

# Religious News

by J.C. Philpot

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*The author criticizes the practice of flattery and deception in modern religious news and periodicals, arguing that it is not scriptural and leads to barrenness and death.*

**Scripture:** Job 32:22, Proverbs 14:15, 1 Thessalonians 2:5, 1 Thessalonians 5:21, 1 John 4:1

**Topics:** "Spiritual Discernment", "Religious Deception"

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## Description

J.C. Philpot emphasizes the importance of focusing on spiritual edification rather than being consumed by the gossip and news-mongering prevalent in the religious world. He cautions against blindly accepting the reports of church events and movements, highlighting the need to discern whether the Spirit of God truly rests upon them. Philpot challenges the practice of lavishing flatteries on ministers and questions the authenticity and fruitfulness of such deceptive practices, urging for a return to truth and sincerity in religious publications.

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## Transcript

Religious news

by J. C. Philpot

Moving on in our own quiet track, and simply seeking, so far as the Lord gives us grace and wisdom, the spiritual edification of our readers, we rarely take any public notice of the various events and movements which are passing in what is called the religious world. Several reasons combine to induce us to observe this course, and to close our pages against the introduction into them of religious news.

First, we have long seen the evil of that spirit of gossip and news-mongering everywhere so prevalent, and are therefore determined, with God's help, not to do anything to foster it. Secondly, we are well convinced that if we once opened our pages to these subjects, as we could not always secure truthful and faithful accounts, being necessarily dependent for them upon the communications of correspondents, we should soon be overwhelmed with a flood of replies, explanations, contradictions, etc., which we could not well reject without unfairness, or insert without these weeds stifling our crop.

But, thirdly, we have found in our experience that in all this "news of the churches," as it is called, there is little else, spiritually viewed, but barrenness and death. It may, indeed, for the moment amuse our carnal mind, and gratify that love of news which is so deeply imbedded in us all, to read what is going on in the

churches; and could we believe the truth of the glowing accounts thus presented to our view, and that the Spirit of God was really at work in the various chapel-openings, anniversaries, tea-meetings, etc., recorded, it would be matter of rejoicing to our inmost soul.

But when we know, not only by our own observation, but the general confession of all possessed of spiritual discernment, at what a low ebb vital godliness everywhere is, and see how shallow and superficial, to say the least, the religion contended for in these "newsy" periodicals is, what barrenness and death then appear stamped upon the whole! We do not impute willful deception to the writers and collectors of this religious news, nor doubt the truth of their statements, as recording certain events and facts. But, what we doubt is whether the power, the presence, and the manifest blessing of the Spirit of God rest upon these chapel-openings, etc., as they represent and would make us believe.

Truth is all of a piece, consistent with itself and with the word of God. It is 'the simple' who believes every word. (Prov. 14:15.) We are bidden to prove all things, and hold fast only that which is good; (1 Thess. 5:21;) not to believe every spirit, but to try the spirits whether they are of God. (1 John 4:1.) We are bound, therefore, to try and examine the accounts thus presented to us, and hold them up to the searching light of truth. When, then, we read the lavish flatteries bestowed upon minister after minister--a point that we shall have presently to speak more upon, the glowing coloring, to say the least, thrown over almost every recorded event, the suppression of everything unfavorable, and the strong 'party spirit' pervading the whole, we may well ask the question--Is this scriptural?

Does the word of truth sanction this giving flattering titles to men? (Job 32:22.) Paul could say, "For we never used flattering speech, as you know, or had greedy motives--God is our witness. We didn't seek praise from people, from you or from anyone else." (1 Thess. 2:5, 6.) Can these time-serving publications, for so we must call them, filled as they are with the grossest flattery, say the same? Are the Acts of the ancient Apostles written on the same plan as the acts of the modern apostles? Does the Holy Spirit ever lavish praises upon the gigantic abilities of Paul, the wonderful eloquence of Peter, the sweet consolation which distilled from the lips of Barnabas? We know that these men of God were thus endowed, for they made it manifest in every place by the sweet savor they carried with them of the knowledge of Christ. But our modern apostles--what would we know of their gifts or their graces, their gigantic abilities, their wonderful eloquence, their sermons so full of consolation, and the blessings which fall in such copious showers with every sermon--unless we were told so in the pages of some religious periodical?

We shall, doubtless, be considered by many very severe thus to speak of these religious newspapers, for they are really nothing else--and very bigoted and narrow-minded, because we cannot receive with implicit faith the glad tidings which they bring of the power and presence of the Lord being in their midst. To justify, therefore, ourselves in thus speaking of the religious news presented for our acceptance, we will give some extracts from a periodical calling itself the "Gospel Guide;" and let us see into what paths of truth and blessedness it would lead us were we to follow its guidance.

"In conclusion, I would say, for one, I am proud of Mr. James Wells, for in him we see the patriarch's abstraction from the world, the priest's devotion to the altar of divine service, the prophet's communings with the spirit-world, the apostle's self-abnegation in seeking the good of others; indeed, in him is concentrated the zeal of Wycliffe, the daring of Luther, the sagacity of Calvin, the imagery of Bunyan, the discrimination of Toplady, and the spirit of the Master."

What wretched flattery is this? If, your stomach can bear it, do, good reader, read this extract again. Was there ever a man or a minister, who lived and breathed the breath of life, that combined in himself the patriarch's abstraction from the world, the priest's devotion, the prophet's communings with the spirit-world, and the apostle's self-denial? Wherever was there one man in whom were concentrated the best qualities of Wycliffe, Luther, Calvin, Bunyan, Toplady, and all crowned with the spirit of Christ?

Does the author really believe what he writes? Is it his calm, deliberate judgment that Mr. James Wells is that unheard-of paragon of all natural and spiritual excellence, that phoenix who combines in himself the greatest gifts and graces of the greatest saints and divines who ever lived? If he believes this, if this be his serious and deliberate opinion, what amazing ignorance of everything naturally or spiritually great, to think that any one man, can combine in himself such a constellation of heavenly gifts--gifts and graces not to be reckoned up by simple addition, but to be calculated by the multiplication-table, for if the shining qualities of ten men meet together in one man, he is not only ten times as great as any one of them, but a hundred times, from the strength and force of their combination and concentration.

If he does not believe it, and writes all this bombast merely to please Mr. Wells--who, by-the-bye, if he has but the common feelings of an honest man, would, we would think, kick such a flattering article out of his house with both feet--as servile adulation, fulsome flattery, and base, wretched toadying!

If we speak strongly, or even severely, on these points, it is because we are thoroughly disgusted with the late flatteries so profusely heaped upon him, and feel called upon to show their deceptiveness and falsehood; for if we do hate anything, it is "shams."

What fruitfulness to God or man, can there be in flattery and deception?

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