

WATCH WHAT YOU READ!

Based on the title of this article, you might think that I am going to launch into a condemnation of pornography, and pornographic literature. That would certainly be a worthwhile topic, and one which I may address at some future time. However, this time, I have something else in mind. I am actually concerned about what we read from a **religious** perspective! It is no secret that there are many false teachers out there (2Pt.2:1-3; 1Jn.4:1-6). And don't let it escape your notice that these false teachers pose as preachers and teachers of the gospel of Christ! But they do not wear warning labels. They look just like you and me. They quote Scripture (cf. Mt.4:5-6). The problem is that, sometimes, we just swallow whatever some preacher says without question – **and that is unacceptable (Ac.17:11)**.

In this article, I will cite some actual examples from various kinds of religious literature. I will quote reference works and commentaries – works that are accepted as “authoritative.” I will show that, while such works can be helpful, we must read them with discretion. Because sometimes, they are flat wrong! Instead of relying on such works as our final authority, we must always make our final appeal to the word of God. Now, let's get down to business...

W.E. Vine was a premillennialist. For instance, in his Expository Dictionary of the New Testament, he discusses the use of the Greek word, “parousia” (coming) with reference to the second coming of Christ. He says, “When used of the return of Christ, **at the rapture of the church**, it signifies, not merely His momentary ‘coming’ for His saints, but His presence with them from that moment until His revelation and manifestation to the world.” Note carefully the portion I've highlighted about the “rapture.” The doctrine of the rapture is a key component of premillennialism; however, the doctrine of premillennialism and/or the rapture is unknown to Scripture! This does not mean that W.E. Vine is a worthless work; it only means that we should read with discernment and discretion. Do not “swallow” everything he says; instead compare what he says with Scripture! Vine's work is called an “expository” dictionary. This means that he expounds upon the meaning of words. This will, of necessity, involve his own conclusions – which may or may not be correct. So, I say again: read with caution!

J.H. Thayer was a unitarian. This means he believed Deity exists in only one person. In discussing the Greek word, “Theos” (God), he said, **“Whether Christ is called God must be determined from John 1:1; 20:28; 1 John 5:20; Rom 9:5; Titus 2:13; Heb 1:8-f, etc.; the matter is still in dispute among theologians.”** While Thayer tries to be objective in his work, he does leave open the question of the Deity of Christ. In reality, virtually every Bible question is in dispute among theologians! The final arbiter of every religious question must be the Bible – NOT the theologians! If you will check the Scripture references in the quote above, it is very clear that Jesus is called God. Yet because Thayer and some theologians do not share that view, he leaves the question open in his lexicon. Once again, I say, read these reference works with caution!

Martin Luther was a Calvinist. This means many things, but one I want to mention in particular was his belief in “penal substitution” – the idea that Christ actually bore our guilt of sin; and consequently, our penalty on the cross. In his commentary on Galatians 3:13, he wrote, “And this, no doubt, all the prophets did foresee in spirit, **that Christ should become the greatest transgressor, murderer, adulterer, thief, rebel, and blasphemer, that ever was or could be in the world. For he being made a sacrifice for the sins of the whole world is not now an innocent person and without sins; is not now the Son of God, born of the Virgin Mary; but a sinner** which hath and carrieth the sin of Paul, who was a blasphemer, an oppressor, and a persecutor; of Peter, which denied Christ; of David, which was an adulterer, a murderer, and caused the Gentiles to blaspheme the name of the Lord; and, briefly, which hath and beareth all the sins of all people in his body: **not that he himself committed them, but for that he received them, being committed or done of us, and laid them upon his own body, that he might make satisfaction for them with his own blood.**” Contrast that blasphemous quote with this Scripture: “how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit **offered Himself without spot to God**, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” (Hb.9:14). What a contrast! Which Jesus do YOU believe in?

I could cite many other examples, but I am out of space. But these will suffice to make my point, which is simply this: **WATCH WHAT YOU READ** – yes, even if I wrote it!

--Lanny Smith