

Are We Too "Negative"?

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Critics have long leveled the charge of "divisive" and "negative" against those who would warn the church of unbiblical teachings and practices. They would rather we preach only "positive" things. I, also, long to put behind me the controversy that has become such an unwelcome part of my life. Yet in articulating the pure gospel, one must carefully distinguish it from the clever counterfeits all around.

How negligent it would be not to warn the sheep of poisoned pastures and false shepherds who promote lies in the name of truth. Yet the odds are staggering. [Norman Vincent Peale's](#) magazines, for example, have 16 million readers monthly, nearly 10,000 times BDM's small circulation! The flesh faints with weariness and frustration. Then why persist in a task so lonely and burdensome? Yes, why this burning passion?

Compelled by God's Word

There are, thank God, the many letters of encouragement from those who offer their love, support and prayers. There are, too, the earnest "thank you's" from thousands who've been set free from the delusion and bondage of false gospels -- from [Catholicism](#) and ["Christian" psychology](#) to [Positive/Possibility Thinking and Positive Confession](#). Yet even without any such encouragement, we would be compelled to carry on.

Jeremiah was hated, maligned, imprisoned, and threatened with death because he preached repentance and warned of God's impending judgment, while the "positive prophets" promised peace and prosperity "by the word of the Lord." Popular opinion opposed him. He became so discouraged that he declared that he would no longer speak for God nor even mention His Name. But God's Word was in his heart and burned like a fire in his bones, so that he had to speak (Jer. 20). Yes, above all, it is God's Word burning within that compels us.

Distressed by accusations of "negativism," I cry out to God and turn to His unfailing Word. And what do I find there? The very message I am constrained to preach! Christ Himself was far more "negative" than I have dared to be. He continually warned of judgment and hell, exposed sin, demanded repentance, rebuked the religious leaders, and indicted them as hypocrites, white sepulchers, and blind leaders of the blind fools. Without doubt, He would be banned from most Christian pulpits and media today!

The Sermon on the Mount is not intended to enhance one's ["self-esteem."](#) It encourages one to be poor in spirit, to mourn, to be meek and merciful, and promises that those who are true to God and His Word will be hated, persecuted, and vilified (Matt. 5). But didn't Jesus say, "Judge not that ye be not judged" (Matt 7:1)? Isn't it unbiblical, then, to accuse a Christian leader of any wrong? On the contrary, Christ could only have meant that we were not to judge motives, for He clearly told us to judge teachings and lives: "Beware of false prophets [i.e. teachers] ... by their

fruits [doctrine and lives] ye shall know them" (15-20). Surely he is calling us to [judge false doctrines and deeds!](#)

A "Judging" Which Satan Hates

When Paul exhorted Timothy to "preach the Word," he explained that to do so one must "reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (2 Tim. 4:2). Paul warned of "vain talkers and deceivers ... whose mouths must be stopped [from teaching false doctrine]." He urged Titus to "rebuke them sharply" (Titus 1:9-14). He told Timothy, "Them that sin rebuke before all [i.e. publicly] that others also may fear" (1 Tim. 5:20). Clearly such reproof requires a judging that does not violate Christ's prohibition but which, in fact, He commanded and the apostles practiced -- a judging which Satan hates because it unmask his lies.

The International Genocide Treaty signed by former President Reagan makes it a crime to try to convert anyone of another religion or to suggest that their beliefs are wrong. It will soon be a serious crime to call homosexuality a sin. The day is coming when, to protect "minority rights," we will be prohibited by law from preaching the gospel except in the most "positive" manner. Sadly, much of the evangelical church has already conformed.

It is not enough simply to "preach the truth" when there are lies which counterfeit it so closely that many can't tell the difference. It is both logically and Scripturally essential to expose and refute today's pernicious false gospels. Yet to do so is to be opposed by church leaders and barred from most platforms. True Bible teachers are banned from "Christian" radio stations like the Moody network, lest they expose the humanism Moody promotes in the name of "Christian psychology." Why not allow an open discussion of vital issues before the whole church? Are church leaders concerned for truth -- or with protecting their own interests?

Turning Inexcusable Sin Into Excusable "Sickness"

"Christian" psychology may seem to help for a time, but it undermines our real victory in Christ by redefining sin as ["mental illness."](#) This heresy inspired a host of new terms such as obsessive-compulsive behavior, dysfunctional families, addiction -- and, more recently, the increasingly popular [co-dependency myths and Twelve-Step recovery programs spawned by Alcoholics Anonymous \(AA\).](#) In [12 Steps to Destruction](#), the [Bobgans](#) point out that Bill Wilson, founder of AA, based his system upon what was revolutionary new theory: that drunkenness was not a "moral defect" but an excusable "illness." Wilson was relieved to learn that he was an "alcoholic" -- a new term at the time.

Enlarging upon this lie, "Christian" psychologists have redefined as mental "illness" all manner of behavior that Jesus, the Great Physician, diagnosed as sin. A woman called into a "Christian" psychology radio program to confess that she couldn't keep from having sex with anybody and everybody. She was told that her problem arose from an overbearing mother and milquetoast father, and that it was an "addiction" that could take years of therapy to cure. So much for Christ's "Go and sin no more" (Jn. 8:11)! Disobeying God is no longer sin if one has a "compulsion" or "addiction" or traumatic childhood.

Too Negative?

One author wrote a while back: "The depth to which sanctified psychotherapy can sink is really quite profound. A local newspaper a recently featured an article about a 34-bed clinic that has opened in Southern California to treat 'Christian sex addicts.' According to the article the clinic is affiliated with a large well-known Protestant church in the area." Several leading "Christian" psychologists interviewed for the article "scoffed at the power of God's Word to transform a heart and break the bondage of sexual sin." The director explained that his treatment center would serve to rescue many Christians who had been taught that "the Bible is all you need."

Exposing the Lie

In *The Journal of Biblical Ethics in Medicine*, Dr. Robert Maddox warns that "all manner of sin ... from gluttony to fornication, from stealing to bestiality ... is [being] labeled as disease, to be cured with chemical, electrical and mechanical treatments." The Bobgans also quote from University of California professor Herbert Fingarette's book *Heavy Drinking: The Myth of Alcoholism as a Disease*: "I just don't understand why any churches would go for the disease idea ... [it] denies the spiritual dimension of the whole thing." They also quote Stanton Peele from his book *Diseasing of America: Addiction Treatment Out of Control*: "... disease definitions undermine the individual's obligations to control behavior and to answer for misconduct ... [and] actually increase the incidence of the behaviors of concern."

How astonishing that as the secular world is abandoning the sinking ship of psychotherapy, Christians are jumping aboard, imagining that this doomed vessel will not only stay afloat, but add needed buoyancy to the ark God has provided!

It makes me weep to watch the growing deception, to cry out against it, and to be heeded by so few and opposed by so many. Why is that essential correction which Scripture so clearly demands left to a few of us nobodies and shunned by church leaders who would be heeded by millions?

Write to the most influential so-called evangelical leaders and ask how they can "preach the Word" without involving themselves in the reproof and rebuke of rampant error that Paul said must be at the very heart of Biblical preaching!

Christian Publishing Gone Astray

A memo from a researcher, who along with her husband is among the nobodies crying out against heresy in the church, stressed Her concern about *The Ragamuffin Gospel* by Brennan Manning, a Catholic, published by Multnomah Press. In part she said: "Manning teaches ... that [a Christian] may continue to live a life of debauchery ... describes himself as a [heavy] smoker and someone who became an alcoholic after conversion ... wants active homosexuals accepted into full fellowship (p. 26) along with other immoral people ... teaches an eastern-type meditation (pp. 43, 205-6) ... twists Scripture (pp. 23, 28, 73, 173); he says that everyone, but the self-righteous (those that obey God by Brennan's definition), will go to heaven (pp. 17, 26, 29) ... This book is dangerous ... a ploy by a new age Catholic to invade the evangelical church ... Christian[s] must be warned that ... the once trusted names of Multnomah, Thomas Nelson, and Fleming Revell [to name a few] are no guarantee of orthodoxy. What a shame!"

Too Negative?

"Christian" publishers can no longer be trusted to publish truth, but have become purveyors of death! A dump truck would not be large enough to haul all of the heresy out of a typical Christian Booksellers Convention. Even Roman Catholic publishers of the most awful blasphemy and incredible nonsense, such as Paulist Press, are represented alongside so-called evangelical publishers.

Take, for example, the Christian Booksellers Convention in Orlando a number of years ago. At the booth of another Catholic Publisher, *Our Sunday Visitor*, one of their books on display told the story of Padre Pio, a recently deceased Catholic monk admired by Pope John Paul II. Pio manifested the "stigmata," bleeding from his palms to make up the deficiency in Christ's redemptive work on the cross! Pio believed he was suffering for the salvation of sinners! He claimed that literally millions of the spirits of the dead, whom he saw with his physical eyes, came to him on their way to heaven to thank him for gaining their release from purgatory! This is only one of Rome's many heresies. On confronting *Our Sunday Visitor* employees concerning this demonic delusion promoted by their books, and objecting to their presence at a convention of evangelical publishers, they pointed to a nearby booth promoting horrendous, allegedly "Christian" Rock music and declared: "We have as much right to be here as they do!" One could only agree.

Today's "evangelical" leaders shun their duty to oppose heresy. Many of them promote Catholicism, occultism, and humanistic psychology. Therefore, we, the nobodies, though few heed us, must cry out even louder to warn the sheep of poisoned pastures and false shepherds. **"Positive or "negative" is not the issue, but truth and simple obedience to the Lord and His Word.**

* This material has been adapted and/or excerpted from an October, 1990, *CIB Bulletin* article.