

John's Test for Discerning Genuine Christianity

by Anthony Buzzard

John, the disciple whom Jesus loved specially, was very much concerned in his three letters to help Christians see the difference between truth and error.

“I have not written to you because you do not know the truth but because you do know it, and that no lie can come from the truth. **Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son...**These things I have written concerning those who seduce you” (1 John 2:21-26).

Comment by the (one-time) head of the evangelical church in England, a highly respected writer amongst American fundamentalists:

“John's black and white contrasts are healthily clear-sighted. Opposing views are not to him 'complementary insights' but 'truth and error'...The heretics' theology is not just defective; it is diabolical. The fundamental doctrinal test of the professing Christian concerns his view of the person of Jesus” (John Stott, *The Letters of John, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries*, p. 116).

So far, so good. Now this:

“If he is a Unitarian, or a member of a sect denying the deity of Jesus, he is not a Christian. Many strange cults which have a popular appeal today can be easily judged and quickly repudiated by this test. The extreme seriousness of the lie is that a second denial is implicit in the first: he denies the Father and the Son...**No system of teaching which denies either the eternal divine pre-existence of Jesus or the historical incarnation of the Christ can be accepted as Christian**” (pp. 116, 58-59).

John the Apostle goes on to say:

“Every spirit that confesses that **Jesus Christ came in the flesh** is from God. And every spirit that does not confess **that** Jesus is not of God. And this is that spirit of antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming; and even now it is already in the world...Greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world” (1 John 4:2-4).

“Whoever confesses that **Jesus is the Son of God**, God remains in him and he in God” (1 John 4:15).

“Whoever believes that **Jesus is the Christ** is born of God...Who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that **Jesus is the Son of God?**” (1 John 5:1, 5).

“Many deceivers have gone out into the world, who do not confess that **Jesus came in the flesh**. This is the deceiver and the antichrist” (2 John 7).

“Whoever advances and does not remain in the teaching of Christ does not have [a relationship with] God. He who remains in the teaching of Christ has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house nor tell him 'God bless you,' for he who says 'God bless you' becomes an associate of his evil works [i.e. becomes guilty by association]” (2 John 9-11).