

THE NEW DOCTRINES AND THE NEW DANGERS

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The developments of our times have projected a whole host of new things into civilization. More new things have appeared during the last sixty years than in all the previous history of the world. At the turn of the century the automobile was invented. This was soon followed by the airplane. Then came radio, television, atomic fission, electronic devices, space craft, and automation.

As a result new dangers followed swiftly in the wake of these developments. Natural barriers of land and sea separating nationalities melted away before the march of automobile, airplane, radio, and atomic fission. The fierce struggle of two world wars decimated the earth, and the third war is now in the making. Proposed interplanetary travel now accentuates the perils that lie ahead. Automation has introduced new perils into the struggle of class and caste for survival in this industrialized era.

New doctrines too have emerged within the professing church which lie more basically at the root of the perils that threaten society. These new doctrines all purport to be of divine origin, and supposedly rest upon a Biblical foundation. Being a part of the times in which we live, they are vigorously clamoring for attention. Four of these will constitute the substance of this message: the new morality; the new theology; the new eschatology; and the new orthodoxy.

THE NEW MORALITY IS THE OLD IMMORALITY WITH ECCLESIASTICAL SANCTION

2 Tim. 3:2-4, 6, 13

The center of this so-called new morality is the exaltation of self. That is where the description begins. "For men shall be lovers of their own selves." This is clearly the choice of self as the supreme good. This is the very essence of sin. It was the choice of self as over against God that initiated sin into the world. As a result there has developed a psychology which ignores sin and makes the self attractive. In this passage the word for love points to attraction as its basis. Out of this grows a devotion to self that produces a warm, personal, unreasoning bond of emotion and affection.

The course of this so-called new morality can be traced directly to this emphasis upon self. Everything that follows is made moral by exalting the self to the place of supreme good.

The motions and movements of self become the measuring rod for all activity. That this sort of psychology is now in vogue is only too evident as one surveys and analyzes the thinking in the educational world today. In a recent educational conference dealing with student development the freedom of the individual was the dominant point of emphasis, and this without concern for the consequences.

Where there is love of self as the moderating principle there is bound to be the fruit as described in the opening verses of 2 Timothy 3. There will be love of money, bragging on self, holding self above others, freedom to affirm untruth, disobedience to parents, ungratefulness, unholy activity, absence of natural affection, the breaking of contracts, slandering, uncontrollableness, ferocity, despisers of good men, treachery, presumption, personal inflation, and attraction to sensualism. This stands in amazing contrast with the wholesome fruitage where there is the monitoring influence of attraction to a supreme sovereign above self.

You may be sure that the seeds of this sort of morality are now beginning to appear all across the world in unbridled excess. Witness the insurrections among students on the campuses over the world, the riots in the major cities of the world in the name of freedom, the gross sensualism into which the human race is now plunging with utter abandon.

The climax of this so-called new morality is yet ahead. For "evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived" (13). This means that the trend is down. It means that the source of this declension is men who are rotten at heart. It means that the course of this declension is progressive through deterrents to lower depths of degradation. It means that the force of this declension grows out of the ever enlarging moral and spiritual deception. Having cast dust into the air, men everywhere are complaining that they cannot see clearly enough to explain the trends.

THE NEW THEOLOGY IS THE OLD PANTHEISM IN A MODERN SETTING 2 Tim. 3:5, 7-9

Pantheism is essentially the reduction of reality to the narrow limits of the natural level. This means that there is no God before, above, outside, and separate from creation. All that belongs to the natural order is God, and God is the natural order. Pantheism is the identification of God with nature. In this new theology you will note three things:

1. There is the perpetuation of forms without the secret of power, that is, "having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof" (5). This undoubtedly means that the forms of Christianity which the Church has practiced through her history will continue to be practiced. There will be the practice of the ordinances, such as baptism and the eucharist. There will be the gathering of professed Christians for public worship. There will be the outward forms of song, sermon, prayer and creed. And all these forms will purport to signify godliness.

But there will be the denial of the power. The secret of godliness, the Lord Jesus Christ (I Tim. 3:16), will be denied. He will be denied as to His historic incarnation in human flesh, and to his personal incarnation in believers by the operation of the Holy Spirit. As a

matter of faith the forms will be observed, but as a matter of fact the person to whom they point will be rejected. In Eternity magazine appeared this account many years ago. The Presbytery met in the church of Dr. Donald Grey Barnhouse. The meeting as usual was to be opened with the eucharist. Knowing that the rank and file denied the spiritual realities to which it referred, he pled with them not to go through the forms. But they rejected his plea and carried through with the usual forms.

2. There is the promulgation of facts without comprehension of meaning. As stated in verse 7, they will be "Ever learning but never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." In the recent volume Honest to God, a rehash and popularization of Tillich's theology, there is an accumulation of facts on a wide scale of knowledge now becoming available from the study of the world in which we live. Failure to see these facts in relation to the whole of reality led the author, Dr. John Robinson, to reject the language and explanation of the Bible and seek an interpretation which is nothing more than a retreat to pantheism.

In the explosion of knowledge that is sweeping the world, the facts of astronomy, geology, and anthropology are outrunning the facts of theology. As a result men are suffering from a lowering intellectual skyline and a diminishing horizon. Within these narrowing limits and on this lower level of visibility, they are not able to come to a full and rational comprehension of the facts at hand. Unwilling to wait for more light, they rush to faulty conclusions, the first of which is to reject the teaching of the Bible, and the second of which is to construct a new theology. But this theology is not new. It is simply the error of men across the centuries, the old pantheism couched in the language and learning of the twentieth century.

3. There is the presentation of feats of the supernatural without being divine. "Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth; men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith" (8). To understand this allusion, one must go back to the book of Exodus (7:11, 22). Moses cast his rod before Pharaoh and it became a serpent. The magicians of Egypt did likewise. With his rod Moses smote the waters of Egypt and they became blood. And again the magicians did likewise. The simulation appeared to be so genuine, that Pharaoh rejected the word of the Lord through Moses.

This is now occurring again in the world. There is a resurgence of paganism in such palpable forms that to the average individual it is truth. The multiplication of cults is gathering momentum. They are able to simulate as though genuine the miracles of the early days of the Church and thus bait along a vast concourse of Christendom. To add to this, Evangelicalism is reinterpreting the Christian faith to fit the new phenomena. Such activities as speaking in tongues, healing, and explorations into the nature and elements of mankind are spreading. No effort is made to discover whether the message accompanying these activities harmonizes with the message of the word of God (Deut. 13; Isa. 8:20).

THE NEW ESCHATOLOGY IS THE OLD UNIVERSALISM
SEEKING TO REESTABLISH ITSELF. 2 Tim. 3:9; 4:1, 10

The new eschatology removes a sovereign judge from consideration. The new theology of pantheism makes no provision for a transcendent God. Without God man becomes the measure

of his morality and is responsible only to himself. This opens the path to perversion so that men may do that which is right in their own eyes without fear of consequences. The path of paganism was ever down, and by the same token evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. There is no fear of God before their eyes. There is no sovereign judge to face. There is no irrevocable sentence to confront. There is no infinite penalty to experience.

But such folly shall be made manifest, just as it was in the case of Jannes and Jambres (2 Tim. 3:9). For there is a sovereign judge to face. "The Lord Jesus Christ . . . shall judge the quick and the dead" (2 Tim. 4:1). This is the more fearful for this judge has already endured in His own body a demonstration of divine wrath in that He died for the ungodly. His resurrection from the dead guarantees that He will judge the world of wicked men in righteousness (Acts 17:31). In that the world of wicked men have rejected His death in their behalf and have elected to bear their own punishment, the world has placed itself in the most vulnerable position. And God will vindicate Himself in this hour of judgment.

The new eschatology rationalizes away the second coming of Christ. The new theology of pantheism makes a second coming of Christ impossible. Since reality has been reduced to the realm of the natural, and God is identified with the natural, then it is impossible for any intervention into this order from without. There can be no introduction of new elements and no interruption of the present order. As the scoffers say, "all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation" (2 Pet. 3:4). This fact lulls the conscience to sleep and conditions men for continuation in sin.

But such reasoning is false. For the sovereign judge, the Lord Jesus Christ is about to appear to inaugurate His kingdom (2 Tim. 4:1). Men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith, shall proceed no further. In one mighty burst of brilliance Christ will vindicate Himself. He will halt wicked men in their headlong progress into sin, and the folly of their reasoning will be publicly exposed (2 Tim. 3:9; 4:1).

The new eschatology reduces the supernatural reign to the present order. The new theology of pantheism which removes God from the scene, also removes the possibility of a coming crisis and the introduction of a supernatural kingdom in the earth. Like Demas of old, men who invent a new eschatology have forsaken the truth, having loved this present world (2 Tim. 4:10). Everything from the bold denial of a coming kingdom to the interpretation of the church in terms of the kingdom, all these lead in the same direction. These denials are calculated to remove all hope of future good supernaturally realized. Instead, their teachings center upon the efforts of men to establish some sort of kingdom.

But according to the word of God Jesus Christ will appear and establish an everlasting kingdom of righteousness (2 Tim. 4:1). In this kingdom He will reign as sovereign. The saved will be exalted to the place of glory with Him. Sinners will be expelled from this kingdom. And all sighing and sorrow and shadows will flee away. This present world has nothing to offer that will quite compare.

THE NEW ORTHODOXY IS THE OLD HETERODOXY PRESENTED IN
MORE SUBTLE STATEMENT. 2 Tim. 4:3-4

The new orthodoxy is set forth in the words of 2 Tim. 4:3-4. "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables."

The motivation for the new orthodoxy is described in the phrase, "After their own lusts" (3). These desires are listed in 2 Tim. 3:2-6. They are desires that cover the entire scope of man, spirit, soul, and body. These constitute the ultimate reason for setting aside the Scriptures. Sound doctrine is divine in origin and constitutes a standard which makes no provision for the lusts of the flesh. Under this rigid standard there is nothing but friction, frustration and irritation for those who desire to live after the flesh. An accusing conscience produces nothing but dissatisfaction. There is therefore but one course of action open, and that is to render the standard inoperative, while at the same time appearing to support and submit to the Scriptures. Here is a type of people who want all the approval of those who follow the Bible, but they do not want to hold themselves to its rigid standards.

A clever mechanism is thus employed to render the Scriptures of none effect. Such people heap to themselves specious teachers who can on the one hand preach the word with such finesse that itching ears are soothed and at the same time preach in such a way that the authoritative standard disappears. This does not refer to the blatant infidel who attacks the Scriptures from without. This is something that occurs within the Church. The liberals were open and unhesitating in their attack upon the inspiration of the word of God. But at last a more subtle method has been devised. In the pious language of the neo-orthodox the same thing is being accomplished without the stigma of being labeled as an enemy of the truth. Christ is declared to be the only revelation of God. The Bible is not the revelation of God. But while reading it, it may become the word of God provided in the given situation it seems to speak to the reader with authority. But in the event it does not seem to speak to the reader with authority, then it is not the word of God.

The measure of departure from the Scriptures in such a situation finally becomes complete. "They shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (4). When the truth is no longer held, then something must be substituted in its place. The mind will not be reduced to a vacuum. In the place of divine explanation there will be substituted human invention. Men shall be turned to fables or myths. A myth is a story for the purpose of explaining something. In the Scriptures this word refers to a fiction, a fabrication, a human invention. The human explanation makes every provision for the origin of life, the kind of life that is being lived, the ethics of life, and the final outcome. It will be noticed that this mythological explanation eases the conscience for continuation in sin. Herein lies the real factor in helping to produce the new morality. Herein is the material out of which is fashioned the new theology and the new eschatology.

Conclusion

Out of the same context come the divine directives to meet the new perils. They are three in number.

1. There must be recognition on the part of the man of God that godliness will arouse persecution in the world (2 Tim. 3:10-12). But godliness must be perpetuated in the face of the new morality.

2. There must be continuation in the word of God in the face of the new theology and the new orthodoxy as the only hope of salvation and sanctification (2 Tim. 3:14-17).

3. There must be the proclamation of the word of God in the face of the new eschatology as the only deterrent to sin and the only preparation for Christ's appearing and kingdom (2 Tim. 4:1-2).