

Discerning False Teaching

After listing the 27 books of the New Testament, Athanasius said: "In them alone is the doctrine of piety proclaimed. Let no one add anything to them or take anything away from them" (Athanasius' 39th Festal Letter, A.D. 367). There were only 27 Christian books written in the first century, i.e. ending with the book of Revelation. Contrary to liberal teaching, the canon of Scripture did not leave out some first century gospels they didn't like. We have been discovering Christian documents for over 2000 years now (we have 5,900 in Greek alone). Search the world over and you will not find any first-century Christian writing, other than the 27 books we call the New Testament. These 27 books also proclaim the inspiration of the 39 books of the Old Testament. We call these 66 books the Bible. False teaching (in various ways) either adds to those 66 books or takes away from them. The Apostle John warned, *Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world* (1 John 4:1-2). My thesis is that the way to test the spirits is to determine if they are adding to, or taking away from, the Bible.

Definitions

False teaching in general = teaching things that are contrary to the way things actually are.

False teaching in Christianity = teaching from within "Christianity," which adds to or takes away from the Bible (Revelation 22:18-19).

False prophecy = a false claim to have received some message from God which is then proclaimed to others. When that proclamation is made, and it usually is if we know about it, then false prophecy is a subcategory of false teaching.

Faulty teaching = teaching that is biblically incorrect, inaccurate, mistaken or erroneous, which does not restrict interpretation to the author's intended meaning. Covenant theology would be an example of this because it does not take prophecy literally, i.e., as the authors intended.

Flawed teaching = a teaching which does not teach the author's intended meaning correctly. Because it is trying to uphold a particular position, it ignores (or is ignorant of) relevant information, such as the context, the author's purpose, the way certain words are translated, etc. Examples would include "Lordship salvation" and "New Calvinism."

Cult teaching = teaching from established cults which focuses on an alternative scripture or spiritual source. Examples would include Mormonism, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Christian Science. Cult teaching is indeed false teaching.

Definition conclusion: The essence of "Christian" false teaching is that it adds to or takes away from Scripture (Revelation 22:18-19). It adds some other source of revelation, or it denies, or ignores, major biblical passages. The Apostle John wrote, *We [the apostles] are from God; he who knows God listens to us [apostles]; he who is not from God does not listen to us [apostles]. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error* (1 John 4:6).

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