

EVALUATING THE BIBLE STUDY FELLOWSHIP (BSF) MINISTRY

The founder of the BSF was Audrey Wetherell Johnson. She was a missionary to Mainland China prior to World War Two. Upon her return to America after her retirement she started the Bible Study Fellowship. It began innocuously as a simple Bible Study with some members of her church congregation. It grew and blossomed to what it is today . . . an international Bible Study fellowship for all. The desire to teach and study the Bible is always good. However, it is because of this noble God honouring desire that Satan takes advantage of the naïve and undiscerning Christian. The BSF began well in its intention, but like many parachurch organizations that begin well, sadly, it has evolved into something not very God honouring in its essence. This quotation from the writings of Wetherell Johnson reveals the heartbeat of BSF, "From the earliest days Bible Study Fellowship has been completely interdenominational. Classes are composed of members from almost all Christian denominations. Discussion leaders are instructed never to encourage members to switch churches. A Catholic priest attended my class for six weeks, and we developed a real friendship. Sometime during the 1960s after Pope John advocated Bible reading, we noticed a great increase in Catholic membership. Priests in one of the Bay Area churches were so impressed with Bible Study Fellowship that anyone who taught catechism on Saturday had to be a current member of a Bible Study Fellowship class. Members from Jewish, Christian Science, Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, and other congregations have become interested in Bible Study. Seeing that all denominations are welcome, Bible Study Fellowship has a truly ecumenical fellowship." [Taken from A. Wetherell Johnson, **Created for Commitment**, Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers Inc. 1982, page 224.]

How can we keep silent when we know that someone is in sin? When we know that a person is a member of the Mormon Church or a Jehovah's Witness or a Roman Catholic, we have to point out that these groups are not of God. This is a clear teaching from **Ezekiel 33:8-9** (KJV), "*When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. 9 Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it; if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul.*" This is sufficient to warn born again believers to stay away from the BSF for their spiritual protection and for the testimony of Christ that they are to bear in this sin-filled world. Sadly, many have not taken heed. From the study notes of the BSF – Genesis (chapters 1 to 25), Ruth and Philippians, the dangers of attending and supporting BSF are as follows:

1. **Official Bible Version of the BSF** – These words are found on the first page of every lesson. "All Scripture quotations, unless indicated, are taken from the HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION. . . . Used by permission of Zondervan Bible Publishers. All rights reserved." The BSF notes also have at the beginning of their questions for group discussion this statement, "The questions, of necessity, cannot be based on all translations; so, as far as possible, use the New International Version or the King James Version as a basic text with whatever other version you enjoy using." This

means that their view of the Bible is very low. The NIV is not a translation but rather an interpretation. The Translation Committee of the NIV boasted that they employ the technique called "dynamic equivalence" in their translation. This means that the thoughts of the biblical writers are translated rather than the words of inspired Scriptures. The problem is compounded by the fact that the NIV translation committee is made up of multiple denominations. They even have a self confessed lesbian in their committee to translate the NIV.¹ The Bible says this concerning homosexuals in **1 Corinthians 6:9-11** (KJV), *"Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, 10 Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. 11 And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."* How can an unbeliever be qualified and trusted to translate the very Word of God which is a spiritual Book. The natural man understands only natural things but the spiritual man understands spiritual things (cf. 1Corinthians 2:11-16). A spiritual man is one who is born again and has the indwelling of the Spirit of God in him.

The NIV is not a translation, let alone a trustworthy translation of the perfect Bible. The NIV is fraught with many errors that will undermine any serious reader of the Word of God. It must be avoided at all costs. Many verses of the Bible are omitted and badly translated because of NIV's faulty Hebrew and Greek texts as well as bad translation techniques and translators. Here are a few examples –

- The NIV translates Luke 9:55-56 as, "But Jesus turned and rebuked them, and they went to another village." The KJV translates thus, "But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. And they went to another village." The differences are glaring and obviously self-explanatory. The entire meaning is lost with all the missing words.
- Acts 8:37 has been completely omitted in the NIV. But the KJV has it thus, "And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." The key answer of Philip to the Ethiopian eunuch's question on what hinders him to be baptized is lost in the NIV.

¹The NIV is one of the most corrupt Bibles on the market today. It is known as the gay Bible because it subtly supports the homosexual lifestyle. The reason for this is that in the NIV committee there was an outspoken Lesbian by the name of Virginia Mollencott. She wrote two books: one entitled, "Is the homosexual my neighbor," and the other, "Sensual Spirituality." In the latter book, she calls God in the feminine. In other words, every time she refers to God, she uses "her," "she," or any other feminist classification. The reason is she believes that God is a woman, and that women are to rule.

- In Mark 16:9-19 and John 7:53-8:11, we find large portions of God's Word being doubted by the NIV. The NIV says that "The most reliable early manuscripts and other ancient witnesses do not have Mark 16:9-20," and "The earliest and most reliable manuscripts and other ancient witnesses do not have John 7:53-8:11."² These two passages are unique to Mark and to John, and losing Mark 16:9-20 would mean losing one of the most important proof-passages that speak against the modern signs and wonders movement, and losing John 7:53-8:11 would mean losing one of the most tender passages on how the Lord mercifully dealt with the woman taken in adultery.

Using the KJV Bible in the BSF is no justification at all for a truly born again believer to support a parachurch organization like the BSF that undermines the Word of God. Jesus says that if you are not for Him, i.e. actively defending His precious and perfect Word and His blessed name, then you are against Him (cf. Mark 12:30). What would you who use the KJB say to the BSF group member who uses the NIV when there is a major difference in the texts? Dare you speak up?

2. **Principles of Interpretation of the BSF** – The BSF adopts a mixture of principles of interpretation. They include both the literal method as well as the allegorical method of interpretation. Genesis 24 is interpreted both literally and allegorically. The allegorical method of interpretation destroys the authority of the Bible. The interpreter injects into the text meanings that are not found in the original text. It is by means of the allegorical method of interpretation that the Roman Catholic Church has established their many traditions and practices including the teaching on purgatory. It is necessary here to distinguish between the uses of allegory, i.e. extended metaphors, and the allegorical method of interpreting the Bible. Examples of allegories in the Bible include John 15:1-8 where Jesus says that He is the vine. The allegorical method of interpretation makes the Bible into silly putty where the Word of God depends upon the fluidity and imagination of the interpreter to "give" its meaning. If a born again believer adopts this method of interpretation, he forfeits his right to say that the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church are wrong!
3. **Doctrine of Biblical Separation Denied** – The encouragement that all versions of Bible translations are allowed in the Bible Study and the NIV being the official version used in the BSF notes is a recipe for compromise! The doctrine of biblical separation that is THE doctrine for protecting believers from sin and compromise has been jettisoned by the BSF. The warning from the Bible against any form of compromises is very clear! God commands us in **2 Corinthians 6:14-18** (KJV), "*Be ye not unequally yoked together*

²These quotes are taken from the main text of the New International Version. Many teachers of God's Word have come to believe these passages do not belong to the inspired Scriptures. One Greek professor says that he would not preach from these two texts since they are not part of God's Holy Word. That is how deadly the NIV is in its influence on some professing believers. This person obviously promotes and defends the NIV. Do you do the same?

with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? 15 And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? 16 And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 17 Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, 18 And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

Note the testimony of the founder in her own life about one of two conferences which touched her life and that prompted her to write book "The International Congress on World Evangelization". She wrote, "I was invited to the International Congress on World Evangelization held at Lausanne, Switzerland, July 16-26, 1975. More than 4,000 participants, observers and guests from 150 countries attended. Head of missions, representatives of countless organizations, pastors, and theologians of all major evangelistic organizations were there. We mingled among men and women of all races, many in colorful garb . . . the atmosphere of love was overwhelming as we sat in the great auditorium of the beautiful Palace of Beaulieu. We listened to messages translated into six languages from such well known speakers as Dr Billy Graham, Dr John Stott, Dr Francis Schaeffer, and Malcolm Muggeridge. . . . We had many deeply moving moments – one when the Congress began by singing "Alleluia, Alleluia." After the closing message by Billy Graham and a solemn communion service, we streamed out singing, "Alleluia," until we reached the corridors." [**Created for Commitment**, pages 306-307].

Men like John Stott and Billy Graham are not men of God but compromisers of the faith. John Stott believed in the doctrine of annihilation.³ Billy Graham's manifold compromises are well known. Billy Graham's compromising heart began as early as in the 1960s. In his 1997 autobiography, Graham acknowledged that he began to draw close to Rome very early in his ministry: "At that time [March 1950], Protestantism in New England was weak, due in part to theological differences within some denominations, the influence of Unitarian ideas in other denominations, and the strength of the Roman Catholic Church. In spite of all that, **a number of Roman Catholic priests and Unitarian clergy**, together with some of their parishioners, came to the meetings along with those from Evangelical churches. With my limited Evangelical background, **this was a further expansion of my own ecumenical outlook.**

³Stott publicly espoused the idea of annihilationism, which is the belief that hell is incineration into non-existence, rather than everlasting conscious torment (the traditional Evangelical approach). He was not dogmatic about this position, but held to it somewhat tentatively, insisting only that it be accepted as a legitimate evangelical option: "the ultimate annihilation of the wicked should at least be accepted as a legitimate, biblically founded alternative to their eternal conscious torment." [John Stott, quoted in Packer, James I. (Spring 1997). "Evangelical Annihilationism in Review". *Reformation & Revival* 6 (2). Retrieved 31 January 2013.]

I now began to make friends among people from many different backgrounds and **to develop a spiritual love for their clergy**" (Graham, *Just As I Am*, p. 167)." [<http://www.wayoflife.org/database/grahamcompromise.html>] [Emphasis original]

This is a quote taken from <http://apprising.org/2012/10/18/billy-graham-has-been-compromised-for-years/>. "The following is from a transcript of an appearance by Billy Graham on Robert Schuller's "Hour of Power," program #1426 entitled *Say "Yes" To Possibility Thinking*, which was originally broadcast May 31, 1997:

"Schuller: Tell me, what do you think is the future of Christianity?

"Graham: Well, Christianity and being a true believer—you know, I think there's the Body of Christ. This comes from all the Christian groups around the world, outside the Christian groups. I think everybody that loves Christ, or knows Christ, whether they're conscious of it or not, they're members of the Body of Christ. And I don't think that we're going to see a great sweeping revival, that will turn the whole world to Christ at any time. I think James answered that, the Apostle James in the first council in Jerusalem, when he said that God's purpose for this age is to call out a people for His name.

"And that's what God is doing today, He's calling people out of the world for His name, whether they come from the Muslim world, or the Buddhist world, or the Christian world or the non-believing world, they are members of the Body of Christ because they've been called by God. They may not even know the name of Jesus but they know in their hearts that they need something that they don't have, and they turn to the only light that they have, and I think that they are saved, and that they're going to be with us in heaven.

"Schuller: What, what I hear you saying that it's possible for Jesus Christ to come into human hearts and soul and life, even if they've been born in darkness and have never had exposure to the Bible. Is that a correct interpretation of what you're saying?

"Graham: Yes, it is, because I believe that. I've met people in various parts of the world in tribal situations, that they have never seen a Bible or heard about a Bible, and never heard of Jesus, but they've believed in their hearts that there was a God, and they've tried to live a life that was quite apart from the surrounding community in which they lived.

"Schuller: I'm so thrilled to hear you say this. There's a wideness in God's mercy.

"Graham: There is."

Conclusion – Very often the remark that keeps coming back is that "we learn God's Word at the BSF." It is true that the BSF contains teachings of God's Word. One even dares to say that more than 90% of what is taught in the BSF is sound and good. Therein lies the danger of the BSF. If the BSF is not teaching God's Word properly 90% of the time, then it would be so much easier to warn and keep God's people out. However, it is precisely because "most" of the teachings in the BS have this semblance of truth in it that it is able to ensnare so many.

Believers have to realize that it is not the 90% so called "good-stuff" in the BSF that they ought to be wary of but the 10% dangerous teaching. One does not need a lot of cyanide in a glass of milk to poison a person! 99% of the milk is good except for that 1% of cyanide which will still kill. This is also true in spiritual matters. The Bible warns in **1 Corinthians 5:6-7** (KJV), *"Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? 7 Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us:"* and **Galatians 5:9** (KJV), *"A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump."* It is good to desire the study of God's Word but it is more important that the study of God's Word is done correctly otherwise it will do more harm than good. When one is not studying the Word of God, he is not being "poisoned" whereas when he studies the Word of God wrongly, he is being poisoned. It is better NOT to study the Word of God than to study the Word of God via the BSF!

The BSF is dangerous because of its compromises in subtle forms that are built into its system of Bible study. Do not have anything to do with the BSF. It will hurt your walk with the LORD and testimony for Christ without you realizing it.