

Beware Of Conspiracies!

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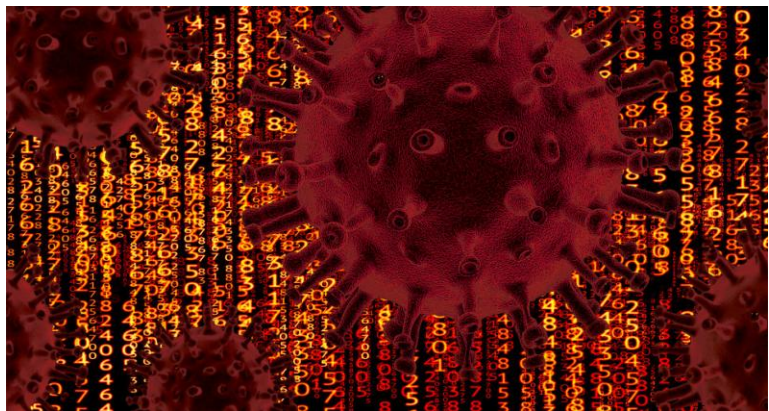
Why? Because conspiratorial thinking is associated with those who are gullible and often ignorant. Conspiracies are the mechanism of demagogues and manipulators of all kinds.

Do you remember the movie with Mel Gibson called “Conspiracy Theory” (1997)? His character, Jerry Fletcher, was obsessively concerned about nefarious plots by the government against its citizens. He was clearly unbalanced mentally. He “saw” suspicious activity everywhere. Of course, in the movie he discovered one real plot—but that is Hollywood and not real life.

I wonder how many of us (Christian believers) are also hyper-ready to believe almost any wild theory that we hear about on the internet. I wonder how often we are gullible like Jerry Fletcher.

As Christian thinkers, we ought to develop a healthy skepticism and intellectual caution about conspiracy. We should always ask: Where does information come from? Who produced it? For what purpose? Who profits if we embrace it? Is the scheme accepted by the majority of trained thinkers on the subject? Why do they accept or object to the outlook? How should we think and respond with biblical wisdom?

Keep in mind what Yahweh told Isaiah during a period of intense crisis: “Do not call conspiracy all that this people calls conspiracy, and do not fear what they fear, nor be in dread. But the LORD of hosts, him you shall honor as holy. Let him be your fear, and let him be your dread” (8:12—13). Conspiracy theories, on the other hand, teach us to fear incorrectly. They teach us to think falsely. They divide and destroy.



Remember that Jesus told us to be discerning. He said: “Be wise as serpents and innocent as doves” (Matt 10:16). It is critical that we distinguish who is trying to manipulate whom and why. Otherwise, we are culpable for embracing “fake news” and making unwise decisions. We should not forget that conspiracies are inherently deceptive.

Paul told us that we should “no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes” (Eph 4:14). The author of Hebrews urged us to “go on to maturity” (6:1).

“Wisdom” and “maturity,” however, are very difficult to achieve if we obtain most of our information about reality from social media. This challenge is particularly important in our day, for—if we are honest and humble—Christians are often ignorant and naïve. Our biblical and theological understanding is underdeveloped. Our knowledge of church history or even contemporary news is often weak. We do not read very much. We certainly do not read anything that requires intellectual effort. Instead, we prefer the lazy way: watching television, gossiping with our friends, and soaking up whatever social media provides us. Our gullibility is really dangerous during time of crisis and hardship.

The Bible tells us, however, what the REAL conspiracy is: Satan wants to divide and distract the Body of Christ. He wants us to fight among ourselves, for instance, about whether we should wear or not wear masks, whether we should open up the economy or not, or whether a sensational video in Face Book reveals a conspiracy that is really true. He wants to divide the church by political partisanship and social class (liberal verses conservative, capitalist verses socialist, populist verses elitist, local verses global). (If you read English, read this blog by Joe Carter: "Christians Are Not Immune to Conspiracy Theories.")

So, let us not be foolish and gullible during this pandemic. Let us cultivate a healthy skepticism about information on the internet. Do not fill your mind with junk food for the soul. Rather, seek out respected thinkers and listen to them. Read carefully.

Above all, let us not embrace the wrong conspiracies: "Do not call conspiracy all that this people calls conspiracy."

PS: Read the inspiring true account called "Conspiracy of Goodness."