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

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Midwest Christian Outreach, Inc. P.O. Box 446 Wonder Lake, IL 60097-0446 630~627~9028 www.midwestoutreach.org

# A Brief History of Heresy

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

you're out ... and then executed. Moses was saying, "Give 'em a "T," or give 'em an "F."

alse beliefs and false teachers have been with us nearly since the Creation. Eve, as you recall, was deceived by the serpent, who cast doubt on what God had communicated when he told her:

Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and

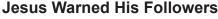
ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. (Genesis 3:4b-5, KJV)

The Old Testament is filled with spurious claims and false predictions by false prophets and false teachers, who *claimed to be speaking for God*. God continually had to raise up and empower true prophets to challenge these many deceivers and call the nation back from worshipping idols and other evil practices.

Moses gave two tests for those (prophets, dreamers of dreams, and or miracle workers) claiming spiritual authority from God. We find one of these "prophet tests" at Deuteronomy 13:1-5. Here God informed His people that *even if* a person made *accurate* predictions and appeared to work miracles but

taught a false view of God (idol worship), their messages were to be ignored and the supposed "prophet" was to be "put to death" (v.5)! God's people always are to trust God's Word over those who "outwardly appear righteous to men" (cf. Matt.23:28).

The second "prophet test" is in Deuteronomy 18:20-22. In this test, if someone *claimed to be a prophet, speaking for God,* but made *one-little- itsy- bitsy-false prophecy*, they were a false prophet. Period. They were not accorded any credit for accruing a 60%, 70% or even 99% accuracy rating. It was one strike, and

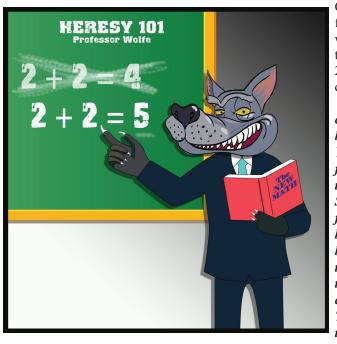


Things didn't really improve in the false teacher/false prophet department with the advent of the Messiah. Like Moses,

Christ warned the people about false prophets and false teachers who would come to them to lead them astray. In Matthew 7:15-23, Jesus pointed back to Moses' definitions by giving examples:

Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles? So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus you will recognize them by their fruits. "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. On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'" (ESV, emphasis ours)



—Continued on page 2



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Midwest Christian Outreach, Inc.
P.O. Box 446, Wonder Lake, IL 60097-0446
Phone: (630) 627-9028

Fax: (630) 627-6829 E-mail:info@midwestoutreach.org

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# "Heresy" Continued from page 1

This verse is often incorrectly put forward as a test for determining whether a person is a *Christian* or not by judging their works; but the entire passage is about identifying *false prophets versus true ones*. The fruit of a false prophet is false prophecy/false teaching. These individual's *character* cannot be determined by inspection, because, as Jesus told us, they would come in "sheep's clothing!" They would seem to be Christians by their outward appearance, perhaps "uber-Christians"—superior to most others in their pseudo spirituality. The pretenders vigorously point to their godly works to fool the undiscerning:

Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name? (Mt. 7:22, ESV)

I guess they thought even the LORD would be fooled on Judgment Day by their righteous appearance! But of course, He won't be. He will say to them, "depart from Me," and that is never a good thing.

So, if we can't rightly judge someone by their appearance or their many good works, what should God's people be inspecting? For what are we to be on the alert? "False prophets!" How will we recognize them? "By their fruits"—their teachings and prophecies—do they line up with God's Word?

Alas, we have no dearth of false prophets and false teachers around today to inspect. Self-appointed prophets are everywhere. We have to give them a "T" or give them an "F." Often Christians will point to a false prophet and remark "they are not a prophet." However, in reality, if someone claims to be a prophet, he certainly is one! He or she is a *false* prophet! Later in His ministry, Jesus again warned His followers to watch out for deceivers, but He added a new category to the alert list:

And Jesus answered them, "See that no one leads you astray. For many will come in my name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and they will lead many astray. (Matthew 24:4-5, ESV)

The list of things for which Jesus said to watch are critically important. Those who claim to be prophets or have special revelatory knowledge in the form of dreams or claims of miracles, but who teach a false view of the nature of God, give even a single false prophecy, or who blasphemously claim to *be* Christ, should be called out and, by all means, be kept away from the flock.

# Who Am I

It is essential to know Who the *true* Jesus is, in order to distinguish Him from the *false* Christs, who have come or are yet to arrive.

In Matthew 16:13-17, Jesus poses a question to the disciples:

Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. (ESV)

When we look at a text, any text—including Scripture, we need to have the context to best understand what is being communicated. We ask questions like:

- Who is communicating?
- What are they communicating?
- When are they communicating?
- To whom are they communicating?
- How would the listener or reader have understood the communication?

In the above passage, we have a first-century, Jewish rabbi (Jesus) asking a question of His first-century, Jewish, rabbinical students (who would have the Old Testament memorized) a question which has some predefined terms the disciples would have in their minds, but that we often miss.

For example, the phrase "Son of" carries the idea of "being in the order of," or nature of something. The phrase "Son of Man" occurs 88 times in the N.T. and is used in two ways in Scripture.

The first is a Messianic title, which comes from Daniel 7:13-14:

I kept looking in the night visions and behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a <u>Son of Man</u> was coming and He came up to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him and to Him was given dominion, Glory and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations and men of every language might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away; and His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed. (NASB, emphasis ours)

In applying this title—"Son of Man"—to Himself, Jesus is making several monumental claims about Himself.

- He has "dominion, Glory and a kingdom"
- All peoples and nations will serve Him
- His kingdom will last forever

The disciple's response about what others are saying—that He must be the ressurected John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets—focuses on this Messianic understanding of the term.

The people at that time were looking for the long promised Jewish Messiah, whom God would send to deliver the Jewish people and nation from oppression and inaugurate the promised earthly kingdom.

The second usage of "Son of Man" simply points to being of human nature. God called the prophet Ezekiel "son of man" 93 times in the book of Ezekiel. God was simply calling Ezekiel a human being, having the nature of humanness. So, the phrase "Son of Man," applied to Jesus, indicates that Jesus is the promised Jewish Messiah and that He is truly a human being.

Peter's response, calling Jesus the "Son of the living God," adds yet another dimension to the nature of Jesus. In the same way that the phrase "Son of Man" identifies Jesus as human, Peter's response that Jesus is the "Son of ... God" is a declaration that Jesus has the very nature of God! It may be that the Apostle John was reminiscing on this some 60 years later when he penned the words in his Gospel (John 1:34, et al) as well as his opening words in his first epistle (1 John 1:3, et al).

# Why the New Testament?

Certainly, some of the New Testament (the four Gospels) was written to present a first-hand, historical narrative of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, and His death and Resurrection. The Book of Acts—Luke's sequel to his Gospel account—tells us what happened to the followers of Jesus after His physical Resurrection and bodily Ascension into Heaven. It also relates to us the sad story of how Israel rejected their risen Messiah and were temporarily set aside while God built His Church—the body of Christ—composed of believing Jews and Gentiles. Most of the rest of the New Testament was written to *correct false teaching* and bad behavior in the Church, as well as to lay out clearly *true teaching*. We see this theme in the Apostle Paul's first letter, Galatians (written about 49AD), which was penned:

... because of false brothers secretly brought in—who slipped in to spy out our freedom that we have in Christ Jesus, so that they might bring us into slavery. ... (Galatians 2:4, ESV)

The issue Paul addressed was the egregious false teaching that one must *earn their sanctification*—cleansing, purifying—through rituals and good works rather than trust and believe in Christ's work: "*It is finished.*" (John 19:30)

Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? (Galatians 3:2-3, ESV)

He clearly laid out the truth that salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone in the previous chapter, and then asks them how they received the Spirit. In other words, how is it they were born again? They were believers *by faith*. He then chides them for being deceived into thinking good works and/or rituals are required to add to their sanctification. Now we have yet *another criterion* to add to our "false teacher test." False teachers promote a dangerously false view of salvation and sanctification. Heresy is like a virus—it sneaks in unnoticed, reprograms the host's cells to produce copies of itself, grows, mutilates, and compromises the immune system; and if left unchecked, it will kill the host. It needs a host that gives it everything it needs to work, then takes it over.

—Continued on page 4

# **MCOI Branches**

# MAIN OFFICE: Wonder Lake, Illinois

P.O. Box 446

Wonder Lake, IL 60097-0446

Phone: (630) 627-9028

E-mail: Info@midwestoutreach.org President: L.L. (Don) Veinot, Jr.

Director: Joy A. Veinot

# Vero Beach, Florida

1400 16th Court SW Vero Beach, FL 32962 Phone: (772) 925-1466

E-mail: trudyjoell@hotmail.com

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P.O. Box 150743

Cape Coral, FL, 33915-0743

Phone: (239) 542-1914 E-mail: ronhenzel@msn.com

Director: Ron Henzel

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

~EPHESIANS 5:11~

# "Heresy " Continued from page 3

# Spiritual A.I.D.S.

This is a spiritual virus that is sweeping the Church today, and it compromises the immune system of believers and church bodies. We call it AIDS - Acquired Ignorance of the Doctrines of Scripture. Some of the issues the New Testament epistles address fall into this category. For the first 20 years or so after the Resurrection, the orthodox view was that Jesus was physically raised, and those who are His would be physically raised as well. This was even put in the form of a creed, perhaps the first Church creed, somewhere around 38-40AD. We even know what the creed said, because Paul recites it in 1 Corinthians 15:1-6, which he penned in 56AD while in Ephesus:

Now I would remind you, brothers, of the Gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain.

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that <u>Christ died</u> for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that He <u>was buried</u>, that He <u>was raised</u> on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that <u>He appeared</u> to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then <u>He appeared</u> to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. (ESV, emphasis ours)

These few short statements make clear that the Gospel of salvation is the *death*, *burial*, *and resurrection of the physical body of Jesus*. Yet, false teachers had *already "slipped in,"* denying the visible, *physical* Resurrection. Paul spends the whole of chapter 15 correcting this false teaching, which had been surfacing there. The physical resurrection of Jesus is the lynchpin of the entire Gospel! Any false Messiah or cult leader can be said to be raised in some mystical "spiritual sense," but their *bodies* are still in their tombs! We may as well all slink back home in utter defeat if Christ has not been raised, because our faith would be "*in vain*" (1Cor.15:17). However, Paul assures us that Jesus Christ has, indeed, been raised! His tomb is empty! Hallelujah! And we thank God that Paul thought it was a good use of his time to set the error straight.

Heresy was not only being birthed and grown within the early Church, but it began pouring in from the outside. As Paul was on his way to appear before Caesar in Rome, he called for the Ephesian elders to meet him. (Ephesus is where he was when he had written to the Corinthians.) In that meeting, he gave the elders an interesting and revealing charge, which we find recorded in Acts 20:28-31:

Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which He obtained with His own blood. I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears. (ESV)

It is clear and straightforward. They were to diligently guard themselves and guard the flock from two sources of danger—false teachers coming in from the outside and false teachers rising up within. The pastor and elders are the *gatekeepers*. They

are essential to the ongoing existence of the Church. We find the same custodial theme in the books of First and Second Timothy, Titus, and First and Second Peter, etc.

Gnosticism\* began infiltrating the Church and stealthily changing the biblical view of doctrine to a more mystical understanding. The Gnostic worldview at its core is "dualism." Dualism is the view that there's a spirit world, which is good; and there's a physical material world of which every aspect is bad.

The reason the material world is bad, according to Gnostic belief, is because the true God of the entire universe didn't create it! God produced an "emanation" called an "æon," which in turn produced an "æon," which produced another "æon," which accidentally produced an "æon" which made the world. The last "æon" was the Christ, and this "Christ emanation" settled on a human being named Jesus at His baptism and left at His Crucifixion. In the Gnostic view, God couldn't incarnate because that would be taking on flesh—which is evil—therefore making God become evil.

The Apostle John first refutes the Gnostic origin claim in his Gospel of John 1:1-3 by pointing back to Genesis 1:

<u>In the beginning</u> was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was <u>in the beginning</u> with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. (KJV, emphasis ours)

As he makes his case in the first chapter, he writes in verse 14:

And the Word <u>became flesh</u> and dwelt among us, and we have seen His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. (ESV, emphasis ours)

His entire claim in these verses was easy to understand, and completely refutes the Gnostic view.

- The Word is God
- The Word is face to face with God
- Whenever the beginning was, the Word already existed

Here John points back to Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," to show exactly Who God is. The God of Genesis 1:1 is the Word of John 1:3, and everything which was created was created by Him! Creation itself was good, according to Genesis. And ... oh, by the way, the Word "became flesh"—taking on human form. Boom!

The Apostle picked up this same theme in 1 John 1:1-3:

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us—that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. (ESV, emphasis ours)

Each element of the passage is important in exposing false teaching, false teachers, and reestablishing orthodox teaching on the true God and salvation.

"That which was from the beginning' ... this beginning is the Greek word arché which may be used of time, but more has the idea of origin, source, initial starting point, preeminent. In other words, John is saying Christ Jesus is not an emanation of an emanation of an emanation, but that He *preexisted Creation* and is the *origin* or *source* of Creation and, therefore, He is *preeminent* over all. John wanted us truly to understand the disciples had thoroughly checked out Jesus and found Him to be genuine ...

- "...which we have heard..."—We audibly listened to Him with our physical ears
- "...which we have seen with our eyes..."—We clearly saw Him physically with our physical eyes
- "...have touched with our hands ..."—We touched, handled, rubbed, and were in close physical contact with His physical body with our physical hands.
- "...the life was made manifest ..."—This life appeared and could be seen and "we have seen it ..."
- "...testify to it ..."—We charge, give evidence, bear record

In this short passage, John writes that they saw or looked upon Jesus four times and heard twice! To what end? That you might believe in the *real Jesus* and:

"... that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ." (ESV)

Jesus is (and continues to be) a true physical being—not simply a phantasm, some mystical spiritual idea, or emanation—but was and is fully God in human form, as opposed to the false Christ of Gnosticism.

# The Creeds Were Formalized to Discredit False Teaching

The steady barrage of false teachers and teachings didn't end in the first century. The Early Church councils and creeds were formalized (put down in writing) to address the various ways false teachers and false prophets were distorting "the faith once delivered for all to the saints." (Jude 3) Each successive creed grew longer and more detailed to prevent false teachers from appropriating the language of the faith, redefining terms and, thus, twisting the Gospel beyond recognition. The Athanasian Creed was long and detailed, not only to assert orthodox belief, but also to define and describe details in each area addressed. As the Athanasian Creed<sup>2</sup> notes:

The Athanasian Creed is usually divided into two sections: lines 1–28 addressing the doctrine of the Trinity. and lines 29–44 addressing the doctrine of Christology. 141 Enumerating the three persons of the Trinity (i.e., Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit), the first section of the creed ascribes the divine attributes to each individually. Thus, each person of the Trinity is described as uncreated (increatus), limitless (immensus), eternal (æternus), and omnipotent (omnipotens).

While ascribing the divine attributes and divinity to each person of the Trinity, thus avoiding <u>subordinationism</u>, the first half of the Athanasian Creed also stresses the unity of the three persons in the one Godhead, thus avoiding a theology of <u>tritheism</u>. Furthermore, although one God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are distinct from each other. For the Father is neither made nor begotten; the Son is not made but is begotten from the Father; the Holy Spirit is neither made nor begotten but proceeds from the Father. Western churches include "and the Son" (filioque), a concept which Eastern and Oriental Orthodox reject.

As Paul had warned, the problem was not only false teachers creeping in from the outside, but also false teachers arising from within—such as Arius (250 or 256-336AD),<sup>3</sup> many of whose heretical views live on all these centuries later in Jehovah's Witness and others' cultic doctrines.

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Sadly, despite Paul's admonition to "shepherd the flock" in Acts 20:28, subsequent Church leaders did not "pay careful attention" to protect the true faith, but rather they seemed to get distracted by wealth and power. The Reformation came about to clear away the false doctrines that had taken hold over the centuries and reassert the true biblical Gospel, which the Roman Catholic Church had distorted and, thus, hidden from the people. Rome continues to hold fast to their error to this day—unrepentant and uncorrectable.

In our day, Rome is making a concerted effort to undo completely the Reformation by calling back to Catholicism their so-called "separated brethren." Sadly, they are making massive inroads in their ecumenism among Protestants who have long forgotten the essence of the true Gospel themselves, and who are flattered to be invited to take part in such a historic "reconciliation." It's very sad and very dangerous to the person in the pew who, perhaps, doesn't understand what the Reformation was all about, nor the importance of true doctrine. Many people believe that folks who call themselves Christian ARE in fact Christian. They have forgotten the solemn words of our LORD Who said:

"Not everyone who says to Me 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven." (Mt. 7:21, ESV) The will of the Father is that we hold fast to and defend "... the faith once for all delivered to the saints." (Jude 1:3, ESV)

# **Heresy Marching On**

There probably is not a time in history when false teachers were not staking their claim and infecting the faithful. Certainly, the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries have had their share. Shakers, Mormons (aka Church of Jesus Christ of Latterday Saints), Oneida Community, Second Adventists, Jehovah's Witnesses (aka JWs), Theosophy and *many others* have distorted the truth and led many astray. Hucksters and conmen such as Frank Sandford (1862-1948), John Alexander Dowie (1847—*Continued on page 6* 

# "Heresy" Continued from page 5

1907), and William Marion Branham (1909-1965) have done great damage as well. Some groups like the Branch Davidians (David Koresh) in Waco, Heaven's Gate (Marshall Applewhite), the People's Temple (Jim Jones), and the JWs (with their ban on blood transfusions) have proven *deadly* to their followers, but *all of them are spiritually deadly*.

What if someone came to your door, claimed to be a Christian, and said he was in full agreement with the statements below? Should we accept him as a fellow Christian?

- Jesus incarnated in human form
- He is God
- He was sinless
- He was crucified
- He was resurrected
- We are saved by grace through faith
- We can have eternal life

As it happens, the above beliefs are those of Mormonism. A Mormon would say that Jesus incarnated in human form. He was born on a planet near Kolob. He incarnated as a man in order to earn his godhood. He was sinless, crucified and was bodily raised. A Mormon may say we are saved by grace through faith—but here's the rub: The word salvation means to them the opportunity to be resurrected; while in their view, the concept of eternal life is something separate and must be earned through rituals and good works. Eternal life gives human beings the opportunity to earn godhood, just like their Jesus and all the other gods have done before him and will continue to do after him!

Obviously, this is not Christian doctrine. Sound biblical teaching and attention to definitions expose these ungodly teachings as those of false prophets leading their followers to worship false gods.

# Are Most American Christians Actually Heretics?

How are we doing in the twenty-first century? For some, perhaps for many, the October 2016 article, "Survey Finds Most American Christians Are Actually Heretics," appearing in *The Federalist*, was a shock to the evangelical system. Although many church leaders might think their churches are biblically sound, we at MCOI were not overly surprised. The article begins:

Evangelical writer Eric Metaxas remarked on *BreakPoint* last week that if Americans took a theology exam, their only hope of passing would be if God graded on a curve. He's right. In knowing both the content of the Bible and the doctrinal foundations of Christianity, we Americans aren't just at the bottom of our class. We are, as Ross Douthat argues in his book, "Bad Religion," [sic] a nation of heretics.

A survey of 3,000 people conducted by LifeWay Research and commissioned by Ligonier Ministries found that although Americans still overwhelmingly identify as "Christian," startling percentages of the nation embrace ancient errors condemned by all major Christian traditions. These are not minor points of doctrine, but core ideas that define Christianity itself. The really sad part? Even when we're denying the divinity of Christ, we can't keep our story straight. Americans talking about theology sound about as

# competent as country singers rapping.

Well, some might argue that a sampling of this size and scope would certainly include those of a more, shall we say, liberal or "progressive" persuasion. The answer is, of course, yes. With that in mind, they went back a year later with "more stringent criteria for evangelical faith" which was developed in conjunction with the National Association of Evangelicals. They ended up with some 586 in the survey. How did this one go?

Everyone expected them to perform better than most Americans. No one expected them to perform worse. Seven in ten evangelicals—more than the population at large—said that Jesus was the first being God created. Fifty-six percent agreed that "the Holy Spirit is a divine force but not a personal being." They also saw a huge increase in evangelicals (28 percent, up from 9 percent) who indicated that the Third Person of the Trinity is not equal with God the Father or Jesus, a direct contradiction of orthodox Christianity. The Holy Spirit is, of course, used to being overlooked. But sources say he seemed bummed about these results.

Would the average Christian today have the biblical knowledge to spot false teachings that deny the very faith they claim to hold? According to the above survey, no.

# AIDS and Christian Media

Unfortunately for pastors and elders today, many of the false teachers are preying on the flock through what was once thought of as Christian publications (magazines and books) and Christian media (radio and television).

One example is Mike Warnke's book Satan Seller, which was popular in the late 1970s and 1980s. It was published and marketed in 1978 with the claim of being a truthful account of his life as a high priest of Satan. Warnke was immediately launched into the "celebrity speaking circuit" in churches around the world. His book also shaped how Christians—who already believe in the existence of Satan-view modern Satanism. In turn, this created cottage industries of phony "deliverance ministries" and "Christian psychology" purveyors, where "repressed memories" of "Satanic Ritual Abuse" were "discovered" through hypnosis and other means. This Satanic panic in Christian circles was, incidentally, highly profitable to the providers of very expensive "recovery treatments" such as the highly popular Minirth-Meier Clinics and others. A person would visit a therapist for help with eating disorders and such, and end up convinced their fathers, brothers, pastors, and even mothers had subjected them to Satanic rituals in church basements. This is where they, themselves, sacrificed babies, sometimes their own, to Satan, even though they had no memories of these experiences before therapy. Ah, but they had *repressed these memories*—you see, *that's* why they couldn't remember!

Once the patient "recalled" their horrifying past, they could not be easily dissuaded from their delusion, even when even the simplest details of the "memories" could not be corroborated in any way. They had babies, *but no one recalls them being pregnant*. Moreover, their memories did not match up with those of siblings and/or friends who were there when all these horrors supposedly took place. In addition, there was zero substantiated evidence for their claims.

So sadly, before this craze subsided, many innocent fathers,

mothers, brothers, pastors, elders, teachers and myriad others had their reputations ruined by false accusations derived from this "repressed memory therapy." Many innocent people were even imprisoned! Where, exactly, does one go to get their life and reputation back from the ruins? Where do people go to put their fractured families back together? How does one ever face the parents and/or siblings they have falsely accused?

It has been proven the stories Warnke portrayed in his book, as well as other Satanic Panic books like Lauren Stratford's *Satan's Underground*, were utterly false. Mike Hertenstein and Jon Trott from *Cornerstone Magazine* set out to verify the claims and discovered that, indeed, Mike Warnke had fabricated *the entire tale*. They documented their findings in their 1993 book *Selling Satan: The Evangelical Media and the Mike Warnke Scandal*.

# Who is Minding the Store?

One can purchase excellent apologetics resources, such as Evidence That Demands a Verdict: Life-Changing Truth for a Skeptical World by Josh McDowell, and many other very helpful apologetic and/or devotional books in your local Christian bookstore. Unfortunately, one can also purchase heretical Word Faith teacher Benny Hinn's books like Good Morning, Holy Spirit in the very same store. Both books were published by Thomas Nelson Publishers. Why should we or anyone else object to Good Morning, Holy Spirit? Our friends Robert M. Bowman, Jr. and Paul Carden outline some of the more heretical problems:

That Hinn is presenting a novel view of the Trinity is implied when he informs us that "what I am about to share with you regarding the Godhead gave me an *entirely new picture* of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit" (81, emphasis added). In context [sic] this "entirely new picture" is evidently new to most Christians, and not something that was merely new at one time to Hinn. Thus [sic] he complains that "even dedicated ministers of the gospel [sic]" and "clergy" have misled the church in this matter. Throughout this key chapter [sic] Hinn claims that most ministers and Christians generally have ignored or even avoided the subject (81, 84, 89).

What is this new picture of the Trinity? According to the original version of the book (and even more explicitly in Hinn's sermon on the subject televised October 13, 1990, on TBN), God the Father and God the Holy Spirit, like God the Son, each is a real "person" in the sense that each has his own separate "Spirit, Soul, and Body" (the title of chapter 6, pp. 80-92).

Although this teaching is not absolutely new (it has been taught by F. J. Dake, Jimmy Swaggart, and others), it is new enough in most circles to account for Hinn's repeated claim that most Christians and even most ministers have ignored it.

According to Hinn, the Father "is eternal spirit yet with nonmaterial form" (81, 1st ed.), having "the appearance... of a man," described by the prophets as having such "features" as lips, tongue, breath, eyesight, and a back (82). "To my amazement I found that God has the likeness of fingers and hands and a face" (82, 1st ed.). To document that God has a soul in addition to his spirit and body, Hinn notes that in Scripture "God also has a heart" (83).<sup>5</sup>

As you can see, this goes way beyond simple disagreement about whether sign gifts are meant for Christians today, and it

gallops right off into denying the very nature of God! It took Robert M. Bowman, Jr. and Paul Carden meeting with Hinn and having a "consultation" with Thomas Nelson Publishers, after seven editions and 350,000 copies had already been printed and sold, before any changes were made.

Thomas Nelson Publishers also gave us Gwen Shamblin's book *Rise Above*, and they aided and abetted her growth and heretical teaching among evangelical churches through the printing and sale of over 185,000 copies before she came to our attention. In her book, Gwen Shamblin and Thomas Nelson Publishers introduced Shamblin's newly imagined god to Christian women. He might be called the heavenly Sean Connery:

God is so good-looking, so athletic, so powerful, and so charming that upon first sight, we would all immediately bow down and adore Him. So He made Himself invisible to make the contest a little more fair. On top of that, He is such a humble gentleman that He took us to Egypt and allowed us to meet His rival face-to-face.<sup>7</sup>

The god she sells to her unsuspecting followers evidently believes in fair play, but he is also very naïve and limited in knowledge:

He is going to let us "date around" - that's plan A - so we can appreciate what a great choice He is. But unfortunately, some of His children - in fact, a *lot* of His children - have lost their focus and become distracted, and therefore found their hearts enslaved to Egypt, with no idea of how to get out of this relationship. This was not part of Plan A. So God had to resort to Plan B: a duel - a boxing match - a fight.8

According to Gwen, her god has a "magic chair" which gives the one sitting in it power. Gwen's god, we are informed, is sometimes "out of the office" (we are not sure where he goes.) When he is absent, sometimes Satan goes into his office and sits in his "magic chair" and rather enjoys the power which the chair provides. One day, god caught Satan in the "magic chair;" but Satan said he was "sorry," and Gwen's naïve gullible god believed him and sent him on his way.

Gwen Shamblin managed to get into over 30,000 churches across 60 denominations. Over one-million churchgoers had attended her seminars at \$105.00 each (that is, for the first time, in addition to other materials, conferences, etc. which were available for purchase). Well over one hundred million dollars was brought into her coffers! To add insult to injury, she taught her followers that their churches—the very ones who invited her in—were apostate; and she drew many out of their church and into her group—The Remnant Fellowship. Oy vey!

After we issued a press release about Gwen Shamblin, *Christianity Today* contacted Gwen Shamblin for her comment. She told them something to the effect that women don't care about doctrine; they just want to lose weight! That seems to have been the catalyst that led Thomas Nelson Publishers and Gwen Shamblin to part ways ... just before they were to ship her third book *Out of Egypt* to the bookstores.

# False teachers on the Internet

We admit to having a love/hate relationship with the internet and technology in general. It can be so very useful, even for getting out the Gospel; but it also can be incredibly dangerous to one's spiritual health—especially to a person not securely grounded in the faith. The internet, which has grown to be a —Continued on page 22



# Introduction

Millenarian movements have existed within the Native American community since at least the fifteenth century and culminated in the Ghost Dance movement of the nineteenth century. The Ghost Dance originally was a movement focusing on preserving Native American culture; but by 1890, the rapacious behavior of European settlers led it to become radicalized into an apocalyptic death cult by the Lakota Sioux Nation.<sup>2</sup>

The movement's ideology is still relevant to Native Americans today despite the dance not being performed publicly since the 1970's. However, with the rise in the number of people looking to Native American faith as a personal path to God, the Ghost Dance ideology of the Sioux is being hijacked by the New Age movement and re-radicalized into an environmentalist death cult.

Pascal-Emmanuel Gobry of *The Week Magazine* argues:

Environmentalism sometimes has a little bit of a whiff of a death cult. It sometimes leans towards an antihuman worldview, one that views the Earth goddess as the only valuable 'life-form' and humans as parasites. And it sometimes feels like more of a fundamentalist religion than anything else.<sup>3</sup>

Interestingly, the New Age Goddess movement, otherwise known as Wicca, appears to be the fastest-growing religion in America according to the *Atlantic Magazine*. Wicca and Native American spirituality have similar beliefs about the relationship shared between humans and nature, thus adding more potential recruits to this ever-growing, environmentalist death cult.

This paper will outline how the Native American views environmental issues, and how the Ghost Dance movement has evolved since the nineteenth century. We will also discuss why the Ghost Dance is not an obsolete ideology and continues to inspire Native Americans. Finally, we will examine how the New Age Movement has hijacked millenarian, Native American prophecies and are using them as an apologetic to further the agenda of the growing international environmentalist death cult.

# **Background**

According to Encyclopedia Britannica:

Millenarianism is the belief that the end of the world is imminent and that a new heaven or new earth will replace the old one. Among the new religions birthed in the United States were the Seventh-day Adventists and the Jehovah's Witnesses, both the products of millenarian fervor set off in the mid-19th century by William Miller (1782–1849).<sup>5</sup>

Millenarianism also underlies the New Age movement that arose in the 1970s and '80s. The New Age movement is an extremely eclectic conglomeration of beliefs and practices that includes channeling, crystal healing, new versions of shamanism, and a variety of therapies and techniques designed to 'transform' the individual into a 'higher consciousness.' The movement as a whole optimistically presumes that the world has entered, or is on the verge of entering, a 'New Age' (sometimes referred to as the 'Age of Aquarius') of unprecedented spiritual possibilities.<sup>6</sup>

# **Discussion**

In a September 2017 article in *Indian Country Today*, Chief Arvol Looking Horse, of the Lakota, Dakota, and Nakota Nations published a millenarian warning about the impact America is making on Mother Earth.

Look around you. Our Mother Earth is very ill from these violations, and we are on the brink of destroying the possibility of a healthy and nurturing survival for generations to come, our children's children.<sup>7</sup>

In our prophecies [sic] it is told that we are now at the crossroads: Either unite spiritually as a global nation, or be faced with chaos, disasters, diseases, and tears from our relatives' eyes. ... I ask you to join me on this endeavor. Our vision is for the peoples of all continents, regardless of their beliefs in the Creator, to come together as one at their Sacred Sites to pray and meditate and commune with one another, thus promoting an energy shift to heal our Mother Earth and achieve a universal consciousness toward attaining Peace.

The statement, "Either unite spiritually as a global nation, or be faced with chaos, disasters, diseases, and tears..." is startling in that this is exactly what is happening today. Many people are leaving the fundamental elements of the Abrahamic religions and are embracing the Occult. About a quarter of U.S. adults (27%) now say they think of themselves as spiritual but not religious, which is up eight percentage points in five years, according to a 2016 Pew Research Center survey.

Many of these "spiritual" people consider the Native American faith as their personal path to God. However, in the New Age Movement, there are many paths to God; and no one path is wrong or right. Yet, there is a common theme advanced within this movement that unites all the different paths: the human race and nature have a symbiotic, mutualistic relationship that must remain in balance. New Age spirituality promotes the belief that the human spirit longs for equilibrium—an equilibrium that can only be achieved when one's spirit is aligned with nature.

### The Rainbow Warrior

The Rainbow Warrior Movement is an example of how people in the New Age Movement are uniting for the environment. Members believe the movement is the fulfillment of the Native American Rainbow Tribe prophecy— a prophecy that is shared not only by American Indians, but also by people across the world. There are different terms for this movement, but the prophecies are similar in noting that they will gather in the Western lands, they will be comprised of people made up of the four races, and they will come together to consolidate the total knowledge of humanity as one. 10 We have seen the fulfillment of this with politicians, environmental groups and civil rights groups joining the effort at Standing Rock, including the Black Lives Matter Movement, indigenous leaders from the Amazon Basin of South America, Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders, the 2016 Green Party presidential candidate Jill Stein and her running mate Ajamu Baraka, and many more.11

# From Millenarianism to Apocalyptic Death Cults

Religious beliefs vary between Native American tribes, but there is a widespread panentheist belief in a Great Spirit who created the earth and pervades everything. It is linked to animism, which sees kindred spirits in all animals and plants. Therefore, Native Americans, like Chief Looking Horse, believe humans have a synergistic relationship with nature; and if the balance of nature is lost, we will be facing a catastrophe of apocalyptic proportions. In order to maintain this balance, sacrifices must be given back to nature before man can take of the land, and plans need to be made to ensure that resources are not depleted. 13

Native American Millenarian Movements before the nineteenth century were focused primarily on returning to traditional native ways of life and no longer embracing the ways of the white man.<sup>14</sup> However, by the late nineteenth century, the buffalo—a sacred animal and the primary source of food for Native Americans—was almost extinct as a result of the rapacious behavior of European settlers in the West.

The Ghost Dance apocalyptic Millenarian Movement was a response to this catastrophe and was meant as a source of hope by its founder, Wovoka of the Paiute Nation. Wovoka received this divine revelation from the Great Spirit while under an altered state of consciousness, which he himself had induced

during the solar eclipse of 1889. The prophecy given states the following:

... the Indian race, living or dead, will soon be reunited upon a regenerated earth, to live a life of aboriginal happiness, forever free from death, disease, and misery.

Although originally a peaceful religion calling for coexistence with the whites, several years of the prophecy not coming true led to the radicalization of the Ghost Dance Doctrine by the Lakota Sioux Nation. By 1890, it became a death cult calling for the extermination of all Europeans. This caused great paranoia within the United States government and the subsequent Wounded Knee Massacre.

Wicca and Native American
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environmentalist death cult.

Today the Ghost Dance is no longer performed, except possibly clandestinely, but the ideology remains active in the hearts and minds of Native Americans and especially the Lakota Sioux. We see the embodiment of this ideology in the Standing Rock protests.

What is concerning, however, is that as America continues to break away from its Christian-Judaeo heritage and embraces more and more of the New Age Occult, more people will be experimenting with various forms of altered states of consciousness, which was the foundation of Wovoka's Ghost Dance movement. We saw this pattern emerge in Standing Rock as we saw people of many faiths participating in other Native American circle dances,<sup>21</sup> all of which are meant to induce an ecstatic state of frenzy to reach into the spirit world.<sup>22</sup>

# The Emerging Environmentalist Death Cult

Some among the Native American community and Progressive media perceived the 2016 election of Donald Trump as a huge blow to Native American culture and spirituality. According to Rosalyn LaPier of Harvard Divinity School, historically, indigenous peoples used the natural seasonal cycles of weather, plants and animals as part of their liturgical or religious calendar. The U.S. government made certain Native American religious practices illegal in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Although these policies have since been rescinded, they led to changes in many indigenous practices. Today, Native Americans feel the environmental changes

# "Ghost Dance" Continued from page 9

occurring as a result of "climate change" have forced them to modify their religious rituals, and it is becoming a crisis of apocalyptic proportions.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, Trump's embrace of the oil and gas industry, approval of the Dakota Access Pipeline, and rollback of federal land protection for Bears Ears National Monument and Grand Staircase-Escalante is seen as just another attempt by the U.S. government to prevent Native Americans from practicing their religion.

Brandan O'Neill, editor of the online magazine *spiked*, wrote in his article in *The Guardian*:

... environmentalism is by far the most influential death cult in existence today. It is inculcating in the masses the idea that the end of the world is nigh; that we shall be punished for our sins; that penance is our earthly duty; and that anyone who says or thinks otherwise is a 'heretic' or a 'denier' who should be held up to public ridicule.<sup>24</sup>

Trump and those who are associated with his policies are being demonized by the progressive media, but do we really understand the underlying reason for this disdain?

"Climate change denial should be a crime," declared Mark Hertsgaard in a September 2017 article in *The Nation* titled "Climate Denialism Is Literally Killing Us." Hertsgaard, *The Nation's* environment correspondent and investigative editor, is just one of a growing number of people in the Environmentalist Movement who believe "murder is murder" and "we should punish it as such."

The Rainbow Warrior Movement is one example of how the New Age Movement has hijacked Native American prophecies; but as a bunch of ragtag hippies, the movement shouldn't be of great concern to Christians. Rather, it's the more mainstream organizations, who legitimately study and practice under Native American religious leaders, that warrant more investigation.

# Has the Environmentalist Movement been Hijacked by the New Age?

The radicalization of the Environmentalist Movement by individuals such as Hertsgaard and groups like Greenpeace begs the question of how we got here. Is Native American spirituality and the Ghost Dance ideology to blame? Richard White (Stanford professor specializing in Native American History) argues that it is presumptuous to make all Native Americans synonymous with "ecology." Native American environmentalism must be studied in the context of the latenineteenth century. Otherwise Native American concerns are trivialized to conform to modern attitudes.

In many Native American cosmologies, all life was the result of the cosmic union between Mother Earth and Father Sky. Therefore, meddling with the future of other beings was serious business. Many rituals were performed before any hunting took place and often sacrifices were made to be reclaimed by the powers of the sun.<sup>27</sup> The balance between nature and man needed to be carefully maintained. Native Americans believe market-based/capitalist economic systems of the European settlers led to socio-political power struggles of the nineteenth century, which subsequently led to the imbalance of this relationship between man and nature.<sup>28</sup>

The main focus of Native American concerns at that time was the total disregard for the conservation of the sacred buffalo by European settlers. However, by the mid-twentieth century, as more and more people began to embrace native spirituality, the Ghost Dance began to appeal to the Counter-culture Movement, moved beyond a conservationist focus, and became a symbol of rebellion against the U.S. government and its environmental policies.

However, many Native American fundamentalists look at the New Age Movement as "culturicide," a term coined in Indian country to mean "the systematic destroying of cultural value on the basis of ethnicity, religion, political beliefs, social status, or other particularities." <sup>29</sup> In fact, at a 1993 international gathering of US and Canadian Lakota, Dakota, and Nakota Nations, about 500 representatives from 40 different tribes and bands of the Lakota unanimously passed a "Declaration of War Against Exploiters of Lakota Spirituality." <sup>30</sup> In contrast to the syncretism\* of the New Age, the "right" religion for you is determined by your nationality in Native American life. <sup>31</sup>

Many of the Lakota Sioux hate the Rainbow Warrior Movement referred to earlier in this article. Every year the Rainbow Family of Light has held love fest gatherings in the Black Hills of South Dakota; thereby, desecrating the sacred land with 5,000 to 20,000 hippies who dig trench latrines, fire pits, and kitchens. These people see themselves as Native Americans despite not understanding the Native American faith.<sup>32</sup>

The Rainbow Warrior Movement is one example of how the New Age Movement has hijacked Native American prophecies; but as a bunch of ragtag hippies, the movement shouldn't be of great concern to Christians. Rather, it's the more mainstream organizations, who legitimately study and practice under Native American religious leaders, that warrant more investigation. These groups include the Center for Planetary Culture and the Theosophical Society.

# Philosophical Transitions in Environmental Science: From Christianity to Psychedelics and Catalepsy

Unlike Hertsgaard, the Center for Planetary Culture and the Theosophical Society are not as openly visceral in their disdain for climate-change deniers, but their philosophy is certainly contributing to the power of the global environmentalist death cult. They are giving a new religious perspective to the scientific analyses of man's supposed impact on the environment. Many of the first scientists—like Kepler, Newton, and Bacon—were strong Christians and looked at science and human life through the lens of truth in the Bible. During the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, however, more materialistic philosophies were applied to science and led to a subsequent devaluation of

human life. Since the 1960's, the Counter-culture Movement and its associated spirituality has become more influential in society's view of the environment and in governmental legislation.

# **Center for Planetary Culture**

Daniel Pinchbeck, who founded the Center for Planetary Culture, is a perfect example of this transition. Pinchbeck's parents were deeply rooted in the New York counter-culture of the 1950s and 1960s<sup>33</sup>, and he routinely takes the psychedelic, tryptamine-brew ayahuasca as part of his religious rituals.<sup>34</sup> Ayahuasca, which originates from the Amazon basin and has similar properties to Native American peyote, is used to enter into an altered state of consciousness so as to reach the spirit world for esoteric knowledge. However, it can cause vicious bouts of vomiting, diarrhea, and delirium; thereby, making one more susceptible to confusion and hallucinations.<sup>35</sup> But to Pinchbeck, the materialism of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has caused the world to forfeit "intuitive aspects of it's being;" thereby suggesting that ayahuasca is the ultimate pathway to gnosis.<sup>36</sup>

According to Penguin Random House Publishing, Pinchbeck has written for many publications, including *Esquire*, *The New York Times Magazine*, *The Village Voice*, and *Rolling Stone*. In 1994, he was chosen by *The New York Times Magazine* as one of "**Thirty Under Thirty**" destined to change our culture through his literary magazine *Open City*.<sup>37</sup> In addition to this, Pinchbeck has written many influential books such as *2012*: *The Return of Quetzalcoatl*, which chronicles Mayan and Hopi Indian prophecies.

According to the society and culture website *Ancient Origins*:

... the Hopi Indians believe that we have suffered three previous world cataclysms. The First World was destroyed by fire—a comet, asteroid strike, or a number of volcanic eruptions. The Second World was destroyed by ice—a great Ice Age. As recorded by many cultures around the globe, a tremendous deluge destroyed the Third World. These three global destructions were not the result of merely random earth changes or astrophysical phenomena but of humankind's disregard both for Mother Earth and for the spiritual dictates of the Creator.<sup>38</sup>

This would suggest that the Hopi Indians and those that believe in their prophecies do not view the cyclical behavior of global temperature as a natural phenomenon. Their religious perspective has determined their worldview; and, therefore, any discussions initiated by the Christian believer regarding the environment must be tailored to this point.

# Theosophical Society

Interestingly, former Assistant Secretary General of the United Nations Robert Muller was considered an elder within the Hopi Nation before his death in 2010. Muller was the first to allow a Native American Nation (the Hopi) to speak at the U.N., 39 and he used their prophecies as an apologetic to further the agenda of his religious environmentalism. But why did he embrace their prophecies? An examination of his philosophical and religious background in Theosophy will explain this.

Theosophy is a religion and a form of western esotericism. It was established in the United States during the late nineteenth century by Russian émigré Helena Blavatsky, and it draws

its beliefs largely from Blavatsky's writings.<sup>40</sup> Alice Bailey was one of the most influential members of Blavatsky's Theosophical Society<sup>41</sup> and greatly influenced Muller. In fact, within Muller's 1982 book *New Genesis*, the chapter heading "The Reappearance of the Christ" was taken directly from Alice Bailey's book of the same name. But Bailey's "Cosmic Christ" is not the Christ of the Bible; and, in fact, those familiar with Bailey's work know her books were all directly channeled from the spirit world through a "Tibetan spirit-guide" named "Djwhal Khul."<sup>42</sup>

Muller was known by some as "the philosopher of the United Nations"<sup>43</sup> and based his Global Education and World Core Curriculum initiative on the teachings set forth in the books of Alice Bailey who channeled the Tibetan spirit-guide Djwhal Khul.<sup>44</sup> Bailey taught that the "World Spiritual Teacher" (the Buddha of the future and the Jesus of the past—the "Maitreya") would soon appear and lead the world into the Age of Aquarius; and it was the task of her disciples to "prepare the way for His imminent appearance."<sup>45</sup>

Unfortunately, Muller used his Catholic mystical practices of Contemplative Prayer to induce an altered state of consciousness to gain further esoteric messages. In his 1985 book *Most of All, They Taught Me Happiness*, Muller states:

... prayer, meditation, and the silent contemplation of nature, reborn each day under the sun's glory, bring us in direct communion with God and the universe.<sup>46</sup>

Here we see how Muller integrated his Catholic upbringing into a worship of nature by following the panentheist belief that God permeates all of nature. Muller's identification with "Catholicism" and "Christianity" is ultimately empty and very deceptive. He had more in common with the religious beliefs of the Hopi Indians than he ever did with mainline Christianity.

# Conclusion

# The Evolution of Radicalized Native Millenarian Movements and the New EcoMarxist Frontier

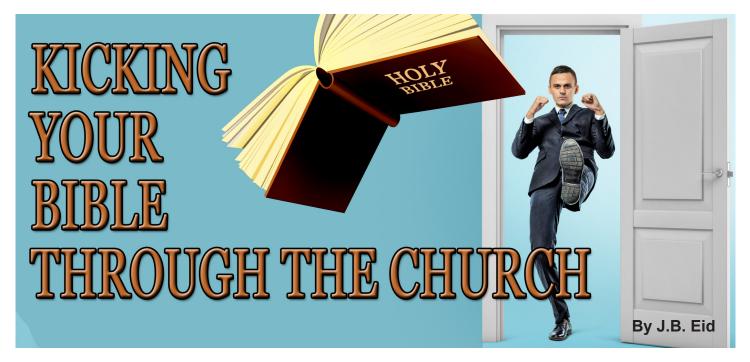
Radicalized, native, apocalyptic Millenarian Movements in the late nineteenth century were primarily focused on eradicating the white man. However, the twentieth century's fusion of Native American spirituality with Buddhism, under the umbrella of the New Age, has caused native millenarianism to evolve into a global environmentalist death cult that calls for the eradication of climate-change deniers. These two religions are considered Earth religions, and they are united around the belief that God permeates nature with humanity being an integral part of nature.

Luckily, globalist organizations like the United Nations do not have the power to enforce worldwide, climate-change regulations. This is most likely because they do not control a global currency. However, as Marxist groups such as the Antifa (short for Anti-fascist) gain more and more influence within the counter-culture, we can expect an EcoMarxist power base to build within the global environmentalist death cult.

Until quite recently, there was a common myth that Marx and Engels (founders of Communist thought) had nothing useful to say about the environment. But an examination of historical documents proves this not to be the case. For example, in his 1844 *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, Marx wrote:

Man lives on nature--means that nature is his body, with which he must remain in continuous interchange if he is not to die. That man's physical and spiritual life

—Continued on page 20



f people were found kicking their Bibles through the church, there would be a good question to ask: Should those people bring their Bibles to church in the first place?

Before you dismiss the question out of hand—assuming the scenario implausible—do not trivialize its answer, because the path to both the question and its answer can lead to conclusions with unintended consequences or an affirmation of questionable Bible use. The genesis of the question starts with my observation as a Children Service Coordinator at my home church. As Charles Dickens might say, the story began at the beginning which is when I noticed a youngster kicking a Bible down the church hallway. This observation then probes the question "Should the Bible be brought to church?"

# **Kicking Your Bible Through the Church**

At church on Sunday, I was sitting at my Children's Service Coordinator post for grades first-fourth when I started to think about in what I was actually sitting. Do you remember the teacup of a school desk you would wriggle around in when you were in first or second grade? Remember how its desktop seemed to extend into infinity, while its cave-like cubby would hold the empty cigar box in which you would put your crayons, scissors and paste? When you opened the box, the sweet savor of unlit cherry tobacco, crayon wax, and Elmer's Glue would plume forth indelibly etching the memory in your mind. Of course, in addition to the makeshift crayon box, you also had room for one big folder, and two large pencils. Behind that, you could conceal just about any toy, hairbrush, or comic book you may have inadvertently smuggled in from home. A few weeks ago, I saw the desk in the corner of a room at the back of the church. It seemed to have that character from a time long past, so I dusted it off and put it to use.

When first I sat in it, images of Mr. Jackson's third-grade class came into focus—straight desks, straight orders, and straight creases on his shirt and pants complementing his shined shoes. Discipline was a key element in his class; but honestly, our strict teacher was as firm as he was fair. For example, if anyone needed to use the restroom, you couldn't ask—not verbally. Instead, you had to hold up your hand with your thumb and pointer finger

extended about two inches apart, making you look like you were a crab that was about to pinch something or someone. He said the little distance between your thumb and index finger would be a signal to him that you needed a little time to use the restroom. Thinking back, I have to say this was a pretty smart system, because there was never an interruption for a bathroom request. There would only be that silent signal from you to him; and at the right time, he would silently nod to you, and only then could you leave class to go take care of your business.

Given that example, I'm sure it wouldn't surprise you that Mr. Jackson had rules for just about everything. Now, in hindsight, I can see how his particular rules were part of bigger systems that were used not only to teach us more than content, but also character.

Disciplinarian that he was, he also had a sense of pleasantness in regard to any infraction which occurred. That was fortunate for me, because I found myself experiencing his systems sooner than most. In fact, I think I was the third or fourth child to be forced to participate in his dreaded "Worker" system. The Worker was simply this: Writing down your schedule for the day including the school work that was assigned. The catch was that all of it had to be written in cursive using his special "Worker" form. This form forced me to keep my letters to a certain size and quality. If it was sloppy or words were written outside of the boxes, he would give me a new form, and I would have to do it all over. At first, I felt a little picked on; but by the end of the school year, even the angels hovering over the classroom were forced to participate in his "Worker" system as penance for falling short of his endless set of class rules. While possibly this proved that misery loves company, the object lesson taught the whole class to use good penmanship and take accountability for our schedules and daily work. Fast-forward 30-plus years and I still use his "Worker" system; only now, I simply call it a daily planner. Interesting how a task I come to depend on now seemed to signal a thread of cruelty from him back then.

When I sat in the desk at church last Sunday, I realized I could barely fit both elbows on what now feels like an upright TV tray, but it works to establish my Service Coordinator post.

As cartoonish as it sounds, this is the desk in which I sit each week so I can keep an eye on those two key (long) hallways. The hallway to my left has a full view of its 50-yard length, which ends at the playground doors. Don't our lambs love to play? The other hall right in front of me is the main hallway, another 50 yards in length, ending with the double doors that lead into the welcome area. Just to my right is the multipurpose room we use for the childrens' main lesson. Behind me is an emergency exit. It is a great position for greeting people who come from several directions. I suppose I call it a "post" from my military experience and, since they give me a walkietalkie for emergencies, it can feel like a security position at times. Sitting behind this little desk makes me feel like the Goliath of hall monitors—especially being the bald, bearded and mustached man that I am. Still, I see the position as being an ambassador for both God and His Church.

It is always a surprise to see who appears from behind the main hallway double doors. The doors will pop open, and

sometimes I'll see a glimpse of parents and other people finishing their talk in the general area where they get coffee, information, and even pray together. Some people come through the doors as a family. They walk the 50yard stretch to drop off their child for the Sunday's children's lesson. From time to time, I'll see children shoot through the double doors and quickly disappear into the volunteer refreshment area, which is in the same hallway. I know some of those children are volunteers, and some are not. In my opinion, missing cupcakes is nothing worthy of reporting on the walkie-talkie. After all, God is watching.

If it's slow, you may find equickly "natrolling" the refres

me quickly "patrolling" the refreshment area. I try to tidy up the room if it is empty of people. Who knows, with five children of my own, the mess could have been from one of mine. Seeing a generous spread of refreshments, I might grab some granola and possibly a bagel; but I love the blueberries. Back at my post, I see a lot of individual women and a few men escorting their children all the way to the door to my right just to make sure they get to class. Other children are simply scooted through the double doors. This is possibly a good way to test their independence, but it does more than that. After all, if the child can make it past the berries, bagels and granola volunteer area without appropriating a muffin, and past the indoor playroom "Tubes and Tunnels" without a detour, then they've passed quite a test. I feel it strengthens their resolve against greater temptations. Some guardians pass their little ones through the doors and verbally usher them down the hall, past the blueberry temptation, past the tubes and tunnels, all the while watching from the doorway. They'll probably see me waving to their little girl as she cautiously makes her way through the hallway journey by herself. Other girls are totally opposite and almost dance the whole way. I've been known to say, "no cartwheels please!" Often you'll see some boy slowly

strutting this stretch of tan tiled flooring, kicking up a squeak from his shoes ever so often, knowing he has a giant mustached smile of a leader waiting to greet him in. I'll usually give them all—girls and boys—a fist bump on their way in. After all, high-fives would show my age. I wouldn't look "cool," that is if "cool" is even a cool word anymore. Truthfully, back in my day, the fist bump looked the same, but it sounded like this: "Wonder Twin Powers ... Activate!" (Our modern version of the fist bump sort of explodes in the air.) Then they'll head into the room for a Godly lesson, never knowing we first had the "fist bump" a generation (or two) before ... Shh ... don't say a word, it wouldn't be cool ...

Last Sunday, one of the boys was "doing his strut" down our main hallway, and he dropped his Bible. No biggie I thought. It's the Word in the book that is most important. I've dropped my Bible before, but I always felt a little awkward when I did; and so I would try to snatch it up quick, hoping it wasn't damaged. There is something in me that demands a semblance of respect for the Good book which has the Good Word written in it. In

this instance, rather than pick up his Bible, the boy proceeded to kick it the rest of the way down the hall. This wasn't the kick that would strategically maneuver the ball past a defender in a game of soccer ... as if that would make it any better; but it was a kick you would use to move an uncertain piece of trash closer to the street where the rest of the trash was. There were a few people around me to whom I was talking. They didn't see it, but I was watching the hallway as a whole. I had no idea how I could articulate this moment to his mom, but I had my mobile phone handy, so I chose to take a quick video for her to see later on. I also took a moment to correct him. I know

his mom and, while I rarely take videos, I felt it would help in this instance

After service, I spoke with his mom. I said I have some news. She said, "News?" I said, "Yes, some of it is even good," as I laughed to ease the tension. The good news is that he brought his Bible. That is the good news and that is great. Out of the hundreds of children who come, he is one of the very few who even brings his Bible. The not-so-good news is that he was kicking it down the hall, and I shared the video hoping she would also see the demeanor in how he kicked it—as if how he kicked it made it better or worse. Indeed, she appreciated the short video. Of course, I explained I would delete the video for privacy concerns and respect etc.; but then she asked a very good question. She asked, "Should he even bring his Bible?" I was honest and said, "I would never tell anyone not to bring their Bible anywhere." Then I said, "If the question is: 'Is he or anyone else actually reading from the Bible as a book, particularly while here in Sunday school?' I would have to think about that." Of course, the fact I have to think about this point signals a problem.

Each Sunday, we have such a tight lesson, and yet, I have —Continued on page 14

Out of the hundreds of children

who come, he is one of the very

few who even brings his Bible.

The not-so-good news is that he

was kicking it down the hall . . .

# "Kicking Bible" Continued from page 13

rarely seen a lesson that actually requires us to open the Bible. If reading the Bible is in the lesson plan, I've observed that it is listed in the very last section of the lesson and, generally, only as an option. During both the main lesson and breakouts, every detail of our children's service is forward positioned; and honestly, we either lack the time or the Bibles themselves to teach them how to open and read from them. We do have the one Bible memory verse we work on all month long. It is written on the whiteboard in each classroom. There is one Bible for every six children in the classrooms, but not enough for each child. There is the lesson video, which usually has a cartoon animation of the Bible opening up, and that video lesson is Bible-based, so these are good things! Nevertheless, because of the lesson, actually opening up the Bible (a hard or digital copy) is not something our sheep are experiencing.

Object lessons are so powerful. This is probably why Jesus used so many of them to teach. The cross itself is an

object lesson. Opening the Bible in front of the children is also an object lesson. Taking the time for our lambs to open their Bible and read from it is applying that object lesson. If you do not apply the object lesson, you'll forget it. It seems our lesson plan doesn't allow the time for the children to apply what could be a short and brief application of the object lesson, which is "Opening the Bible, and reading from it." This is important, because God's inerrant Word is in the Bible. The full Bible is needed. because the greater context of the Bible is necessary to understand correctly God's Word. Some churches and even

their greater denomination leadership are selectively choosing what to include and exclude from God's Word. Does this lead to big problems? Just read the news if you need an example.

As a problem solver, I'm quick to spot one and try to fix it. To solve this problem, I brought in my own Bibles—almost two cases of Bibles stuffed in a rolling tool chest. I integrated it into the breakout lesson I lead. It takes some energy to bring 50+ Bibles in a big container, distribute them, and collect them back at the end. Quite often, our volunteer help calls in sick or doesn't show up; so I may be all by myself, not negating the needed help I get from my son who is about the same age as those in the class I teach. To add to the challenge, sometimes parents give their child/children big, sugary doughnuts right before Sunday school, or we may even provide those or some candy beforehand. With that dose of energy, they can get wild and tough to manage. Toting 50+ Bibles around can wear on anyone. In addition to those challenges, there is some time wasted getting a child to understand what a Bible is, how to open it, and/or how to find the Scripture reference being studied. Let me rephrase that: There is some "initial" time lost doing this; but over time, it becomes seamless and feels integrated with the plan.

Over the past six months, I decided not to bring in my Bible tool chest. With the logistics of toting that big thing around, people shooting me looks when I do, and the other issues, I thought to myself, "Well, let me work the lesson plans a little more." The normal lesson plans we are provided often have object lessons that are game-like and "fun," and so I thought, "Why not work that plan and leave the Bibles at the house? After all, the fun activities are used to help the children come closer to God, which is also a good thing." Then I thought about that Bible being kicked down the hall last Sunday, and I wondered. I wondered what is lost by not incorporating the object lesson of demonstrating opening the Bible and putting forth the real expectation they will be opening their Bible and reading from it as part of the application of this important object lesson. I wonder how it impacts the child's Bible life at home when they do not read their Bibles at church and vice versa. This is not to say the opening of their Bible is more powerful than the message within. However, with so many groups misappropriating God's

Word these days, if people do not know where is the source of God's Word, and how to get to it, what downstream impact does it have?

This brings me to the point: How should we advise parents if they ask, "Should my child bring their Bible? If my child brings their Bible, will they open it? If they open it, will they read from it?"

Our answer to their questions, about their children bringing their Bible, could have a domino effect. Imagine this answer: "Yes, they should bring their Bible. Yes, they will open it; and yes, they will be reading from it." The domino effect could look like this: The

parent may next ask: "As a parent, should I bring my Bible? If I bring my Bible, will I open it? If I opened it, will I read from it in a significant way justifying my bringing it?" If the answer to these questions is "Yes," it could definitely start a positive ripple effect.

On the other hand, there is a different ripple effect. I recall a mentor of mine from up north once said: "I don't bring my Bible to church. The preacher talks so fast, by the time I open up to a verse, he is on to a wholly different and new one; and then I'm totally lost, trying to play catch up, and I miss the message. So I do better to listen, and just leave my Bible at home."

"Well, who hasn't had that happen?" I thought. Moreover, since Bible snippets are shown up on the big screen, it supplements my missing Bible whether its absence is intentional or not. Of course, as handy as big-screen, Bible-verse snippets are, they negate the need to bring the Bible, but at what cost. The less I bring my Bible to church, the less I open it. The less I open my Bible, the less I read my Bible. The less I read my Bible, the less I share it; the less my children read it; it becomes less relevant in our lives. It is sort of a weird cycle, and I wonder if the net effect is the Bible—as the ark that carries God's Word—has no

Object lessons are so powerful. This is probably why Jesus used so many of them to teach. The cross itself is an object lesson. Opening the Bible in front of the children is also an object lesson. Taking the time for our lambs to open their Bible and read from it is applying that object lesson.

significance in church. I wonder if this is part of the reason many churches are not standing upon God's Word. Drip-by-drip, are people neglecting God's Word simply by not opening the Bible? Maybe that is too simplistic of a view.

As I reflected on the boy, I realized something. I realized he was simply outwardly acting upon an action (or inaction) he had seen and internalized from the adults around him-myself included—and drip-by-drip, this all happened right before our eyes ... right before my eyes.

What is the cost of not applying the example of opening our Bibles in the church? If we opened our Bibles in church, would there be a greater chance that we would open our Bibles outside of church? If we opened our Bibles outside of the church, would there be a greater chance of sharing God's light, His Word, and our Bibles with others who are also outside of the Church? Shouldn't we design our messages to allow a place for the Bible back into the church? Should the lesson be designed to give the people who make up the church a reason to bring God's Word with them, a reason to open their Bibles and, at minimum, a brief time to read them in church? If it is not the case, then answer this with certainty: Is it unnecessary for us to bring our Bibles to church? If we don't read them, what is the point? The Bible would be a token idea or possibly even itself an idol. If Bibles in the church are deemed unnecessary, what does that mean? If Bibles in the modern church are, indeed, unnecessary, how do we reconcile this new truth with the dangerous reality of the radical views in our world today? How many of us are mentally kicking our real Bible down the church hallway?

How do we reconcile those questions above with the following verses? Have you kicked your Bible down the hallway recently? I, myself, I am guilty of doing so. Lord, forgive me.

Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of *Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching.* (1 Timothy 4:13)

But he answered, "It is written, "'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God." (Matthew 4:4)

For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have *hope.* (Romans 15:4)

For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. (Hebrews 4:12)

But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. (Psalm 1:2)

All Bible quotes are from the ESV (English Standard Version) of the Bible..



JB Eid is the Christian author of the book Son of Jacob: 8 Crosses To Identity and serves in a leadership role at New Orleans' largest church. JB is the father of five boys whose ages span a generation, giving him and his wife a unique view of the challenges facing the Christian family.

# And Have No Fellowship With The Unfruitful Works of Darkness, But Rather.

~Ephesians 5:11 NKJV

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often find myself reflecting on how it was that I went from being one of Jehovah's Witnesses (JWs)\* to being an Evangelical Christian. A full explanation eludes me, for "God's ways are higher than our ways" (cf. Isaiah 55:8-9). Still, I believe I came to at least one important conclusion that went a long way toward my conversion: The "Governing Body"\*\* of the JWs is not good at interpreting prophecy, since they have a substantial record of failed predictions and prophetic interpretations. This helped cement in my mind the fact they are not God's unique "prophet."

I believe my experience can be generalized as an approach to convince some JWs that Jehovah's Witnesses' Particularism—the belief that JWs are the only genuinely Christian group and that their Governing Body is God's "sole visible channel, through whom alone spiritual instruction was to come," is false. If this can be done, they might be willing to reconsider their faith with the hope being they find a robust and living faith in Christ. I will describe this approach against the backdrop of the threefold foundation many JWs have for accepting Jehovah's Witnesses' Particularism. As I do so, I will use my own experience to illustrate what I say.

# The Stool Defined

We can envision the threefold foundation of many JWs' confidence in Jehovah's Witnesses' Particularism as a three-legged stool. Many JWs have these beliefs because:

- (1) They believe their leaders and their religious group fulfill biblical prophecy showing them to be God's unique spokesman and His people, respectively; I will call this the prophetic fulfillment leg.
- (2) They find most of what they are taught to be true for reasons besides "the Governing Body says so"; I will call this *the doctrinal leg*.
- (3) They believe only their group actually has the brotherly love Christ said His followers would have; I will call this *the brotherhood leg*.

Something will be said about how to address the latter two legs toward the end of this article. However, this approach focuses on the first leg.

# The Approach Qualified

I believe this approach can help open the minds of many JWs to further discussions about their beliefs. But it is no panacea. Indeed, it would be foolish to suggest this is the only approach or even the best one in every case. Also, don't think it can be accomplished quickly, or that it will always be advantageous to start off with this. Always use discernment.

Still, I think it can be effective with those who are JWs primarily because they have confidence that their leaders are prophetically established as God's "sole channel." But even if effective, this approach will not necessarily cause them to stop being a JW. This is partly because it isn't arguing that their religion is a false one, but rather that theirs is not the only true one. Hopefully, this will make it less menacing to them and will cause them more likely to hear you out.

# **Locked onto Target: The Approach Defined**

We're going after the prophetic fulfillment leg. I consider this the most important leg—apart from it, the stool collapses; that is, without the supposedly prophetically-established credentials of their leaders, a JW will have insufficient reason to affirm Jehovah's Witnesses' Particularism. True, the other legs help to corroborate the first, but they are insufficient to save it from the approach I will lay out; and by themselves, they cannot support Jehovah's Witnesses' Particularism. They get more credibilitywise from the first leg than they give to it. Hence, why I call the *prophetic fulfillment leg* the first one.

Now, it must be broken in just the right way, otherwise it will not, in fact, break. We must seek to avoid needless offense. Offense must come to be sure, for we are overturning deeply entrenched beliefs; but we should hazard no more offense than is necessary. Thus, I suggest not escalating things by arguing that their leaders are false prophets, at least, not at first. It may

become necessary to make this case, but try to wait.

Indeed, we might very well not need to make that point to break the first leg; and to argue for that point too early on is very likely to backfire. To refute the supposedly prophetically-established credentials of their leaders, it suffices to show they've made numerous and substantial false predictions and interpretations of prophecy. This destroys their credibility as prophetic interpreters and shows there is no reason to suppose they are right this time around or when they claim they fulfill various prophecies<sup>3</sup> showing them to be God's "sole visible channel."

I came to the realization the JW's Governing Body is an inept interpreter of prophecy partly as a result of defending them against the charge they were false prophets. "They are no worse than all these others, including several prominent protestants over the centuries, who made failed predictions; these were not false prophets, so neither is the Governing Body," I reasoned. So, while I was not yet willing to accept they were false prophets, it still dawned on me that my defense implied they were no better than others at interpreting end-times prophecy either. This conclusion helped make me more willing to consider they might be wrong elsewhere.

# False Prophecy: The Approach Pressed Further

Accordingly, it might become advantageous to make the case that their leaders' failed predictions are actually false prophecies. Here, there are several errors to avoid.

While I was a JW, I found that many who would try to persuade me to leave the organization (Watchtower Bible & Tract Society, aka WTBTS) were too sloppy in their use of WTBTS literature. "Merely to quote a statement where a prediction or prophetic interpretation is made doesn't show that my leaders are false prophets," I would think. Avoid such indiscriminate use of WTBTS publications. Otherwise you risk making a factual error—suggesting that quotations which do not show their leaders are false prophets, in fact, do. And this would undermine your efforts by destroying your credibility in the eyes of your friend. It will also give them an out when it comes to those passages which *do demonstrate* their leaders' failed predictions and when their false prophetic interpretations do rise to the level of false prophecy. "Maybe he's mishandling these quotes too," they might reason.

Another error is that of ignoring numerous passages where their leaders explicitly *do deny* they are prophets or that their predictions are prophecies. As a JW, I would go to these, and there find refuge. You must acknowledge these statements and address them. If you fail to address such statements, you will lose credibility in your friend's eyes. If I were the JW you were talking to and you failed to do this, I might think to myself, "Not only does he not address this exculpatory\*\*\* evidence, he can't." A case in favor of the JW's Governing Body can be made, but it just is not a good one. But if you don't address their denials, don't be surprised if your friend dismisses your case out of hand.

Now, before you present any passages to your friend, you need to establish what a false prophet is. I suggest starting out with how their book, *Reasoning from the Scriptures*, defines **"false prophet"** (cf. Deuteronomy 18:20-22):

Individuals and organizations proclaiming messages that they attribute to a superhuman source but that do not originate with the true God and are not in harmony with his revealed will. (p. 132, 2009 ed.)

WTBTS leaders' predictions meet this standard. Why? Because, not only do they claim to be guided by God in a *general* sense, but they also claim God has revealed *specific* predictions and prophetic interpretations to them. When they say, "God says, 'Y'" or "God has revealed 'Y'," they often mean something more than "God's Word says 'X,' and we think 'X' means 'Y'." Rather, they claim that *God reveals to them* that "X' means 'Y'!" That is, in many cases, they claim *God as the author* of particular interpretations and predictions *they proclaim*.

What I've just said is entirely consistent with the fact their *individual* leaders deny having dreams, visions, hearing God's voice, or being inspired in the manner of the biblical prophets. It is also consistent with the times they make weaker claims—such as suggesting they merely offered the interpretations or predictions as their own conjecture. No one ever said they are consistent about their role as God's "sole visible channel" or about the status of their predictions. Often, they say what is useful at the time, even as they want the honor and obedience due a true prophet of God.

# One Down, Two to Go

If the above approach succeeds, only the *doctrinal leg* and the *brotherhood leg* remain. How should we address these? How strong are they? I'll take the latter question first. They are quite weak; that they appear to stand is more a function of cartoon gravity than their supposed sufficiency to ground belief in Jehovah's Witnesses' Particularism. That is, the demise of the other two legs is implicit in the demise of the first, and this you will want to make clear as you proceed.

We must seek to avoid needless offense.

Offense must come to be sure, for we are overturning deeply entrenched beliefs; but we should hazard no more offense than is necessary. Thus, I suggest not escalating things by arguing that their leaders are false prophets, at least, not at first.

See, when you talk doctrine—Hell, the soul, the Resurrection body, the Trinity, etc.—with them, and what various passages mean or whether this or that argument is a good one, they can no longer rely on *the credibility of who* it is that teaches them to believe as they do. They can't say, "Well my belief is correct, since God's 'sole visible channel' teaches it" or "This passage is to be understood in this way, since the 'Governing Body' says so." Thus, they will have to judge the arguments on their own merits; and hopefully, after being somewhat freed from dependence on the Governing Body, they might be more receptive to the working of the Holy Spirit through your friendship and good evidence.

—Continued on page 18

# "Stool" Continued from page 17

I must qualify this somewhat. For, all other things being the same, they will likely still believe most of what they are taught

To refute the supposedly propheticallyestablished credentials of their leaders, it suffices to show they've made numerous and substantial false predictions and interpretations of prophecy. This destroys their credibility as prophetic interpreters and shows there is no reason to suppose they are right this time around...

as a JW. If you induce some doubts in their minds about, say, the nature of the Resurrection body, they might think, "Well, they are right in all these other matters, so they are probably right here too." However, this kind of reasoning may not persist for too long. It eventually reduces to circular reasoning, something like: "I believe 'X,' because I believe 'Y;' and I believe 'Y,' because I believe 'X'." They cannot pull themselves up by their own bootstraps forever, so eventually they will have to decide what to believe on *the merits of the evidence* and not just *who* presents it to them. This is what happened to me.

Now, being a good friend and inviting them to join a friendly and healthy church will go a long way to undermining *the brotherhood leg.* Let them experience that JWs aren't the only ones who have love amongst themselves.

In this vein, it is vital to keep in mind that neither this approach, nor any further arguments you might make, will take the place of their friends and family they will lose if they leave the WTBTS organization. It *must* always be kept in mind that going from being a JW to, say, being a Nazarene is *not* like going from being a Baptist to being a Nazarene, or going from being a Catholic to being a Protestant. The personal cost is much less in these cases; but it is not so with one who would cease to be a JW. Think of Psalm 69:7-9 when you consider what many JWs have to go through should they leave: being shunned by friends and family. If you don't appreciate this, and if you're not ready to become their friend, then you simply are not ready.

But being their friend will not entirely defeat *the brother-hood leg*. There is one objection you will likely face, at least if your friend is worth his salt as a JW. Paraphrasing my JW cousin, it goes something like this: "Jesus said that we should be "no part of the world," (John 15:19, NWT) but most so-called Christian denominations have been happy going to war, even killing other professed Christians. How is that neutrality toward the world? How is that brotherly love?" How do we address this?

It would be beyond the scope of this article to look at it in-depth; I should like to return to this topic in the future. In the meantime, however, see the MCOI Journal article

"War Games." Still, here are several things to keep in mind. Wars can be just. Just wars are analogous to self-defense, and who doesn't believe one has a right to defend themselves? Additionally, voting is not much different than the legal activities JWs are known for in securing religious freedom. It is not as if the Supreme Court, or the judicial system generally, is not part of the political order.

On the other hand, it might be useful to point out they are not the only group that strives to withdraw from the political sphere, nor are they the only one that refuses to go to war. In this case, the suggestion might be "Perhaps JWs have a point, but that, by itself, doesn't mean you should be a JW." (The point being: While it is not intrinsically unacceptable for Christians to go to war or to be involved in politics, it might be wrong in many circumstances.)

And third, it is useful to note Jesus does not explicitly describe what being "no part of the world" means. Consider that Scripture contains no mention of Cornelius being told to resign his politically powerful role as a centurion (Acts 10:1, 22) nor of the Ethiopian eunuch, an official under Queen Candace (Acts 8:27), being told to resign. This should give us reason to be gracious as to whether Christians can serve as soldiers or be involved in politics in at least some circumstances.

# Conclusion

The reasonings underlying this approach are easy enough to grasp. A long record of failed predictions should undermine one's trust in the WTBTS's present prophetic interpretations, including those they claim support their belief to be God's "soul visible channel" of instruction. If these were attributed to God, then they are false prophecies. From here the JW's worldview would tend to unravel, and they might become more willing to hear you out on other matters. Pray that they do.

Equally clear is the need for patience and humility. We should not think too much of ourselves. (It is the role of the Holy Spirit to convict, cf. John 16:8). We are almost certainly not going to convert them overnight. I've tried to stress this by describing a rather modest approach. Its aim is only to give you a foothold. It doesn't argue that the WTBTS is a false religion, but rather that they are not the only genuine Christian group, and one doesn't need their Governing Body. From this modest starting point, you can discuss further. But continue to do so in the spirit of modesty and patience that characterizes the approach I suggest. Keeping in mind the need to become their true friend.

Yes, if you keep firmly in mind my advice about becoming their friend, you are so much better equipped in your discussions no matter what approach you take; and in that case, writing this article will, for that reason, have been worthwhile.

\*Jehovah's Witnesses (aka JWs) are followers of the teachings of the Watchtower Bible & Tract Society (WTBTS).



\*\*Governing Body of the WTBTS is the government or clergy of the Jehovah's Witnesses.

\*\*\*Exculpatory "to clear from alleged fault or guilt" (Webster's)



**Sean Killackey** is currently a member of the Church of the Nazarene. Since August 2018, he is a Philosophy and Christian Ministry Major at Northwest Nazarene University. Prior to becoming a Christian, he was raised as one of Jehovah's Witnesses (fourth generation) and was a baptized member for about seven years. He can be contacted at <a href="mailto:seankillackey2018@gmail.com">seankillackey2018@gmail.com</a>.

### **ENDNOTES:**

1. Unknown Author. "They Shall Know That A Prophet Was Among Them" *The Watchtower* (WTBTS, NY: April 1, 1972) p. 197.

"So, does Jehovah have a prophet to help them, to warn them of dangers and to declare things to come?...These questions can be answered in the affirmative. Who is this prophet?...This 'prophet' was not one man, but was a body of men and women. It was the small group of footstep followers of Jesus Christ, known at that time as

International Bible Students. Today they are known as Jehovah's Christian witnesses.

2. Unknown Author. "Finding Freedom with Jehovah's Visible Organization" *The Watchtower* (WTBTS, NY: October 1, 1967) p.590.

"Jehovah poured out his spirit upon them and assigned them the responsibility of serving as his sole visible channel, through whom alone spiritual instruction was to come. Those who recognize Jehovah's visible theocratic organization, therefore, must recognize and accept this appointment of the 'faithful and discreet slave' and be submissive to it."

3. More extensive lists can be found elsewhere; but for now, this should suffice.

### Some predictions and their cover ups (note the publication years)

### Re: 1878 vs. 1914 The Year of the Lord's Presence

"Our Lord, the appointed King, is now present since October 1874, A.D., according to the testimony of the prophets, to those who have ears to hear it: and the formal inauguration of his kingly office dates from Apr 1878, A.D." *Studies in the Scriptures*, Series IV (WTBTS, NY: 1897) p.621.

"The Watchtower has consistently presented evidence to honesthearted students of Bible prophecy that Jesus' presence in heavenly Kingdom power began in 1914." The Watchtower (WTBTS, NY: January 15,1993) p.5.

# Re: 1914 as the year of the end or beginning of trouble

It is interesting to note that JWs are taught that Russell predicted that 1914 would be the *beginning* of the end, which is manifestly untrue as can be seen from the following quotes.

"But bear in mind that the end of 1914 is not the date for the beginning, but for the end of the time of trouble." *Zion's Watch Tower* (WTBTS, NY: July 15.1894) p.226.

"Jehovah's Witnesses have consistently shown from the Scriptures that the year 1914 marked the beginning of this world's time of the end and that "the day of judgment and of destruction of the ungodly men" has drawn near." *The Watchtower* (WTBTS, NY: August 15, 1993) p.9.

### Re:1925 as the year of the return of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob

"What, then, should we expect to take place? The chief thing to be restored is the human race to life; and since other Scriptures definitely fix the fact that there will be a resurrection of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and other faithful ones of old, and that these will have the first favour, we may expect 1925 to witness the return of these faithful men of Israel from the condition of death, being resurrected and fully restored to perfect humanity and made the visible, legal representatives of the new order of things on earth." *Millions Now Living Will Never Die!* (WTBTS, NY: 1920) p.88.

"When you take up a more advanced study of the Bible, you will

find that the year 1925 A. D. is particularly marked in prophecy." *The Way to Paradise* (WTBTS, NY:1924) p.220.

# Re: 1975 is the year of fulfillment of time of the end prophecies

"Does God's rest day parallel the time man has been on earth since his creation? Apparently so. In what year, then, would the first 6,000 years of man's existence and also the first 6,000 years of Gods [sic] rest day come to an end? The year 1975. It means that within a relatively few years we will witness the fulfillment of the remaining prophecies that have to do with the 'time of the end'." Awake! (WTBTS, NY: October 8, 1966:) pp.19-20.

# **Exculpatory Claims**

"We have not the gift of prophecy." Zion's Watch Tower (WTBTS, NY: January 1883) p. 425.

"However, *The Watchtower* [magazine] does not claim to be inspired in its utterances, nor is it dogmatic. It invites careful and critical examination of its contents in the light of the Scriptures. Its purpose is to aid others to know Jehovah and his purposes toward mankind, and to announce Christ's established kingdom as our only hope." *The Watchtower* (WTBTS, NY: August 15, 1950) p.26 "True, the brothers preparing these publications are not infallible. Their writings are not inspired as are those of Paul and the other Bible writers. (2 Tim. 3:16) And so, at times, it has been necessary, as understanding became clearer, to correct views." *The Watchtower* (WTBTS. NY: February 15, 1981) p.19.

While too lengthy to discuss here, their book *Reasoning From the Scriptures* also offers a defense to the claim that they are false prophets. It fails primarily because it is one red herring after another.

# **Inculpatory Claims**

"The Watchtower [magazine] is not the instrument of any man or set of men, nor is it published according to the whims of men. No man's opinion is expressed in *The Watchtower*. God feeds his own people, and surely God uses those who love and serve him according to his own will. Those who oppose *The Watchtower* are not capable of discerning the truth that God is giving to the children of his organization, and this is the very strongest proof that such opposers are not of God's organization." *The Watchtower* (WTBTS, NY: November 1, 1931) p.327.

"Enlightenment proceeds from Jehovah by and though Jesus Christ and is given to the faithful anointed on earth at the temple, and brings great peace and consolation to them. Again Zechariah talked with the angel of the Lord, which shows that the remnant are instructed by the angels of the Lord. The remnant do not hear audible sounds, because such is not necessary. Jehovah has provided his own good way to convey thoughts to the minds of his anointed ones [the Governing Body]." *Preparation* (WTBTS, NY: 1933) p.64.

Keep in mind that Jehovah's Witnesses no longer believe their 1933 claim that their leaders are "instructed by the angels of the Lord." Rather they think it is by means of the Holy Spirit (which is, to them, merely his "active force").

"Yes, the 'faithful and discreet slave' was awake to the coming of 1914. In 1942 the 'faithful and discreet slave' guided by Jehovah's unerring spirit made known that the democracies would win World War II and that there would be a United Nations organization set up. Such wakefulness was concerning events that unerringly took place three years later. At the 1958 Divine Will International Assembly amazing advance information in connection with Daniel's prophecy was given about events to occur in the immediate future. Such evidence of spiritual foresight is recorded for us in the book *Your Will Be Done on Earth*. Once again the 'faithful and discreet slave' has been tipped off ahead of time for the guidance of all lovers of God. Surely one's present security depends on his staying awake with the 'faithful and discreet slave.' "

The Watchtower (WTBTS, NY: July 15, 1960) p.444.

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"Ghost Dance" Continued from page 14

is linked to nature means simply that nature is linked to itself, for man is a part of nature.<sup>47</sup>

Growing nationalism across the world is a response to this threat, but complacency thrives in times of economic progress. As the economy continues to improve, we can expect more EcoMarxists to enter positions of power within the U.N. and other globalist organizations.

# **Mother Earth:**

# The Religious System of the Antichrist

When we witness to Native Americans and those involved in the New Age Movement, we must emphasize that God did not create "Mother" Earth; therefore, the earth should not be worshipped. Earth-based spirituality is the very antithesis of the world fashioned for us by a loving Creator.<sup>48</sup> As James said:

This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. (James 3:15, ESV)

This global peace plan initiated by the environmentalist death cult will eventually set up the religion of the Antichrist.<sup>49</sup> In light of this, we must always remember the warning the Apostle Paul gave to us in his second letter to the Thessalonians...

Let no one deceive you by any means; for that

Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day [of Jesus' Second Coming] will not come unless the falling away [from faith and belief in Jesus] comes first. (2 Thessalonians 2:3, ESV)

It is highly likely we are seeing this great "falling away" today; therefore, Christians must be prepared to answer not only for the hope that is within them, but why we cannot support the global environmentalist death cult popularly known as the "global green agenda."

All Bible quotes are from the ESV (English Standard Version) of the Bible.

\*Syncretism is the combining of different beliefs, while blending practices of various schools of thought. Syncretism involves the merging or assimilation of several originally discrete traditions, especially in the theology and mythology of religion, thus asserting an underlying unity and allowing for an inclusive approach to other faiths. (*Wikipedia*, accessed 09/20/2018.)



Stephanie A. Potts and Jim, her husband, live in Dayton, Ohio and have been married for 17 years. She worked with the federal government for 15 years as a defense intelligence analyst and joined Haven Ministries in 2015. She received her Bachelor's Degree from Florida State University in Political Science and International Relations, and received her Master's Degree in Geographic Information Systems from Penn State University. She specializes in evangelism to

Muslims and Native Americans. She is currently partnering with United Indian Missions International to educate Native Americans in the four corners region, on the dangers on syncretism and the Emerging Church.

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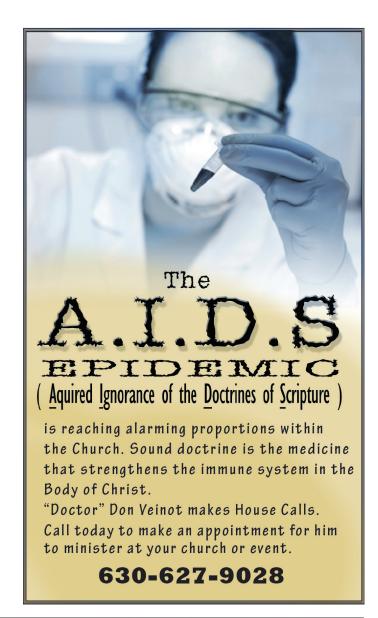
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An Apologetics Conference Addressing Issues Facing The Church And Our World

# "Heresy" Continued from page 7

truly modern-day, international version of Mars Hill (Acts 17), provides more false doctrines and false prophecies *every day* to the unwary than people might have accessed in many years before its ascendancy.

Internet sites and YouTube videos provide good and true teachings as well, depending upon the source, of course; but it requires real discernment to separate the "sheep" from the "goats" online.

We do not have time and/or space to go into even a tiny percentage of the false teachings being peddled on YouTube, and other similar sites. Some of the ideas proposed and even made relatively popular, such as the flat-Earth claims, are so patently ridiculous, that most people should recognize them. Others are far more subtle. Many if not most "Christian cults" (non-Christian groups who claim to be Christian and claim to base their doctrines on the Bible) on the planet have videos on YouTube aimed at Christians. You need to know what is true before you can identify the false, the counterfeit, the "wolf in sheep's" clothing (cf. Mt. 7:15).

# Wandering into the Cultural Swamp

As we pointed out at the beginning of this article, heresy isn't new. The Bible refers to the people of God as sheep. Sheep are not by nature careful animals, which is why they need a careful and watchful shepherd. Sheep, left to their own devices, will wander away from the safety of the flock and fall into a ditch. The shepherd must keep a sharp eye on them, because they lack the ability to guard themselves.

The history of the people of God straying from the faith is often traceable to leaders who were not guarding themselves or the sheep. The trap that so often enticed the Israelites and led to their downfall was their strong desire to be "like all the other nations" (cf. Is. 8:19-20, 2 Ki. 17:11) Christians fall into a similar trap—badly wanting to be accepted by the prevailing culture, which leads them to adopt the beliefs and attitudes of the world. This desire can be so strong that standing for sound doctrine is often eventually jettisoned by individual Christians and, all too frequently, by whole churches and/or denominations. The world demands conformity and pretty much hates Christian teaching ... now more than ever, it does seem.

The antidote is to remember Acts: 20:28-31, which we have already quoted, and to pay careful attention to ourselves and the congregation to protect them from the wolves inside and outside the Church.

Besides protecting the sheep from danger, leadership needs to equip the congregation to do the work of ministry and to understand that they have a big part to play in building up the Church and leading the lost to the faith. Church leadership needs to:

... equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. (Eph. 4:12-15, ESV)

Regular training in apologetics and defense of the faith will enable believers to spot false teaching, to protect themselves and others—*like their children for example*—and

be able "to give an answer" to unbelievers in the marketplace. We need to see unbelievers as hopelessly lost and needing our help to reach safety. We need, above all, to have genuine love for those God seeks to save. Maybe we need to pray God will give us eyes to see them as He does and pour out His great love into our hearts. As almost any parent can attest, there isn't any amount of money, time, or prayers we won't invest to rescue those we dearly love from danger. Let us be the people of God that we are meant to be.

\*Gnosticism is "A prominent heretical movement of the secondcentury Christian Church, partly of pre-Christian origin. Gnostic doctrine taught that the world was created and ruled by a lesser divinity, the demiurge, and that Christ was an emissary of the remote supreme divine being, esoteric knowledge (gnosis) of whom enabled the redemption of the human spirit." (English Oxford Living Dictionaries, accessed 09/03/2018)

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, inc. 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.

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There are many who view apologetics—the defense of the faith—as divisive. And, yes, truth can divide. But we need to ask another question: What is the cost of heresy? Serious false teaching isn't benign. It isn't simply a difference of opinion like which flavor of ice cream is better, or in which part of the country it is preferable to live. We all know there are differences of opinion on secondary issues in the Church that should *not* necessarily break fellowship; but there are also very important doctrinal issues that cannot simply be glossed over. There is a *great cost* to heresy.

Some years ago, I was a part-time, volunteer chaplain at a small suburban hospital. I was usually on duty in the emergency room. One night, an ambulance brought in an individual who had passed away while being transported to the emergency room. I went to meet with and comfort his wife. When I entered the room and introduced myself, she stood up, looked me in the eye, and said she didn't want to talk with me because, as she put it, "Your God lied to me!" With that, she turned and stormed out. I was somewhat dumbfounded. Her parents were walking in as this transpired and explained to me what was going on. She and her husband were avid followers of Word Faith teacher, Kenneth Copeland. Her husband was diagnosed with what was a highly treatable form of cancer with a very high success rate. But Copeland told her husband that if he takes medication and treatment, he is "claiming the illness," and he needed to "claim the healing" instead. The husband stopped the treatments, threw out the medications, and "walked in faith" that he was healed. The cost to him of believing this particular heresy was his physical life. The cost to his wife was a shattered faith. She had been deceived into believing that God had lied to her and her husband, but it was Kenneth Copeland who had lied.

As missionaries to cults and non-Christian religions, occasionally we have taken interested others on field trips of sorts. One such trip was to a Hindu temple. Ravi Narasimhan, who had left Hinduism and embraced Jesus as his Lord and Savior, set up the opportunity. Our group of about 10-12 arrived, and an individual from the temple took us on a guided tour to explain the various rituals and practices as well as the numerous incarnations of Vishnu (one of the principle deities of Hinduism). At each stop, the guide would reiterate "all paths lead to God." This was one of his main mantras we heard during the tour.

At the end, I asked if Jesus was an incarnation of Vishnu; and he said, "Yes." I then posed another question: "Would one incarnation of Vishnu lie about other incarnations

of Vishnu?" He shook his head and said, "That would never happen." I then pointed out that Jesus had boldly claimed, "no one comes to the Father except through Me" [John 14:6], and therefore, all other claimants were imposters. The guide looked stunned for a few seconds; and then, in a less-than-jovial manner, responded, "Jesus lied," and he turned and walked away. It was interesting to me, because I didn't say all paths don't lead to God ... eventually; but rather, I only testified that Jesus was clear that no one would be accepted by the Father except through Him.

The idea there are "many paths to God" is very popular in our culture today and, in some cases, even inside the Church. It is a favorite mantra of Oprah Winfrey and other New Age priestesses and priests. It was a common claim at the Parliament of the World's Religions, which we again attended this past November in Toronto, Canada. This heresy has eternal consequences and an unbearable cost. As it turns out, all paths *do* lead to God. But wouldn't that mean Jesus was wrong? The answer is, "No, *both* are true." But how can that be? Philippians 2:10-11 makes it clear:

so that at the name of Jesus <u>every knee</u> will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that <u>every tongue</u> will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (emphasis ours)

No matter what path one takes, *every* person eventually will come face to face with God the Father; *and* they *will* confess, "*Jesus is Lord.*" Those who *voluntarily* have made that confession *in this life* are united to the Father through the Son. In Romans 10:9, the Apostle Paul affirms Jesus' claim:

that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

Those who take any *other* path will meet God, and they, also, will confess that "*Jesus is Lord*," but it will be too late; and the cost to them will be eternal separation from God.

So, *when* should one make the confession? Second Corinthians 6:2 may help:

for He says,

"At the acceptable time I listened to you, and on the day of salvation I helped you." Behold, <u>now</u> is "the acceptable time," behold, <u>now</u> is "the day of salvation" (emphasis ours)

Today would be good.

\*\* Please see Bio for Don and Joy on opposite page, (22).

Midwest Christian Outreach, Inc. P.O. Box 446
Wonder Lake, IL 60097-0446

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# In This Issue:

Page 1	A Brief History of Heresy	by L.L.(Don) Veinot, Jr. & Joy A. Veinot
Page 8	The New Age Ghost Dance.	by Stephanie A. Potts
Page 12	Kicking Your Bible Through The Church	by J.B. Eid
Page 16	The 3-Legged Stool	by Sean Killackey
Page 23	The Cost of Heresy	by L.L.(Don) Veinot, Jr. & Joy A. Veinot