

Podium Oracles

by Robert Turner

The pulpit, or podium, is not a shrine from which an oracle speaks. Control of the microphone does not bestow divine authority. Of course we know these things, but an occasional reminder is in order for those speakers who seem to think that if they said it -- especially before a large audience -- the truth is established. Listeners also need to review their concepts of "pulpit pronouncements."

Our attention has been called to several recent examples of "speaker superiority" -- where the speaker felt insulted if his conclusions were questioned, and refused to engage in "equal time" studies of the matter, even in privacy. In some cases a public "I disagree" is supposed to answer scriptural arguments -- and for those who accept public pronouncements as final authority, this may be the end of further investigation -- but God will have the final word. One church dismissed those who questioned their practices by saying, "This is not a competitive church." A strange way to fight the fight of faith. We could understand "not interested in a carnal battle" if there were not so much evidence of carnal pressures to force their conclusions upon others.

Brethren, we are deep into an era of questioning and investigation; of renewed interest in private study. If we have half the confidence we claim to have in our teaching and practice, we will encourage rather than squelch objective Bible testing. Perhaps many of the questions will be inane and childish. So, show your maturity and wisdom with concerned, scriptural reply. Help the querist grow up.

Getting angry, pulling rank, or hiding behind the "dignity" of the pulpit is a strong psychological clue to your inadequacy. Insecure people, feeling their "position" threatened, act like that; and so do brethren who have no authority for their practice.

Questions, and "new" (non-traditional) ideas are not signs of wisdom. A fool can question, and may need answering "according to his folly" (Prov. 26:4-5). But foolish also are the men or churches who act as though God would judge man on the basis of their conclusions (Rom. 12:3; 14:12).

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