposed, ridiculed and scourged. It was not because of a sectarian nor independent attitude that He was rejected, abused and killed. It was not because He failed to express proper love to brethren that men plotted His betrayal and crucifixion. It was because He spoke the truth, and He was the truth, and truth is unwelcome to all who are bound by tradition.

Whoever starts out on a course to pursue the truth and disseminate it is straightway going to run up against a variety of error which cannot exist in the light of truth. One who sets his mind to get at the truth has set out on a collision course. He doesn't aim at collision; he doesn't look for any obstacle with which to collide; he may hope and pray with all his heart to be spared the collision; but it cannot be avoided. The course of truth is a collision course in this “present evil world” and the only way to prevent the collision is to veer off from truth and compromise or remain everlastingly silent with the truth hidden in his own bosom.

A century or so ago there was a vigorous movement to restore the church to original truth and purity. The motto of this “restoration movement” was: “where the scriptures speak we speak and where the scriptures are silent we are silent.” Traditional errors and denominational walls began to fall to make way for a Biblical approach to the gospel and churches by the hundreds began to spring up under the banner of Christ. Freed from tradition of age-old denominations and their biases these churches moved for a while in the direction of the original apostolic church. During that time it was considered a mark of courage to collide with tradition and majority vote in favor of the sterner truth of the Scripture.

When such men as Luther, Wesley, Campbell and Stone set out to “speak where the scriptures speak” they knew full well that they were on a collision course, and that such could not be avoided. And collisions came. One-by-one leaders in the movement found themselves eased out of their respective denominations, disfellowshipped by their district churches and finally fired from their pulpits. They found solace in the fellowship with

each other, and in the fact that they were on a course to uncover and establish truth. They were willing to suffer the consequences.

Earnestly they faced the stigma of their so-called heresy in order that they might more nearly imitate the Christ and the apostles in the hope that many others would have the courage to take the same course. Some did. Most did not.

Eventually, however, as the movement sought recognition and status among the world's denominations, it developed or acquired its own traditions. Satisfied that the gospel and pattern of the church were fully restored, the movement became static. It ceases to move. It entrenched along certain lines considerably short of the goal, and these lines became its traditional boundaries.

Today it speaks of the "restoration tradition." while denying denominational status, it speaks of "our people" and "our work." The movement is now divided into several factions, each having nothing to do with the other. Each faction applied terms such as "loyal" and "New Testament" to their own particular tradition. Communities which do not have a church that follows one "tradition" are said not to have a "loyal New Testament" church. In other words in each faction has become, in a practical sense, a denomination in itself.

Instead of a movement from one stage to a more enlightened stage, the idea of "movement" is to expand its present retarded stage. This has been the fatal decision of every such movement. Luther led in a great reformation movement, but his followers too quickly settled down to perpetuate the immature concepts to which they had grown. The same can be said of the Restoration Movement.

The movement made courageous strides in re-establishing Christian baptism as the immersion of penitent believers and in restoring the regular observance of the Lord's Supper. I say "courageous strides" because tradition had a firm grasp on these doctrines and at every turn to get back to the truth concerning them there were collisions with those who by habit and faith held their traditions to be correct.

Tradition still holds a firm grasp on some basic doctrines such as the ultimate destruction of the unbeliever and the resurrection and ultimate life in eternity of the redeemed. Most Christians seem to be unaware of what Bible scholars have discovered about these things since the Reformation.

Most of Christendom holds to the traditional concept of soul-life beyond the grave in clear contrast to Biblical teaching of the resurrection of the dead and creation of a new earth for human life. Having missed this ultimate and basic purpose of God in the scheme of the Gospel, it is no wonder that there is no more vital interest in propagating it than the average person indicates.

But to move toward the light of the Scriptures is to collide with tradition. And collisions are unpleasant.

The greatest temptation then is to avoid doctrinal and theological conclusions, to consider them unimportant or else to keep silent. But one, to follow the Christ, must be prepared to deny himself, to put his hands to the plow and not look back, to be considered an enemy for telling the truth, to pray “Thy will be done” and to rest with joy and peace upon the promise, “Lo, I am with you.”

With events shaping up toward the rule of antichrist and the advent of our own King, men want to know what realities lie behind the faith we call Christian. It is not a question of “which denomination” or of “how can we get together in unity?” It is a question of “how can I face peril and persecution? What is the meaning of redemption? (Redeemed from what? For what?) How can I stand in the Day of Judgment? What is this thing of ‘eternal life?’ Am I ready for His coming?”

Facing these issues, as we surely are in these last days, inquiring minds have no use for bickering over slogans and unwritten creeds and claims to loyalty, all of which obscure the issue and are irrelevant to modern questions. All history and revelation shouts that the Lord is coming soon, that judgment is near and the question of DESTINY must be answered NOW. In answering we must not be bound to loyalty to traditional party lines nor to party personalities. The answer must be most emphatic and clear cut in the manner of the plainest Scripture. If it comes into collision with tradition, then so be it. We set our face steadfastly to the task as witnesses to the truth. The loyalty which counts is that loyalty to Him who is the way, the truth and the life, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; who only hath immortality, who alone has the words of eternal life!

## **JUST FOR YOU-TH**

A short-short story entitled: A NICE BOY

Mrs. Doe said, “He seems like a nice boy.” But she didn’t want Jane going steady with him.

“So, what’s wrong with my going steady with a nice boy?”

“Lots of things,” Mrs. Doe said. And the lecture began. “In the first place it gives you a narrow view of young men. You just get to know ONE boy’s character. It makes you one-sided. In the second place it puts an emotional strain on a girl and boy to be together so much. I know you don’t understand about that...” But Jane did understand. She thought that if her mother only knew what a thrill it was to be with Harry, she wouldn’t say that again. “And in the third place,” Mrs. Doe continued. “It leads to marriage when you may not be suited for each other or ready for it. And besides...”

“And besides, Mother, we’ve been all through this before. You said yourself that Harry’s a nice boy. I don’t see anything wrong with dating him, just because he’s not a member of our church.”

“Well, ail right.” And Mrs. Doe gave in. “But just see that you don’t get serious over him.”

“Oh, Mother!” was Jane’s classic conclusion to the discussion.

That had been January, during the snow, and the excitement of dates at the basketball game. Then it was June, and Jane went to see the minister in his study.

“I knew you and Harry were seeing a lot of each other,” he said. “But I had no idea you were contemplating marriage.”

“Well, it does appear to be a bit sudden,” Jane tried to sound casual. “But we’ve been going steady for months. And we’re both sure that this is really it. I mean there just couldn’t be anyone else. So we have decided to go ahead with the marriage, then I can help Harry in college this fall.”

You know the Bible teaches that a Christian should only marry ‘in the Lord.’ Has Harry decided to become a Christian?”

“Well, we’ve talked about it.” But she didn’t mention how cold and silent Harry became the night she mentioned Christianity, and how, later on, she had passionately proven to him that her religion wouldn’t stand between them! She said, “I’m sure Harry believes in God and he’s promised to go to church with me. I just know that after we’re married I can get him to change and accept Christ too.”

“Umm-huh.” It was an old song to the preacher. A girl expecting to sell a boy on something which she took so lightly that she could betray it willingly and purposely. He thought of flatly refusing to perform the ceremony, but this was simply unheard of. The girl’s parents were faithful members, and they all agreed that Harry was a nice boy!

It was another January, and Jane was back for a visit during Harry’s college vacation.

“And that’s another thing,” Jane said. “He usually wants to sleep on Sunday morning instead of going to church. I finally quit saying anything about it. He just isn’t interested.”

“Oh well, give him time,” Mrs. Doe tried to be optimistic. “At least he doesn’t discourage you from going, does he?”

“Just to be honest I haven’t gone much myself. In fact I haven’t been going at all. Things just aren’t like I thought they would be. Harry’s – well, he seems different. He...” Her voice ended in a quiver. She was on the verge of tears, as she started from the room.

“You’ll get adjusted,” Mrs. Doe assured her, unaware of her daughter’s tears. “After all,” she added. “I’m sure Harry’s a nice boy.”

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