Paralyzed

by Cathy Ramey

Pietism: (pi'i-tiz'em) n. **1**. Piety. **2**. Affected or exaggerated piety. **3. Pietism**. A reform movement in the German Lutheran Church during the 17th and 18th centuries, which strove to renew the devotional ideal in the Protestant religion.

As Pastor Mike Colvin says (see July 1994 *Life Advocate*), pietism is not necessarily a bad thing. An effort to affect personal holiness is, in fact, a Biblical ideal. "Without holiness no one will see the Lord" the writer of Hebrews tells us, and "you are to be holy to me because I, the Lord, am holy, and I have set you apart from the nations to be my own" we are instructed by God in the Levitical Law (Heb. 12:14 & Lev. 20:26). Being set apart, having a personal accountability to God that affects every decision we make is what our Christian faith demands.

Again, leaning on the foundation built by Pastor Colvin, we can understand that there have been times in history when religion became a function. True love and worship of God was lost in form. As Christ commanded the church in Ephesus (Rev. 2:1-5), the early Pietists repented of their lack of personal, heart-felt, commitment to God. They did that by focusing in on the individual's intimate relationship with Him. They sought to dispense with distractions and instead returned to their "first love."

But, in reacting to the lack of knowledge of and reverence for God, history has also taught us that there are times when another kind of error crept in. Like a pendulum that has been swinging radically to the right, the Church worked to correct itself by pulling radically to the left. The over-compensation for past error meant that they focused on a warm interior relationship with God that excluded them from expressing His character into the exterior culture around them.

Recently, there was a Christian gathering, a "March for Jesus," with media estimating participation at the 15 million mark. It was an ecumenical effort to "come together to lift up the name of Jesus" that promised unity. Unity with the abortion-loving United Methodist church, and the sodomite-ordaining Episcopal church among others. Its leaders purposefully dissuaded those Christians with political and social concerns [read: moral concerns] from coming — unless they could yoke themselves with 'unity for a day' by leaving aside any call to the Church to repent of the sin that is in the camp.

It was pietism on parade in my town. The "church" which has refused to batter the Hell-gates of abortion, pornography, homosexuality, and other sin chose to remain *equally yoked* with their most liberal "brethren" by disenfranchising those who could not disassociate Christ's name with His Character.

Now, before you become ruffled over what seems like a put-down of an event which many God-fearing Christians participated in, let me clarify. My concern with the March for Jesus has little to do with the flock that was being led and more to do with the shepherds who were leading them. It is less an indictment of those who came to make public their claim in Christ than of those who concocted a convention to honor Him devoid of His holy character. Under that kind of leadership, the March was destined to be problematic. Let me give you a few examples.

George is a strong believer in Jesus Christ. In fact, his faith has radically changed his life. Instead of spending off-hours hunkered around the TV or taking up golf, George spends hours of discretionary time each week as a "street preacher." George was street preaching on a public sidewalk across from the rallying point for the local rendition of the March for Jesus. And it was during that hour of ecumenism that George was roughly grabbed by police and hustled into a nearby police car. George was a distraction to some of those who wanted to avoid issues and character and unite only under a faceless banner that spelled J.E.S.U.S.

(A little distraction here too. How can a Church ever hope that America will deal with a president who lacks in character when they have stripped character away from the only Man whose character can save? If character doesn't matter in Jesus Christ who is ruler over all of the universe, it is hard to see how it can matter in a man whose area of tyranny extends only between two oceans.)

But back to the March dynamics.

Incarcerated in the patrol car, George was told that he would be driven several blocks away and then released. The effort was an attempt to give rally-goers an opportunity to go on without the blighting presence of someone who would disrupt the tender sensitivities of those inclined toward sin. Only the curious media, picking up on George's strident complaints that his rights were being violated, caused police to rethink their plan. After being speedily released from the patrol car, George joined in with the marching crowd as they took to the streets to "take our city for God." He held a reasonably small sign in one hand. In his other hand George carried a cross.

George has been treated to the outrage of abortion facility escorts and sodomites alike in the process of preaching about Christ and His character. He has been pushed and bullied in their efforts to silence him. But George says he has never been treated as roughly as he was during the March for Jesus as some leaders sought to inform him that his brand of Christian witness wasn't wanted at their parade.

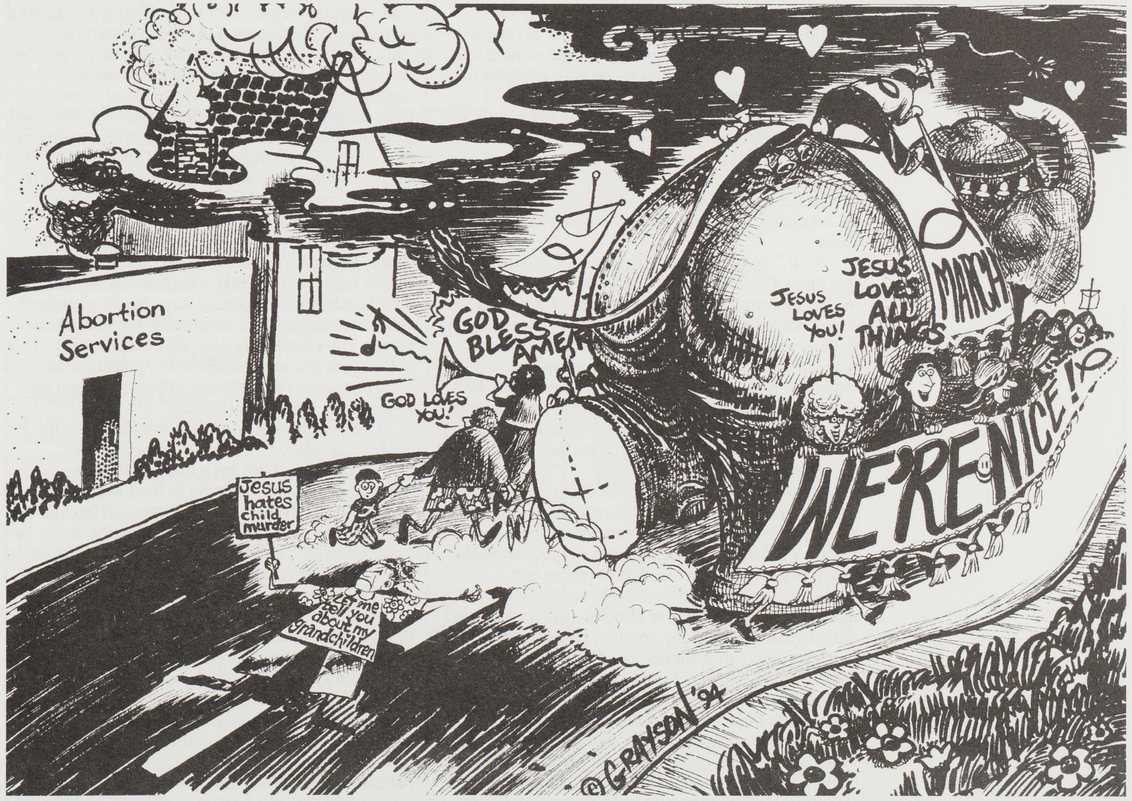
Let's think this through! "Christians" who endorse the killing of little baby boys and girls were welcomed with open arms as were those who sanction sodomy. "Christians" who have killed their own children and never repented of that sin were embraced as "witnesses for the Gospel" as were others who personally practice sex outside of marriage and with a partner of the same gender. The criteria for unity in this "Body of Christ" did not demand Biblical holiness, it only required that they come without expressing their personal positions on sin.

One rally-goer, Mary, reflected after the event was over that she felt like there were "problems" with the March, but the particulars eluded her. She and her family really wanted to participate in a public display of support for the Savior. Additionally, they are concerned for the nation. The idea of collectively "claiming" our city for Jesus appealed to her, and so she went to rally with thousands of others in an area called "the Park blocks." It was there that Mary saw a gentleman — maybe George — with a sign condemning homosexuality.

It was also there that a man who is well known as a preacher of the Gospel stepped up to a microphone and announced over the loudspeaking system that the gentleman needed to take his sign out from among the brethren (lest some of them be offended by that particular narrow-minded perspective). Odd, it seems that some Christians were gathered to "honor" the Savior but to deny the demands of behavior and character that He stands for. The question begs to be asked, *which Jesus were they honoring?* (see 2 Cor. 11:4)

On SW 10th and Washington there is an abortion mill, and it was there that a small handful of us posted ourselves as marchers convened at the Park blocks. We unfurled an eight-foot long banner that said "Babies Killed Here, Please Help Them!" After affixing our sign to poles that held it high off the ground, we waited. The March for Jesus was slated to pass directly under the ninth floor windows of a building where babies were being killed even as Christians gathered to "celebrate." Most of the ten thousand in the crowd were not even aware that they would be parading past one of the Auschwitz death camps of our day. We meant to let them know.

Only moments past 10 a.m. a crowd appeared several blocks away. They were first visible because of the brightly colored balloons that bobbed about in the air above them. Marching squarely down the center of a four-lane street, they were the first of the ten thousand who eventually all passed by our banner.

Scattered in among the crowd were several friends and acquaintances. From many of those passing by there was enthusiastic acknowledgment of our presence. With few exceptions, we were welcome as far as the general masses were concerned. Several people prayed out loud and against the abortion mill as they continued marching by. A few asked us to clarify, *were they really marching past an abortion clinic?* And others simply winked in encouragement, smiled and nodded, or gave us the "thumbs up" for our stand against abortion.

Only moments into the passing by of the parade an official looking man approached my end of the banner. After responding to a call on his walkie-talkie, he turned his full attention upon me. Our banner, he claimed, was "counter-productive," and he wished that we would remove it from view. "Our