

Conspiracy Theorist

by Gardner Hall

“Richard Nixon is a communist!” the man told me with certainty. “Why do you say that” I asked. “He went to China to talk to them. Must be one of ‘em,” was the response.

Another man told me something to the effect that all politicians, except for George Wallace, were either communists or communist sympathizers, and sometimes he wondered about George.

I remember hearing from many conspiracy theorists during my teenage years in north Alabama. They were certain that communists from the Soviet Union were about to take over America with the willing complicity of most politicians. Those politicians were attacked with all kinds of exaggeration, innuendo, and quotes out of context. Thousands were convinced that Nixon, Kissinger, and other politicians of the 70’s must at least have been fellow travelers.

“Conspiracy Theorists” in the Bible

Some tried to paint the apostle Paul as advocating, “let us do evil that good may abound” (Rom. 3:8). Paul was no softy, but his teaching on God’s grace and his efforts to humble himself and avoid a harsh presence made him the object of unfair attacks, 2 Cor. 11:7-15. Many were sure that Paul was the leader of a great conspiracy against truth. He was the subject of personal attacks on his physical presence and speech, 2 Cor. 10:10.

Diotrephes could find fault in almost everyone, including the apostle John. He prated against John and other faithful brethren with “malicious words” (2 John 10).

The Difference Between Vigilance And Unfair Fault-finding

Aren’t we to be vigilant and watch for signs of apostasy? Absolutely! “The devil walks about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour” (1 Pet. 5:8). Some arise from within the ranks of Christians “speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after themselves” (Acts 20:30). Immodest clothing, ungodly entertainment, looseness on divorce, alcohol, dancing and other worldly practices are eating away at the moral fiber of the saints.

And yet in this battle it is possible to do more harm than good with reckless cries of wolf. Wild, unchecked and undocumented accusations distract the focus from the real enemy and cause brethren to “bite and devour one another” (Gal. 5:15), rather than directing their energies against Satan.

How can we distinguish between the vigilance that God commands and the ungodly fault-finders: Love for truth, fairness, and love for brethren.

The vigilant lover of truth will check out facts before rushing to judgment. If possible, he will contact a brother whose teaching is being questioned before launching a broadside. He realizes that he must understand a position before he can deal with it properly. If he feels he must expose compromising doctrine, he will present that doctrine accurately without trying to embellish it.

The fault-finder will pass along rumors. I once heard from a young Christian that a godly Texas preacher “believed in abortion.” Of course the young Christian hadn’t contacted the preacher, but I did. The preacher was aghast that such rumors were being circulated against him and sent me a cassette tape to pass on to the young man in which he plainly presented Bible teaching against abortion.

An older preacher harshly accused a group of editors of not wanting many scriptures quoted. If he had taken the trouble to look at the most recent copy of the magazine they publish, he would have seen over 200 scriptures referenced in just that one issue. However, fault-finders are seldom interested in facts or in fairly representing those who are the objects of their attacks. If they read their writings or listen to their preaching it is simply to find fault, and not to understand objectively what is being said. They pass along rumors and hearsay, which they may sincerely believe. However, the bottom line is that they don’t have enough love for the truth or their brethren to check out facts. They stir up those inclined to be suspicious, but actually are very ineffective in fighting worldliness and loose thinking.

While brethren bite and devour one another, Satan continues to sweep away disciples into the world. To fight him, God needs vigilant, sober, and loving servants – not hypercritical, fault-finding and unfair conspiracy theorists.

- The Stonegate Standard, October 16, 2005 -