

The Word's Eye View

The Word's Eye View is a newspaper column written by
Dr. James Modlish

In All Fairness (Article 39)

“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.” This is the first of the ten Constitutional Amendments which are frequently referred to as the Bill of Rights. They were transmitted to the state legislatures on September 25, 1789 and not completely ratified until December 15, 1791. More than two years were given over to the debate and assimilation of these attachments. Their addition was not completed quickly or in the dark but in the full light of day with adequate room for controversy. Logic would suggest that since freedom of religion and speech was the first to be mentioned, it was deemed to be the most critical as a guardian of freedom.

Free speech has always experienced an army of adversaries who desire control without opposition. It seems that modern America is moving toward a position of toleration for the left but antagonism for the right. Homosexuals can parade on public streets shouting slogans and carrying placards that could not be printed in a public newspaper, but if Rush Limbaugh contradicts the President's policies, he is likened to a fascist Nazi guilty of hate crimes. The so-called Fairness Doctrine that Congress is entertaining is nothing more than an attempt to silence conservative talk radio and television. Truth always resonates and consequently, is the most feared opponent of those who would twist it.

There is little comparison to Jesus and talk show hosts except that He faced a similar problem. The religious and political hierarchy sent experienced lawyers to engage the Lord in debate when the lightweights were unsuccessful in tripping Him up. (Matthew 22:33-46) They were met with such a wall of logic and depth of spiritual wisdom that only ruptured egos and deep seated anger could follow. This hatred resulted in arranging perjured testimony and cries for Christ's crucifixion. The reason for such incredible animosity was not Jesus' compassion for the poor as exhibited in His miracles but rather His words. (Mark 12:13) Words cloaked in truth have more power than feeding thousands of hungry people, cleansing lepers or restoring sight to the blind. Truth is compared to a two-edged sword that has the ability to cut asunder soul and spirit and can discern thoughts and intents of the heart. (Hebrews 4:12) Those on the business end of the sword are naturally going to resist and do all they can to eliminate the individuals who are thrusting it.

The ascension of Christ featured Him commissioning the apostles to continue His message in a public venue. In short order multitudes responded favorably to the truth which once again drew the wrath and indignation of the political and religious left. The narrative is instructive: “And laid their hands on the apostles, and put them in the common prison. But the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and brought them forth, and said, “Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life.” (Acts 5:18-20) The primary interest of God was not the continuation of miracles but rather uninterrupted speech.

The disciples were once again apprehended in the temple as they preached. In replay they found themselves being accused as they stood before a “congressional committee.” The high priest (speaker of the house) lost all composure and revealed true motives when he said, “Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? And, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man’s blood upon us.” (Acts 5:28) The situation was compounded for the caucus because the apostles’ testimony was gaining a rapidly growing audience; consequently, the agenda of “Capitol Hill” was threatened. Peter’s abbreviated response began with “We ought to obey God rather than men.” This was followed up with a pointed three verse sermon that essentially told the counsel that they were the real problem. The establishment never wants to hear that regardless of how plausible the argument may be. With eyes bugged out, veins protruding and reddening faces they “took counsel to slay them.” (Acts 5:33) Falsehoods seldom, if ever, produce such reactions, but unvarnished truth causes its opponents to burn out brakes and blow gaskets all over the speedway.

Amazingly, a voice of reason, one lawyer named Gamaliel, stood with a common sense proposal. After listing some historical examples of “revolutions’ gone amuck, his conclusion was, “Refrain from these men, and let them alone; for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God.” (Acts 5:38,39) This idea gathered general agreement, but the boys in the band deemed it necessary at minimum to have the apostles beaten. Modern translation----if we can’t kill Sarah Palin, we should at least beat her up with character assassination.

Perhaps our liberal friends would meet less resistance if they adopted a Gamaliel doctrine in place of a misrepresented fairness doctrine. Peter preached in the temple---the stronghold of the obstructionist, willing to debate and exchange concepts, but never did the apostles attempt to quiet the voice of MSNBC. They knew their message would stand on its own two feet!