

## DANGEROUS NONSENSE

The late Neil Postman in his book *Amusing Ourselves to Death* in discussing the modern Media in general and Television in particular, said that “a great media-metaphor shift has taken place in America with the result that the content of much of our public discourse has become dangerous nonsense.” He tells of watching forty-two hours of religious programming on television and concluded that “on television, religion like everything else, is presented quite simply and without apology, as an entertainment. Everything that makes religion a sacred, profound human activity is stripped away; the preacher is tops. God comes out as second banana.” He quotes the national director of the Religious Broadcasters Association as saying “You can get our share of the audience only by offering people something they want.” He says that although the “most modern methods of marketing and promotion are abundantly used yet God is a vague and subordinate character.” Coming from a man who was a critic, writer, educator, and communication theorist (from the preface of the book) and making no claim to be a Christian in the Biblical sense, we should listen to what he further said: “Christianity is a demanding and serious life. When it is pictured as easy and amusing, it is another kind of religion.” Although he was writing about how modern Christianity is presented on TV, what he said is true of much of the religious fare that is coming out of many of our modern churches and pulpits today...dangerous nonsense. In today’s religious world, where the word of God is so often taken lightly, you hear very little about the fact God will bring the whole world, as well as the church, into judgment concerning their thinking and conduct. Much of the modern “ministry” stresses psychology, psychiatry, counseling, recreation, and services geared to meet our every real or imagined need to face the stress and conflict of modern society. Its preaching is tailored to gaining interest on a superficial level, not solid doctrinal teachings. This is just an example of dangerous nonsense that has invaded the modern church. In the remaining of this article we will discuss some of the major doctrines of the church that can be classified as “dangerous nonsense,” some that have been birthed in the last few years and some having been tenaciously affirmed throughout the history of the church, and blindly held by millions of Christians today.

Definitions of nonsense: Webster: “words or language having no meaning or conveying no intelligible ideas...things of no importance or value.” Cambridge English Dictionary: “a language that cannot be understood or that has no meaning.” Oxford Dictionary: “spoken or written words that have no meaning or makes no sense.” The reason we have labeled this article “Dangerous Nonsense” is not only that much of the fare in modern Christendom is nonsense, but it is definitely dangerous. Here are some of the warnings from scripture: Acts 20:29, 30: “...savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock, and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them.” Gal. 1:8, 9: “Even though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed...I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you have received, let him be accursed.” II Tim. 4:3, 4: “For the time will come when they

will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires; and will turn away many from the truth, and will turn aside to myths.” II Pet. 2:1, 2: “there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves. And many will follow their sensuality and the truth will be maligned.”

Dangerous nonsense: God the son. To believe that Jesus was “God the son” is to sacrifice his humanity upon the altar of deity, and this is what the council of Nicaea in 325 AD fostered upon the church and presented to the world an unearthly Jesus far from what most of us think of as human. This council simply codified the doctrine of Gnosticism, prevalent in the later days of the early church, which denied that Jesus came in the flesh. This doctrine is alive and well today in the religious world that denies that Jesus was a fully human being, that is a *man*, (a perfect, sinless man but nevertheless a man). The apostle John warns of this danger in I John 4:2, 3. A literal translation of these verses reads: “By this know you the Spirit of God: every spirit which confesses Jesus Christ having come in flesh is of God, and every spirit which confesses not this Jesus is not of God and this is the spirit of the antichrist.” Note carefully, the text says, “every spirit that confesses not *this* Jesus,” “*this*” Jesus referring to Jesus having come in flesh, affirming that Jesus the Christ (OT. Messiah) was a human being, not a God-man. Nowhere does scripture say Jesus was a double person, fully God and fully man.

To say Jesus is fully God and fully man is to say he was mortal, yet immortal. Able to be tempted and yet as God he could not be tempted. Begotten in eternity and begotten again on earth. Preexisting yet coming into existence. The Christ (anointed one) was the man, Jesus, in the flesh, distinct from God, his Father. This is seen in I Timothy 2:5: “For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the *man* Christ Jesus.” The “one mediator” is the *man* Christ Jesus. Not only was Jesus a man while on earth he is still a man in heaven. Peter said it was “Jesus, the Nazarene, a *man* attested by God, this *man* the Jews nailed to a cross” (Acts 2:22,23). Sidney Hatch in *Brief Bible Studies* makes this poignant point: “Hebrews 13:8, ‘Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today and forever.’ Yesterday that man who died on Calvary and then rose from the dead. Today that man who ascended and is glorified, seated at the right hand of the heavenly Father. Tomorrow the man who is coming in power and great glory.” This does not say that Jesus is the “same from eternity, today, and forever.” “Yesterday” is a definite point in history, not eternity. Eternity is timeless. Jesus was a man while on earth, he is a glorified man today and will be the same Jesus to return to earth (Acts 1:11). Jesus was a human being. He has “been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin” (Heb. 4:15). “Therefore, he had to be made like his brethren in all things, that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest...for since he himself was tempted in that which he suffered, he is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted.” (Heb. 2:17, 18). “Although he was a son, he *learned* obedience by the things he suffered” (Heb. 5:8. All this is evidence that Jesus “has come in flesh” (I John 4:1). It is dangerous nonsense not to “know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. This is eternal life” (John 17:3).

Dangerous nonsense: By-passing the resurrection. Many Christians have accepted the heretical idea that at death the body passes permanently away and the dead person reappears in some disembodied state entering either heaven or hell, depending on what kind of life they lived on earth. If this is true the resurrection of our body is not a very important subject. Many Christians have become so captivated with the subject of “life after death” the resurrection has little meaning to them. After all what is the point of a resurrection if they are still living after death (an oxymoron if there ever was one), and at death they have entered their reward, thus circumnavigating the resurrection. This is a false doctrine based upon the teaching of the immortality of the soul, a teaching introduced to mankind by Satan when he told Eve, “You surely shall not die,” or as some Hebrew scholars translate, “dying you shall not die.” The question posed in the Old Testament was not “Is there life after death?” rather “If a man dies shall he live again?” (Job 14:14). Jesus answers this question by his resurrection and states, “because I live you shall live also” (Jn. 14:19). The resurrection is of little value because it is not needed if the soul doesn’t die and goes on to heaven. The Jewish religion is the only religion that has no teaching on life after death. All pagan religions, including the occult, teach this doctrine. This is the basis of the belief in reincarnation. If Paul on Mars Hill (Acts 17) had preached the doctrine of life after death the Athenian philosophers would have gladly embraced his message. Instead he preached the resurrection of the body and they scoffed and refused to listen. I Corinthians 15 Paul does not argue the resurrection upon the basis of the immortality of the soul, but rather argues immortality upon the basis of the resurrection. Most Christians embrace the myth that death is not a reality, it is simply a change of state or a door to a better life. Many have refused to recognize death for what it is...an enemy, and have given so much attention to the myths about death and dying they have ignored the importance of the resurrection.

If we believe the soul is immortal then consider the harmful ramifications of this belief. First: It changes the Christian focus on the resurrection and the appearing of Christ to the coming of one’s own death. Dr. Walter Martin, a noted Christian writer stated the orthodox Christianity belief in his book *The Kingdom of the Cults*: “The great hope of the believer, then, is the joy of personal union with the Lord, and this union, the Apostle Paul tells us, takes place at the death of the body.” The “great hope” of the Christian is not his union with the Lord at his own death; we are already united with Christ in the here and now (Romans 6:5), rather it is at the appearing of our Lord. “For what is our *hope* or joy or crown of exultation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus *at his appearing*?” (I Thess. 2:19). “Looking for the blessed *hope* and the *appearing* of our great God and our Savior, Christ Jesus” (Titus 2:13). When he *appears* we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who has this *hope* fixed on him purifies himself” (I John 3:2,3). It is stated in I Corinthians 15:26 that death is an enemy, the last enemy to be abolished. Death takes away life, it does not give life. Life is in resurrection, not death. Second: If disembodied souls are able to live and enjoy the presence of God in heaven for eternity, then what is the need of a resurrection? Death and not resurrection becomes the hope of the Christian. Third: The immortality of the soul promotes the practice of communicating with the dead. Séances and “channeling” is a common practice in the world and many Christians are dabbling with the practice. Isaiah asks: “Should not a people consult their God? Should they consult the dead on behalf of the living?” (Isaiah 8:19).

Dangerous nonsense: The world is going to come to an end and be destroyed. Depending only on the King James version has given rise to many ideas and doctrines which are simply not true. The most glaring one is that the world is going to come to an end and be destroyed. Doesn’t everyone know that the world is going to come to an end and there will be the end of time? In fact, most preachers are telling us that all the signs of the times point to a soon coming end of time and the world. Didn’t Jesus plainly speak of “the end of the world”? The answer is yes if you read only the King James version. In all the verses cited to prove that Jesus spoke of the end of the world (example: Matt. 13:39,40,49: 24:3; 28:20) the word “world” is correctly translated “age” in other versions. The passage stating that “time shall be no more” (Rev. 10:6) is correctly translated “there shall be delay no longer.” God was not going to delay the sounding of the seventh angel.

What about I John 2:16, 17: “And the world is passing away, and also its lust, but the one who does the will of God abides forever”? John identifies the “world” as the world’s system in the words “For all that is of the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.” These things will pass away, but the earth will not be destroyed. Perhaps the main passage used to show the earth being destroyed is II Peter 3:10,12: “But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be *destroyed* with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be *burned up*. Since all these things are to be *destroyed* in this way what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, on account of which the heavens will be destroyed by *burning* and the elements will melt with intense heat!” In verse 10 he uses the word *burned up* and in verse 12 he uses the word *burning*, but the word used in verse 12 is not the same word as translated *burned* in verse 10. The word in verse 10 is *discovered* and before we discount this look at Psalm 18:15: “Then the channels of waters were seen, and the foundations of the world were *discovered* at thy rebuke.” When David is speaking of God’s judgment he says the “foundations of the world were ‘laid bare’ or ‘discovered’”. II Peter 3 is also speaking of the judgment of God and uses the same terminology used in the Old Testament to describe this judgment. Compare verse 11 with verse 6. Speaking of the flood it is said “the world at that time was *destroyed* being flooded with water.” When God destroyed the world with water it was not annihilated. When He destroys the world by fire it will not be annihilated but cleansed and the curse will be lifted (Rom. 8:21).

God’s promise is: “I will never again destroy every living thing as I have done, while the earth remains...” (Gen 8:21b-22). How long will the earth remain? Ecclesiastes 1:4: “A generation comes and a generation goes but *the earth remains forever*.” Paul in Romans 8:19-21 affirms that when the curse is lifted God will redeem the earth not destroy it, and Jesus promised in Matthew 5:5 that the meek would inherit the earth. Psalm 78:69: “And He built His sanctuary like the heights, like the earth which he has founded forever.” Psalm 104:5: “He established the earth upon it’s foundations, so it will not totter forever and forever.” Psalm 115:16: “The heavens are the heavens of the Lord, but the earth He has given to the sons of man.” Psalm 93:1 and 96:10 states: “the world is firmly established and will not be moved.” “The meek shall inherit the earth,” but most Christians rather inherit a “cabin in glory land,” or a “mansion just over the hilltop.” The average church today teaches nothing about a redeemed earth.

Dangerous nonsense: continued next month