

Milk & Honey

Vol. XXVII June, 2013 No. 6

Spiritual Food and Encouragement for Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ

Exposing Error: Is It Worthwhile?

Harry Ironside

Objection is often raised even by some sound in the faith regarding the exposure of error as being entirely negative and of no real edification. Of late, the hue and cry has been against an and all negative teaching. But the brethren who assume this attitude forget that a large part of the New Testament, both of the teaching of our blessed Lord Himself and the writings of the apostles, is made up of this very character of ministry—namely, showing the Satanic origin, and therefore, the unsettling results of the propagation of erroneous systems which Peter, in his second epistle, so definitely refers to as “damnable heresies.”

Our Lord prophesies, “Many false prophets shall arise, and shall deceive many.” Within our own day, how many false prophets have risen: and oh, how many are the deceived! Paul predicted, “I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock, also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch.” My own observation is that these “grievous wolves,” alone and in packs, are not sparing even the most favoured flocks. Undershepherds in these “perilous times” will do well to note the apostle’s warning:

Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers. (Acts 20:28)

It is an important in these days as in Paul’s—in fact, it is increasingly important—to expose the many types of false teaching that, on every hand, abound more and more.

We are called upon to “contend earnestly for the faith once for all delivered to the saints,” while we hold the truth in love. The faith means the whole body of revealed truth, and to contend for all of God’s truth necessitates some negative teaching. The choice is not left with us. Jude said he preferred a different, a pleasanter theme:

Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the

saints. For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ. (Jude 3,4)

Paul likewise admonishes us to “have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.” (Eph. 5:11)

This does not imply harsh treatment of those entrapped by error—quite the opposite. If it be objected that exposure to error necessitates unkind reflection upon others who do not see as we do, our answer is it has always been the duty of every loyal servant of Christ to warn against any teaching that would make Him less precious or cast reflection upon His finished redemptive work and the all-sufficiency of His present service as our great High Priest and Advocate.

Every system of teaching can be judged by what it sets forth as to these fundamental truths of the faith. “What think ye of Christ?” is still the true test of every creed. The Christ of the Bible is certainly not the Christ of any false “-ism.” Each of the cults has its hideous caricature of our lovely Lord.

Let us who have been redeemed at the cost of His precious blood be “good soldiers of Jesus Christ.” As the battle against the forces of evil waxes even more hot, we have need for God-given valour.

There is a constant temptation to compromise. “Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach.” It is always right to stand firmly for what God has revealed concerning His blessed Son’s person and work. The “father of lies” deals in half-truths and specializes in most subtle fallacies concerning the Lord Jesus, our sole and sufficient Savior.

Error is like leaven of which we read, “A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.” Truth mixed with error equivalent to all error, except that it is more innocent looking and, therefore, more dangerous. God hates such a mixture! Any error, or any truth-and-error mixture, calls for definite exposure and repudiation. To condone such is to be unfaithful to God and His Word and treacherous to imperiled souls for whom Christ died.

Exposing error is most unpopular work. But from every true standpoint it is worthwhile work. To our Savior, it

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What Is Heresy?

H. A. Ironside; Wm. MacDonald; August VanRyn

In these last days it is extremely important that the true believers should be familiar with the marks of false teaching or heresy that is all around us. Because of modern technology, there has probably never been an age in which heretical teaching can creep into our homes and assemblies without an awareness on our part. "Little children, it is the *last hour*; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, *even now* many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the *last hour*." (1 Jn. 2:18) Here are listed some guidelines to help us be aware of heretical teaching.

1. Heretical Teaching Consists Of Opinions Contrary To The Doctrine Of The Bible. "Then the high priest rose up, and all those who were with him (which is the SECT of the Sadducees), and they were filled with indignation." (Acts 5:17) "For Sadducees say that there is no resurrection...." (Acts 23:8). "But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty." (1 Cor. 15:13,14) The Sadducees were materialists. They did not believe that man existed in another world after death. Is there a resurrection from the dead or does death end all? May I say that every Christian can take his stand with the Apostle Paul. We believe in the hope of the resurrection, and we rejoice today to know that Christ who died lives again. (H. A. Ironside) The first mark, then, of heretical teaching is that it contains opinions that are directly contrary to the Scriptures. This is a red flag that should keep us away from such teaching.

2. Heretical Teaching Emphasizes Man's Ability To Please God And Diminishes God's Plan Of Salvation. "But some of the *sect* of the Pharisees who believed rose up, saying, It is necessary to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses." (Acts 15:5) "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness." (Matt. 23:27) Strangely, religious leaders are often the most active opponents of the gospel of grace. They can be sweetly tolerant of everything but the good news of salvation. Natural man doesn't want to be the object of God's grace and doesn't want to show grace to others. It is solemn to remember that these words of condemnation were hurled at religious leaders, not at drunkards and reprobates. In an ecumenical age when some evangelical Christians are joining forces with avowed enemies of the cross of Christ, it is good to ponder the example of Jesus. (Wm. MacDonald) "But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other

gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed." (Gal. 1:8)

3. Heretical Teaching Refers To The Humanity Of Jesus Christ, But Denies His Deity; Thus Also His Redemptive Work. "And every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world." (1 Jn. 4:3) "For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men who have turned the grace of our God into a license for evil and *who deny* our Master and Lord, Jesus Christ." (Jude 4) Spiritistic cults thrive at a fearful rate these days, and carry away thousands of deluded souls. Once a man casts loose from the revealed facts which the Word of God sets forth, then he is susceptible to any false theory which is propagated. But the truth of God is all based on facts, seen by eye-witnesses. God was manifest in flesh. The invisible God is made known through the visible Christ, and today we have the record of that in the physical, visible Word of God - the Holy Scriptures. The life, death, and resurrection of Christ were all visible, physical realities, abundantly seen and testified to by reliable men. It is the absence of the true doctrine, rather than the presence of false doctrine, we are bidden to guard against. If anyone professes to minister spiritual things and yet leaves out all the fundamentals of the Christian faith, such as the virgin birth, the sinless humanity, the sacrificial death of Christ, and the value of His precious blood, His resurrection and ascension to the right hand of the throne of God, then such a speaker is not speaking by the Spirit of God, but by the spirit of Satan. (August VanRyn)

4. Heretical Teaching Does Not Edify, But Rather Is Destructive And Is Generally Mixed In With Orthodox Teaching.

"But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in *destructive heresies*, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction." (2 Pet. 2:1) After God brought Israel out of Egypt false prophets rose up from time to time to controvert the truth which He revealed through His specially anointed servants. Similar conditions had begun already to prevail in Christian circles even in apostolic times, and God foresaw that false teachers would rise up throughout all the centuries prior to the coming again of our Lord Jesus Christ. These false teachers come in under cover. They bring in heresies privately or secretly. It is never customary for teachers of error to declare and oppose the truth openly in the beginning. As a rule they work in an underhanded way, seeking to gain the confidence of God's people before they make known their

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6. "Cain was of the wicked one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brother's righteous" (1 Jn. 3:12). Here we have a divinely given sample of what a child of the devil is like. Cain was of the wicked one, and proved it by venting his spite on his brother; he slew him. Here is no passive sinner, but an active rejector of God's mercy and God's ways. Cain was a sinner even before he brought of the fruit of the ground an offering to the Lord, for all men are sinners; but Cain became more than a sinner after God had to refuse his offering, and after He pleaded with Cain to do the right thing as his brother Abel had done. Cain then became a criminal, a murderer. If Abel had heard what sacrifice he was to bring, then Cain had heard it also. But he refused to submit to God's way, and preferred his own. (August VanRyn)

7. "Woe to them! For they have gone in the way of Cain" (Jude 11). In the beginning God made known to guilty man the truth that death and judgment were his rightful portion, only to be averted by the sacrifice of the glorious Seed of the woman, who in the fullness of time should appear as the sinner's Savior, bruising the serpent's head, though Himself wounded in the heel. "Christ died for the ungodly." "He was wounded for our transgressions; He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed." "It is the blood that makes an atonement for the soul." Everywhere in Scripture the same testimony is given, for "without shedding of blood there is no remission." Now this is exactly what, in principle, Cain denied. He brought an offering to God according to the promptings of his own heart. His sacrifice seemed fair and lovely; the fruits of the ground, wrung therefrom by toil and travail. This is natural religion as opposed to what has been revealed. The fruits presented picture well man's effort in all that is fairest in character-building, all that is loveliest in human attainment but of no avail whatever to meet the claims of divine justice, to purge the conscience and cleanse the soul from the stain of sin. It is surely plain, then that "the way of Cain" is a most comprehensive title, embracing every form of religious teaching, ceremony, or cult that ignores the need of the vicarious atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ. (H. A. Ironside) *

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John The Baptist

C. H. Mackintosh

Was John troubled by the loss of his disciples? No, it was a joy to see them finding their center and their object where he had found his own. He had not sought to make a party or to gather disciples around himself. He had borne witness to another, and that other was "the Lamb of God:" in whom he himself delighted, not only because of His work, but because of His worth—His moral glory, His intrinsic, peerless, divine excellence. He heard the Bridegroom's voice and saw His face, and his joy was full.

Now we may well inquire, What can the world offer to a man whose joy is full! What can circumstances, what can the creature do for him? If men slight and desert him, if they wound and insult him, what then? Why, he can say, "My joy is full. I have found all I want in the blessed One who not only has taken away my sins and filled me with the Holy Spirit, but who has drawn me to Himself and filled me with His own divine preciousness and eternal excellency." *

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real views. Such false teachers often hide their doctrinal peculiarities by using orthodox terms to which, however, they attach an altogether different meaning than that which is ordinarily accepted. If they alone were thus dealt with it would be comparatively a small thing, but the sad result of their unscriptural ministry is that the weak and uninstructed readily follow the pernicious ways of those misleading representatives of Satan, and because of this the way of truth - that is, "the faith which was once delivered unto the saints"—is derided and evil spoken of. (H. A. Ironside)*

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that He receives from us, His blood-bought ones, the loyalty that is His due. To ourselves, if consider "the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt," it ensures future reward, a thousand-fold. And to souls "caught in the snare of the fowler"—how many of them God only knows—it may mean light and life, abundant and

Milk & Honey Information

There is no charge for Milk & Honey. It, like all ministries of Spread The Word, is supported entirely by the freewill offerings of the Lord's people. All gifts are tax deductible.

Publisher: **Spread The Word, Inc.**

2400 Admire Springs Dr.

Dover, PA 17315

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Web site www.STW1982.com

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Buy the truth, and sell it not... Prov. 23:23

June, 2013

The Brief, But Solemn, Lessons From The Way Of Cain

Matthew Henry, C. H. Mackintosh, W. H. Griffith
Thomas; William Newell; August VanRyn; H. A.

Back to the way of Cain thousands are turning who once professed to have an interest in the blood of Christ. Counting that blood a common thing, as the blood of a mere martyr for righteousness' sake and liberty of conscience, they trample beneath their feet its atoning value and haughtily dare to approach the High and Lofty One that inhabits Eternity with the fruits and flowers of nature, boasting in what would be the occasion of their deepest repentance if they had received the love of the truth that they might be saved. (H.A. Ironside)

1. "She bore Cain and said, I have acquired a man from the Lord" (Gen. 4:1). Many suppose that Eve had a conceit that this son was the promised seed, and that therefore she thus triumphed in him. If so, she was wretchedly mistaken, as Samuel, when he said "Surely the Lord's anointed is before me." (1 Sam. 16:6) When children are born, who can foresee what they will prove? He who was thought to be a man from the Lord became an enemy to the Lord. The less we expect from creatures, the more tolerable will disappointments be. (Matthew Henry)

2. "Cain was a tiller of the ground...and in the process of time he brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the Lord" (Gen. 4:3,4). Cain offered to Jehovah the fruit of a cursed earth, and that, moreover, without any blood to remove the curse. He presented "an unbloody sacrifice," simply because he had no faith. Had he possessed that divine principle, it would have taught him, even at this early

moment, that "without shedding of blood there is no remission." (Heb. 9:22) (C. H. Mackintosh)

3. "The Lord did not respect Cain and his offering, and Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell" (Gen. 4:5). Cain's anger clearly shows that his worship was only a form of godliness without the power. If his offering had been made in the right spirit, there would have been no anger and no lowering of the countenance. (W. H. Griffith Thomas)

4. "By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain" (Heb. 11:4). Abel was just as truly a sinner as Cain, for God says, "There is no distinction; for all have sinned"; and "There is none righteous, no, not one." God bore witness in respect of Abel's gifts, not his character! God did not need anything, as Cain's contribution seemed to indicate that He did. But that a sinner should judge himself to be a sinner, worthy of death, and also at the same moment dare to exercise faith in a holy God, on the ground of a sin-offering alone, a substitute, pouring out its life-blood in the sinner's place - this double thing God could with joy accept. This was faith; this was God's way. Cain lacked self-judgment as a sinner, and, consequently, did not have faith; for none but self-condemned sinners can really trust a holy God! (William Newell)

5. "And it came to pass that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him" (Gen. 4:8). Thus has it ever been; the Cains have persecuted and murdered the Abels. At all times, man and his religion are the same, faith and its religion are the same; and wherever they have met there has been conflict. However, it is well to see that Cain's act of murder was the true consequence - the proper fruit - of his false worship. His foundation was bad, and the superstructure erected thereon was also bad. (C. H. Mackintosh)

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