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

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INTERCEPTING DECEPTION

By L.L. (Don) Veinot, Jr. and Joy A. Veinot

Being a missionary to people in cults and other religious groups is not unlike being a missionary to people in other countries or cultures. We have to understand those to whom we are ministering and be able to communicate with them. In our case, it is more about understanding worldview than cultural practices, since most to whom we minister are Americans or westerners with whom we share a cultural connection to a great extent. Worldview is the perspective people have about the world around them—what people believe, and why they believe it. Christians have, or are supposed to have, anyway, a Christian worldview. We see the world through the lens of our faith and the teachings of the Bible. Non-Christians judge what is happening in our world through the lens of:

- Another religion—such as Judaism, Islam, Hinduism or other
- Secular Humanism/Atheism
- New Age Paganism
- Hedonism—don't think much about life and death—motivated by pleasure

This is why it can be so difficult for our non-Christian neighbors, work friends, etc., to truly understand the Gospel and sound biblical teaching. We may as well be talking about our belief in little green men. It's even worse than that, however, because extra-terrestrials (ETs) are fairly popular today, not too weird, and can, in any case, easily be dismissed with an internal eye-roll and a "See ya later, man." Christianity can be more threatening by far, because of Christianity's "arrogant" (in modern thinking) insistence that Jesus is the only true path to God, and that they are lost and will be forever lost if they neglect to accept God's forgiveness through the sacrifice of Jesus. That "absolute truth" issue is a hard pill for the bottom three bullet-point worldviews to swallow. Lost? Forgiveness? Sacrifice? What? People would far rather assemble their beliefs to suit their whims, to see and to present themselves in a good light, rather than to be told God has firmly established what is true

and what is false, what is right and wrong; and what's more, He takes it very seriously. ... That is just not cool, man ... not cool at all.

Moreover, Christians, likewise, can have a very hard time understanding why others believe what they believe. Why do "they"—some non-Christian or cult group over there—believe that weird stuff

they do? Christians (those with a biblical worldview, anyway) wonder how people can believe you can be whichever sex you "feel" like right this minute despite chromosomal evidence to the contrary? Why on earth do we need 77 different genders, anyway? Why do people believe little green (really grey) men are visiting our planet to enlighten us to the fact Jesus is really just an ET—certainly not almighty God; and Christianity is false? They traveled all the way across the Universe to share ideas we can learn from any earthbound New Age Guru? Couldn't they just send us an email? Or couldn't "ET Jesus" have simply given us their precious message when He walked the earth? Why, instead, did He lie to us—telling us He was God? Why did the Heaven's Gate adherents believe there was a spaceship hidden behind the 1977 Hale-Bop Comet; and why were they willing to

kill themselves to join their ET brothers aboard the ship? Why would anyone believe any group that has falsely predicted Armageddon sooooo many times in its history—such as the Watchtower Bible & Track Society (WTBTS) of Jehovah's Witnesses (JWs) have done—knows anything about the future? Why would anyone follow a religion that believes it's God's (Allah's) "will" to burn children alive or take women and children as sex slaves? And so on ...

Another question we are often asked is, "How do churches and individuals within churches get so far off the beam doctrinally?" People who were raised in the church become Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, embrace Word-Faith teaching, become uncertain about whether abortion or homosexual behavior is sin, or come to believe truth is

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relative. How does that happen? It's all about deception; and it has been with us for a very long time.

Some people believe that Christianity in its early days was a pristine faith, in which everyone was united with full clarity of doctrine and conviction. The truth is nearly all of the New Testament was written to correct bad behavior, false teaching, and expose false teachers (cf. 1 Peter 1:1-3). False teachers may found within the church. They are those who seek to lead the church in a new ... and false ... direction. They also may be one of those who come to your door carrying a Bible and looking like Christians. They may write books containing new revelations, etc. They might be stars on Christian television. They are wolves in sheep's clothing (cf. Acts. 20:29-30).

Deception: An Age Old Problem

We see the art of deception in the very first book of the Bible, Genesis. It was simple really. All the serpent had to do was cast doubt that they could understand what God said:

Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?" (Genesis 3:1, NIV)

The serpent worded his question in such a way as to imply God was withholding fruit from all of the trees in the garden. We can detect Eve was beginning to get caught up in the serpent's lie by the fact she subtly adds to God's words herself:

... but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.' (Genesis 3:3, NIV, Underline for emphasis)

God did not say man was forbidden to touch the fruit, but only that they were not to eat it (Genesis 2:16-17).

With that, the game was on. We can almost hear the contempt, the resentment, the hatred for God in the hiss of the serpent, "Nah, you won't die. God is selfishly withholding a good thing from you! He is not to be trusted. Go ahead, try it, you'll like it!"

The Old and New Testaments record a myriad of false teachers, false prophets, and deceivers of all types. God continually calls His people to ferret them out, expose them, and warn others about them. Even during the first century in his second epistle, Peter warns against listening to people offering up private prophetic interpretations of Scripture. The Book of 2 Peter was probably written between 65-68 ad, since Peter died in 68ad. In the first chapter of this epistle, he sets up pretty much everything that would follow in 1:19-21(NIV):

We also have the prophetic message as something completely reliable, and you will do well to pay attention to it as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things. For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

These words of Peter to this audience would have brought O.T. passages like Jeremiah 23:25-40 to mind:

I have heard what the prophets say who prophesy lies in my name. They say, "I had a dream! I had a dream!" (NIV)

How many times do we hear about the supposed dreams and visions of televangelists and/or popular teachers? Trips to Heaven, trips to Hell, ... visions about the outcome of the recent 2016 Presidential Election. Or they warn people, or comfort people, or scare people, or just plain confuse people—with prophetic pronouncements not found anywhere in the Word of God. Oh, how very important they are, though!

How many cults have been started by someone who had an alleged dream or vision, or a visit from an "angel," wherein he "discovered" God wanted him to break away from "apostate Christendom" and restore "true Christianity" to the earth? Almost all cults get their start in this way! Jeremiah continues in verse 26, and 30-31:

"How long will this continue in the hearts of these lying prophets, who prophesy the delusions of their own minds?"

"Therefore," declares the LORD, "I am against the prophets who steal from one another words supposedly from me. Yes," declares the LORD, "I am against the prophets who wag their own tongues and yet declare, 'The LORD declares.'" (NIV)

The LORD's angry denunciation of the false prophets and dreamers continues until the end of Jeremiah chapter 23.

Let's return to 2 Peter, chapter 1. Peter's admonition teaches us that interpretation of prophecy should never be based on a novel idea that an individual is promoting, or based upon an alleged dream, vision, or supposed word from the LORD, which actually springs from the prophet's own imagination. And, prophecy always has to jibe with God's Word already revealed in Scripture. Prophetic passages of the Bible may sometimes be difficult to sort out, because most Bible prophecy is understood effectually only as the time nears for its fulfillment. False prophets manufacture new teachings out of thin air, yet Peter states, **"no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man"** but came from God to men who were empowered by the Holy Spirit. Peter compares the false prophets of his day to false teachers of the past with the first verse of chapter 2:

But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction. (2 Peter 2:1, ESV)

There WILL be false teachers in the church, Peter warned. There ARE false teachers in the church today. Yet, it seems very few people are ferreting them out by using discernment. Peter then cautions that:

- Many will follow their sensuality (v.2).
- Because of them, the way of truth will be blasphemed (v.2).
- In their greed, these teachers will exploit you with false words. (v.3).

Peter is describing a faith that is driven by what feels good—what appeals to the senses—not the mind or the spirit. Sadly, **"...many will follow their sensuality."** It is a faith that is based on feelings and experiences, and not faith based on the truth of Word of God. Peter identifies the motive of the false teachers as being **"greed."** He could have just as well have been writing about false prophets and false teachers of our day. Word-Faith teachers, for one glaring example, are very popular, because they are telling their followers that Jesus died to make them physically healthy and financially wealthy. They appeal to a human's inherent selfishness. Nobody wants to suffer with ill health or life's difficulties. Word-Faith teachers assure their followers they needn't suffer life's maladies. And, when REALITY asserts itself, as it eventually will, and their followers do suffer physical illnesses and financial setbacks, etc., as we all do, these teachers tell their followers it is their own fault. Perhaps, according to these false teachers, their faith is lacking, or they are "claiming" their illness, persecution or financial difficulties. If the suffering subject simply would claim their healing, claim their victory, and claim their financial prosperity; then God is absolutely obligated—like a magic genie from a bottle—to give them their wish. The inevitable suffering that comes to all human beings can be absolutely devastating; and they walk away believing Christianity doesn't "work;" when that in which they have been involved has nothing to do with true Christianity at all. We are not saying that anyone who follows such teaching is not a Christian, because true Christians can be deceived; and they can get tangled up in false teaching.

Most unbelievers don't go to church, surprisingly. ☺ However, they often do come across what they think is Christianity on TV, while they are surfing through the channels looking for something else. To be clear, there are some very good programs on Christian television stations, but much of what is out there is a type of quackery. Therefore, as Peter said, **"because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed."** Even unbelievers, who are woefully ignorant of Scripture, can recognize something is seriously wrong with such carrying on. They may not believe in God, but they do surmise that if one existed, supposed Christians shouldn't be throwing Him recklessly around the stage or demanding that He fulfill their every desire. Some non-believers regularly watch these charlatans simply to ridicule Christians and God Himself. Unfortunately, Word Faith and other false teachers amass huge followings who send in vast amounts of money, believing, as many of these teachers promise, that whatever money they send in will be returned to them many times over. As a result, greedy false teachers and false prophets often become very wealthy, while those they exploit as often become very poor and are getting poorer.

How are the Sheep Fleeced?

I think Peter gives us some real insight into a way false teachers and false prophets are able to deceive and manipulate, when he writes:

... just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant

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**HAVE NOTHING
TO DO WITH
THE FRUITLESS
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DARKNESS,
BUT RATHER
EXPOSE THEM.**

~EPHESIANS 5:11~

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and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures. (2 Peter 3:15-16, ESV)

Deceivers tend to work in three areas:

- Difficult doctrines
- Questionable definitions
- Obscure texts

As we saw in Genesis, God’s Word doesn’t have to be difficult, with unclear definitions, or be very obscure to be *presented by a deceiver* as being difficult (is God denying you access to all of the fruit trees?), unclear (did God actually say?) or obscure. As Paul articulated doctrine, others who were ***“ignorant and unstable”*** (2 Peter 3:16) gave those doctrines unusual spins to the harm of themselves and those who followed them.

Difficult Doctrines

Cults, false teachers, other religions, and even Atheists tend to trip up the faith of believers with “how-and-why” questions. How can Jesus be fully God and fully man? If Jesus is God, to whom was He praying in the Garden of Gethsemane? How can God exist as a Trinity? The Trinity Doctrine is a very popular doctrine misunderstood and misused by all sorts of cults to confuse people and to recruit them. It is a doctrine which many view as difficult to get a handle on. Another doctrine often twisted concerns the Deity of Christ. They confuse people regarding the Incarnation, the doctrine that teaches Jesus is fully God and fully human at the same time—beginning with the Incarnation and continuing on for Eternity future. This is very often the area cults exploit, opting to reject that Jesus has both natures; and they go off in one direction or the other.

The Watchtower Bible & Tract Society teach Jehovah’s Witnesses to reject His Deity; and instead, they teach Jesus was originally created as an angel—Michael the Archangel. At the Incarnation, according to them, Michael ceased to exist, and the human Jesus was created in Mary’s womb to replace Michael, and Michael’s ***“memories”*** were implanted into the newly created being. Jesus, in their teaching, was fully human and only human. They claim when Jesus died, He wasn’t resurrected at all, but rather He ceased to exist for all time! Instead of raising the human Jesus from the dead, Jehovah—the god of the Watchtower—recreated Michael the Archangel, and implanted the ***“memories”*** of the human Jesus into Michael.¹ Jehovah could do this, because he had kept a record of Jesus’ ***“memories”*** while he lived; so Jehovah just made a copy of those ***“memories”*** from his brain and stuck the copy into the “New Michael” along with the copy of the original Michael’s ***“memories.”*** Each part of the Michael/Jesus/Michael “Frankenstein” entity has zero connection to the other two. Since the JWs do not understand or do not want to understand the Incarnation, they conclude it is untrue, and thus, substitute a supposedly “simpler-to-understand” clone theory in its place.

The Mormons of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) solve the “Jesus problem” a different way. “Yes, Jesus is God,” they say, “and like him, we can rise to godhood as well.” They teach the Trinity is three separate “gods,” who have physical bodies and live on a planet—like all other gods before them. God the Father of the Mormons has many Mormon wives who he keeps eternally pregnant. And, like Jesus, all of us were born (as spirit babies) on that planet to god the father and one of

his Mormon wives. Jesus is our older brother and in order to get a physical body and begin advancing to his godhood, ***“Heavenly Father”*** came to earth and had physical sexual relations with his daughter Mary (incest here?), who conceived a physical body which her ***“spirit brother”*** Jesus then inhabited. Uh huh ... In the same fashion, we who were born on *our* ***“Heavenly Father’s”*** planet as ***“spirit babies”*** will at some point be sent to earth to take on physical bodies in the wombs of human women. Now, of course, the human women were also onetime ***“Heavenly Father’s”*** ***“spirit babies”*** on this other planet— our spirit siblings, so to speak. Okaaaaay ...

It is striking that, way more often than not, the explanations deceivers manufacture to explain the difficult biblical doctrines are far more bizarre, convoluted, and complicated than the biblical teaching they are trying to replace.

Questionable Definitions

People don’t always recognize the importance of definitions, and so they are sometimes fooled by false teachers who use the same words that Christians use when discussing Christian doctrine, but whose definitions of those words are vastly different from ours. By using this ploy, false teachers can often avoid detection during a cursory inspection and are accepted into the churches and allowed to spread falsehood and cause division.

One such false teacher is Weigh Down Workshop’s diet guru Gwen Shamblin, who waltzed right into Christian churches and waltzed off with some of the flock. She created her own cult—Remnant Fellowship, and teaches the stolen sheep that the Trinity is false; salvation is gained through works, yada, yada, yada. She didn’t sneak in, she was allowed in. Why? She looked like a Christian and used (or misused) Christian lingo, and in that fashion, she got past the radar.

We have written extensively about the teachings of Bill Gothard, who was very popular within fundamentalist and evangelical Christian circles for over three decades. Gothard defined “grace” as:

God giving you the power and ability to do His will joyfully.

Now, God may, indeed, give you the power and ability to do His will joyfully, but that is far from the biblical definition of grace. The shorthand definition of grace is unmerited favor. The slightly longer definition is a kindly attitude toward the undeserving. In terms of our relationship with God, it is His kindly attitude toward us—the undeserving. God does NOT save the deserving; He saves the UNdeserving by His grace! Accepting God’s free gift of salvation through faith by the GRACE of God, and through no merit of our own, is the only way to be saved. We are removed from a state of enmity against God, and placed in His family—adopted as sons and daughters—purely by His kindness, His grace. Bill Gothard’s idea of grace falls woefully short of our need. We cannot make ourselves good enough to merit God’s favor. Gothard’s completely inadequate representation of “grace” sends his followers down a hopeless path of works, laying upon their backs a heavy load—an ever-expanding set of rules, steps and principles—in an effort to somehow please God.

Jehovah’s Witnesses come to the door and talk about ***“resurrection;”*** but as we pointed out, they define it *very differently* from what we find in Scripture. Biblically, the word *resurrection* is a *standing up again*, and Paul spends a fair amount of time in 1 Corinthians 15 explaining what it entails.

YOU fell down in death; YOU will be raised to eternal life. The body that is “*sown*” is the one that will be raised. The JW’s idea of resurrection is essentially the promise of being Xeroxed. The original is destroyed forever and replaced with a copy. Yet people who hear JWs use the word *resurrection* can easily be fooled into thinking that JWs are Christians, because they do not understand until much later (if ever) that there is no true, physical resurrection in JW doctrine. Think about it: YOU cease to exist; why would YOU care about the copy who takes YOUR place or what he or she may remember about YOUR life? There is ZERO hope for YOU at all!

Obscure Texts

There are obscure texts in Scripture, and cults and false teachers exploit them to create new religions out of whole cloth. For example, there is a bit of mystery surrounding the Bible character Melchizedek. Melchizedek is mentioned 11 times in Scripture, but we are not told where he came from, what his parentage and lineage were, how long he lived or when he died. In that sense, he is just the type of character that certain groups will zoom in on and build bizarre teachings around. For example, there is The Urantia Foundation, a Chicago-based group that provides materials, promotes events, and provides guidance associated with The Urantia Book.² They offer people lots of extra-biblical information about the mysterious Melchizedek, which, unfortunately, leads people away from biblical Christianity. So, yes, people can look to esoteric sources like The Urantia Book or many other such foundations to find answers about obscure passages in Scripture, but the answers they receive will be false and will twist and misrepresent the truths of the Bible.

Mormons practice “**baptism for the dead.**” They misconstrue this from 1 Corinthians 15:29 in the KJV:

Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? Why are they then baptized for the dead?

This practice is only mentioned once in Scripture, with no explanation, and the Mormon teachings are more than happy to fill in the blanks. As result, Mormons seek out the dead and take it upon themselves to baptize these dead individuals into the Mormon faith—by proxy. Except the Bible clearly says “... *it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment*” (Hebrews 9:27, ESV). The dead had their chance to be saved when they lived. It’s too late now. Not to mention, of course, the inconvenient fact that they wouldn’t be saved by the Mormon faith anyway, since there is no salvation in Mormonism. No, the dead cannot be helped by the Mormon baptism; but perhaps, we should look on the bright side—your Baptist great aunt Matilda can’t be hurt by this so-called “baptism” either! ☺ Someone might ask, though, “Who are the ‘*they*’ in the passage who are ‘*baptized for the dead*?’” Christians never are told to baptize for the dead, so we would suggest the ones performing this ritual were not the Corinthian believers, but rather they were some other group. Why would we suggest that? Following the text, watching the words that Paul used, gives us some hints. When Paul is saying something to the believers, he refers to them as “*you*” and “*us*.” When he is referring to non-believers, he uses pronouns like “*them*” or “*they*.” In this passage, he refers to “*they*.”

Recognizing Context

“A text without a context is a pretext.” This is something we learned very early on after becoming Christians. This applies to any literature—a novel, a newspaper, the Constitution and, yes, certainly the Bible.

- A text is whatever it is we are reading.
- Context includes answers to the “who,” “what,” “when,” “where,” “why,” and “how” questions such as: When was the text written? To whom was it written? Who wrote it or whose words were recorded in the document? How would the reader or hearer have understood it at the time? To read something in its historical/grammatical context and understand it means we need to know what type of literature it is. Wisdom literature is different from historical narrative. Poetry is different from fantasy literature.

Today, people have made a very popular catch phrase out of Matthew 7:1, to claim that Jesus instructed believers not to ever make judgements of any kind:

Judge not, that you be not judged.

It is, perhaps, ironic that the people who use this verse to bludgeon Christians are judging Christians as being judgmental! As we look at the context, however, we quickly discover that Jesus is not saying we shouldn’t make judgements, but rather, we are to make judgements righteously. We are to use the same righteous standard (God’s Word) for others as we use for ourselves and be very careful in finding fault with others. But to say that one should be careful to judge with righteous judgment is very different from saying one should not judge at all. In fact, a few verses later (Matthew 7:15), Jesus tells his listeners to:

Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves.

How can we “*beware*” of something we are not allowed to judge? That’s just silly. It requires right judgment to recognize and to avoid a false prophet.

Many cults use a later section of this same chapter in Matthew to try to prove that not all who claim to be Christians are Christians for the purpose of casting aspersions upon your faith:


Not everyone who says to Me, “Lord, Lord,” will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of My Father Who is in heaven. (Matthew 7:21)

Now, we know they don’t doubt themselves or their own group. They are intimating that you are not a true Christian and your church is not Christian. The group they represent are the REAL Christians, you see, as determined, so they think, by their “fruit”—the supposed good works that they do. It is true not all who claim to be Christians are Christians, but Jesus’ point, as shown by the context, is that many who claim to be Christians are, in fact, false prophets. Jesus tells us plainly He is referring to false prophets in Matthew 7:15:

Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. (NASB)

In context, WHOM will we be able to recognize by their fruits? Christians? NO! False Prophets! The fruit of an apple tree is an apple; the fruit of a “false prophet tree” are false prophecies! What do these “*false prophets*” look like? The false prophets will “*come to you in sheep’s clothing.*” They will *look* like Christians! The “*fruit*” (v.16) Jesus talks about are not their Christian-y works, their theocratic haircuts, or the fact they carry Bibles, but rather it is

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New Apostolic Reformation: Final Reformation or False Restoration?

By Keith Gibson

"The full restoration of apostles and prophets back into the Church will then bring divine order, unity, purity and maturity to the corporate Body of Christ ... That will in turn bring about the end of this world system of humanity and Satan's rule. The fulfillment of all these things will release Christ, who has been seated at the right hand of the Father in heaven, to return literally and set up His everlasting kingdom over all the earth." —Bill Hamon¹

"The Last Reformation is a reformation about the true gospel and the simple disciple life, but also a reformation of the church. This is the reason why the movement is called The Last Reformation. The "first" reformation was the reformation with Martin Luther in the 16th century. A reformation of the Catholic church that led to the Protestant church." —Torben Sondergaard²

Currently, one of the fastest growing movements in the church is the New Apostolic Reformation (NAR). It is difficult to calculate fully the number of churches affected; but a significant portion of the church community—especially within Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity in the U.S. and around the world—has been impacted. There are currently hundreds of different people around the world claiming to be Apostles. This movement claims to be the final reformation—the completion of the work begun by Martin Luther. They claim this movement is essential in order for Jesus to return. In fact, leaders in this movement make a number of startling claims. They claim to be the greatest generation of Apostles and prophets that have ever lived, that no church can fulfill its God-given mission in these days without first submitting to them, that they are the best wine that has been saved for last, and so much more. However, does the movement live up to the hype? Is this, in fact, a move of God; or is it a man-centered, man-exalting movement that strikes at the very foundations of the church? Explaining and evaluating this movement will be the purpose of this article.

Reformation or Restoration: Isn't it the same?

In order to evaluate this movement properly, one must begin by understanding what exactly they are asserting. While many within the movement will use the term "reformation," what they really are claiming is a "restoration;" and the difference is significant. The idea of reformation is to bring correction to something that is existing. The Reformers, like Martin Luther, believed they were bringing necessary corrections to the existing church; but they believed the truth still could be found within the church. The "New Apostles" claim to be restoring to the church essential elements that had been lost in the history of Christianity. Much like Mormons, they believe the church went into a time of

grave apostasy when crucial truths were lost to the church. Since the time of the Reformation, God has been restoring these truths to His people. The final elements to be restored are the offices of Apostle and prophet.

Within NAR, the typical expression of the historical timeline of the "restoration" is that God restored justification through Martin Luther; Wesley was the man used to restore sanctification; and A.B. Simpson restored the ministry of healing. Early Pentecostal pioneers were used to restore the gifts of the Spirit. The final restoration is now in process—that of the Apostolic and prophetic offices.

To those unfamiliar with church history and who do not think through the ramifications of such teachings, this presentation can appear persuasive. Pentecostal Pastor Bill Randles, however, points out the fatal flaw when he states the following:

How could the church lose justification? Justification by faith is the whole basis for the church, the church has always had it as well as sanctification, healing and the baptism of the Holy Spirit. There has always been the true church which has been equipped by Jesus Himself, the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls ... The church has always been complete in Christ!³

Note Randles' words carefully, because he is absolutely correct. If there ever was truly a time when the Church lost the concept of justification, then there was a time when the true Church ceased to exist. If this actually happened, then one must conclude Jesus failed in His mission.

With regard to Apostles, however, one must sincerely question whether or not it was the Lord's intention that this office continue in perpetuity. If so, it would appear He failed to communicate this truth to His original Apostles. Once Judas was replaced, no ongoing effort was ever made to replace the original Apostles as they faced martyrdom. The book of Acts records James was put to death with the sword very early in the life of the Church, but the other Apostles did not reconvene in order to replace him (cf. Acts 12:2).

The only doctrinal basis offered for the need for an ongoing ministry of Apostles is found within the "Fivefold Ministry" doctrine, which has permeated many Pentecostal and Charismatic churches. Space will not permit a full treatment of this doctrine, but it is based exclusively on Ephesians 4:11. Apologist Rob Bowman responds well to the fallacy of this teaching:

The sole proof-text used to support this concept is Ephesians 4:11-13, which states that Christ gave "some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers ... until we all attain to the unity of the faith and the full knowledge of the Son of God." The word "until" it is argued, proves that the church today needs apostles

and prophets as much as evangelists, pastors and teachers. However, it is the “building up” of the church (v. 12) which must continue until the church is mature, not all five of the offices listed in verse 11.⁴

Bowman goes on further to note that in the same book in Ephesians 2:20, Paul states that Apostles and prophets form the *foundation* of the Church. Ephesians 3:5 declares the mystery of the Church was revealed to the Apostles. *Foundations* are only *laid once*. When the doctrines of Christ were fully revealed, the need for the offices of Apostle and prophet ceased. Jesus is, indeed, the *final* Word of God (Heb. 1:1) and prophet (John 6:14). In reality, the Apostles of Christ continue to exercise their foundational role in the Church today as we study the Scriptures they delivered to us.

In order to assist myself in remembering the issues associated with the NAR, I developed the acrostic FALSE. Admittedly, this acrostic reveals the conclusion I have reached. I make no apologies for that. After over 12 years of investigation—reading literally thousands of “prophetic” teachings and meeting with those involved—I believe this conclusion is not only justified, but also demanded.

Faulty Foundations

If one presses deeply enough into the movement to get past the superficial issues (which, incidentally, are sufficiently bad in and of themselves to cause concern), one finds the entire movement is built upon very shaky foundations.

Faulty foundation number one is a very poor approach to Scripture. First, despite the claims of the leaders of this movement, the Bible *is not* held in high esteem by the modern apostles and prophets. Consider the words of Wendy Alec (writer, TV producer, filmmaker, and director) in her extremely popular book *Journal of the Unknown Prophet*. Alec claims to be speaking a word she received directly from the mouth of Jesus Himself. According to her, the Lord said,

For the Word alone is yesterday's manna and even they [prophetic teachers] have seen deep in their hearts that it is no longer enough to feed my people.⁵ (Underline for emphasis)

Notice in this “prophecy,” the Scriptures are compared to “yesterday's manna”—the manna that was gathered up and kept by the people in disobedience to the Lord during Israel's time in the wilderness. Those familiar with the story will immediately remember that the manna that was saved “bred worms and stank” (Exodus 16:20). So according to the vision of Wendy Alec, the Scriptures alone are analogous to old, stinking, worm-infested, bread. She further says this Word is no longer sufficient to feed the people of God. It is, indeed, difficult to believe the Word Incarnate would speak so disparagingly of the Word Inspired; but the quote does, I think, reveal the heart of Ms. Alec.

Rick Joyner (co-founder of MorningStar Ministries), at several points in his most popular book *The Final Quest*—which he claims was given to him primarily through visions and open-heaven visitations—indicates his belief that portions of Scripture are inferior to others and may contain errors and opinions. He speaks of four levels of revelation. In discussing the second level, he states the following:

The next level of inspiration is a conscious sense of the presence of the Lord, or the anointing of the Holy Spirit, which gives special illumination to our minds.

This often comes when I am writing, or speaking, and it gives me much greater confidence in the importance or accuracy of what I am saying. I believe that this was probably experienced by the apostles [sic] as they wrote the New Testament epistles. This will give us great confidence, but it is still a level where we can still be influenced by our prejudices, doctrines, etc. (Rick Joyner, *The Final Quest*, 1996, Whitaker House, New Kensington, PA, page 10)

Please note carefully, if Rick Joyner's words are accurate, the inerrancy of the epistles is clearly in jeopardy since the authors were writing at a level where they can be influenced by their own prejudices. Additionally, since Joyner claims he experiences this level “often,” the words he speaks and writes at this level would have equal authority with the New Testament. But most shockingly, since Joyner believes there are two levels above this level, and it is from these two levels (visions and open-heaven visitations) that he received the message of his book, his words would have GREATER authority than the words of Scripture! Do we judge the words of Paul by the words of Joyner and not the reverse? The arrogance of such an idea is staggering.

Additionally, when the Bible is taught in NAR circles, it is handled extremely poorly. I have referred to this elsewhere as the “prophetic hermeneutic.” By that phrase, I mean the Scriptures are interpreted to mean whatever the individual NAR prophet claims they mean at that moment. Context, grammar, historical settings are all irrelevant. Space will not permit an exposition of the abuse of Scripture by NAR teachers, but the examples are legion.

Faulty foundation number two is personal revelation. Today's apostles make much of their own personal revelations. Personal revelation is the basis for their direction in ministry, their interpretation of Scripture, and the doctrines they establish.

Colossians 2:18 seems to address this type of behavior directly when it states, “*Let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism and worship of angels, going on in detail about visions, puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind...*” Indeed, “*going on in detail about* [personal] *visions*” provides the majority of the teachings of these individuals.

Aberrant Doctrines and Practices.

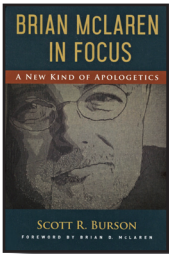
Because NAR leaders play fast and loose with the Scriptures and base doctrines upon the visions of their own imaginations, this movement is plagued by a plethora of unbiblical and extra-biblical doctrines and practices. Indeed, it seems as if new doctrines emerge virtually on a daily basis. In fact, this is one of the most easily detected problems with the movement.

A glaring example of the aberrant doctrine of those in this movement would be the following assertion from Rick Joyner. Concerning the person of Christ, Joyner writes:

There is a tendency to continue relating to Him as ‘the MAN from Galilee.’ Jesus is not a man. He was and is Spirit. He took the form of a servant and became a man for a brief time.”⁶ (Emphasis in the original)

There are so many problems with this quote that it is difficult to know where to begin. In the first place, Joyner seems to be denying the permanent union of Christ to humanity. The Second Person of the Trinity did not come in a rent-a-body in order to redeem us. He took to Himself humanity in a permanent union. He is *forever* the God-Man—fully God and fully man—at the right hand of the Father (cf. Psalm 110:1). Secondly, one

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BOOK REVIEW

By G. Richard Fisher

In his book entitled *McLaren in Focus: A New Kind of Apologetic* (Abilene Christian University Press; August 9, 2016), Scott Burson (Assistant Professor, Philosophical Theology at Indiana Wesleyan University) has tackled the issue of Brian McLaren's teachings. The book is advertised with the claim it is a balanced appraisal answering the question: Is Brian McLaren a villain or a hero?

Burson begins by alleging other apologists have been too negative or too hard on McLaren. Burson asserts he will be committed to a hermeneutic* of charity, not a hermeneutic of suspicion. It seems, however, that in his frequent questioning of Christian doctrines, McLaren arouses and creates suspicion; and he does so on purpose.

It is Brian McLaren's contention that Calvinism** has distorted and destroyed the true Christian message. However, what McLaren offers in its place is not the true Gospel message, as we'll see.

McLaren is a prolific writer who spends a great deal of time on book tours and book signings. His latest book, *The Great Spiritual Migration* (released September 16, 2016), is posted on his website with the promotional teaser:

McLaren invites readers to seize the moment and set out on the most significant spiritual pilgrimage of our time; to help Christianity become more Christian.

How does one make "Christianity become more Christian?" That is a strange claim. We are told this very tall order will be done by:

Healing the planet, building peace, overcoming poverty and injustice, and collaborating with other faiths to encourage a better future for all of us.

So just what is being offered here? Certainly, it is not the Gospel and, certainly not personal transformation through the Death, Burial and Resurrection of our Savior Jesus Christ. Jesus codified a Gospel that was fixed and transcended time and culture when He said:

Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, that repentance and remission of sins should be preached to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. (Luke 24:46-47)

Burson acknowledges that:

McLaren does not believe there is a universal,

abstract, timeless essence to the gospel [sic] message that transcends each concrete situation. (Burson, p. 44)

I think one should be very suspicious of the message McLaren is offering. His is an old, threadbare message that was tried and miserably failed over a century ago. Unfortunately, so many are ignorant of church history and will never realize the above McLaren formula for Christianity is history repeating itself. McLaren is simply dragging out a message from the mothballs in the dustbin of failed experiments. We have "been there / done that."

What McLaren is offering is not new and innovative, but rather it is the old "Social Gospel Movement" full of political slogans and empty nostrums, which have been tried and found wanting.

The Social Gospel Movement arose in the late 1800s in England. The liberal church began focusing not on doctrine, exegesis, apologetics, and evangelism, but rather, it began focusing on social inequality, labor problems, world peace, and ecumenism. The Social Gospel spread for a time in America (early 1900s) through the efforts of Walter Rauschenbusch (Christian theologian and Baptist pastor who taught at the Rochester Theological Seminary). The grand scheme for world peace and Utopia was blasted and largely forgotten because of two world wars, and Utopia became dystopia. All McLaren seems to have become enamored with and has regurgitated are the old Social Gospel ideas—he is not offering anything new. It is unclear if Burson is aware of church history; and when he writes that McLaren has been on a long search for "a new way of following Christ" (Burson, p. 35), he does not seem to recognize McLaren has not discovered a "new way," he has simply resurrected the old way of Walter Rauschenbusch and company.

Burson states further:

McLaren began writing for *Sojourners*, a progressive Christian social activist periodical founded by Jim Wallace. (Burson, p. 45)

It is difficult to take McLaren seriously, especially when he describes himself as a provocateur who purposely obscures the truth:

I have gone out of my way to be provocative, mischievous, and unclear, reflecting my belief that clarity is sometimes overrated and that shock, obscurity, playfulness, and intrigue (carefully articulated) often stimulate more thought than clarity. (Quoted in Burson, p. 46)

So McLaren, by his own admission, intentionally obscures the truth, and the result is uncertainty. As I read this, the words of an earlier provocateur come to mind:

Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?" (Genesis 3:1)

McLaren has been selected by Time Magazine as one of the 25 most influential Evangelicals in America. He obscures the Doctrine of Eternal Punishment so one could ask the question (following McLaren's lead and love for questions), "Is McLaren an Evangelical?"

McLaren declares himself "**an international ambassador for emergent**" (Burson, p. 53), meaning he networks on the issues of global community, environment, justice, peace, and poverty. His understanding of the Kingdom of God is wrapped around these issues.

Burson examines the early McLaren (1956-1994), the emerging McLaren (1995-2005), and the Emergent McLaren (2006-to the present). Will McLaren ever land and stand on anything solid?

According to McLaren, Jesus is a countercultural revolutionary with a secret message. In McLaren's view, this new perception of Jesus could bring global peace. How can anyone make such an incredible claim? Isn't McLaren's messianic claim devoid of humility? Isn't McLaren saying that his paradigm can save the entire world? All one can say is ... WOW!

McLaren lost some support with his overt backing of the Obama presidency in 2008. He lost favor with many conservative Evangelicals when he affirmed the gay position and "presided over his son's same-sex commitment ceremony," (Burson, p. 62).

There is no doubt McLaren has created a totally new hermeneutic in his approach to the Bible. Brian McLaren seems to be declaring that any former way of looking at the Bible is wrong. To speak of Eden, the Fall, Salvation, Heaven and Hell is in error and obsolete; all of those are part of an outdated storyline, which McLaren calls the "Greco-Roman narrative."

McLaren's new hermeneutic is so dense, so philosophical, and in the end, so deceptive, that the average man-on-the-street would be totally lost. While McLaren would argue that as historically understood, the Bible is irrelevant; it is he who is out of touch with the common person. McLaren has developed insider language that is foreign to most people. At times, he seems to be on another planet of his own making.

McLaren's ultimate bogeyman is Calvinism. His aversion to the T.U.L.I.P.*** has pushed him into the heavy and poisonous weeds of Open Theism†, (Burson, chapter 4). McLaren tends to label everything he disagrees with as a "virus." He is even suspicious for his own Emergent abuse and says it must be debugged (Burson, p. 109). Calvinists are accused of focusing too much on individual salvation and ignoring social issues. However, the opposite is true, that is, in ignoring individual salvation and systematic theology one can be too immersed in social issues. A person can then be man-centered and not God-centered. Modern man does not like to be told or controlled. To affirm too strongly that God is sovereign over man has McLaren completely rejecting that view of God as mechanistic and humans as puppets or robots, (Burson, pp. 115-116).

Burson has a helpful section discussing the differences between determinism††, libertarianism††† and what he calls "**soft determinism**" (Burson, pp. 126-136). Burson shows McLaren seems unaware that finely nuanced Calvinism does not hold to hard determinism (fatalism), but rather soft determinism. McLaren is really rejecting hard determinism and, as a result,

falls into the camp of libertarianism. His critique of Calvinism totally misses the mark and creates a strawman. McLaren needs to return to the drawing board.

Burson demonstrates that McLaren does not hold to the historical orthodoxy of the Doctrines of the Fall and Total Depravity.

Original Sin is transmitted genetically through human physiology. We are thus born with the sin nature. We sinned by nature and by choice. McLaren says otherwise. He claims we sin simply by mimicking others. He calls it "mimesis" or imitating—as we mimic sin, it results in rivalry (Burson, pp. 138-141). McLaren does not answer the question as to why we would mimic sin and indulge in rivalry in the first place.

Burson spent some time on McLaren's views of the future and afterlife.

McLaren does not hold to the literal, physical Return of Jesus or any form of Rapture teaching. McLaren defines the Second Coming as, "**the fullness of Christ's royal presence working through the church, the figurative body of Christ**" (Burson, p. 151). McLaren claims that after 70AD and the destruction of the Jewish Temple, a new era of planet restoration began. This is a form of extreme Preterism‡.

Burson shows, without question, that McLaren does not believe in Hell, but that he is a Universalist—believing all will be saved ultimately (Burson, p. 154-157). In light of his belief everyone will be in Heaven, it seems strange and inconsistent that McLaren refuses to discuss the eternal fate of the unevangelized (Burson, pp. 157-158). Chapter seven and eight discuss the interplay of Arminian theology with McLaren's teachings. It covers what Burson believes Evangelicals can learn from McLaren's teachings.

Burson's more than 300 pages are a challenge and a mind stretcher. Wading through the dense, complex world of McLaren's terminology has been well handled. This is a necessary book if one wishes to see where liberalism is going, and how it is getting there through "**deceptive words**" (2 Peter 2:3) and "**flattering speech**" (Romans 16:18). [Q]

***hermeneutic**=relating to or consisting in the interpretation of texts, especially the books of the Bible (Encarta)

****Calvinism**=the religious doctrines of John Calvin

*****T.U.L.I.P.**=Five basic points of Calvinism in acronym:

Total Depravity (a.k.a. Total Inability), **U**nconditional Election, **L**imited Atonement (also known as Particular Atonement), **I**rresistible Grace, **P**erseverance of the Saints.

†**Open Theism**=the belief that God does not exercise meticulous control of the universe but leaves it "open" for humans to make significant choices (free will) that impact their relationships with God and others. ... Proponents affirm that God is omniscient, but deny that this means that God knows everything that will happen. (Theopedia)

††**determinism (fatalism)**=the doctrine or belief that everything, including every human act, is caused by something and that there is no real free will (Encarta)

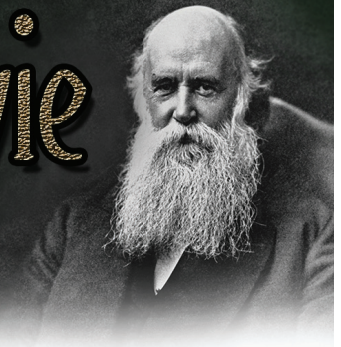
†††**libertarianism**=our choices are free from the determination or constraints of human nature and free from any predetermination by God. ... the freedom to act contrary to one's nature, predisposition and greatest desires. (Theopedia)

‡**Preterism**=view in Christian eschatology which holds that some or all of the biblical prophecies concerning the *Last Days* refer to

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John Alexander Dowie

By Rev. Bob Liichow



[Ed. note: All source material is quoted “as is” without changes to spelling, punctuation, or grammar.]

The Man:

John Alexander Dowie, although little remembered today, was an early “giant” of early Pentecostalism. He was born in Scotland in May of 1847. His family moved to Australia in 1860, where he joined the Congregational Church. He returned to Scotland and studied at the University of Edinburgh for the ministry although it does not appear he graduated from the university. While in Edinburgh, he came under the influence of the teachings of **Edward Irving**. In order to understand Dowie, one has to know a little of Irving’s ministry.

Irving was an early proclaimer of the restoration of the spiritual gifts and of nascent dispensationalism. He viewed the Church as powerless and corrupt. Consequently, he set about to establish a new “church” he called “**The Holy Catholic Apostolic Church**” over which presided 12 apostles—Irving being one of those 12. The Irvingites embraced divine healing, speaking in other tongues, prophetic utterances, and even a role for women in the clergy. It was in this hotbed of restorationism that Dowie “cut” his spiritual teeth.

Dowie was called back home prior to graduating, and he returned to Australia. In 1876, he was the pastor of the Newtown Congregational Church. During his time there, many of his members began to get sick and die.

As a young man he experienced a healing from chronic indigestion which he attributed to divine intervention; this led to his growing activity as a faith healer and ultimately to the foundation of his International Divine Healing Association. He left for the United States in 1888, and after two years on the Pacific coast moved to Evanston, Illinois.¹

It was here that God revealed that healing was still for today. Several members of his church became sick and died during a wave of disease that hit the city. God spoke to Dowie, and showed him that sickness was of the devil and to be resisted. He began to pray for his parishioner [sic], and from that day forward none died. This revelation so impacted Dowie that he left the pastorate, and became a full-time healing evangelist.² (Underline for emphasis.)

This incident of physical healing changed the trajectory of his ministry work. Sickness is, indeed, a “curse” and the result of our inherent sin as fallen people; and yes, Jesus did heal those who followed Him (cf. Matthew 12:15). Physical healing in His ministry and that of His Apostles was always secondary to the message of repentance and forgiveness of sin. In short, Dowie began to “major on the minors” and saw physical healing as *the* message to proclaim.

His Mission:

From all historical evidence, Dowie began his ministry with a humble start; but his lack of sound doctrine and a theological underpinning would become evident later. His ministry was influenced by the spiritual enthusiasm of his time, and that shaped the rest of his ministry. Before the Azusa* excesses in 1906, he made this “prophetic” statement regarding the sign gifts:

‘Well, I do not know. I think some of you are getting a new tongue. You are getting a tongue that gives praise to the Lord, for a new blessing that has come into your homes, and He is giving us new tongues. We have not everything yet, that is true, but He gives the Word of Wisdom, and the Word of Knowledge, and Faith, and Gifts of Healing, and Workings of Miracles, and Prophecy and Discernings of Spirits, and He will give us in due time Tongues and Interpretation of Tongues. He will. That is coming in its right time.’ (Leaves of Healing - April 10, 1897)³

For Dowie, such a pronouncement made perfect sense. As a dispensationalist who followed Darby and others, he believed God was “restoring” the Church back to its early glory; and he believed he had seen this in his own healing work—God had restored healing power to the Church. God seemed to be restoring godly church structure through the work of Irving and his followers. God was calling His people back to holy living.

The problem for Dowie and all “restoration” advocates is they look to the Book of Acts as a pattern for restoration. The Book of Acts is a historical account; it is not a doctrinal map on “how to do church.” In the beginning, the church was led by Apostles—they laid the foundation (Ephesians 2:20). On that original foundation, our Lord has been building the superstructure of His Church for almost 2,000 years. With the death of John (historians agree he was the last of the Apostles), there were no more Apostles of the Lamb, so their results were not expected to be duplicated.

In order to transcend this problem of no more Apostles, people had to declare that *suddenly*, after fifteen-hundred-plus years, the Lord had *decided* to restore this foundational gift to His Church—starting with Irving and, not long after, Mr. Dowie. Like Edward Irving, Dowie taught all the gifts were being restored to the Church, although he, himself, did not speak in other tongues.

In 1893, with the opening of the World’s Fair, Dowie opened Tabernacle Number One which came to be called “The Little Wooden Hut” across from the entrance to the Fair. Dowie’s Divine Healing Association was not recognized as being a church so he was denied a place on the Avenue of Churches at the World’s Fair.⁴

Interest in Dowie's sermons was such that he was able to lease one of the largest auditoriums in Chicago for six months, from October, 1895 to April, 1896. During this time, Dowie proposed the organization of a church based on apostolic principles, and in February, 1896, he organized the Christian Catholic Church in Zion.⁵ (Underline for emphasis.)

It seems from all historical evidence that it was during this time—around 1895—that he began to go totally off the theological rails. From what evidence we have—photographs and testimonies, it seems Dowie did have results in praying for the sick. This is wonderful. Glory be to God for His great mercy; but that is not the major concern of our Lord. He is *all about* the proclamation of the Good News (Gospel) of God's free forgiveness by faith alone in Jesus Christ alone.

Dowie and his adherents took this *gifting* to be proof Mr. Dowie was being *used* by God, and thus, he must be *hearing* from the Lord, too. Due to the signs, people were encouraged to believe his doctrine. After all, it seemed obvious God was using Dowie in a mighty way; ergo he was truly God's servant and, thus, a man to be heeded. It should be noted, however, that spiritual "gifts" are just that: "Gifts" of grace. In NO WAY do they imply spiritual maturity or insight. The gifts are to point people to Jesus Christ and never to themselves. Gifts are for the benefit of *others*, never the one being used/utilized/employed by our Lord.

First, Dowie officially set up his "**Christian Catholic Church**" in Zion, Illinois in 1896. Coming from a staunch holiness** background, he envisioned a truly *restored* Christian church that walked in holiness and power. In order to accomplish this, he believed there needed to be a city where God's people could grow as a holy people.

After the organization of the Christian Catholic Church in Zion, he dreamed of a city where his congregation would be free from the evils of the world, a city where God would be the ruler ... After successfully securing options on approximately 6,600 acres of land, he unveiled his plan for Zion City at the Watchnight Service the eve of the New Year 1900. It would be a city where his congregation could worship, work, and play free from the temptations of the world.⁶ (Underline for emphasis.)

Until that time, Washington D.C. was the only city that was pre-planned and pre-drawn before a spade of dirt was turned over. In Zion, Dowie allowed no one to drink alcohol or smoke tobacco. There were no theaters or brothels. It was to be a place of no worldly temptations, a place where people could live, work, worship, and raise their families in a totally "godly" environment.

Dowie really should have matriculated Edinburgh when he had the opportunity. Had he done so, he would have known all the outward manifestations of sin and depravity come from within the heart of man and our fallen condition. Spiritual defilement comes from within man (see Matthew 15:11) and, laudable as it is, removing the outward manifestations of the world will not stop the sin that is within. The Illinois city of Zion was a city built on the "law" of God and not His "Gospel." Dowie failed to grasp what Paul told the Colossians (2:20-23):

If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations—"Do not handle, Do not

taste, Do not touch" (referring to things that all perish as they are used)—according to human precepts and teachings? These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh. (Underline for emphasis.)

People came to Dowie's Zion by the hundreds to be part of this great end-of-days' restoration of the Church and sit under a highly praised man of faith and power. Naturally, as the sign-seekers sold all they had and began to move to Zion, the money also began to roll in. Since it was Mr. Dowie who was the visionary, it was only *fitting* he and his family should have the biggest mansion, which they did. With his plans for Zion underway, it seems Mr. Dowie became more enthralled with establishing *his* kingdom and new "church"—with himself as the new "Pope" of both church and city—than with leading people to Christ.

His Mistakes:

Dowie's entire life is a cautionary story we would do well to heed. He had a zeal to serve our Lord at first, but it was a zeal "*without knowledge*" (Romans 10:2). He never had a solid theological underpinning from the start. This left him open and prone to many errors. Dowie endorsed the restoration CONcepts of Edward Irving and his followers. He accepted the dispensational views of Mr. Darby and embraced the Anglo-Israelite*** views:

Dr. Dowie was also a strong believer in and took a firm public stand in favor of the Christian Anglo-Israel message of the Bible. He was a personal friend of Dr. Joseph Wild, pastor of the Bond Street Congregational Church of Toronto, Ontario. By invitation of Dr. Wild, an evangelistic healing service was conducted by Dr. Dowie in the Toronto Church. Dr. Wild was a strong believer in both divine healing and the Anglo-Israel message.⁷

More troubling than these errors was his misunderstanding of indwelling sin in the believer (1 John 1:7-9), and what was (is) involved in holy living. He seemed to have dealt with the *visible* branches of sin, but never really got to the *heart* of the matter (Matthew 15:18).

As his fame and subsequent wealth increased, so did his view of himself and his role in God's kingdom. He presumed God was "using" him to build this great holy city. Obviously, he was someone unlike all other fellow Christians, since no one was doing what he did. His closest advisors began to tell Dowie he was the "**Elijah**" to come, the Forerunner to The Return of Jesus Christ (but cf. Luke 1:16-17). Dowie received these flattering lies and began to declare himself to be "**the Elijah to come.**"

Things began to crumble, and Dowie declared himself "Elijah the Restorer" or Elijah III. (First Elijah, then John the Baptist, then himself) He walked around dressed in an Old Testament-like priest's outfit. In 1905 he had a stroke and traveled to Mexico where he bought a large tract of land for a "plantation paradise."⁸

In short, we see a man who started out very humbly and, in the end, was parading himself around in a pseudo-high-priestly outfit calling himself "**Elijah the Restorer.**" "*Pride comes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall*" (Proverbs 16:18). The financial ruin of his city and his first stroke did not seem to reign in his madness.

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“Restoration” Continued from page 7

must ask when Joyner believes the human nature of Christ was discarded. Does he believe in the bodily Resurrection, or was that when Jesus returned to being spirit? Thirdly, the Scriptures link the ongoing ministry of Jesus as intercessor and High Priest with His humanity (1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 7:23-28). Either Joyner doesn’t understand these things, or he is denying them. Either position is serious.

One of the newer fads among followers of the NAR is that of **“grave sucking”** (also sometimes referred to as **“anointing sucking”** or **“mantel grabbing”**). In this bizarre, thoroughly unbiblical practice, the believer goes to the grave of a departed saint and lies on the grave or touches it in some other fashion in order to absorb the anointing remaining in the bones of the deceased. Bill Johnson (Senior Pastor of Bethel Church in Redding, CA) describes the importance of this practice this way:

There are anointings, mantles, revelations and mysteries that have lain unclaimed, literally where they were left because the generation that walked in them never passed them on. I believe it’s possible for us to recover realms of anointing, realms of insight, realms of God that have been untended for decades simply by choosing to reclaim them and perpetuate them for future generations.⁷

Other examples would include strategic-level spiritual warfare, judicial intercession, the Jezebel spirit, heavenly portals, and on and on ad nauseum.

Dominion Theology first came to prominence in the 1940’s-1950’s with William Branham (healing minister who claimed to be the end-time “Elijah” prophet of the Laodicean Church age) and the Sharon Brethren. The basic tenets of Dominion Theology are as follows:

- 1. The Church must be restored and equipped to rule by the five-fold ministries.**
- 2. The church must come to perfection and complete visible unity.**
- 3. Out of the purified church will come a spiritual elite corps, a Corporate Christ who possess the Spirit without measure.**
- 4. They will purge the earth of all wickedness and rebellion.**
- 5. They will judge the apostate Church.**
- 6. They will redeem all creation, and restore the earth.**
- 7. They will eventually overcome death itself in a counterfeit of the Rapture.**
- 8. The Church will thus inherit the earth, and rule over it from the Throne of Christ.⁸**

Recognizing the threat to orthodox Christianity presented in these doctrines, the Assemblies of God moved quickly to denounce them as heresy. The teaching seemed to be headed to the trash heap of false teachings; but this heresy has been revived under the auspices of “New Apostles” such as Bill Hamon, C. Peter Wagner, Rick Joyner and many others.

For instance, in his book *Seven Mountains Prophecy*, Dominionist Johnny Enlow states the following:

In essence the Father said to the Son, “Once You have purchased redemption for mankind, You will sit at my right hand. You will have done Your part on earth till I make Your enemies Your footstool. You will remain up here as the Head and Your body on earth will crush Your enemies. The last generation will be the foot generation and will rule on earth over Your enemies. Until they do

so, You are not going back to rescue, rapture, save or anything else. Your body, in fact, will not be a beautiful bride until she has accomplished this crushing of Satan.”⁹

As one continues reading the book, one discovers the **“seven mountains”** represent the seven aspects of society that the church is to claim for Christ and over which to rule. They include: media, government, education, economy, celebration (arts and entertainment), religion, and family. Under this heretical teaching, the church must gain control over all of these elements in society, all over the world, and bring them into submission to Jesus Christ before Jesus can return.

A vital piece to fulfilling this mission, according to the leaders of NAR, is that each church must come into submission under them—the “New Apostles” and prophets. *Only they* can lead the church to fulfill its role in the last days.

Lack of Doctrinal Balance

There are certain key truths that define Christianity and separate it from every religion in the world. These core teachings ought to form the centerpiece of theology in every Christian church and movement. They must be the steady diet of every believer in order for them to grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. These doctrines include, but are not limited to, the Trinity, the Fall of Man, the holiness and wrath of God, the Incarnation, the penal, substitutionary Atonement of Christ, the bodily Resurrection, the Return of Christ to judge the living and the dead, and Doctrines of Eternal Reward and Punishment. These are truths that are timeless. They need to be expounded upon, stressed, and explained. They deserve much more than merely an occasional mention.

NAR leaders and churches spend relatively little time on these truths, however, preferring to emphasize teachings on healings, miracles, spiritual warfare, and many of the aberrant doctrines we have already mentioned. For all the talk about “apostolic relationships” and “apostolic power,” little attention is given to actual Apostolic doctrine.

The fact is, those doctrinal teachings do not form the core teachings within the New Apostolic Reformation. C. Peter Wagner (recently deceased cofounder of the World Prayer Center and chancellor of the Wagner Institute in Colorado Springs, Colorado.) admits as much when he discusses the school for pastors he created:

One of the realities of this new tailored approach that quickly came to our attention was that if we offered traditional courses in systematic theology, epistemology or the history of dogma, practically no one would sign up for them.¹⁰

This pick-and-choose method of ministerial training means that ministers within this movement have not been given a thorough understanding of essential Bible doctrines and their relationships to one another. They are not equipped with a firm grasp of the core truths of the Christian faith, and how to teach them properly. They are not qualified to teach a congregation of God’s people.

Support of Other False Teachers

The list of teachers praised by leaders of the NAR is a virtual “Who’s Who” of heretics past and present. Leaders in this movement will quote Roman Catholic mystics like Madam Guyon, contemplatives like Henri Nouwen, Word of Faith teachers, and many more. Conspicuously absent are references to those known to be standing firmly in the truth of Biblical orthodoxy—especially Protestant Biblical Orthodoxy.

Two heretics from times past receive special attention: William Branham and John G. Lake. We have mentioned Branham earlier in this article in his relation to Dominion Theology. He is considered by many in the NAR to be the greatest “apostle” who ever lived. In addition to Dominion Theology, Branham denied the Trinity—calling it **“a doctrine of demons.”** He believed he was the Elijah for this generation. He taught denominations were **“the mark of the Beast.”**

Lake (co-founder of the Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa) is famous for his healing rooms in Oregon in the 1920’s. Nevertheless, it is documented that many of his “miracles” were frauds. He dressed in costume and tried to claim he was a spiritual teacher from Arabia. He was arrested for blue-sky fraud in deceptively manipulating his followers in the giving of their offerings by promising to give them stock in a mining company, which he never delivered. He also taught Christians could communicate with the dead as long as they were calling them down from heaven and not up from hell. The point is that *no Christian* should be advocating the teachings of either of these men. Yet, NAR leaders consider them spiritual fathers and pioneers.

End Result

The end result of this hodge-podge of heresy is that the followers of the NAR leadership have little understanding at all of the reality of the Christian life, and they are **“...tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, ...”**—being captivated by any new idea or false experience (Ephesians 4:14). Allow me to illustrate.

The man, let’s call him “Bob.” sat uneasily during the service. Afterward, he came to speak to me. He had heard about our ministry from a friend. He had been regularly attending a local prophetic ministry for years. He was very excited to show me some papers he had brought with him. They contained revelations he had personally received from God. Among them were some very official-looking papers. I questioned him about these.

Bob became quite animated as he explained to me that these were legal papers pertaining to his lawsuit against the devil. He said he had filed suit against the devil in the court of Heaven for stealing his wife. Bob was demanding the return of his wife as well as damages. Bob related to me that his wife had left him several years ago.

I became deeply distressed as Bob continued relating the story and explaining the actions he had taken. I put my hand in the middle of his papers to get his attention.

“Did you ever stop to wonder why no one in the Bible ever did this?” I asked.

Bob stood speechless for a moment before saying, “What?”

I tried again. “No one in the Bible ever did this. No one ever filed a lawsuit against the devil. There is no instruction in the Bible that tells us to sue the devil.”

Bob stood perfectly still except for repeatedly blinking his eyes. It seemed evident to me that the thought that the Bible contained no basis for his current activities had never occurred to him.

“Your actions are unbiblical. As long as you continue to act in ways that are unbiblical, your life will continue to be a mess. God doesn’t honor this. You need to get under the regular instruction of the Word of God so that you can live in a way that

is pleasing to Him,” I said, hoping I wasn’t being too abrupt.


Bob turned without speaking and walked out the door leaving his “heavenly lawsuits” under my hand.

This man was neither the first nor the last person with whom I have spoken who, through following NAR teachers, has drifted into unbiblical activities. Many of these people even began to doubt the goodness and faithfulness of God when the activities in which they were engaged failed to produce the promised result. These are left confused, broken people. They are the carnage of this movement. A person can only live on superficial hype for so long. Doctrine matters and false doctrines destroy.

So when we evaluate the New Apostolic Reformation, what do we find?

- Faulty Foundation
- Aberrant doctrines and practices
- Lack of doctrinal balance
- Support of false teachers
- End result- damaged lives

The “New Apostles” and prophets are not bringing a new, final reformation, but rather they represent the false christs and false apostles Jesus warned would proliferate in the last days. This is a movement to be avoided at all costs.

For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. (Mt. 24:24, Mk. 13:22) 

All Bible quotes are from the English Standard Version.

Keith Gibson is Pastor-Word of Life Community Church, Adjunct Professor-Calvary University, Kansas City Director-Apologetics Resource Center.



ENDNOTES:

- 1 Hamon, Bill, *“Prophets and the Prophetic Movement: God’s Prophetic Move Today”* (Destiny Image Publishers, Shippensburg, PA; 1990) 59
- 2 Sondergaard, Torben, www.thelastreformation.com. The article accessed is “About The Last Reformation”
- 3 Randles, Bill, *Weighed and Found Wanting* (Dick Sleeper Distribution, 1996) 48.
- 4 Bowman, Robert- “The Five-fold Ministry” article appears on the website www.apologeticsindex.org
- 5 Alec, Wendy- *Journal of the Unknown Prophet*, (Warboys Media; 2002), page 84
- 6 Joyner, Rick- *There were Two Trees in the Garden*, (Whitaker House, New Kensington, PA; 1992)
- 7 Youth Apologetics Training, *What is Grave Sucking?* The article is attributed to Michael. No last name is given.
- 8 Tillin, Tricia *The New Thing* internet article available at www.intotrueth.org/res/newthin2.html#BELIEFS
- 9 Enlow, Johnny- *The Seven Mountains Prophecy*, (Creation House Publications, Lake Mary, FL.; 2008) 24
- 10 Wagner, C. Peter- *Dominion!* (Chosen Books, Grand Rapids, MI; 2008) 58

“Out of Focus” Continued from page 9

events which took place in the first century after Christ’s birth, esp. ... Jerusalem in 70 AD. (Theopedia)

All Bible quotes are from New King James Version

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“Dowie” Continued from page 13

His wife had moved out to a mansion Dowie built for her in Michigan. She left him due to his acceptance of a belief in polygamy along with the fact he brought over Miss Hofer, a young woman from Switzerland. He had a “secret” basement room built on his own house that enabled easy access to sister Hofer’s room, which held not only a bed, but also a huge safe to hold his gold.

While recuperating from his stroke, the man Dowie had left in charge of Zion, Wilbur Voliva, began procedures to wrest control of Zion from Dowie’s hands. Voliva succeeded, and Dowie was stripped of his authority; but he was allowed to remain in his home in Zion. Dowie had a second stroke and died a few months later on March 9, 1907 a broken and defeated man.

Every attempt to establish the kingdom of God on earth has ended in abysmal failure. Our Lord said ***“My kingdom is not of this world”*** (John 18:36) and, furthermore, He said His kingdom comes ***“without observation”*** (Luke 17:20). No one except the Lord Jesus Christ—the Head of the Church (Colossians 1:18)—will be the One Who establishes His kingdom on earth physically.

The Spiritual Fruit from Dowie’s Zion:

Some might argue that Dowie did become misdirected, yet the Lord used Zion to bring great blessings to the Church and world. Is that really the case? Many future notables came to receive from him while Dowie was alive. Zion, his city, did draw many people who became “notable” within Pentecostalism, but were they a *blessing*? Is there one specific theological truth or insight that can be attributed directly to Mr. Dowie or someone from Zion? No, there is not.

Dowie seemed to have given birth to the *CONcept* of the *healing Evangelist*. My dear friends, there is **NO SUCH** “ministry” in the Bible. The idea that our Lord sends out specific people to heal physical maladies of the masses is simply never mentioned in the Bible.

Mass healing by *anyone* apart from our Lord Jesus (see Matthew 12:15; Luke 4:40; Luke 6:19) does not exist at all in the N.T. or in the annals of verified Church history. (I personally have heard Benny Hinn proclaim the day is coming when all the people in the crusade will be healed. This has yet to happen, Mr. Hinn.) Yet, many people have followed Mr. Dowie by looking to him as a “ministry” model.

John G. Lake was formerly a deacon in Zion with the **“Christian Catholic Church.”** There is a lot of *urban legend* surrounding this man and his healing ministry. He died a fairly young man who was beginning to be swayed by the new “Jesus Only”† sect rising up within nascent American Pentecostalism near the time of his death. Lake espoused the “no doctors/no medicine” doctrine common to many holiness evangelists. **F.F. Bosworth, Raymond T. Richey and Lillian E. Yeomans**—all Pentecostal “healing” evangelists—all credit Dowie and Zion for their ministries. Later on, **William Branham**—well-known false prophet and false teacher—went to Zion, Illinois and held healing crusades.

Dowie and those who followed his healing evangelist “model” all either ended up doctrinally shipwrecked and/or morally debased. A brief overview of the lives and teachings of the well-known “faith healers” shows a myriad of false doctrines, false practices, greed, sexual immorality, and the financial and spiritual ruin of multitudes of their followers.

Jesus answered, “My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.” (John 18:36, Underline for emphasis.)

And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, “The kingdom of God cometh not with observation:” (Luke 17:20, Underline for emphasis.)

for the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. (Romans 14:17, Underline for emphasis.) ☐

***Azusa**=Azusa Street Revival which began in 1906 at the Apostolic Faith Gospel Mission at 312 Azusa Street in Los Angeles with leader William Seymour. (per Encyclopedia Britannica)

****Holiness movement**=Holiness Christians left Methodism in the 19th and early 20th centuries because they felt that mainstream Methodism was failing to emphasize Wesleyan teachings on sanctification, particularly the experience of Christian Perfection, which Holiness theologians usually refer to as *entire sanctification* ... more notable Holiness bodies are the Church of the Nazarene and the Salvation Army. (Theopedia)

*****Anglo-Israel**=A theory which identifies the Anglo-Saxon race with the Lost Ten Tribes. Its adherents, who claim that the promises given to Israel will be fulfilled with regard to England and America (Jewish Encyclopedia)

†**Jesus Only**=decries the traditional doctrine of the Trinity as unbiblical. ... This is due to the belief that the original Apostles baptized converts in the name of Jesus. The majority of Oneness Pentecostals believe that God has revealed Himself in different roles rather than three distinct persons, for which see modalism. (Theopedia)

All Bible quotes are from English Standard Version

Rev. Robert Liichow, after graduating from the University of Michigan, became involved in the Charismatic Renewal Movement. He and his wife, Dr. Tracy Liichow, were graduates from Robert Tilton’s Word of Faith Satellite Bible School in the 1980’s. They were involved in five sub-movements within the sign-gift-renewal umbrella. The Lord delivered them from doctrinal darkness while attending Michigan Theological Seminary (now part of Moody Bible Institute). In response to the Lord’s goodness, Rev. Liichow began “Discernment Ministries International” (DMI). For over twenty years, Rev. Liichow has endeavored to “Teach Truth & Expose Error.” DMI publishes a monthly newsletter called/titled *Truth Matters* and is very active in overseas missionary work focusing on Uganda.



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- 1 http://www.james-joyce-music.com/extras/dowie_bio.html
- 2 <http://healingandrevival.com/BioJADowie.htm> Underlining added for emphasis by the author.
- 3 <http://truthinhistory.org/life-ministry-of-john-alexander-dowie.html> (also *Leaves of Healing*, vol. 3, page 378)
- 4 <http://www.zionhs.com/history.htm>
- 5 Ibid. Underlining added for emphasis by the author.
- 6 Ibid. Underlining added for emphasis by the author.
- 7 Op cit. truthinhistory.org
- 8 Op cit. healingandrevival.com

“Deception” Continued from page 5

their prophecies. In accordance with Deut. 18, which tells how one can recognize a false prophet—something with which the Jewish hearers of the teaching of Jesus here would be very familiar—it is their *prophecies* that must be tested and be judged to be true or false. We cannot look upon *anyone’s* heart, but we *can* judge the veracity of the prophecies of the person or group:

But the prophet who speaks a word presumptuously in My name which I have not commanded him to speak, or which he speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die. You may say in your heart, “How will we know the word which the LORD has not spoken?” When a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the thing does not come about or come true, that is the thing which the LORD has not spoken ... (Deuteronomy 18:20-22, NASB)

If *any* person or group, such as the Watchtower Society or the LDS, claims they are speaking prophecies given to them by the LORD, they had better be right 100% of the time! We should examine (or judge) their prophecies, and see whether they come true or not. We are to give ‘em a “T” (true) or give ‘em an “F” (false)! There is no wiggle room at all. It doesn’t matter if they go door-to-door every weekend for their whole lives. It doesn’t matter if they cry out, **“Lord, Lord!”** It doesn’t matter if they use the Bible, or *appear* to be Christians, or never miss a meeting, or are neatly dressed and groomed. “T” or “F”—it is our job to judge!

There is another test for a false prophet given in Deuteronomy 13, verses 1-4, regarding the false teachings of false prophets. If a person or group arises, claiming to be God’s prophet, and shows **“signs and wonders”** that *appear* to come true, yet the teachings would lead you to worship other gods, we must give ‘em an “F” as in FALSE. Therefore, it is important to judge carefully what the prophet *says*—whether it lines up with Scripture, and whether their god and THE God are one and the same.

For example, Jehovah—the very limited god of the Watchtower Society, who doesn’t even know the future, for sure, but learns as he goes—is certainly not THE God of the Bible. Elohim—the name employed for the god of the Mormons, who is only one of many gods, according to their teaching—is obviously not THE God of the Bible. The same holds true for the man-made gods of all the cults.

Jehovah’s Witnesses, Mormons and many others use Matthew 7:15 out of context to claim their group is the true Christian group, because they are doing the very mostest bestest good works! “We’re the only ones going door to door,” boasts the JW. “We are the only ones baptizing for the dead,” boasts the Mormon. And of course, they claim to be speaking for God while making false prophecies and teaching false doctrines. Give them an “F,” and warn your friends ...

Christians also should refrain from judging whether people are true Christians or not depending upon their Christian *appearance*, or the good *works* that they do. Jesus’ whole point here is that we will have to inspect people’s *prophecies and teachings* to determine who is who, *because the false wolves will look like the true sheep!*

That’s Your Interpretation

This dodge is just a variation of the “relative truth” objection. People often reject the Bible’s teachings by saying there are many interpretations of Scripture, and therefore, whatever one they choose is *true for them*. However, *in context*, each passage only has one interpretation. It may have many applications; but

before we get to that phase, we need to understand the historical/grammatical interpretation of the passage. For example, Jesus said, ***“I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”*** (John 14:6) He clearly didn’t leave it open to an interpretation that He was just “the way *shower*” or that He was “*a way*”—one among many to choose from. When Peter confronted the religious leaders of his day in Acts 4:11-12, he agreed with this interpretation:

This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.

Whether is it Brian McLaren, Rob Bell, Oprah Winfrey, the Pope, or the Dalai Lama claiming there are *many ways* to salvation and eternal life, they are *wrong!* Yes, all of these will stand before God someday – that is for sure. Philippians 2:10-11 speaks directly to this:

... at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Everyone, regardless of the path they now are on, will eventually come face-to-face with God. They will, to a Person, confess Jesus Christ is fully God and will bend their knees to Him. But, if they do not arrive before God’s throne *via grace through faith in Christ*, they won’t find it to be a pleasant encounter. They’re not going to get off the hook by arguing with God about His faulty interpretation. They won’t be able to blame an “angel,” a vision, or a false prophet, because they were warned about them all in Scripture and were told how to discern the true from the false. They won’t be able to complain the obscure passages of Scripture kept them from simply believing the very plain ones, the ones that offered them forgiveness from God—a complete pardon based on Jesus’ sacrifice, and eternal life. ☐

All Bible quotes are from English Standard Version unless otherwise indicated.

L.L. (Don) & Joy Veinot are president and co-founder of Midwest Christian Outreach, Inc., a national apologetics ministry and mission to new religious movements based in Wonder Lake, IL. Don and Joy, his wife of 45 years, have been involved in discernment ministry as missionaries to New Religious Movements since 1987. Don is a frequent guest on various radio and television broadcasts including The John Ankerberg Show. In addition, Don is a staff researcher and writer for the Midwest Christian Outreach Journal, co-author of A Matter of Basic Principles: Bill Gothard and the Christian Life, and contributing author of Preserving Evangelical Unity: Welcoming Diversity in Non-Essentials, as well as articles written for the CRI Journal, PFO Quarterly Journal, Campus Life Magazine, Journal of the International Society of Christian Apologetics, Midwestern Journal of Theology and other periodicals. He was ordained to the ministry by West Suburban Community Church of Lombard, IL at the Garden of Gethsemane in Jerusalem, Israel in March of 1997. Don is a charter member of ISCA (International Society of Christian Apologetics) and is also the current president of Evangelical Ministries to New Religions (EMNR), a consortium of counter cult/apologetic and discernment ministries from around the country.



ENDNOTES:

1 See our article “Resurrection: Watchtower-Style” <http://midwestchristianoutreach.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/fall-2006.pdf>

2 See “Urantia”, Eric Pement; http://www.culthelp.info/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=823&Itemid=10

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