

Down With “Doters”

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Paul warned of those who consent not to the sound doctrine of Christ, but who are “proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions . . .” (1 Tim. 6:3–5). He was not criticizing the earnest study that seeks the answers to Biblical questions. Contrariwise, the Greek word behind *doting* means to be ill, either in body or mind.

The “doting” here refers to those who have such a morbid fixation on certain Bible-related doctrines and/or questions as to be “sick” over them. They are obsessed with them and make a “hobby” of them. Such folk constantly study, discuss, preach on, and write about one thing principally – their chosen question or issue. Often this sort of person seems to revel in the attention he receives because of his unorthodox position (somewhat akin to the Gnostics of the late-first and early-second centuries, claiming they had “inside” information concerning God’s will). Whether or not others agree with their convictions on their favorite theme becomes their “litmus test” as to whether others are faithful brethren.

One can become a “doter” even if he emphasizes a point of Truth to the neglect of other points of the Truth. The wrong is only compounded when one’s obsession is with an error, and he lives only to propagate it. Here we have the “hobby-rider” who fastens on one subject and then “runs it into the ground and breaks it off” as my mother was fond of saying concerning folk of this mentality.

This spiritual sickness is not confined to the first century. A once faithful and effective Gospel preacher became enamored a few decades ago with the bizarre theory that Christ returned, the dead were raised, and the end of the world occurred in A.D. 70. Various called “A.D 70 Theology” and “Realized Eschatology,” once embracing this error, he lived only to win people to it. Those converted to his heresy likewise dote on this doctrinal system.

Another brother in his younger years was an effective Gospel preacher, but he became consumed with the erroneous idea that alien sinners are not accountable to the law of Christ and that the four Gospel accounts are in the Old Testament rather than the New. Before this became his passion he was converting the lost and helping in the fight against rampant liberalism in the church, moral evils in society, and such like. However, since becoming engrossed with his errors relating to the relation between the Old and the New Testaments, he has been all but utterly silent on any other subject.

He has “doted” on his pet issue for several decades, incessantly writing on it in church bulletins and preaching it from the pulpit (all but destroying a congregation in the process). He made it the theme of radio programs, supposedly aimed at those who need to hear the Gospel. Over the years he has begun two journals to propagate his hobby, mailing them to every address he could find. He presently uses the Internet to argue his error. His sickness has almost completely isolated him (and deservedly so) from most of his former co-workers, friends, and supporters, many of whom have earnestly begged him to reconsider his course. His response to all of them has been even to more zealously “dote” on his false doctrine.

This misguided brother fits exactly the person Paul described. May we all guard against becoming involved in such a spiritual sickness. It will not only destroy the one who is sick, but the ones he infects as well.

[**Note:** I wrote this article for and it was published in *The Lighthouse*, weekly bulletin of Northpoint Church of Christ, Denton, TX, January 16, 2010, of which I was editor.]

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