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"Have I now become your enemy by telling you the truth?"
Galatians 4:16

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HUMAN RIGHTS? Only For Some Humans

By L.L. (Don) Veinot, Jr.

My daughter, Jennifer, tends to be a bit timid and shy. She has formed solid opinions but, unlike myself, doesn't feel compelled to share them with everyone who walks by. In other words, she is not a fan of confrontation. She has had a quieter faith and has found less "in-your-face" ways to open the discussion. When she was in high school, she would wear a shirt that had a picture of a garbage can with the caption under it: **"This is no place for a baby."** Jennifer was one of only perhaps two or three who were pro-life in her freshman class.

During that time, she had to compose a persuasive paper for her English class and wanted to write *"Murder is Socially Acceptable"* to compare slavery, the Holocaust and abortion. Her teacher's response was: The concept is interesting, but there is no evidence abortion is murder; and so she wouldn't let her write the paper. Jennifer was not happy and as the old saying goes: "When Jennifer ain't happy, ain't nobody happy." Instead of giving up, she decided to reframe the argument and write a persuasive paper demonstrating that abortion is murder. As we thought about it and talked with a few teachers and college professors we know, we realized Jennifer's teacher probably has one or two students each year who want to make a biblical case for a pro-life position. Jennifer and I decided the best approach would be to make a sound, compelling case, which would be consistent with biblical teaching, but not quote the Bible in the process. She gathered the scientific data on fetal development, talked about what is in the mother's womb (a human rather than a plant, bird, fish, etc.),

and Jennifer developed her persuasive argument. After reading it, her teacher changed her personal opinion from "pro-choice" to "pro-life." In a later class assignment, she was to debate students who took a "pro-choice" position; and she went first. I suggested while giving her positive "pro-life" case, she should refute the arguments the other students likely would use for the "pro-choice" position. After she finished, the students affirming the "pro-choice" side really didn't know what to do, since their arguments had been destroyed before they even took the floor.



Reframing the Argument

The July 22, 2010 *Washington Times* article "Clinton pushes Vietnam on human rights progress"¹ raised the issue of human rights in foreign lands (in this case Vietnam), and how much Secretary of State Hillary Clinton would focus on that in her discussions with the leaders of Vietnam. Some of the U.S. Congress thought this important as well:

"The government of Vietnam's desire to reap the benefits of the global economy must be matched by efforts to respect comprehensive human rights," a bipartisan group of 19 members of Congress wrote to Clinton on July 15.

As I read this and other articles since then, I thought back to Jennifer's high school days, which seems another lifetime ago now that our grandchildren are getting close to the teen years themselves. A new idea or way to reframe the human rights

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argument began to crystallize. This is a subject I have been thinking about for a while, but there was something in that particular article; or perhaps, it was just the mood I was in while reading it, but I wondered: Do humans have rights based solely on being human, or is there some other criteria? If there are some other criteria, is it constant or does it change from culture to culture and/or time to time in order to exclude certain humans from protection? Rather than simply developing a position and asserting my view is correct, I decided to put the question to an organization that specializes in addressing violations of human rights: Amnesty International. I e-mailed them and asked:

There seems to be some confusion when using the term "human rights." Do you mean by this that humans have rights based solely on being human? If a nation decides that a human is not legally a person and, therefore, has no rights, for only persons have rights, is that something you affirm?

The question is fairly simple and straightforward. Do humans have rights, because they are human; or is there some other criteria for deciding which humans are worthy of human-rights protections? Perhaps, a human has no inherent rights and law makers or the ruling elite in various societies are free to use any arbitrary criteria they choose in defining which humans have rights and which ones do not. Currently in the United States, only those who are legally deemed a "person" are members of the protected class. In this scenario, non-persons—human or not—do not have any legal rights and, therefore, are not deserving of protection. I received their response in less than 24 hours:

Thank you for your interest in Amnesty International and the work that we do.

I'm unaware of the confusion that you mention.

Human rights are those which all humans should be entitled to, regardless of legislation introduced by an individual country that may undermine any of these.

I do not understand your differentiation between people and humans, but I hope that this goes some way to answer your question.

I have spoken with others and asked this question and have watched as they, like Amnesty International, also short-circuited and changed the parameters of the question from "person" to "**people**." There is an important distinction here. The word *person* is a *legal designation* and may be applied to a human or a corporation. It might be people or some other legal entity. On the other hand, the word *people* is used interchangeably with *human*. So, *people* are always human, but *person* may not be. I responded to Amnesty International:

Thank you for your timely response and clear answer. The confusion wasn't between "people" and "human" but between "person" and "human." For example, in the United States when slavery was legal, no one denied that slaves were human. However, in the eyes of the law they were not "persons." Several state legislatures and the U.S. Supreme Court affirmed this position (they were viewed as 3/5 persons). Therefore, even though they were human but not persons, they had no rights or protections under the law. They were simply property and could be cared for and protected or beaten, sold, dismembered, and even killed without legal reprisal, since they were not persons and had no rights. This classification was based on the arbitrary criteria of skin color.

Currently, preborn humans are legally classified as non-persons based on the arbitrary criteria of geography. They are living inside the womb vs. outside the womb. Based on this arbitrary criteria, state legislatures and the U.S. Supreme Court do not extend "personhood" and the attendant legal rights and protections afforded "persons" until a geographical change occurs from inside the womb to outside the womb. Even though human, they are property and can be cared for and nurtured until they make the geographical change; or they can be dismembered, burned to death with saline, or even have their brains vacuumed out a few centimeters away from a full geographical change, since they are property and not persons even though human. As long as this arbitrary classification stands, I am not really sure on what basis someone could say that slavery was wrong or in the case of other nations, if they are abusing humans who have been legally classified as non-persons on what basis they could be charged with human rights violations? In the U.S., legally, persons have rights, humans do not.

It has been nearly two years and, so far, they have not responded. At this point, I doubt they will. I think I can safely assume it is probable they have chosen to ignore the question at this point. Why? Well, if they affirm the law can use any arbitrary criterion which excludes certain *humans* from protection to determine a legal definition of *person*, then there is really no "human rights" basis on which to say slavery was wrong. After all,

slavery was legal. The ruling elite of that day determined the slaves legally were not fully counted as *persons* in the census (which determined state representation) even though they were *human*. It is wrong to own slaves in the United States today; but that is only because the criteria for human rights is arbitrary and changeable and, consequently, the *current law* has changed and eliminated skin color as a criterion for being a *person* or non-*person*. It isn't because today's blacks are any more *human* than were their ancestors, but simply because the ruling elite currently have declared it to be so.

Other nations that commit so-called "human rights violations" legally may not be doing anything wrong if this arbitrary criteria for determining *person* stands. They simply may choose a different set of criteria; and if it is *arbitrary* it doesn't matter, because it is the criteria their government has chosen. North Korea, Vietnam, China and others legally may have defined those whom they are abusing as *non-persons*. If that is so, what right do we, as a nation, have to try to force *our arbitrary* definition of *person* on to other nations and cultures. After all, our current arbitrary definition is, as I pointed out to Amnesty International, based on *geography*. A human *in the womb* is not a person, but once that human makes *a move of a few inches*—from inside the womb to outside the womb—the *new location* legally makes that *human a person* and affords them protections under the law. If the arbitrary criterion above is false and humans deserve protection solely on the basis of being human, that changes how we view the issue of being pro-abortion vs. anti-abortion. Dr. Seuss might say, "Humans are human, *no matter how small*." Preborn humans are small, but they are human nonetheless. If *human-ness* and *person-hood* are interchangeable terms, then the small, preborn humans deserve protection. If these terms are not interchangeable and one is purely legal and arbitrary (*person*) while the other is biological (*human*), then we no longer can view slavery as having been wrong for that society; and we should abandon any attempt at correcting human rights violations in other nations who have simply chosen a different set of *arbitrary criteria*.

"Every Child a Wanted Child"

Beside supposed privacy issues in arguing for abortion, one of the reasons cited was child abuse. An unwanted child, it was argued, increased the instances of child abuse. So, by giving women "choice," that supposedly translated to "every child a wanted child." That this policy hasn't diminished child abuse but, perhaps, has permitted its increase is a discussion for another day. In my blog article, "Do Humans Have Rights That Can Be Violated?"² I realize I have mentioned this, but reminders are helpful. In American law and legislation, *human-ness* and *person-hood* have traditionally been two different things. *Human* is a statement of biology not *person-hood*. Historically and at the present time, one could be biologically *human*, but that same one could not be considered a *person* by law. Since they legally are not a *person*, they have no rights or protections under the law; they legally are not a *person*, but they legally are property. The one who owns them as property has rights, and they pretty much can handle their property in any way they desire.

Arguing the issue based on being a *person* rather than being a *human* can make the determination of when human rights should be applied a moving target. Scott Klusendorf (pro-life apologist and president of Life Training Institute) writes in his *CRI Journal* article, "Peter Singer's Bold Defense of Infanticide:"

In 1993, ethicist Peter Singer shocked many Americans by suggesting that no newborn should be considered a person until 30 days after birth and that the attending physician should kill some disabled babies on the spot. Five years later, his appointment as Decamp Professor of Bio-Ethics at Princeton University ignited a firestorm of controversy, though his ideas about abortion and infanticide were hardly new. In 1979 he wrote, "Human babies are not born self-aware, or capable of grasping that they exist over time. They are not persons"; therefore, "the life of a newborn is of less value than the life of a pig, a dog, or a chimpanzee."³

Singer is not alone in his view on this issue in discussions in America, nor is it new. Philosopher Michael Tooley wrote regarding this in the early 1970s holding fundamentally the same position. Making the legal criterion for *person-hood* one of *age* instead of *geography*—30 days outside of the womb—gives the parents the right as "property owners" to decide if they want to keep the property or terminate and dispose of it. More recently, medical ethicists from Oxford have affirmed this view:

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**HAVE
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~EPHESIANS 5:11~

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Parents should be allowed to have their newborn babies killed because they are “morally irrelevant” and ending their lives is no different to abortion, a group of medical ethicists linked to Oxford University has argued.⁴

Medical Correspondent Stephen Adams starts out his article, **“Killing babies no different from abortion, experts say:”**

The article, published in the Journal of Medical Ethics, says newborn babies are not “actual persons” and do not have a “moral right to life”. The academics also argue that parents should be able to have their baby killed if it turns out to be disabled when it is born.⁵

As long as *person-hood* is the deciding factor in awarding legal protections, and *person-hood* is arbitrarily defined, *person-hood* remains a moving target. This even has implications in the corporate world, which has come to light with PepsiCo. Why? Well, PepsiCo:

... uses fetal cells from babies victimized by abortions to test and produce artificial flavor enhancers.⁶

How can they do that? Simple, the aborted babies legally are not *persons* but *property*.

In a decision delivered February 28, the Security and Exchange Commission ruled that PepsiCo’s use of aborted fetal remains in their research and development agreement with Senomyx to produce flavor enhancers falls under “ordinary business operations.”⁷

This makes sense if one is a utilitarian as is Peter Singer. The view of the band of brothers from Oxford seems to be based on this as well. The arbitrary deciding factor is whether something has “usefulness” rather than beauty or ornamentation.⁸ The babe in the womb or newborn serves no useful function and, therefore, disposing of it is inconsequential. PepsiCo’s use of portions of the aborted children serves a utilitarian purpose; and in this view, it is, therefore, morally correct. *Geography* seems to be the current criterion used to determine which *humans* will be awarded human rights. The discussion is moving toward *usefulness* as a criterion for those *humans* who have moved out of the womb and into the world. This has even more far-reaching implications.

Every Grandma a Wanted Grandma

According to the pro-life Action League,⁹ there has been 1.3-million abortions annually since 1973; and as of May 17, 2005, that brought the number to 46-million. This becomes important for two reasons: Economic as well as end-of-life questions. Most likely, a majority of the aborted, had they lived, would have been wage earners and tax payers. By killing off these *humans*, there are less *persons* available to support the aging Cry-baby Boomers. As the Obama administration embarked on “**health care reform**,” one of the questions was how that would impact health care for the elderly. Assurances were given the health care would be as good or better and at a lower cost than currently is being charged. Conservatives were firm this was untrue. Now that the health care legislation has passed, unread by most in the House and Senate who voted for it, the actual impact is slowly beginning to come to light. As “**Medicare Reform Means Some Seniors Face Benefit Cuts**” notes:

Now for the bad news: Seniors enrolled in Medicare Advantage may soon find that their benefits have

been cut. Under changes contained within America’s new health reform law, reduced payments to private insurers may lead to a reduction in benefits such as dental coverage and free eyeglasses. That could trigger an exodus from Medicare Advantage plans back to traditional fee-for-service Medicare, though at much higher costs.¹⁰

As the legislation neared passing, Sarah Palin, former governor of Alaska, raised the issue of what she called “**death panels**.” End-of-life issues are difficult, and the majority of money spent on care of the elderly will be spent in the last few weeks of their life. It is something that needs to be thought about and discussed within one’s *family*. But is it something which should be legislated by the Federal Government or, more precisely, by a board of *unelected bureaucrats*?

Of course, the ruckus that was raised caused Barack Obama and others to verbally deny this was their view, but other times of candor demonstrates Palin’s concerns were well-founded. Steven Mosher, president of Population Research Institute addresses this from the legislation itself in “**Obama to Seniors: Take Two Aspirin and Call Me When You’re Dead.**”

Consider Section 1233 of the bill, HR3200, currently under consideration by the House of Representatives. This specifies that the “advance care planning consultation “shall include ... (1)(E) An explanation by the practitioner of the continuum of end-of-life services and supports available”, which “may include the formulation of ... an actionable medical order relating to the treatment of that individual that ... may include indications respecting ... (iv) the use of artificially administered nutrition and hydration.”¹¹

Eileen F. Toplansky, columnist for the *American Thinker*, in “**Death Panels and Mom**” revisited the question:

When the health care reform bill was still in its infancy, I read with dismay about the so-called death panels. I knew that Barack Obama was a vigorous proponent of late-stage abortions, which spoke to his detached view of life. Then I discovered that since there really were no “death panels” in the bill, Congress decided to eliminate the confusing language. Of course, if these panels were not in the bill in the first place, what was being deleted?

Therefore, that nagging feeling never quite went away. And so now I read Michael D. Tanner’s piece entitled “Death Panels Were an Overblown Claim -- Until Now” and my earlier suspicions have been reinvigorated. Thus, we learn that Obama’s pick for director of the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services “is romantic about the [British] National Health Service,” where “every year, 50,000 surgeries are cancelled because patients become too sick on the waiting list to proceed.” Thus, rationing and death panels hover at the borders of this health care reform law. Just because the term is not used doesn’t mean the intent is not clear to anyone who can connect the dots.¹²

If human rights are denied *humans* in the womb (*geography*), why not those in retirement homes later in life? If *usefulness* is a criterion and someone in a nursing home is not deemed *useful*, can human rights be terminated? If not, why not?

I am not a prophet, or the son of a prophet, and I work for a non-profit organization, so this is not a prophetic proclamation, but it is an educated prediction. Those who have fought so strongly for abortion most likely will have their views and positions turned on them in coming years. Cry-baby Boomers will


begin retiring very soon and, since they are the largest segment of the population, the sheer mass will tax the system in ways we cannot imagine. The chosen tool which will be turned to remedy the solution likely will be to appeal to an already-approved definition of *person*: Geography. Those *humans* living in nursing homes legally will be made *non-persons*, whereas those *humans* living outside nursing homes legally still will be *persons*. That will make the emotional decisions of what to do with grandma a little easier. She is *human*, but she is not legally a *person* and may be abandoned or abused in her old age. Euthanasia will be suggested as a viable alternative to take financial and emotional stress off of family and society. You know the line; every grandma should be a wanted grandma.

Formulating a Different Argument

Early on in the cultural and political debate, the sides were identified as pro-abortion vs. anti-abortion. The pro-abortion crowd quickly realized their position—being in favor of killing a child, even a child in the womb—was difficult to market. Subsequently, they changed the *focus* of the debate when they made it about “choice.” This recast the argument as one side being against the choice of a living, breathing human being called a *woman* and a “*fetus*.” The language of “*fetus*” comes across as amorphous—it brings no shape or character to mind, and so it gives the impression the life in the womb is something more akin to an organ like a liver or kidney than it does to another human being.

The anti-abortion advocates made a positive transition from being “anti”—something to being “pro”—something: Specifically, pro-life. It does market better than being “anti”—something, but it still is an uphill battle in a nation that values freedom and choice.

In a letter I wrote to Congresswoman Renee Ellmers (Republican, NC) in February of this year, I suggested we recast the pro-life argument in a new direction. Ellmers is very pro-life and has been working on legislation to protect the pre-born. I don’t know what goes into writing a bill and proposing legislation exactly, but I suggested a Human Rights Bill be crafted which advanced protection of human rights regardless of gender, age, physical challenges or geographic location. This would again change the argument. Those who are fighting for abortion would be exposed as being opposed to basic human rights, while the pro-life side is working positively for human rights for *all* humans.

This seems to be the most logical and, I think, biblical perspective. Humans are created in the image of God (Gen.1:27). They have intrinsic value even in their fallen state, because they still have the Imago Dei (image of God). That does not mean they are saved or even in the family of God. Sin brought about a separation (Is.59:2) which only can be bridged by faith in Jesus Christ (Gal.2:16) Who paid for our sins (Rom.5:8), we are adopted by God (Rom.8:15), and the sin separation is eliminated by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone (Eph.2:8-9). But, state governments, the Federal Government and Supreme Court have been clear and consistent throughout U.S. history: Rights and Constitutional protections are not for *all humans*; those protections are only for those legally recognized as *persons*—according to whatever subjective criteria the ruling elite are using at any given time. Focusing the argument on Human Rights protects innocent life on both ends of the mortal life continuum. 



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ENDNOTES:

- 1 Clinton pushes Vietnam on human rights progress; <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2010/jul/22/clinton-pushes-vietnam-human-rights-progress/>
- 2 Do Humans Have Rights That Can Be Violated? <http://midwestoutreach.org/blogs/do-humans-have-rights-that-can-be-violated> (The MCOI blog is titled, The Crux.)
- 3 “Peter Singer’s Bold Defense of Infanticide,” <http://www.equip.org/articles/peter-singer-s-bold-defense-of-infanticide>
- 4 “Killing babies no different from abortion, experts say,” <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/health/healthnews/9113394/Killing-babies-no-different-from-abortion-experts-say.html>
- 5 “Killing babies no different from abortion, experts say,” <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/health/healthnews/9113394/Killing-babies-no-different-from-abortion-experts-say.html>
- 6 “Obama Agency: Pepsi Using Aborted Fetal Cells is Ordinary Business,” <http://www.lifenews.com/2012/03/05/obama-agency-pepsi-using-aborted-fetal-cells-is-ordinary-business/>
- 7 “Obama Agency: Pepsi Using Aborted Fetal Cells is Ordinary Business,” <http://www.lifenews.com/2012/03/05/obama-agency-pepsi-using-aborted-fetal-cells-is-ordinary-business/> PepsiCo has issued a statement denying this is true, however, as Charlie Butts in “PepsiCo on fetal research – deny, deny, deny” (<http://www.onenewsnow.com/Business/Default.aspx?id=1560738>) demonstrates, the links are very public including press releases in the *Wall Street Journal* announcing the deal between PepsiCo and Senomyx.
- 8 *Utilitarian*, <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/utilitarian>
- 9 pro-life Action League; <http://pro-lifeaction.org/faq/abortion.php#total>
- 10 “Medicare Reform Means Some Seniors Face Benefit Cuts,” <http://www.dailyfinance.com/2010/08/03/medicare-reform-means-some-seniors-face-benefit-cuts/>
- 11 “Obama to Seniors: Take Two Aspirin and Call Me When You’re Dead,” <https://pop.org/content/obama-to-seniors-take-two-aspirin-and-call-me-when-youre-dead-989>
- 12 “Death Panels and Mom,” http://www.americanthinker.com/2010/06/death_panels_and_mom.html





Postmodernism and the Emergent Church were brought to my attention in increments. John MacArthur's book, *The Truth War*, was one of the first sources to bring the movement to my knowledge. Postmodernism is the latest revolt inside the church. It is a rebellion from within. It's the coup d'état against the authority of the Bible that will usher in the Anti-Christ as he "emerges" onto the scene. It's so subversive and extreme, that it won't be topped by future uprisings.

While the historic Christian Church has half-heartedly watched outside its walls for danger, this hazardous threat has sprung up and taken root right under her nose. The mobilized efforts of Emergent leaders—like Brian McLaren, Rob Bell, Dan Kimball, David Dark, Doug Pagitt, Tony Jones, Sally Morgenthaler, and many others—are seeking to lead the Church into a "paradigm shift." John MacArthur defines this paradigm shift as **"a wholesale overhaul in the way people think about truth itself."**¹

Postmodernism and the Emergent Church are gaining strength in their attempt to bring historic biblical Christianity into compromise with all religions of the world. The promised result is a peaceful, harmonious world **"community."** Christians are urged to find common ground rather than areas of disagreement as they interact with other belief systems.

This organized, systematic opposition to Christianity's *exclusivity* is cleverly devised and implemented. It persuasively twists Scripture and misapplies biblical teachings as it shifts traditional, Bible-based Church practice toward inclusiveness. It is completely revamping foundational truth and long-standing biblical interpretation. It is a scheme made of mixing truth and lies which Ravi Zacharias explains, **"a half-truth gets so interwoven with a lie that it becomes deadlier by the mix."**²

Blind Leading the Blind

The popular 2004-2010 TV series *Lost* ended its season with an hour, not only laced with spiritualism, but also explanations for its mysterious storyline; then it culminated its saga with its view of the afterlife. As the characters gathered in a church, the camera remained on a stained glass window in the background showing six plates. One plate had a Christian cross; another had a yin yang sign. There was a Jewish Star of David, the Buddhist wheel, a Hindu

"aum, and, finally, the star and crescent of Islam.

The characters in the "church of all religions" hugged and cried as soft, peaceful music resonated in the background. As the man (who had died on the final episode) was leaving through a doorway, he approached a bright light indicating he was entering heaven. The peaceful music, the "feeling" of unity, and the "happy ending," in reality was a story of how *lost* the characters were as they *hoped* they were trusting in the right thing.

Hopefully, Christians recognize this prime-time error and refuse to watch such contradictions to God's Word. But, to think this falsity has come from our pulpits and is in our Christian literature would be pushing it. Right? How could this openness to other faiths come into our faithful churches? How could my preacher be preaching compromise with other religions? Jesus warned His disciples strong deception would be the sign before He returned (See Matt. 24:3-5,11). How much more deceiving is error when it comes from a trusted source? Paul warned Christians in Acts 20:29-30 that **"after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them."**

Inclusiveness

The mobilization toward global unity is so strong that without vigilance, preachers unwittingly pepper their sermons with the doctrine of inclusiveness even suggesting truth can be found in other "sacred texts. If we compromise with believing truth (not just true statements) could be found in another book, we naturally conclude salvation could have come without the Bible. A preacher may even say the truth and mean the truth in his heart, but if he is too watered down or unspecific about what or whom he is referring, the young sheep of his flock will likely filter it through their world view of inclusiveness.

We can be assured the Bible excludes "others" from being sources of truth. Jesus tells us in John 17:17 that **"... Thy Word [Bible] is truth."**

In Psalm 119:160, the psalmist wrote, **"Thy word is true from the beginning."** The source of truth for mankind *is* the Bible of Christianity. No other religious text completely agrees with the Bible, where they contradict the Bible, they are not the

truth. There is one truth (from God), and there are many false ideas (from men). Truth is exclusive.

Inclusiveness unites all belief systems. It adheres to common ground while ignoring disparity. But, areas of disagreement cannot be overlooked. It is the disagreement that distinguishes truth from error. The **“common ground”** of love and compassion are now allowing false ideologies to be preached as the **“truth of Jesus,”** so that even the elect are being deceived (See Matt. 24:24).

All religions living in unity is a farce. **“Can two walk together except they be agreed?”** (Amos 3:3) There is no unity between contradicting beliefs no matter how long the two pretend to agree with their disagreement. The result of this union only forces Christianity to abdicate principles vital to truth.

The very trap of the enemy is for Christians to lay aside truth in order to negotiate with other religions **“on their terms.”** Other religions have no intentions of abdicating their beliefs. **“Their terms”** is a reference to an article in a Christian magazine where author Brian Zahnd argued:

... if we are going to persuade a skeptical world of the gospel of Jesus Christ and make a compelling case for Christianity in this century, we will have to do so on their terms.³

Zahnd is persuasive as he explains how Jesus’ platform is one of forgiveness. Without doubt, Christianity is about forgiveness, and we are required to love people of all religions as we draw them to truth and away from the error which sends them to Hell. Emergent authors mislead, though, as they apply reconciliation at the cross (between man and God) to a Christian’s relationship with other religions.

Zahnd’s final blow in causing Christians to lay down their defense of Scripture is his compelling argument that things are **“uncertain”** in Christianity.⁴ Satan knows Christians will not defend with confidence that which is uncertain. On the contrary, we should resist these attacks and rest in certainty that Scripture is **“true from the beginning”** and every one of God’s **“righteous judgments endureth forever.”** (Ps. 119:160) It is very true the cross brought love, reconciliation, and forgiveness. The author is right about that. But for whom? Everyone? All religions? Why did Jesus suffer if, in the end, all go to heaven?

Exclusiveness

Salvation from eternal death is available for those who exclusively adhere to the truth of God’s Word in the essentials. But, God will take **“vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.”** (2Thess. 1:8) Jesus is the only way to the Father (John 14:6). Sadly, a person who does not believe these narrow/essential teachings will face eternal punishment. This narrowness in the essentials is part of the **“simplicity”** of the Gospel which Paul feared would be **“corrupted”** just **“as the serpent beguiled Eve through his**

subtlety.” (2Cor. 11:3)

The new Emergent Christianity—which is now trying to submerge true Christianity—is suggesting to church-goers that Jesus can be found on *any* path and/or by reading *any* text. Assured Christians who know there is only one view of truth are being advised to adjust their thinking. Old alleged “assumptions” of truth are being re-evaluated. The new inclusiveness is said to **“sweeten what you already believe”** giving it **“collective strength”** gathered from other viewpoints.

However, confusion is the result of believing several viewpoints. Think how contradictory and even fatal it would be for a person to believe several differing viewpoints of gravity. Giving credibility to someone else’s viewpoint just for the sake of peace is really no peace at all if that concession ends in death. It is obvious the only right and true way to approach life, either physically, and especially spiritually, is to approach life truthfully.

On a side note, we must remember Paul’s advice to be **“all things to all men.”** (1Cor. 9:22) Christians should be the first to relinquish their *personal* viewpoints if discussing irrelevant

opinions. We are to turn our cheek (Matt. 5:39) without defense when we are personally rejected or mistreated. Our *opinions* in everyday life do not matter as we should please others and yield to their opinions, putting our desires last. *But*, when truth is at stake, let the sword of truth be unashamedly waved.

The Way of Truth Shall Be Evil Spoken Of 2Peter 2:2

Following is a quote from the postmodern book, *An Emergent Manifesto*, written by several authors. Barry Taylor, teacher at Fuller Theological Seminary and speaker at international events exploring emerging global culture, writes:

One of the most interesting dynamics of the present time is the collapse of distinction between the sacred and the profane. Contemporary society allows for the “holy” to be found in the most unexpected places. As Christopher Partridge writes: “The new spiritual awakening makes use of thought-forms, ideas and practices, which are not at all alien to the majority of Westerners. They emerge from an essentially non-Christian religious-cultural milieu, a milieu that both resources and is resourced by popular culture.” The future of Christian faith lies in its ability to inhabit this gray world, not attempting to “sort it out” as much as to be available to help others navigate and negotiate the complexities that such a dynamic raises. To “go with the flow” might seem a trite way of describing theological engagement, but a commitment to fluidity and a willingness to swim in the cultural waters rather than insisting on one’s own paddling pool is a necessary perspective.⁵

Any red flags in your spirit? This author is urging Christianity

—Continued on page 8

“Other Religions” Continued from page 7

to blur the lines between it and other religions, allowing the unholiness of neo-paganism to filter into the holiness of Christianity while suggesting we can find the holiness of Jesus in unholy places. The author is confusing Christians with his soft rhetoric, tempting them to surrender their protection of truth, as he belittles them with insults of narrow-mindedness.

The Bible constantly warns against outside influences and is clear from cover to cover that Christianity is not to be infiltrated by other religions. Ezekiel 22 is clear in warning God’s people that since they “... ***put no difference between the holy and profane, neither have they shewed difference between the unclean and the clean*** ...” they were consumed with the fire of His wrath. (vs. 26, see also verse 31)

A different author from the same book, Samir Selmanovic, who had a Muslim father and Christian mother, is a “progressive” Christian pastor, and who is also the founder of Faith House—an “inter-religious” organization in Manhattan, wrote:

Christianity’s idea that other religions cannot be God’s carriers of grace and truth casts a large shadow over our Christian experience.⁶

This demeaning statement automatically causes people to shy away from defending Christianity. To defend the very crux of Christianity (grace and truth) is not a shadow, but the very Light of the World! The “**idea**” God’s truth is only contained inside Christianity is not an idea at all, but reality. The real shadow on Christianity is the new spiritual awakening preached by Emergent wolves in sheep’s clothing.

Whether humanity likes it or not, Christianity is the only carrier of grace and truth (cf. John 1:14,17). The fact Christianity is the exclusive repository of truth is a stumbling block to unbelievers. But, it originates with God and is found only in the Holy Bible of Christianity. God’s authentic truth, the real Jesus, is only revealed to us through His Word. Jesus *is* the Word (Jn. 1:1; Rev. 1:2; 19:13).

Jesus tells us the Scriptures (at that time, the Old Testament) “**testify**” of Him (Jn. 5:39). Although, false texts can contain facts, a liar can make a true statement, and Satan can use Scripture, Acts 18:28 tells us it is the Bible that shows us Jesus Christ. Anything that contradicts Scripture suggesting there are other “**carriers of grace and truth**” can only be advocating a false, Anti-Christ.

The new twist is so clever that it will even admit Jesus’ *deity*, but deny Him as also being one unique human man ... the One Who died on the cross for our sins. Jesus cannot be any other man. New theology believes whoever practices the “**love of Jesus**” is actually revealing the “**Christ**” within.” In their reasoning, anyone can become Jesus (and, therefore, God) by acting out their “**authentic**,” loving nature, which, of course, denies the sin nature of humanity. According to the Bible, it is the spirit of “**anti-Christ**” to deny the Son is come in the flesh. (See 1Jn. 2:22-23; 1Jn. 4:2-3; 2Jn. 1:7) This error flips the truth that God became flesh, as it claims flesh can become God.

If a “Christian” falls for a consensus of the view truth can be found in other sources and other religions, and that Christ is anywhere other than in the person of Jesus, then proof is there—he never did believe the exclusive truth of God’s Word. The whole point of Christianity is to confess, believe, uphold, and adhere to the exclusivity of Jesus as the *only* way to the Father (Jn. 14:6). So, to believe the truth plus “21” lies means the person

did not, in fact, believe the truth. (There are approximately 22 major world religions.)

Be Ye Separate

Using a false religion’s method of worship and applying it to Christianity is what the children of Israel decided to do when they made the golden calf. A golden calf is obviously a worldly idol. Did they get this idea from Egypt? But, notice the Bible tells us it was worshiped at a “***feast to the LORD***.” (Ex. 32:5) The alleged “new freedom” inside Christianity also applies false religious practices to its beliefs, refusing to see the discrepancy. God’s jealousy has not changed and a divided heart provokes Him to anger just as it did in the day of the Israelites.

The Bible states in 2Cor. 6:17 that we should “***come out from among them, and be ye separate ...***.” Who are the “***them?***” They are false religions and their practices. Instead, we have not separated, but have chosen to *blend* all for the sake of relationship, peace, and an *appearance* of loving-kindness and tolerance.

We have not drawn a clear line between falsity and truth (and are now even crediting both views as “truth”). Jesus said something we rarely hear in today’s church. He asked, “***Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division.***” (Matt. 10:34; Lk. 12:51) He came to bring a “**sword**.” His Word of truth is that sword, and it causes division between right and wrong. There are times when peace applies and times when division applies.

KEY: The problem of disunity is really when other religions do not conform to Christianity. If all religions would agree with God’s way, there would be true peace. (See Jn. 14:27). If Christianity refuses her duty to uphold truth captured inside the “**narrow way**” and decides, rather, to conform to other religions, a false sense of world peace will be the result. This is when Jesus says He did not come to give peace “***as the world giveth***,” (Jn. 14:27) but to bring a sword of division (Lu. 12:51). The world is pressuring Christianity to coincide with all other belief systems. Christianity should not bow to “**their terms**,” they must bow to God’s terms (Is. 45:23, Phil. 2:10).

If God had set up the world so man could do whatever he pleased and be guiltless as long as it was labeled “good,” then we needn’t worry about anything. We could just turn on the soft music, sit back, and hum our way into eternity. However, discernment tells us that to neglect truth and to “***call evil good***” is the Devil’s doctrine and leads to woeful regret. (Is.5:20)

Real Fruit vs. Fake

The book *Christianity Encountering World Religions*, published by Baker Books, has several authors who are bold in their intentions to converge all religions into one. One author wrote::

Those who argue that other religious practices, such as Buddhist meditation and Hindu yoga, can be used by Christians often cite the passage in Matthew 7:15-20 that argues that a good tree is judged by its fruit. The implication is that practices that produce good Christian virtues (Gal. 5:22-26) are acceptable.⁷

[This is a much-used/abused passage among many groups. The Matthew 7:15-20 passage is talking about how to recognize

“false prophets” (v.15), not how to recognize Christians. Christians do bad things, unsaved people do “good” things. We recognize Christians because they **“have love one to another,”** and they do the work of God: **“believe on him whom he hath sent.”** (John 13:34-35, John 6:29)]

Using Scripture out-of-context or focusing on parts of Scripture without considering the rest of the Bible is a popular tactic used by non-Christian religions. After reading the previous quote, a thief (Hindu or Buddhist) could point out the “good fruits” of his thievery, since he is helping the persons he robs work off their bad Karma from a previous life.

In reality, good fruit is only the product of a good root. Spiritually, we are responsible to make sure our hearts are rooted in truth and our outer fruit reflects that truth and is not some shiny counterfeit that sits on the table for display only. If a work is of the flesh or produced by man’s religion (not Christianity), it is bringing forth **“fruit unto death.”** (Rom.7:5)

Beguiling Unstable Souls

2 Peter 2:14

Pointing to the alleged **“good fruit”** of other religions without mentioning differences of roots into the **“true vine”** versus fruit that withers from a corrupt vine is very misleading (See Jn. 15:1; Jude 12). It is merely walking by sight. This reverts back to the age-old belief all “good” people go to heaven as it focuses on *mans*’ works. This doctrine nullifies what Jesus did at the cross. Contrary to the new perspective, people do not go to heaven based on the “goodness” of their religion even when this goodness is deceptively called the **“spirit of Jesus.”**

Jesus made it clear He is the vine, and we, as branches, must be connected to Him to produce good fruit. Jesus said, **“... without me ye can do nothing.”** (Jn. 15:5) (This verse reveals mankind does not possess hidden divinity and, therefore, cannot be God.) The branch must be rooted in the truth before its fruit is considered good by God. A person cannot have good fruit until it is rooted into Jesus, the Word, and therefore, Christianity. (See Jn. 15; Rom. 11.)

Across the page from the previous quote from *Christianity Encountering World Religions*, the question is asked, **“Is the Christian God the God of All Religions?”** That question should be a waste of time for even the most elementary Christian. But, the “Christian” publisher decided to give these wolves a voice leading weaker lambs into the valley of indecision because the answer given in the book is:

When human beings, no matter when or where, reach out to something beyond space and time, they are, whether they know it or not, reaching out to the God ... There is only one true God, so anyone describing the ultimate principle of the universe, no matter what the quality of the description, is referring to the biblical God.⁸

Reaching out to **“something,”** whether a person knows **“it”** or not, is NOT the same as reaching out to God. Personal salvation requires an active “yes” to truth, not ignorant groping. To describe **“the ultimate principle”** **“no matter what the quality”** is validating all belief systems. The message of the current Emergent literature is prying open our minds to accept Buddhism, Hinduism, Shintoism, Baha’i, Scientology, Islam, Astrology, Kabbalah, and New Age cults as weighing equal to Christianity. The Bible warns against unequal yokes with

unbelief as it asks, **“... what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness?”** (2Cor. 6:14)

Satan wants the standard of truth—Christianity and its handbook—gone. He strategically hopes graying the lines between truth and lies will contaminate the Gospel to the point of extinction. We must be vigilant and stand against this onslaught of teachings promoting **“broad is the way”** (Matt. 7:13).

Remember these are so-called “Christian” books published by mainstream Christian publishers found in Christian bookstores across the country. As I read these Emergent books, I find nearly every page of every book is clear in its fatal message advocating truth in all religions and the corresponding validity of all viewpoints. The Emergent literature is consistent in teaching embracing other religions while bashing true, biblical Christianity for its adherence to exclusive truth. This is not the belief of one or two stray authors who are seeking vengeance against their childhood pastor, but it is a tsunami led by many aberrant thinkers who are ravenous for the souls of this generation.

More Spoiled Fruit

A local newspaper covered the National Day of Prayer back in 2009 criticizing Franklin Graham for stating his prayer was not a prayer to the same god as the Muslims and Hindus. Graham said:

None of their 9,000 gods is going to lead me to salvation. We are fooling ourselves if we think we can have some big kumbaya service and all hold hands and it’s all going to get better in this world.⁹

The writer of the article then asked:

If the whole world prays for a common good, will no good come of it?

She ended the article with the comment that:

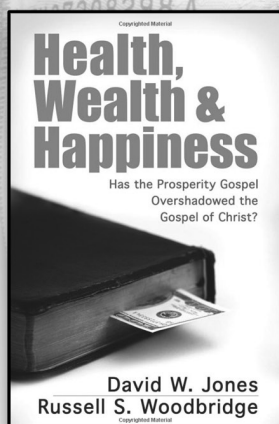
... transcending the notion that only some prayers are the right ones might get us closer to the enlightenment we purportedly seek.¹⁰

In the same breath as she demeans Franklin Graham, she implores Christians to **“transcend”** their narrow notions. She, as prime-time humanists, believes joining all faiths is **“closer”** to truth than recognizing truth’s exclusive nature. But, striving to combine the conflicting beliefs of all religions for the **“common good”** of humanity is fruitless, if on Judgment Day, those who are **“enlightened”** by this **“common good”** are plucked up and cast into the fire.

The article also referenced research allegedly showing that the human brain reacts to all prayer **“in the same way”** and surveys showing **“evangelicals under 30 believe there are many ways to God, not just through Jesus.”¹¹** But, regardless of ever-changing research and surveys limited by humanness, truth remains unchanged by God. Even when the Emergent spirituality calls for Christians to **“transcend”** their belief in the Bible—implying we have wallowed in the mud for centuries, we must resist and stand for the certainty of truth being persuaded of its accuracy and perfection found in/confirmed by the physical resurrection of the One and Only Son of God: Jesus Christ (Rom. 1:4). (See Luke 1:4; Prov. 22:21.)

Few and far between are Christians who have the nerve to stand like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego as they refused to bow to a false god. The philosophies of Humanism try to trick Christians into bowing by saying Jesus is in all religions so go

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Health, Wealth & Happiness

A BOOK REVIEW

By Dan Cox

In the early 1960's, Newton Minow, Chairman of the Federal Communications Commission, observed the content of much American television programming and famously concluded that it was a **"vast wasteland."** Minow was distraught, because while television had tremendous power and potential to serve the public interest, it had been co-opted, instead, by commercial forces which merely served frivolous interests. Rather than educating and edifying people, television appealed to the lowest common denominator and served up a steady diet of empty entertainment.

Sadly, much of what passes for Christian television, these days, is a vast spiritual wasteland. It is dominated by programs advocating the "prosperity gospel," which asserts it is God's will for every Christian to be healthy, wealthy and happy in terms and means the average worldling can understand and appreciate. Christian television has great potential to serve the public interest—both within and outside the church. Much of so-called Christian television, however, consists of a steady diet of false teaching which appeals to worldly interests.

As a result, the teachings of the "prosperity gospel" have made great inroads into the church, including evangelicalism. Prompted by a deep concern for the advances of prosperity thinking and teaching, Dr. David W. Jones—Associate Professor of Christian Ethics at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary and Dr. Russell S. Woodbridge—Assistant Professor of Theology and Church History (currently engaged in missions work in eastern Europe) have written a powerful, succinct and thoroughly biblical analysis and refutation of the "prosperity gospel." Their book—*Health Wealth & Happiness*—surveys and describes prosperity teaching, and then answers its claims with biblical teaching. The subtitle of the book asks a disturbing question: *Has the Prosperity Gospel Overshadowed the Gospel of Christ?* Sadly, indeed, it has overshadowed sound theology and biblical teaching in the minds of millions of people all over the world. Their book serves as a clarion call to the church to confront false teaching with biblical truth and contend for the true Gospel. From the beginning of the church until today, it has always been necessary to do this as we are reminded by Jude in Jude 1:3:

Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. (ESV)

Introduction

The authors begin their analysis with a couple of sad but true stories of persons who were duped by prosperity preachers. They are not shy about naming names and identifying ministries. One woman heard the message that if she would be faithful in giving, God would reward her with great financial prosperity. She gave faithfully to a number of ministries including Joyce Meyer, Paula White and Benny Hinn. But, even though she waited patiently, the promised financial reward never came. A man who was paralyzed from the waist down due to a congenital birth defect was told that if he simply had enough faith, God would heal him. He attended a faith healing crusade believing God would heal him. Unfortunately, the ushers at the crusade directed him to the back of the auditorium and ignored his pleas to be chosen for healing. This bitter and disillusioned man remains in his wheelchair today.

There are countless other examples of people, including people within evangelical churches, who have been led to believe this false gospel. Jones and Woodbridge say:

Evangelical churches are full of people who, perhaps unknowingly, regularly watch prosperity gospel teachers on television. Here is a common scenario: the polished, friendly motivational preacher asks for money in order to support his ministry; in return, he promises prayer on the donors' behalf, as well as a financial blessing from God. The viewers then send money because they appreciate the positive teaching and could use a little bit more money to pay their bills. When an increase in income does not occur, however, consumers of the prosperity message often become self-critical, thinking that the failure rests in their own lack of faith, or they become disappointed and angry with God.¹

How did we get here? How have so many otherwise orthodox Christians come to believe God exists in order to help us achieve personal success and serve as a means of attaining material prosperity? In many churches today, a new "gospel" is being preached. It is a "gospel" that omits Jesus and neglects the cross. Instead of promising Christ, this "gospel" promises health and wealth here and now. It tells people that everything they touch will prosper. If believers/followers will repeat positive confessions, focus their thoughts and generate enough faith, God

will release blessings upon their lives. This “gospel” teaches it is God’s will for every Christian to live a healthy and financially prosperous life.

The “prosperity gospel” has been given many names such as “name it and claim it,” “health and wealth,” “word of faith” and “positive confession theology.” Whatever the name, though, the message is this: God wants you to be materially prosperous and healthy in the here and now. This gospel continues to grow and influence Christians all around the world. Of the largest 260 churches in the United States, 50 promote the “prosperity gospel”. Many prosperity teachers regularly appear on television and have influenced millions of people. Some of the better-known prosperity preachers include: Robert Tilton, Kenneth Copeland, T.D. Jakes, Joel Osteen, Frederick Price, Creflo Dollar, Kenneth Hagin Jr. and Eddie Long, as well as the aforementioned Joyce Meyer, Paula White and Benny Hinn. One of the most-watched religious television networks in the world is the Trinity Broadcasting Network (TBN), and it constantly pumps out the prosperity message through numerous programs.

Given its departure from the historical, orthodox message of the church, we might think most Bible-believing Christians would reject this false teaching. Sadly, that is not the case. As the authors note, a recent survey in the United States found that 46-percent of self-proclaimed Christians agree with the idea God will grant material riches to all believers/followers who have enough faith. The appeal of the “prosperity gospel” is not a uniquely American phenomenon, however. It is on the rise in South America, Africa, India and Korea among many other places. Jones and Woodbridge note the startling results of an international survey conducted in 2006 by the Pew Forum of Pentecostals and other like-minded Christians:

In Nigeria, 96 percent of those who professed belief in God either completely agreed or mostly agreed that God will grant material riches if one has enough faith. Believers in the countries of India (82 percent) and Guatemala (71 percent) gave similar responses. Likewise, a significant number of those surveyed asserted their belief that God will grant good health and relief from sickness to believers who have enough faith. When the Pew Forum asked if faith in God was an important factor in people’s economic success, roughly 90 percent of those who responded in Kenya, Nigeria, and South Africa said it was.²

Why has the “prosperity gospel” grown at such staggering rates all around the world? The authors point out the generally self-serving nature of the “prosperity gospel” which inherently appeals to our fleshly nature. They suggest, however, at least seven specific additional reasons.

First, the “prosperity gospel” contains an element of biblical truth, although it is highly distorted. God, indeed, is love, He does have the power to bless materially, and He is exceedingly

gracious toward His creation. However, He does not promise prosperity for all people in the here and now. Rather, He promises something much better- Himself.

Second, the “prosperity gospel” appeals to the natural human desire to be successful, healthy and financially secure. While these desires are not inherently sinful, however, they can supplant the desire for God. We can become idolaters who are seeking out the gifts rather than the Giver of the gifts.

Third, the “prosperity gospel” promises much and requires little, portraying Jesus as one Who can help believers/followers help themselves. Rather than being portrayed as God’s answer to man’s chief problem— sin and, thus, death—Jesus is presented as the solution to our *material* wants.

Fourth, many advocates of the “prosperity gospel” have cultivated a winsome personality and a polished presentation of their message. They are good communicators who are skilled at motivational speaking. While we might say it is good to convey

a message well, the message must be biblical, however, and that is not the case with prosperity preaching.

Fifth, many followers of prosperity preaching have little knowledge of biblical doctrine. They are ripe, therefore, for accepting the distorted teachings of the prosperity preachers. Many Christians simply lack theological discernment.

Sixth, many people have experienced success and/or healing (or, at least, claimed to have done so) and attribute that to the teachings of the “prosperity gospel”. For them, that seems to “validate” its message given the pragmatic nature of many people: “If-it-works, it-must-be-true.” Of course, any number of other factors may be at work, but the results are attributed to prosperity teachings.

Seventh, many in the modern church lack a general sense of biblical discernment, because they are more influenced by the secular culture than Scripture. Therefore, many Christians define happiness, joy and success by the world’s standards instead of using God’s standards. They view “success” as status, wealth and position rather than holiness, faithfulness and obedience to God.

Jones and Woodbridge write from the perspective that correct doctrine matters. Correct theological beliefs are essential to the believer’s relationship to God. And, the biblical gospel must be correctly proclaimed to the world. The “prosperity gospel” does not save; only the biblical Gospel is the power of God unto salvation (Rom.1:16, 1Cor.15:1-4).

The bulk of the book is divided into two parts. Part 1 is a critique of prosperity teaching. In this section, the authors skillfully lay out the foundations, teachings and errors of the “prosperity gospel”. Part 2 is a biblical correction of prosperity teaching. In this section, the authors present the biblical teaching on suffering, wealth and poverty, and giving.

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The Foundations of the "Prosperity Gospel"

The teachings of the "prosperity gospel" did not emerge out of a vacuum. Jones and Woodbridge skillfully detail the philosophical theories and spiritual milieu which laid the foundations for prosperity preaching:

The prosperity gospel is built upon a quasi-Christian heresy known as the New Thought movement, an ideology that gained popularity in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Although the New Thought movement is unknown by name to most contemporary Christians, the prosperity gospel consists largely of the ideas of the New Thought movement repackaged with new faces, new technology, new venues, and a slightly altered message. While the prosperity gospel may look better than the classic New Thought movement, it still constitutes a departure from orthodox Christianity.³

The New Thought movement began in the nineteenth century and was also known by other names such as Mind-Cure, Mental Healing or Harmonialism. The goal of New Thought was to show one's loftiest ideals may be realized through right thinking, and disease may be treated by spiritual and mental methods. There were also some religious beliefs not found in Scripture:

Examples of such beliefs include that God is a force; spirit or mind is ultimate reality; people are divine; disease originates in the mind; and thoughts can create and/or change reality.⁴

Philosopher William James noted New Thought drew from a variety of sources including Hinduism, philosophical idealism, transcendentalism, popular science evolution, and the optimistic spirit of progress. In effect, New Thought was a combination of many different pagan philosophies. Influential New Thought writers include: Emanuel Swedenborg, Phineas Quimby, Ralph Waldo Trine, Norman Vincent Peale, Ernest Holmes, and Charles Fillmore.

Emanuel Swedenborg (1688–1772) can be considered the "grandfather" of New Thought. He was a Swedish scientist and inventor who contributed to a number of fields including mathematics, astronomy, economics, political theory, and medicine. But, his most significant contribution was in the field of religion. Swedenborg claimed God had appeared to him and told him to publish new doctrine for the church. He said he spoke with the Apostle Paul for a year as well as Martin Luther and Moses. He also claimed to be a clairvoyant who possessed the power to look into Heaven, Hell, and other dimensions of the spirit world. He also rejected orthodox Christian beliefs such as the Doctrine of the Trinity, the Deity of Jesus Christ, and salvation by grace through faith alone. His writings were distributed widely throughout the world and came to influence individuals such as Ralph Waldo Trine and Warren Felt Evans and others who founded the New Thought movement.

Phineas Quimby (1802–1866) is considered the intellectual "father" of New Thought. Quimby theorized the mind had the power to create and influence. He believed sickness is a mental dysfunction and, therefore, can be cured by correcting false reasoning or error in the mind. Whatever one believes is reality, including illness. He denied the bodily Resurrection of Jesus, arguing that mind or spirit is good and matter is evil (a rehash

of the ancient heresy of Gnosticism). He argued Jesus was just a man who had superior ideas: In order to cure people, Jesus simply changed people's minds with His teachings. One of Quimby's patients was Mary Baker Eddy, who would one day found the cult of Christian Science.

Ralph Waldo Trine (1866–1958) was the "evangelist" of New Thought. In the early twentieth century, a number of books containing New Thought ideas were published with the aim of helping people to achieve health and success. Jones and Woodbridge note:

In these New Thought works, one can discern some of the key recurring elements of the prosperity gospel: speaking the right words, invoking a universal law of success with words, and having faith in oneself.⁵

Trine's works became enormously popular, even among many professing Christians. Considering that level of influence, it is important to examine his theological beliefs. He rejected the unique inspiration of the Bible by claiming Buddha's writings were also inspired. He advocated theological pluralism by denying Jesus is the only means of salvation, and instead, he claimed every religion leads to God. Trine's only interest in Jesus was in His moral teachings. There is no mention of the work of Jesus on the cross, sin, repentance or the Gospel. One achieves salvation by tapping into higher laws and achieving success in life. Despite the fact Trine's writings held very little in common with biblical Christianity, they were embraced by many people, including orthodox believers.

Norman Vincent Peale (1898–1993) is considered the "pastor" of New Thought. He is best known for his book *The Power of Positive Thinking* (1952), which popularized New Thought ideas and techniques in America. Despite his Dutch Reformed Church background, Peale embraced New Thought ideas in his writings. Although he claimed to affirm the teachings of orthodox Christianity, he dangerously merged pagan philosophies with biblical ideas.

After discussing key figures in the history of the New Thought movement, Jones and Woodbridge examine some of the core tenets of New Thought philosophy that impacted the "prosperity gospel". These core faulty tenants are summarized in five categorical pillars: (1) a distorted view of God, (2) an elevation of mind over matter, (3) an exalted view of humankind, (4) a focus on health and wealth, and (5) an unorthodox view of salvation.

The **first pillar** of New Thought philosophy is a distorted view of God. While not all New Thought writers had the same view of God, the general teachings deviate from the biblical Doctrine of God. Most New Thought writers rejected the Trinity. God and the world are of one substance, or the world is simply an extension of God (pantheism and panentheism). God is an impersonal life-force or energy that must be harnessed in order to be successful ("**Use the force, Luke**"). Jesus was merely a prophet—He certainly was not God.

The **second pillar** of New Thought philosophy is an elevation of mind over matter. Harnessing one's mind or thoughts is the key to being successful:

According to New Thought advocates, this is the great secret of life- that is, if you think a certain way, then you can change reality. This is so because thoughts, spirit, and mind are what is real, while the physical world is an illusion. In other words, your mind is far more important than matter.⁶

One particularly disturbing promise is found in the book *Success Through a Positive Mental Attitude* (1960) in which author Napoleon Hill says:

When you make the discoveries that are awaiting you, they can bring you: (1) physical, mental, and moral health, happiness, and wealth; (2) success in your chosen field of endeavor; and even (3) a means to affect, use and control, or harmonize with powers known and unknown.⁷

Promise three there sounds like the “controller” of “**powers ... unknown**” is, in fact, being controlled by the unknown powers of the spirit world!

New Thought teachers also believe there are laws of attraction at work in the universe. People attract whatever they think. The power to succeed is within each person as he or she directs thoughts toward that which they want to attract or achieve.

The **third pillar** of New Thought philosophy is an exalted view of humankind. New Thought philosophy asserts that people are essentially good, spiritual beings who have a potential for godlike—if not divine—status one day. People must open themselves up to the “**divine influx**.” Through this encounter with “god,” one becomes godlike. There is, of course, no mention of sin and redemption since people are fundamentally good and capable of becoming gods. There is no need for a sinless Savior to die as a propitiation for sin.

The **fourth pillar** of New Thought philosophy is a focus on health and wealth. If one is properly connected to “the Infinite,” sickness will not be manifested. People become sick because of negative thoughts or an improper connection with the **Infinite Spirit**. The solution to illness is to think about being well and have faith the “law of attraction” will work. Similarly, if one focuses the mind on wealth, the “law of attraction” will bring it into reality. Control your thoughts, and financial prosperity will follow. Form a clear mental image of whatever it is you desire (house, car, job, etc.), speak the correct words, and the universe will bring it into existence by the power of your mind.

The **fifth pillar** of New Thought philosophy is an unorthodox view of salvation. This should not be too surprising given the previous pillars of self-exaltation. According to New Thought, religion is not redemption from sin, but rather it is learning to love your neighbor. Jesus was not the Son of God, but merely a man whose spirit was raised from the dead. Thus, salvation is redefined to refer to ethical behavior and the attainment of everything you desire:

In summary, for New Thought, salvation is not placing one's faith in Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, who died for the sins of humankind on the cross. Rather, salvation is a self-generated mystical experience with the Infinite, which entails channeling the divine influx for personal health, wealth, happiness and success.⁸

In New Thought, the key to obtaining everything you want is thinking, visualizing and speaking the right words. These ideas are often taught using biblical terms and concepts, and distorting Scripture.

The Teachings of the “Prosperity Gospel”

In presenting the basic teachings of the “prosperity gospel,” Jones and Woodbridge make it evident it is quite similar to the New Thought movement. The “prosperity gospel” has existed as

an organized movement for about 100 years. While there were dozens of early proponents of prosperity thinking, two stand out from the rest: E.W. Kenyon and Kenneth E. Hagin. E.W. Kenyon was one of the first to give New Thought an explicitly Christian veneer. Hagin popularized the “prosperity gospel” through what became known as the Word of Faith movement.

E. W. Kenyon (1867–1948) was an evangelist, pastor and founder of Bethel Bible Institute in Spencer, Massachusetts. While rejecting some elements of New Thought philosophy, he incorporated many others into his theological system:

This is evidenced by Kenyon's advocacy of positive confession theology, his deficient view of the atonement, and his elevation of human beings, as well as his explicit teachings on health and wealth.⁹

Kenyon's ideas greatly influenced the “prosperity gospel” movement. He emphasized speaking the right words in order to bring about a new reality. He is credited with coining the phrase, “**What I confess, I possess.**” He believed positive confession was the key to health and financial prosperity. Kenyon writes:

Confession always goes ahead of healing. Don't watch symptoms, watch the word, and be sure that your confession is bold and vigorous. Don't listen to people. Act on the word. Be a doer of the word. It is God speaking. You are healed. The word says you are. Don't listen to the senses. Give the word its place. God cannot lie.¹⁰

With proper thoughts in one's spirit, one can command the physical world. If you speak of sickness, you will descend into sickness. You are a spirit and the spirit registers your words.

Kenyon also held that Jesus' death on the cross did not purchase salvation. He describes the cross as a place of failure and defeat. The physical death of Jesus had no impact on sinful men and women. Since sin is a spiritual thing, it must be dealt with in the realm of the spirit. When Jesus died, Satan took Him to the place where the sinner's spirit goes when he dies. The work of atonement was then accomplished in this spiritual realm.

Kenyon also placed people at the center of his system. The purpose of religion is not to honor God or redeem people. Rather, religion is to serve people and help them get what they desire. As one partners with God, life will be good because God does not want people to experience hardship or failure.

Kenneth E. Hagin (1917–2003) is recognized by many to be the greatest evangelist of the “prosperity gospel” as well as being the father of the Word of Faith movement. According to his official biography:

In April 1933 during a dramatic conversion experience, Hagin reported dying three times in 10 minutes, each time seeing the horrors of hell and then returning to life. In August 1934, Rev. Hagin was miraculously healed, raised off a deathbed by the power of God and the revelation of faith in God's Word. Jesus appeared to Rev. Hagin eight times over the next several years in visions that changed the course of his ministry.¹¹

In this story, we see a common feature of many prosperity teachers: A reliance on extra-biblical revelation from God. Many of them claim to have received special messages from God, and this gives them added authority and credibility in the eyes of their followers. Hagin called himself an “**anointed prophet and teacher of faith,**” and he claimed to have had several visitations from Jesus who provided new revelations to be taught to the church.

—Continued on page 18



Begging To Differ:

Examining Faulty Logic in Moroni 10:4

By David Isaacs

Mormonism is one of the most successful and unique religions in the history of the United States. Since its foundation almost 200 years ago, it has survived a number of internal rifts and external threats; it has also consistently responded to its critics' challenges through scholarly articles, books, and conferences. Today, it claims to be one of the fastest growing religious groups in the world.¹ In fact, its growth has been so remarkable that Sociologist of Religion Rodney Stark² concludes that Mormonism:

... has sustained the most rapid growth of any new religion in U.S. History. Indeed, it stands on the threshold of becoming the first major faith to appear on earth since the prophet Mohammed rode out of the desert.³

Stark goes on to predict that at its current rate of growth, there will be over 260,000,000 Mormons by 2080!⁴ This is partly because for many years the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (aka LDS, aka Mormons) has aggressively evangelized. Many people are able to recognize a pair of LDS missionaries knocking on the door and asking to share their testimony. These missionaries often seem to answer, or at least deflect, many of the objections raised against LDS teachings, which leaves even confirmed Christians wondering how best to answer the false teachings of the Mormon faith.

Many good exposés have shown the doctrinal and historical problems in Mormonism; however, they all too often require the Christian apologist to remember extensive research and to examine documents not available to most laypeople. While there is nothing wrong with this and Christians should spend time studying and preparing for every opportunity, in reality, most do not. In addition, even when a Christian is prepared, one easily can be flustered into forgetting what one has read when confronted by well-trained Mormon missionaries. (This has happened to me, even though I have spent hours researching the claims of Mormonism.) Therefore, I propose another method of responding to the claims of this religion in a witnessing situation: The use of sound logic. By examining the failure of Mormonism to use logic consistently, we can

see Mormons lose most arguments by default as well as by evidence. Specifically, I will look at the informal logical fallacies of "*begging the question*" and "*stacking the deck*" to show that LDS missionaries do not have as sound a system as they believe. If the LDS at the door bases his witnessing on faulty reasoning, then his arguments should not be accepted by any reasonable person. This article offers a brief primer for the typical Christian on clear thinking and suggests a way to counter one of Mormonism's most consistent claims. One does not even need to know much about the LDS. Instead, an examination of the most popular verse used to convert—Moroni 10:4:

And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost.⁵

and some of the typical arguments given along with it should suffice to prepare the Christian to answer the door with confidence.

This logical approach is not unwarranted: Some Mormons even have invited serious examinations of their faith. Early Mormon Apostle Orson Pratt said in an official LDS publication, *The Seer* (1853, pg.15):

If we cannot convince you by reason nor by the word of God, that your religion is wrong, we will not persecute you.

He goes on to say:

... we ask from you the same generosity ... convince us of our errors of doctrine, if we have any, by reason, by logical arguments, or by the word [sic] of God, and we will be ever grateful for the information ...⁶

Since at least some LDS seem willing to discuss the issues logically, Christians should also be prepared to do so. It is important for Christians to have a ready defense not simply to win arguments but, hopefully, to win souls in a loving manner. (cf. 1Cor.13:1, 1Pet.3:15)

Begging the Question

One of the logical fallacies Mormon missionaries commit is termed *begging the question*, in which the one making a claim uses the conclusion as one of the premises. It would be like asking why the sky is blue and being told, **“Because its blueness makes it look blue.”**⁷ Instead of offering evidence, the claimant assumes one’s position is true and just reasserts the conclusion using other words, which leads to circular reasoning.

Christians sometimes commit this logical fallacy when they claim the Bible is God-inspired, because it states in 2Timothy: **“All Scripture is inspired by God.”** However, as scholars Dr. Norman L. Geisler (co-founder of Southern Evangelical Seminary and Veritas Seminary) and Ronald M. Brooks (ThM, Dallas Theological Seminary) point out:

... referring to the Bible as proof, there is an implicit assumption that the Bible has divine authority. But that is the very question being asked! You cannot just say that the Bible says it came from God; so does the Koran. This assumed premise restates the conclusion and begs the question.⁸

Instead, Christians need to offer solid reasons for the Bible’s reliability and authenticity before they can appeal to its inspiration. In a similar way, the Mormon commits the same logical fallacy when he uses Moroni 10:4 to prove the authority of *The Book of Mormon*.

LDS missionaries probably use this verse more than any other to get people to consider the Mormon faith through prayer. (In fact, I have found several copies of *The Book of Mormon* in libraries and bookstores in which the missionaries have written a note on the first page encouraging readers to consider this verse.)

This verse offers a simple test for validating *The Book of Mormon* and its claims: One prays for God to reveal the book’s truthfulness and, then, one will receive confirmation that it is, indeed, true. However, notice the verse assumes *The Book of Mormon* is telling the truth and offering a valid test; then, by applying this self-prescribed test, one should see *The Book of Mormon* is true. The argument can be illustrated in this way:

- (1) *The Book of Mormon* is true.
- (2) We know *The Book of Mormon* is true, because it says it is true.
- (3) Therefore, *The Book of Mormon* is true.

In order for the test of praying for truth **“with a sincere heart”** to work, one must first *assume* that *The Book of Mormon* is telling the truth when it offers a valid test, yet the veracity of *The Book of Mormon* is the point under consideration! Thus, the LDS proposition “begs the question” and does not really offer a persuasive argument. Those aware of this logical fallacy should not feel any pressure to apply Moroni 10:4, for there is no logical reason given to do so.

This leads to another problem. For Mormons, praying **“with a sincere heart”** allegedly leads to the proof of inspiration. However, this assumes *sincerity* is a valid test for truth. When a non-Mormon prays following Moroni 10:4, he may have a very real experience—often called a **“burning in the bosom”**—which supposedly testifies that *The Book of Mormon* is, indeed, God’s completed Word. A Christian can challenge this. After all, Christians have their own testimonies, as do people in other religions, yet the Mormon discounts this. However, if sincerity is all that is needed to establish truth, then any person of *any* religious faith can claim a sincere experience as “proof.” Once again, the Mormon has “begged the question.” Many people realize someone can be sincere yet sincerely *wrong*. For example, I may sincerely believe I am six-feet tall, but anyone with a tape measure can easily prove this wrong (unfortunately!), or I may sincerely believe taking poison will do me no harm, but reality’s truth will prove otherwise. As Christian scholar James White (Director of Alpha and Omega Ministries) states:

What is right is right, and what is wrong is wrong. Truth exists independently of either you or I [sic]. ... Truth is truth, and it will be true whether I believe it to be true or not.⁹

In addition, one could be insincere and still speak the truth. For example, an Elmer-Gantry** type of revival preacher may not believe the truths in his message, yet he may have converts to Christianity who are truly regenerated by those truths in his message. Sincerity is not the issue—the body of truths in the propositions is. In an argument, validity is determined through clear thinking and solid evidence. The Mormon needs to provide these in addition to any feelings he may have. Even if the Christian does not provide a reason, the *fact* the Mormon assumes *sincerity* is a

valid test for the truth of *The Book of Mormon* commits a logical fallacy, and thus he assumes the burden of proof. We need not feel compelled to accept his claim without a better argument.

Stacking the Deck

Moroni 10:4 also commits the logical fallacy known as *“stacking the deck.”* In this fallacy, the person making a claim designs his **“reasoning in such a way that [he] can’t lose.”**¹⁰ In other words, the person lays out the evidence so he will win no matter what, just as a card player who prepares a deck of cards ahead of time can always deal himself a winning hand; card players also call this “cheating.”

Once again, notice what Moroni 10:4 states:

And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth unto you, by

—Continued on page 16

One of the logical fallacies Mormon missionaries commit is termed *begging the question*, in which the one making a claim uses the conclusion as one of the premises. It would be like asking why the sky is blue and being told, “Because its blueness makes it look blue.”

**“Begging” Continued from page 15
the power of the Holy Ghost.**

As White points out, this is a “no win” proposition for the non-Mormon:

If a person does not feel that the Holy Spirit testifies that the Book of Mormon is true, then the Mormon has a ready answer, provided by the passage itself—such a person must not have a sincere heart, or have real intent, or have faith in Christ. If a person were sincere, honest, and believed in Christ, then that person would have to know, by the power of the Holy Spirit, that the Book of Mormon is true. That makes things quite easy, for everyone who doesn’t believe in the Book of Mormon must be dishonest at heart, lack the proper intentions, and certainly does not have faith in Christ.¹¹

In other words, the passage has not left room for any alternatives: i.e. *The Book of Mormon* is false, people can be sincerely misled into believing wrong doctrine, and/or the experience attributed to the Holy Spirit could come from another source such as Satan or one’s own wishful thinking, etc. By “*stacking the deck*,” the Mormon paints the potential convert into the proverbial corner: Believe what *The Book of Mormon* says is true, or you are not sincere and honest. Because the Mormons present this *sincerely*, many unsuspecting people have been led to consider the LDS claims. I believe average Mormons do not recognize the problem with the reasoning in this verse, but it is “cheating” and needs to be exposed.

The Christian can respond in several ways. First, one can point out the logical fallacies in this verse and suggest one put *The Book of Mormon* to the same test suggested in the *Journal of Discourses* 16:56.

Take up the Bible, and compare the religion of the Latter-day Saints with it, and see if it will stand the test.¹²

The Christian will then need to show how *The Book of Mormon* does not “stand the test.”¹³ Also, one can ask the Latter-day Saint (Mormon) if he has also prayed about the other LDS scriptures such as *The Doctrine and Covenants* and *The Pearl of Great Price*, not to mention the Bible. After all, if God wants us to find truth through such a method, it should apply to *all* works claiming to be “scripture.” Most likely, the Mormon has only applied the Moroni 10:4 test to *The Book of Mormon*. Perhaps this is because it does not really contain much current Mormon doctrine, so those who read it are not as likely to raise as many questions than if they read *The Pearl of Great Price* first (this work gives an alleged history of Joseph Smith’s*** initial conversion and finding the plates that would become *The Book of Mormon*). Regardless, since the claim in Moroni 10:4 rests upon a fallacy, the burden of proof is upon the Mormon to demonstrate its truth some other way. The Christian should be prepared to offer other reasons not to accept the Moroni 10:4 test, but if one is not, then one can simply ask the Mormon to provide a logical reason for accepting the verse’s claims which does not “*stack the deck*”—the burden of proof rightly falls on those claiming new revelation.

Conclusion

Ken Samples (senior research scholar at Reasons to Believe) reminds us we need to evaluate carefully **“the various interpretations of reality offered in the marketplace of ideas. By applying methods of critical thinking to the various**

aspects of each particular worldview, the accuracy of that belief system can be analyzed to determine how well it actually fits reality.”¹⁴ He goes on to argue the first test is the logical consistency of the worldview.¹⁵ After joining a religious group, or while being raised within one, followers look at and relate to the world and themselves through the group’s doctrinal paradigm. By understanding the Mormon’s concept of the world, and his lack of using logic to interpret it, one can be better prepared to meet the LDS missionary’s challenges to the Christian faith. By showing the inconsistencies in the logic of Mormonism, one can demonstrate its teachings are not trustworthy. While Mormons are unlikely to be persuaded immediately, it is our job as Christians to give a defense (Jude 3) and to plant seeds.¹⁶

As with any missionary outreach, it is important for Christians not only to be informed but sensitive. We need to see Mormons as people searching for truth and deserving of the same compassion, love, and respect we would give anyone else. Too often, Christians feel they need to win the argument, but God calls us to love others and to be equipped to give solid answers for our faith (again, see Jude 3). If we do these faithfully, we are doing our part, and we can trust that He will do the rest! We often may not even see the effects of our refutations, but we should view any opportunity as a chance to plant seeds. We do not need to see the LDS missionary as an enemy soldier and cower in fear or try to shoot him down. Instead, by using sound logic and a ready defense, we can tear down the enemy’s strongholds in order to offer the truth: Jesus Christ, the hope of glory. ☐

“burning in the bosom” is found in various places in LDS writings, i.e.: **“As you are sensitive to the promptings of the Spirit, one of two things will certainly occur at the appropriate time: either the stupor of thought will come, indicating an improper choice, or the peace or the burning in the bosom will be felt, confirming that your choice was correct. When you are living righteously and are acting with trust, God will not let you proceed too far without a warning impression if you have made the wrong decision.”** (Scott, Richard G., “Using the Supernal Gift of Prayer,” CR, *Ensign* May 2007, p. 10). It is likely coined from LDS scripture *Doctrine and Covenants* 9:8: **“... if it is right I will cause that your bosom shall burn within you; therefore, you shall feel that it is right;”** and the Bible at Luke 24:32: **“And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?”**

****Elmer Gantry** is the fictional character from the 1960 film who was a con man selling religion to small-town America.

*****Joseph Smith, Jr.** is the founder of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (aka Mormons, aka LDS) and author of *The Book of Mormon*, *The Pearl of Great Price* and *The Doctrine and Covenants* among other works.



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Endnotes:

1 The official figure is just under fourteen million members as of January, 2010. See 2011 *Church Almanac* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 2011), 4. However, these numbers do not typically reflect inactive members or those who have left the church.

2 Stark is co-director of the Institute for the Studies of Religion at Baylor University. Widely considered “one of the world’s most respected sociologists of religion,” he has long documented American religious movements; he is also a self-described agnostic. See the interview “A Double Take on Early Christianity: An Interview with Rodney Stark,” The National Institute for the Renewal of the Priesthood Website, 22 July 2004. Available at <<http://www.jknirp.com/stark.htm>> See also his website at <<http://rodneystark.com>>.

3 Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Mormonism* (New York: Columbia UP, 2005), 139.

4 Ibid., 141-146.

5 For this article, I use *The Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ* (Salt Lake City: LDS, 1981).

6 Bob Witte, *Where Does It Say That?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Gospel Truths, n.d.), 7-4 (italics added).

7 Norman L. Geisler and Ronald M. Brooks, *Come, Let Us Reason: An Introduction to Logical Thinking* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1990), 100.

8 Ibid., 100.

9 James R. White, *Letters to a Mormon Elder* (Southbridge, MA: Crown Publications, 1990), 3.

10 Geisler and Brooks, 100.

11 White, 159-160 (italics in original).


12 John D. Ferrer discusses other scholars and how to respond to them in “Knowing’ . . . Mormon Style,” *Midwest Christian Outreach Journal*, 10.3 Summer 2004, pp. 8-11. Available at <<http://www.midwestoutreach.org/Pdf%20Journals/2004/04sum.pdf>>.

13 Some good primers would include the following: Jerald and Sandra Tanner, *Major Problems of Mormonism* (Salt Lake City: Utah Light House Ministry, 1989); Walter Martin, *Kingdom of the Cults* (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1985); and Francis J. Beckwith, Carl Mosser, and Paul Owen, Gen. Eds., *The New Mormon Challenge* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002).

14 Kenneth Richard Samples, *A World of Difference: Putting Christian Truth-Claims to the Worldview Test* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: BakerBooks, 2007), 32.

15 Ibid., 33.

16 Ferrer, cited above, offers some good strategies to engage the Latter-day Saint in such ways as to move past the tests of Moroni 10:4 and its corollary phenomenon called the “burning in the bosom.” White’s *Letters to a Mormon Elder* also offers a model of engagement.



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“Health” Continued from page 13

Hagin was greatly influenced by E.W. Kenyon, and in turn, Hagin has influenced a host of other ministries in the Word of Faith movement. Examples of these ministries include: Kenneth Hagin, Jr., Kenneth Copeland, Frederick Price, Robert Tilton, Benny Hinn, Charles Capps, and Jerry Savelle. The Trinity Broadcast Network, founded in 1973 by Paul and Jan Crouch along with Jim and Tammy Faye Bakker, serves as a platform for numerous prosperity teachers including: Rod Parsley, Creflo Dollar, Paula White, Kenneth Copeland, Jesse Duplantis and Kenneth Hagin, Jr. The Jimmy Swaggart and Jim Bakker financial and sex scandals in the 1980’s shook the Word of Faith movement, but it has recovered and flourishes again today.

The “prosperity gospel” is prospering in the United States, and it is being successfully exported around the world, especially South America and Africa. “Soft” advocates of the “prosperity gospel” such as Joel Osteen, Joyce Meyer and T.D. Jakes are well-known names and have large followings. Jones and Woodbridge strike the right tone in saying:

Without question, many prosperity teachers are sincere, passionate, and excellent communicators, but these qualities do not excuse false teachings, whether intentional or not. Many genuine Christians listen to prosperity teachers but do not discern how prosperity teachers distort Scripture and the gospel. Of course, taken at face value, the prosperity message—God wants you to be prosperous in everything in the here-and-now—sounds good, but is not found in Scripture. Most Christians fail to realize that in addition to misunderstanding the true nature of the gospel, many who preach the prosperity message hold to heretical views of God, Christ, and people, among other errors. Given their emphasis on material prosperity, their views on such doctrines are not prominent in their popular writings, but are nevertheless present, and have been well-documented.¹²

Although there is a diversity of views and nuances within the movement; nevertheless, there is a significant pattern of doctrinal deviation. While prosperity teachers would almost certainly deny their teachings are rooted in the secular and pagan philosophy of the New Thought movement, a study of their teachings reveals otherwise. Using the five categorical pillars of New Thought from the previous chapter, Jones and Woodbridge examine the teachings of prosperity theology and find many similarities which, along with other errors, form the foundation of the modern prosperity movement.

The **first pillar** of both New Thought and prosperity teaching is a distorted view of God. Many believers/followers of the “prosperity gospel” do not realize several prominent prosperity teachers deny the biblical Doctrine of the Trinity. They reject the orthodox view of one God eternally existing in three Persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Rather, they believe God exists as one person who appears at various times in different modes as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is the ancient heresy known as *modalism*. T.D. Jakes has said there is one God, who has appeared in three different “**manifestations**,” which is a term typical of Oneness Pentecostalism. (T.D. Jakes recently appeared in one of James MacDonald’s “Elephant Room” seminars. He attempted to clarify his view of the Trinity and defend it as orthodox. Very few were persuaded, however.) In 1990, Benny Hinn declared he had received new revelation from the Holy Spirit that each

person of the Godhead is triune— meaning there are a total of nine persons. Creflo Dollar has said there is one God who has three different functions. Kenneth Copeland maintains a very brief (and arguably ambiguous) statement about the Godhead, which is problematic given his association with known modalists such as T.D. Jakes.

The **second pillar** of both New Thought and prosperity teaching is the elevation of mind over matter. Many prosperity preachers believe words—both thought and spoken—are a force and have creative power. Human beings are able to speak spiritual words that can manipulate and control the physical world. Creflo Dollar stated:

The spiritual world is the parent of the physical world. Everything came from God, who is a spirit. The physical matter, including circumstances and situations, is physical substance. We can use spiritual substance to change physical substance. Spiritual laws supersede physical laws. Jesus superseded the law of gravity when He walked on water... As believers, we have authority over this physical world.¹³

Purportedly, speaking the right words, combined with faith in those words, can produce amazing results, because God established the spiritual laws that govern this world. If God’s words have creative, miraculous power, then human words do as well, because we are made in the image of God. Kenneth Copeland says believers can have anything they speak, because God has created the whole world for human benefit. He also teaches it was God’s faith in His own words which created the world.

Since positive confession of words produces such blessing, some prosperity teachers provide lists of confessions for their followers to recite. Joyce Meyer has compiled a list of confessions to be said each day. She claims that if one repeats these confessions (and has faith, of course), they will materialize. According to Joel Osteen, you must see your success in your mind, because what you see in your mind is what you will produce. He also says:

Our words have tremendous power, and whether we want to or not, we will give life to what we’re saying, either good or bad... Words are similar to seeds, by speaking them aloud, they are planted in our subconscious minds, and they take on a life of their own.¹⁴

The **third pillar** of both New Thought and prosperity teaching is an exalted view of humankind. Prosperity theology inverts the relationship between the Creator and the creature. Human beings are at the center of the universe, and God exists to meet their needs and give them sound health, financial prosperity and good relationships. People are constantly reminded they have God’s favor on them in all aspects of their lives. Some prosperity advocates such as Paul Crouch, Kenneth Copeland and Creflo Dollar have even gone so far as to assert human beings are divine—little gods. T.D. Jakes believes human beings are made out of God’s DNA, whatever that means.

The **fourth pillar** of both New Thought and prosperity teaching is a focus on health and wealth. Several prosperity teachers have claimed neither Jesus nor His disciples were poor. Robert Tilton believes being poor is a sin, because God promises prosperity. There is an inordinate focus on giving. The reason? Because the alleged “**law of compensation**”

states that when Christians give generously, God will give back much more in return.

Prosperity teachers make promises to their followers that are not true. They teach it is *always* God's will for them to be financially successful and healthy:

Kenneth Copeland stated, "You must realize that it is God's will for you to prosper. This is available to you, and frankly, it would be stupid of you not to partake of it." Paula White agrees, "Do you believe that God wants you to live in the abundance of and the overflow of His goodness, His mercy, and His provision? King David declared that God takes pleasure in you prospering. God is not magnified when you are broke, busted or disgusted."... Joyce Meyer tells her audience, "If you stay in your faith, you are going to get paid. I am now living in my reward."... Listen to Hagin's claim: "I believe that it is the plan of God our Father that no believer should ever be sick... It is not—I state boldly—it is not the will of God my Father that we should suffer with cancer and other dread diseases which bring pain and anguish. No! It is God's will that we be healed." While Hagin's claim may be true from an eternal perspective, he fails to incorporate the temporal effects of the fall of humankind into his theology.¹⁵

Prosperity teachers base their confidence in such bold assertions of healing, because they believe God provided full physical healing for the here and now in the death of Jesus on the cross. Verses such as Isaiah 53:5 (*"by his stripes we are healed"*) and 1 Peter 2:24 (*"He himself bore our sins on his body on the tree... by his wounds you have been healed."*) Of course, the true message in both those passages is that believers are healed of their sin by Jesus' death on the cross. That does not stop them from asserting, however, that God wills for all believers/followers to be healed here and now.

Finally, the **fifth pillar** of both New Thought and prosperity teaching is an unorthodox view of salvation. Some prosperity teachers such as Joyce Meyer, Creflo Dollar and Joel Osteen have made statements that sound orthodox about the need to trust in Christ for salvation. However, upon further examination, several problems arise.

First, some prosperity teachers have a skewed view of the Christ in whom they encourage people to trust. Kenneth Copeland, for example, teaches Jesus emptied Himself of His divinity while on earth. According to Copeland, Jesus ceased to be God during His Incarnation.

Second, prosperity teachers misunderstand the death of Jesus on the cross for the sins of the world. Kenneth Hagin limits the Atonement to Christ's spiritual death, not His physical death. Frederick Price teaches the physical death of Jesus on the cross did not save us. Rather, we are saved because Jesus went into Hell for us.

Third, although some prosperity teachers appear to teach an orthodox view of salvation, an important question to ask is, "From what does Jesus save people?" The biblical answer is sin and death; but for prosperity advocates, one might conclude we are saved from a non-prosperous life. While many prosperity teachers do offer the plan of salvation, they undermine it with the rest of their teaching.

Errors of the "Prosperity Gospel"

All believers are theologians, because we all have beliefs about God, moral issues, the church and many other subjects. There are good theologians, and there are bad theologians:

Good theologians believe what accords with Scripture and compare all teachings with the Word of God. Bad theologians, however, use Scripture to justify their preconceived ideas instead of allowing the text to inform their beliefs—a practice often referred to as proof-texting. ... It is the contention of this book that despite the good intentions of some of its proponents—especially among the soft advocates—the prosperity gospel is constructed upon faulty theology.¹⁶

It is not the authors' intention to examine and elucidate every error of all doctrines associated with prosperity teaching. However, there are several fundamental doctrines which are examined in order to illustrate the nature and extent of the theological errors within the prosperity movement. Jones and Woodbridge focus on errors relating to the Gospel, faith, the Atonement, the Abrahamic Covenant, the mind, prayer, the Bible and giving.

The authors first sketch the biblical Doctrine of the Gospel. The biblical Gospel asserts God is holy and perfectly righteous. Every person has sinned against a holy God and cannot meet God's standard of moral perfection. No one is good enough to merit God's grace, and we all stand condemned to Hell for our sin. The triune God sent Jesus to earth to accomplish redemption. Jesus is both fully God and fully man. He lived a perfect, sinless life of obedience to His Father. He lived the life we could not. He then willingly gave His life on the cross as an offering for our sin. He became sin for us, and fully satisfied the wrath of God against sin. Jesus is our substitute, and through His death on the cross He took the punishment for our sin. By the substitutionary Atonement of Christ on the cross, God has made peace with sinful humanity. The debt of sin has been canceled, and sins are not counted against those who believe. God raised Jesus from the dead for our justification. Through the Resurrection, God demonstrated He approved Jesus' sacrifice and, thereby, ensured salvation for all who believe. A person becomes righteous before God by repenting of sin and turning in faith to Jesus and His completed work of redemption on the cross. Salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone. The life, death, burial and resurrection of Jesus are the central tenets of the Gospel. Anything else is a false Gospel.

The "prosperity gospel," however, marginalizes several key components of the biblical Gospel: Jesus, the cross, God's judgment and the sinful state of the human race. But, if any of those elements are left out, there is no Gospel. In a telling paragraph describing Joel Osteen's appearance on *60 Minutes*, we are told this:

Byron Pitts summarized what he perceived to be the emphases within Osteen's message. Pitts commented, 'God is a living, forgiving God who will reward believers with health, wealth and happiness. It's the centerpiece of every sermon... To become a better you, you must be positive towards yourself, develop better relationships, embrace the place where you are. Not one mention of God in that. Not one mention of Jesus Christ in that.' Osteen replied, 'That's just my message.' This is a remarkable statement for an evangelical pastor in light

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of the apostle Paul’s call to preach Jesus Christ as Lord and Him crucified.¹⁷

Also, the “prosperity gospel” turns the Gospel of Christ into a human-focused religion. The followers of the “prosperity gospel” dictate the terms of their lives to God as they seek after health, wealth and success as they desire. The “prosperity gospel” does not point lost people to the risen Savior. Instead, it points them toward the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh and the pride of life (1John2:16, cf. Gen.3:5-6).

What about the Doctrine of Faith? The biblical Doctrine of Faith asserts it is trust in the person of Jesus Christ, the truth of His teaching and His redemptive work He accomplished at Calvary. The “prosperity gospel” teaches faith is something quite different; faith is an active **“force”** or **“energy:”**

In his book *The Laws of Prosperity*, Kenneth Copeland writes that “faith is a spiritual force, a spiritual energy, a spiritual power. It is this force of faith which makes the laws of the spirit world function... There are certain laws governing prosperity revealed in God’s Word. Faith causes them to function.” This is obviously a faulty, if not heretical, understanding of faith. Later in the same book, Copeland claims, “If you make up your mind... that you are willing to live in divine prosperity and abundance... divine prosperity will come to pass in your life. You have exercised your faith.” According to prosperity theology, faith is not a theocentric act of the will, stemming from God; rather, it is an anthropocentric spiritual force, directed at God.¹⁸

Regarding the Doctrine of the Atonement, the “prosperity gospel” predictably focuses on physical healing and financial prosperity, claiming they have been provided for in the Atonement. Several key Scripture passages are misinterpreted by prosperity teachers: 2 Corinthians 8:9; Isaiah 53:5 and 1 Peter 2:24.

2 Corinthians 8:9 says this:

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich. (ESV)

Isaiah 53:5 says:

But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. (ESV)

And 1 Peter 2:24:

He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. (ESV)

Based on passages like these, prosperity teachers assert physical healing and financial prosperity are included now in the Atonement. However, is that what these verses teach? Hardly. The focus and context clearly indicate spiritual healing from sin is in view here. While it is true that there will not be any sickness in heaven or on the new earth, these verses are not promising immediate physical healing and prosperity now. It is shameful, too, that “prosperity gospel” teachers, in my view, denigrate the majesty of the humble servant Christ in these verses, and ignore His call to **“deny himself and take up his cross and follow me”** (Matt.16:14, ESV).

Prosperity teachers also misinterpret the Abrahamic

covenant, which is found in Genesis 12:3:

I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed. (ESV)

Prosperity teachers claim that since Christians are Abraham’s “spiritual” children, they are heirs to the physical, material blessings of faith. Just as God blessed Abraham and made him materially prosperous, so too the “spiritual” children of Abraham can claim this verse as a promise of temporal material blessing. In fact, Creflo Dollar claims God is *obligated* to bless Christians with material wealth on the basis of this covenant. But, is that what this verse is teaching? No. God assures Abraham He will bless Him and protect him; and one day, all the families of the earth will be blessed when the Messiah comes through Abraham’s family line. It is a promise of *spiritual* blessing (salvation) for all who believe in Christ—the descendant of Abraham, who **“believed the LORD, and He counted it to him as righteousness”** (Gen.15:6, ESV).

Regarding the place of the mind in prosperity teaching, believers/followers are encouraged to make positive verbal and mental confessions of what they desire. The faithful then should focus their minds on such things as increased finances, better health, success in the workplace and healthy relationships. While there is nothing inherently wrong with these things, the “prosperity gospel” asserts it is the function of the mind to concentrate upon these things and, therefore, bring them into reality. By contrast, the biblical teachings regarding the mind is that believers are to cultivate **“the mind of Christ”** (1Cor.2:16, cf. Phil.2:5), and dwell on those things that are true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, commendable and worthy of praise (Phil.4:8). We are to be transformed into the image of Christ by the renewing of our minds.

Regarding prayer, prosperity teachers often note that, **“we have not because we ask not”** (James 4:2). They say believers/followers ought to pray for personal success in all areas of life. Thus, prayer becomes a tool in the hand of the believer/follower in order to obtain *personal* desires. They also stress one must pray in faith in order that one may receive everything one wants. The biblical teaching on prayer, however, recognizes prayer is a means of fellowship with God and is an act of worship. Prayer is talking to God and asking that God’s will be done, not our own. And while we, indeed, are commanded to pray boldly and confidently in faith (Matt.7:7-11), that does not override the sovereign, wise will of God.

The hermeneutics* of the prosperity movement are, to put it bluntly, a disaster and a disgrace. Bible verses are quoted with no regard for such things as context, historical setting, grammatical considerations and the entirety of biblical teaching. Verses are consistently ripped out of context and interpreted subjectively in order to make the passage say whatever the teacher wants it to say.

Finally, prosperity teaching also distorts the biblical concept of giving. Prosperity teachers say one must **“sow a seed of faith”** (give money), and then they will be rewarded financially for their gift. The more one gives, the more God allegedly will bless and give back. It is couched in terms of guarantees and certainty. The biblical teaching regarding giving, however, is that believers are to be good stewards of their resources. Part of good stewardship is regular, generous, sacrificial, cheerful giving in order to support the work of the church, help meet the needs

of others and bring honor to God. And, while I can personally testify to the fact God has been faithful and generous with me as I have trusted Him with my finances and given faithfully, this is not an absolute, ironclad guarantee God will always give back to me many, many times over what I give. A believer is to give with a cheerful heart (2Cor.9:7), not because one is expecting more and more back in return.

Having critiqued the foundations, teachings and errors of the “prosperity gospel”, Jones and Woodbridge now turn their attention to presenting brief portraits of the biblical teaching on suffering, wealth and poverty, and giving.

The Biblical Teaching on Suffering

Prosperity teaching speaks in positive terms focusing on the temporal, material blessings, health and good relationships. There is a deliberate avoidance of personal suffering. *Pain and suffering* are *common* among biblical characters, however. Abraham spent his later years as a nomad in a foreign land, and he experienced marital and political *strife* (see Genesis 11-25). Jacob experienced profound dysfunction in his family, including the rape of his daughter, and health problems that included diminished eyesight and a crippled leg (see Genesis 25-35). Joseph was treated unjustly by his brothers and spent years in prison for a crime he never committed (see Genesis 37-50). Job lost nearly everything he held dear including his children, his possessions and his health (see book of Job). David endured ridicule from his family, persecution from his enemies, public humiliation and the loss of children (see 1 and 2Samuel).

There are numerous examples of suffering believers in the New Testament as well. Jesus was “*a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief*” (Isaiah 53:3, ESV). The Apostles were all persecuted and martyred, with the exception of John. The Apostle Paul endured great hardship and heartache for the sake of the Gospel (2Cor.11). The “Faith Hall of Fame” in Hebrews chapter 11 lists many people of faith who *suffered greatly*, and they were commended for their faith.

Believers are not called to always try to escape or avoid suffering. Rather, they are called to embrace it, and recognize it as an instrument in the hand of God to sanctify and accomplish glorious eternal purposes (2Cor.4:16-18). While the work of redemption has been done, we still live in a fallen world which is subject to pain and suffering. We experience natural evil such as weather disasters, diseases, genetic defects, accidents, injuries and death. We also suffer from moral evil as a result of sinful choices—both ours and those of other people. Because of the curse on the created order, our sinful choices, and the sinful choices of others, suffering and pain are a reality in the world. Christians are not exempt from all of it. We have overcome the world in Christ, but we have not yet escaped this world and its sorrows. That is a blessed future event (Rev. 21:4).

The Biblical Teaching On Wealth and Poverty

As the authors ably state, the best defense against the teachings of the “prosperity gospel” is a holistic understanding of scriptural teaching on wealth and poverty. Beginning in Genesis, we see God created people with material needs as well as the ability and the desire to work to meet those needs. The biblical Gospel encourages people to work in order to meet their needs

(2Thess.3:10), while the “prosperity gospel” encourages people to try to conjure up mystical, magical forces of faith to provide for themselves. After The Fall of human beings into sin, there were drastic consequences, including a curse on the earth. The *work* of man now would be *toil*. The woman would no longer be a willing helper to her husband—the work for which she was created. The Lord also subjected Creation to futility in hope—hope the curse would drive people back to the God from Whom they had fled (Rom.8:20). Not surprisingly, it is the poor—those who most feel the material effects of The Fall—who come to Christ in the greatest numbers.

The biblical Gospel focuses on meeting the material needs of others, especially the poor; whereas the “prosperity gospel” focuses on meeting one’s own needs and accumulating more and more. The biblical gospel warns about the dangers of accumulated wealth, while the “prosperity gospel” is consumed with the accumulation of wealth. When Jesus taught on wealth and poverty, He focused on the spiritual impact of wealth or poverty upon the individual (Matt.6:33, 1Tim. 6:17-19).

Finally, there is no direct connection between material wealth/poverty and spiritual wealth/poverty:

Given that neither wealth nor poverty is explicitly commended or condemned in Scripture, it is better to conclude that while there can be a tie between material wealth/poverty and spiritual wealth/poverty, any such connection is *nonrequisite*. Rather than claiming—as proponents of the prosperity gospel do—that material wealth is a barometer of spiritual wealth, it is better simply to recognize that on account of the moral traits that accompany spiritual wealth (industry, honesty, diligence, etc.), material wealth often follows. Yet, this is not a quid pro quo transaction. It may be that a spiritually wealthy person is in a low paying job, gets laid off, is cheated, becomes ill, or simply chooses to divest him- or herself of wealth in order to meet the needs of the poor, as did Christ.¹⁹

The Biblical Teaching on Giving

In addressing the subject of the biblical teaching on giving, Jones and Woodbridge tackle the matter by asking and answering three questions: Why should Christians give? How much should Christians give? To whom should Christians give?

Why should Christians give? The believer is called to be a faithful steward. We are to faithfully manage that which has been entrusted to us. One aspect of faithful stewardship is giving, and the Bible provides several motivations for giving. First, giving is an act of obedience to God. He has commanded us to give to support the work of ministry and to assist those in need. A second motivation for giving is love for God and love for others. Believers are to be motivated by love for others. How can we say we love if we are unwilling to help meet the material needs of others? A third motivation for giving is to bring glory to God. When believers give generously to help others, God is praised. A fourth motivation for giving is the Gospel itself. Christians ought to use their possessions to show the world that God and His kingdom are more important than the things of this world. A fifth motivation for giving is reward. Every believer will face the Judgment Seat of Christ to be rewarded for the things done while in the body (2Cor.5:10). While the exact nature of these rewards is not known, God clearly exhorts believers to seek

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eternal reward, rather than the rewards of this world and this life.

How much should Christians give? Christians debate about whether or not the tithe is still in effect for Christians today, but regardless, the Bible is clear Christians are to be generous givers. Based on the teaching found in 1 Corinthians 16:1-2 and 2 Corinthians, chapters 8 & 9, Jones and Woodbridge suggest five principles for giving. First, giving is to be periodic. Second, giving is to be personal. Third, giving is to be planned. Fourth, giving is to be proportionate. Fifth, giving is to be plentiful. A person's heart which is dedicated to Christ cannot help but be generous toward God and people, and they often will give more than 10 percent.

To whom should Christians give? There are numerous worthy organizations, causes and individuals. How does one sort through the possibilities and give in a biblically responsible manner? The New Testament reveals three categories for giving: the local church, Christian organizations and individual people in need. It is important to give to ministries that exalt Christ. It is wise for Christians to exercise due diligence in selecting organizations for giving. The information from groups such as the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability and Wall Watchers can help an individual to give wisely and responsibly.

Conclusion

Health, Wealth and Happiness clearly sets forth the differences between the biblical Gospel and the "prosperity gospel". Jones and Woodbridge have done a masterful job of succinctly and convincingly setting forth the case for biblical doctrine while definitely demonstrating the "prosperity gospel" is a *false gospel*. The authors are aware, however, that many sincere Christians have been *deceived* by the slick presentation and polished message of the prosperity preachers. The Christian *veneer* often given to this false gospel has led many genuine believers to buy into it. The "prosperity gospel" may be subtly influencing your church, your friends or even you. How can you tell if you might have succumbed in part to this false gospel?

Jones and Woodbridge suggest good questions can help us to discern what we believe. They present five questions/answers that explore the foundational ideas upon which the "prosperity gospel" rests. By interacting with these questions, the reader can gauge if there has been any influence or openness to prosperity thinking in his or her own mind. They can also help to answer whether or not a friend or family member has unwittingly succumbed to this false teaching.

First, *Why does God exist, and what does He control in the world?* The Bible teaches God is eternal and worthy of glory, worship and praise. He is sovereign over His creation and exercises complete control over everything. Human beings exist in order to worship and serve God. The Lord does whatever He pleases to accomplish His purposes. He directs our steps and works all things for good (Rom.8:28). When we start to think God exists for our desires and purposes, we usurp His place. *Self* is the focal point of prosperity thinking rather than *God*.


Second, *What is the purpose of suffering and how do I react when I suffer?* Do you blame God? Do you think you deserve better? The Bible teaches suffering is designed to make one more like Christ (1Pet.1:6-7), but the "prosperity gospel" seeks to avoid or minimize pain.

Third, ask yourself, *What do I deserve in life?* The "prosperity gospel" asserts you deserve a good life full of riches, health and everything *you* desire. The Bible teaches, however, that we are to be content regardless of our circumstances (Phil.4:12-13). We have been given eternal life and every good thing by God's grace and mercy alone.

Fourth, *Why did God save me?* Did God save you because He desperately needs you on the team? Did He save you so you could be rich and famous? No, God saved you on account of His mercy and love. He saved you so you would glorify Him forever. We were rescued to glorify God and do the good works which He has prepared beforehand that we should walk in them (Eph.2:10). **"This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent,"** (John 6:29, ESV)

A final question is: *Why do I give to God?* Do you give out of obedience and to meet the needs of others? Do you give generously and sacrificially, expecting nothing in return? Or, do you see God as your ticket to great riches? Do you give in order to get something back from God?

Jones and Woodbridge conclude the book by offering some helpful suggestions on how to minister to someone who may be caught up in prosperity thinking. There is also a section which details some possible objections and answers when discussing the "prosperity gospel" with others.

In conclusion, if you are looking for an excellent resource to get a good understanding of the general teachings of the "prosperity gospel", I can highly recommend *Health, Wealth and Happiness*. This respectful, well-reasoned, carefully researched and thoroughly biblical response to the "vast spiritual wasteland" that is the "prosperity gospel" is a perfect antidote. 

*Hermeneutics is the art and science of biblical interpretation.

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ahead and bow. Christians must have the fortitude to refuse to bow even when the false god seemingly has attributes of Jesus. Not knowing the differences will be the fatal error of those who fall for the Anti-Christ as he will fit the bill in many ways but falls woefully short when compared to the biblical Jesus.

God is Not the God of All Religions

The relentless urging toward global unification of all religions in the spiritual realm is very persuasive, because it is beginning to have the power of consensus. Majority opinion currently persuades modern thought. All religions are coming together under the false pantheistic conviction that everything is the same, and there are no differences.

The Bible is clear, we are to **"love your enemies"** (Matt. 5:44). Love is the greatest attribute and commandment given to man (Matt. 22:35-41). Love is the main thing that draws people to the truth of Christianity. But, there is a difference between "love" that agrees with the false teachings of the enemy and **"love"** that confronts the false teachings of the enemy with truth for the sake of salvation as taught throughout Scripture.

In all the global efforts to converge the world's religions, we must not forget the Bible's warning that **"friendship of the world is enmity with God."** (James 4:4) Attracting the world to Christianity by loving others does *not* include bowing to their gods, obeying **"their terms,"** or abdicating Christianity's main tenet of exclusivity. If that is abandoned, any following efforts to better mankind will be in vain, because the love given to men will not result in true salvation.

As society and the Emergent church push the false notion that **"all religions teach the same thing"** and **"God is the God of all religions,"** we must remember truth is exclusive. **"Narrow is the way"** to life and **"few there be that find it."** (Matt. 7:14) A loving God has graciously provided humanity access to Him, but it is *only* through His Son—Jesus Christ (John 14:6). 

All Scripture quotations are from the King James Bible.

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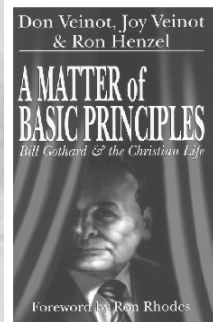
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