

## FALSE TEACHINGS IN THE CHURCH TODAY

Follow Christ

Nové Zámky, 21st October 2017

**Jude 1:3-4** Ἀγαπητοί, πάσαν σπουδὴν ποιούμενος γράφειν ὑμῖν περὶ τῆς κοινῆς ἡμῶν σωτηρίας ἀνάγκην ἔσχον γράψαι ὑμῖν παρακαλῶν ἐπαγωνίζεσθαι τῇ ἅπαξ παραδοθείσῃ τοῖς ἁγίοις πίστει.<sup>4</sup> παρεισέδυσαν γάρ τινες ἄνθρωποι, οἱ πάλαι προγεγραμμένοι εἰς τοῦτο τὸ κρίμα, ἀσεβεῖς, τὴν τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν χάριτα μετατιθέντες εἰς ἀσέλγειαν καὶ τὸν μόνον δεσπότην καὶ κύριον ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν ἀρνούμεν

**Jude 1:3-4** Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.<sup>4</sup> For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.,

שְׂגִיאוֹת מִיָּבִין מִנְּתַרְתּוֹת נִקְנִי

**Ps 19:12** Who can discern his errors? Declare me innocent from hidden faults.

## OUTLINE

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- 2.3. SCIENTISM
- 2.4. SECULARISM (SECULARISED ESCHATOLOGY)

**3. TO REMEMBER****0. INTRODUCTION: FALSE TEACHINGS, SECTS & CULTS****0.1. DANGERS**

- To recognize the fake we have to study closely the genuine thing, and not to focus too much attention to the fake...
- Focusing on the false teachings may itself become a false teaching (negativity; judgmental; self-centered...)
- LLOYD-JONES *Revival* ("Dead Orthodoxy")<sup>1</sup>

I think that the word that sums up this condition most perfectly is the word contentment. I hesitate to use

<sup>1</sup> series of messages on the occasion of the one hundredth anniversary of the Welsh Revival which occurred in 1859

the word smugness, but perhaps we could put the two together and say a smug contentment. Now, by that expression I mean something like this: it is the condition of people who believe the truth, and know that they believe the truth. There is no question about that. You question them, you catechise them, and you will find that they are correct and orthodox. There is no fault to be found with their creed, or with their belief. But there is this element of contentment about it because they not only believe these things but are satisfied with themselves – self-satisfied.

- G. K. CHESTERTON *Heretics* → being *proud* of being heretical

[CHESTERTON p. 12] The word \*'heresy' not only means no longer being wrong; it practically means being clear-headed and courageous. The word "orthodoxy" not only no longer means being right; it practically means being wrong. All this can mean one thing, and one thing only. It means that people care less for whether they are philosophically right.

## 0.2. SOME BASIC DISTINCTIONS

### 0.2.1. SECT, CULT, RELIGION

- “sect” → Max WEBER sociological definition: sect (voluntary organization) as opposed to church (non-voluntary);

[Evangelical Dictionary of Theology] A group whose identity partially consists of belonging to a larger social body, typically a religious body. The sect's identity is further derived from its principal leader or from a distinctive teaching or practice. The term has regularly been applied to groups that break away from existing religious bodies, such as the early Christians who separated from Judaism or the Protestants who separated from Roman Catholicism. The term has also been applied to such groups as maintain their identity without separating from the larger religious body, for example, the Pharisees among the Jews or the Puritans in the Church of England.

- → biblical – **Titus 3:10** As for a person (αἰρετικὸν ἄνθρωπον) who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him,
- → **1Co 11:19** ...there must be factions (δεῖ γὰρ καὶ αἵρέσεις ἐν ὑμῖν εἶναι.) among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized
  - [ELLCOTT] “In neither case, however, does the word seem to imply specially ' the open espousal of any fundamental error”
  - [LACOSTE] Catholic canon law (Code of Canon Law 1983, c. 751) heresy is a baptized person’s obstinate denial (or doubting) of any truth of faith.
- “cult” → a religion regarded as unorthodox or spurious also: its body of adherents (voodoo; satanic cult) “Drug addiction and cult membership are striking in their similarities”<sup>2</sup>

### 0.2.2. TEACHINGS ↔ TEACHERS

- distinguishing *false teachings* (errors in doctrines) from the *false teachers* (deliberate deceivers) **Tit 3:10** As for a person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him, (αἰρετικὸν ἄνθρωπον μετὰ μίαν καὶ δευτέραν νοουθεσίαν παραιτοῦ)
- a *defective* teaching is not necessarily *false* teaching (Acts 18:26 – Apollo)

### 0.2.3. CONTENT ↔ METHODS

- recognizing false teachings by *contents* (doctrines)
- recognizing false teachings by *methods* (leadership) “What makes them a cult is the fact that they
- use mind control, not what they believe.”<sup>3</sup>

CULTS AND MENTAL MANIPULATION Addiction and Dependence, — Brainwashing, — Catastrophism and Millenarianism, — Money-Making Schemes,  
HOW CULTS ARE ORGANIZED The Pyramid, — The Network, — Group Dynamics, — Magical Thought, — The Guru-Father, — Seduction — Alienation, — Dependence on Authority, — Sexuality, — Deprivation of One’s Own — Imitation, — Food Deprivation, — Sleep Deprivation, — Compulsory Labor, — Chemical Use, Paranoia, (ABGRALL, J.-M. *Soul Snatchers*)

- “...basic respect for the individual simply doesn't exist, and people are gradually led to think and

<sup>2</sup> ABGRALL, J.-M. *Soul Snatchers*, p. 17

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.cultwatch.com/howcultswork.html> (16-Oct-17)

behave in very similar ways through a process of mind control.”... it—“mind control” may be understood as a system of influences that disrupts an individual's identity (beliefs, behavior, thinking, and emotions) and replaces it with a new identity<sup>4</sup>

### 0.3. HERESIES “IN” THE CHURCH AND “OUTSIDE” THE CHURCH

#### 0.3.1. **OUTSIDE**

- the church → cults; sects; religions (non-Christian belief systems)



[TIBBOTT Julie *Members Only*] eg. The Bilderberg Group; The Bizango; Branch Davidians; Club 33; The Freemasons; The Ghost Club; The Hellfire Club; The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn; The Illuminati; The Knights Templar; The Lily Dale Assembly; The Machine; The Magic Castle; The Order of the Star Spangled Banner/Know Nothings; Peoples Temple (Jonestown); Rosicrucianism; Skull and Bones Society; La Santa Muerte; The Thule Society; The Society for Creative Anachronis;

- occultism; fortune telling; astrology; witchcraft...
- conspiracy theories...

#### 0.3.2. **“INSIDE”**

- the church → dangerous tendencies, that *lead away* from the centre towards (1) unbiblical doctrines, (2) unbiblical living
- ENROTH, Ronald M. *Churches that Abuse* (Contents)<sup>5</sup>
  - FRINGE AND FANATICISM .....  
Abusive Churches Can Go Over the Edge
  - PAST AND PRESENT .....  
Abusive Churches Are Not New
  - AUTHORITY AND POWER .....  
Abusive Churches Misuse Spiritual Authority
  - MANIPULATION AND CONTROL .....  
Abusive Churches Use Fear, Guilt, and Threats
  - ELITISM AND PERSECUTION .....  
Abusive Churches See Themselves as Special
  - LIFE-STYLE AND EXPERIENCE .....  
Abusive Churches Foster Rigidity
  - DISSENT AND DISCIPLINE .....  
Abusive Churches Discourage Questions
  - EXIT AND ADJUSTMENT .....  
Abusive Churches Make Leaving Painful
  - DISCERNMENT AND RESPONSE .....  
Abusive Churches Present a Warning
  - CHALLENGE AND CHANGE .....  
Abusive Churches Will Always Exist

### 0.4. THE “SINE QUA NON” OF CHRISTIANITY

#### 0.4.1. JESUS CHRIST – THE LIFE-GIVING CONNECTION

- The *spiritual* union with Jesus is not completely co-existence with the *orthodox beliefs*...

#### 0.4.2. THE DOCTRINES NECESSARY FOR SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS

- (1) The Triune God, the Absolute Creator, the Just Judge, the Loving Father; The Son of God, incarnate Jahve, One substance with the Father and distinct person; The Holy Spirit, God working in all the acts of the Triune God for revelation, keeping and salvation of creation
- (2) The Bible, the revelation from God, inspired authority, guidance for our thinking

<sup>4</sup> HASSAN, S. *Combatting Cult Mind Control*, p. 7.

<sup>5</sup> Zondervan, 1992.

- (3) The Cross and the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, the final judgment and salvation offered to mankind
- (4) Faith as a gift from God, spiritual and rational surrender to the sovereign will of God for salvation and life

## 1. COMMON MARKS OF CULTS

- Dave Breese: *Know the Marks of Cults*:<sup>6</sup>

2. Extra-Biblical Revelation	25
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- → false teachings closer to biblical orthodoxy (more dangerous; more important to recognize)
- → unreliable exegesis

### 1.1. THE TRINITY

- rationalizing; *vestigia trinitatis*; speculations...

#### 1.1.1. GOD – THE FATHER

- the attributes of God → study! the Bible, the doctrine and the dogma... do not speculate in some less than serious manner!
- problems related to *Theodicy* (the justice and goodness of God) → atheism ("out" of the church)
- *Open Theism* → denying omniscience → still "in" the church???

#### 1.1.2. GOD – THE SON

- denying divinity → arianism ("outside" the church)
- *Jesus Seminar* ("scientific" methods of biblical criticism)
- *DaVinci Code* (Dan BROWN) → Gnostic Gospels (*The Gospel of Judas*)
- the difference between the love of God the Father and the love of God the Son...
- defective understanding of our relationship to Jesus (rationalistic; meritorious...)

#### 1.1.3. GOD – THE HOLY SPIRIT

- denying personality of the Holy Spirit
- "forgetting" the Holy Spirit → powerless Christianity
- emphasizing the Spirit at the expense of Jesus the Crucified

### 1.2. THE CROSS

- ...is only "an example" (salvation through sacrificial living)
- ...is only "expression of sympathy" (love; compassion; commiseration...)
- ...was tragedy that was not in God's original plan

### 1.3. THE BIBLE

- biblical criticism → (1) rejection of biblical authority, (2) valid only for faith and practice, (3) Bible plus science option (4) plus spiritual experience
- formalism → knowledge without spiritual understanding (**John 3:3** "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.")
- extra-biblical revelations ()
  - expounding prophecies [predicting Parousia → Dispensationalism]

<sup>6</sup> Victor Books, 1975.

## 1.4. FAITH AND HOLINESS

### 1.4.1. FAITH, WORKS, JUSTIFICATION

- libertinism ([rational] faith is enough vs. justification by faith alone)
- legalism → justification by works, or by Jesus' **cross PLUS** some meritorious work (Galatians)
- N.T. WRIGHT *Justification* ↔ John PIPER discussion<sup>7</sup> → the questions Piper asks:
  - The Gospel Is Not about How to Get Saved?
  - Justification Is Not How You Become a Christian?
  - Justification Is Not the Gospel?
  - We Are Not Justified by Believing in Justification?
  - Future Justification Is on the Basis of the Complete Life Lived?
  - First-century Judaism Had Nothing of the Alleged Self-Righteous and Boastful Legalism?
  - God's Righteousness Is the Same as His Covenant Faithfulness?

### 1.4.2. FAITH MISINTERPRETED AND ABUSED

- miracles as a *condition* of genuine faith in Jesus/salvation
- faith as DEPENDENCE → manipulation by leaders → *shepherding* movement;
- faith as INDEPENDENCE → self-help literature (psycho-theology)

<sup>7</sup> PIPER, J. *The Future of Justification*, Wheaton : Crossway Books, 2007.

## 2. THE MAIN CONTEMPORARY DEVIATIONS FROM BIBLICAL DOCTRINE

- contrary tendencies in contemporary [evangelical] church

- (1) libertinism ↔ legalism (immorality vs. judgmental attitudes)
- (2) ecumenism ↔ fundamentalism (sacrificing truth vs. narrow-minded denominational chauvinism)
- (3) individualism ↔ formalism (chaos of lively disorder vs. deadly uniformity)
- (4) emotionalism ↔ intellectualism (shallow feelings vs. dry endless explanations)

- contemporary *Zeitgeist* → (1) Anthropocentrism, (2) Individualism, (3) Scientism, (4) Secularised Eschatology [→ Secularism]

### 2.1. ANTHROPOCENTRICISM

- Emerging Church (MACLAREN *Generous Orthodoxy, New Kind of Christian*; Rob BELL *Love Wins; Velvet Elvis...*)
- Positive Thinking (Vincent Norman PEALE)
  - *Possibility Thinking* Robert SCHULLER “I call it possibility thinking. Others call it faith.” → never verbalize negative emotions!
- Psycho-Theology (JUNG) dangers of occultism...

[ANKERBERG & WELDON *The Coming Darkness*] ...people who think they are only developing mental powers that are fundamentally natural need to consider that their perspective is contradicted by occult history, religious tradition, the lives of participants themselves, and even standard dictionary definitions of the term “occult,” which all emphasize its supernatural nature.

- feminist-; black-; liberation-; gender-... theology → centred in an analysis at variance with the biblical analysis of human situation...

### 2.2. INDIVIDUALISM

- selfism (“God-for-me” heresy)
- experience-based charismatism → exegeting/expounding the Bible in the light of one’s own personal experience → we can coin a new word “**EXPERIENCISM**”... [apologies!]
- SCHULLER – “Self-esteem – the New Reformation”

[SCHULLER] “Self-esteem then, or “pride in being a human being,” is the single greatest need facing the human race today. ...I strongly suggest that self-love is the ultimate will of man that what you really want more than anything else in the world is the awareness that you are a worthy person. ...Do not fear pride: the easiest job God has is to humble us. God’s almost impossible task is to keep us believing every hour of every day how great we are as his sons and daughters on planet earth.”<sup>8</sup>

- “Jesus *yes*, the church *no*” attitude.

### 2.3. SCIENTISM

#### 2.3.1. SCIENCE IN APOLOGETICS

- determinism & evolutionism → making away with *mystery* (no mystery ⇒ no worship)
- theo-evolution → pantheism/panentheism (Genesis 1&2 is about Shabbat and Marriage!)

#### 2.3.2. FAITH MOVEMENT

- “name it, claim it” → manipulating God;
- the power of human word ↔ the power of GOD’S WORD

#### 2.3.3. SCIENCE OF THE “CHURCH GROWTH”

- looking for the ultimate *methods* → guaranteed success...
- treating church as a corporation/company/society... (leadership doctrines/methods)
- *Purpose Driven* (Rich WARREN)

<sup>8</sup> quoted: www.equip.org/PDF/DS210.pdf

- 
- Church Growth mvmt → megachurches (the keyword: *methods*)

#### **2.4. SECULARISM (SECULARISED ESCHATOLOGY)**

- the ultimate meaning of life is to be found on this side of eternity
- religion is good/important/useful for this life here on earth → the ultimate meaning of life
- *Prosperity Gospel* → “Health&Wealth” gospel
- entertainment as “worship”
- “visual” faith → depending on eye-perception

#### **3. TO REMEMBER**

- The closer to orthodoxy, the greater the danger of deception. (the “dead orthodoxy” heresy)
- Know the absolute basics of Christianity (the *sine qua non* of the Christian faith), live them out in the Holy Spirit! His witness is the only safe guarantee of being **alive IN CHRIST**.
- Be informed about the *Zeitgeist* and expect its manifestations in the church! Christians carry the problems they have had in the world to the church.