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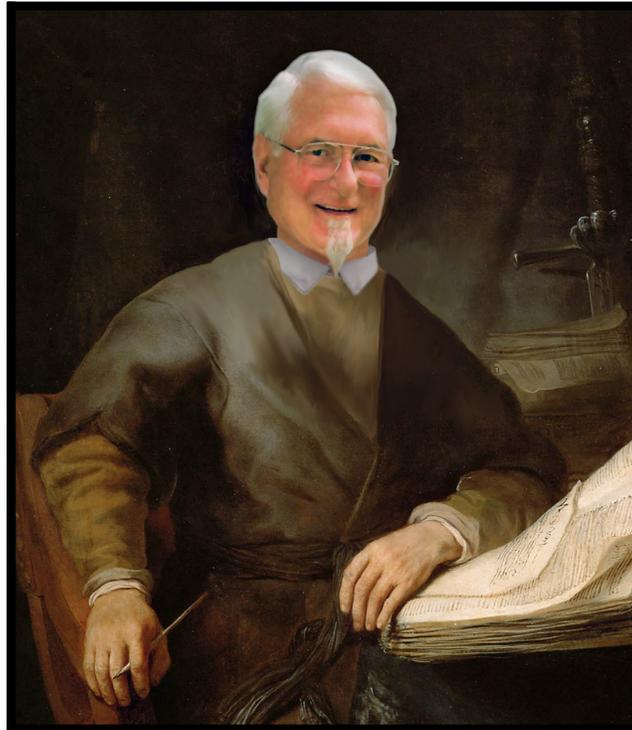
Peter Wagner and the Modern-Day Apostles Examining the New Apostolic Reformation

by Gary E. Gilley

The New Apostolic Reformation (NAR) is one of the largest, broadest, and most powerful movements within Christianity today, yet it flies largely under the radar.

Even those involved often misunderstand the movement so much that they deny they are part of it. This confusion stems from the fact that the NAR does not have official membership or leadership. Rather, the NAR is a loose coalition of mostly Pentecostal and Charismatic Christians, organizations, and churches that are united over the interpretation of certain portions of Scripture. The interpretation of these New Testament texts is widely held by those connected with the NAR and focus mainly on the miraculous sign gifts.

Some have equated the NAR with the so-called third wave of Pentecostalism. The first wave is said to have started with the birth of the Pentecostal movement in 1901; the second wave is identified with the Charismatic movement in the 1960s; and the



third wave, which emphasizes power evangelism, healings, and spiritual warfare, was led by John Wimber and the Vineyard movement in the 1980s. This greatly influenced C. Peter Wagner, who has been most instrumental in the development of the NAR. Pentecostal and Charismatic historian Vinson Synan writes:

“In 1983, Peter Wagner, professor of church growth at Fuller Theological Seminary, proposed the existence of a ‘third wave of the Holy Spirit’ that was entering wholesale into historic evangelical churches. In his view, the first wave consisted of Pentecostals while the second wave were the charis-

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Editorials

MIXING RELIGION WITH POLITICS

The election and inauguration of Donald Trump as president of the United States brought a measure of expectation and hope to many Christians. One reason for the excitement was that Trump established for himself a Religious Advisory Council made up of what many see as leading “Evangelicals.”

However, for the discerning Christian, a survey of the council members should quickly deflate that enthusiasm. The council is, at best, a mixed bag of luminaries. For example, on the downside, the council includes Word-Faith advocates Kenneth and Gloria Copeland, psychologist James Dobson, and Charismatic leader Paula White.

Of these, White, who has been called a heretic, an apostate, an adulterer, and a charlatan by her critics, is the most prominent. She is said to be President Trump’s longtime religious adviser, a member of his inner circle, and the person responsible for leading him to faith in Jesus Christ. She was one of several faith leaders who prayed at Trump’s inauguration on Jan. 20, 2017. But as CNN has noted, “Evangelicals in particularly [sic] have fretted that White’s role in the inauguration and closeness to Trump could ‘mainstream heresy.’”

Yet supporters of Trump will argue there is an upside to the council, because of other members who include

renowned pastors Robert Jeffress and David Jeremiah, along with Richard Land, current president of Southern Evangelical Seminary in Charlotte.

Jeffress, senior pastor of First Baptist Church of Dallas, would be seen as one of the council members removed from the financial excesses and unbiblical interpretations of the Copelands and White and one who would appear to be trustworthy in the counsel he offers to the president. However, in light of comments he made last August, specific to Trump and foreign affairs, one can’t be so sure.

In an article appearing in *The Washington Post*, religion reporter Sarah Pulliam Bailey wrote, “Texas megachurch pastor Robert Jeffress, one of President Trump’s evangelical advisers who preached [at a private service for Trump and his family] the morning of his inauguration, has released a statement saying the president has the moral authority to ‘take out’ North Korean leader Kim Jong Un. ‘When it comes to how we should deal with evildoers, the Bible, in the book of Romans, is very clear: God has endowed rulers full power to use whatever means necessary — including war — to stop evil,’ Jeffress said. ‘In the case of North Korea, God has given Trump authority to take out Kim Jong Un.’”

Bailey further noted, “The biblical passage Romans 13 gives the government authority to deal with evildoers, Jeffress said. ‘That gives the government ... the authority to do whatever, whether it’s assassination, capital
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HYBELS NAMES SUCCESSORS

Bill Hybels' role as senior pastor of Willow Creek Community Church is drawing to a close as he announced last fall that he will be stepping down and two members of his executive team will fill his vacancy. The announcement came 42 years after the Chicago-area church held its inaugural service. Hybels said the actual transition will occur in October 2018, at which time he will take the title of Willow Creek's founding pastor.

According to a story in the *Chicago Tribune*, "a woman will take his place as CEO." The news article further reported, "Heather Larson, who has served as executive pastor of the suburban megachurch for five years, will step into the role of lead pastor over all Willow Creek locations, including its main campus in South Barrington and its seven satellite campuses in the city and suburbs. As executive pastor, Larson already oversees the church's \$77 million budget and 350 employees."

Steve Carter will assume the role of lead teaching pastor. Carter has been mentored by Hybels for 15 years and has been a teaching pastor at the church for the past five years. Prior to coming to WCCC, Carter served with controversial pastor Rob Bell in Grand Rapids, Mich.

The church held its first service on Oct. 12, 1975, in the rented Willow Creek Theatre in Palatine. Two years later, the church purchased 155 acres in South Barrington. WCCC now has eight locations and estimates an average weekly attendance of 25,000.

—MKG

RECENT DEAD SEA SCROLL FRAGMENTS SUSPECTED AS FAKES

The Museum of the Bible, which opened last November in Washington, DC, is a multimillion-dollar endeavor funded and sponsored by Steve Green, an evangelical Christian and heir to the Hobby Lobby fortune. Among the many artifacts the museum acquired for display — at a cost of millions of dollars — are some of the newest Dead Sea Scroll fragments. But in a setback for the museum, *The Times of Israel* has reported that, "A series of recent articles in respected academic journals calls into question the authenticity of at least half a dozen in its trove of tiny scroll fragments."

Between 2009 and 2014, Green purchased more than a dozen fragments for exhibition at the museum. However, Dead Sea Scrolls expert Kipp Davis said many of the scrolls acquired by Green for display in the museum are questionable at best and are fakes at worst. Davis told *The Times*, "There is a growing emerging consensus among Dead Sea Scroll scholars that many of the fragments in the private collections are fakes."

It is being reported that during the past decade and a half, the world's private antiquities markets have been flooded with high-profile archaeological fakes. In addition to the newer Dead Sea Scroll documents, repudiated artifacts include an ossuary belonging to James, the half-brother of Jesus, and a scroll fragment in which Jesus speaks of "My wife."

According to *The Times*, the museum along with others who have acquired the Dead Sea Scroll fragments are "supporting authentication research of their own."

—MKG

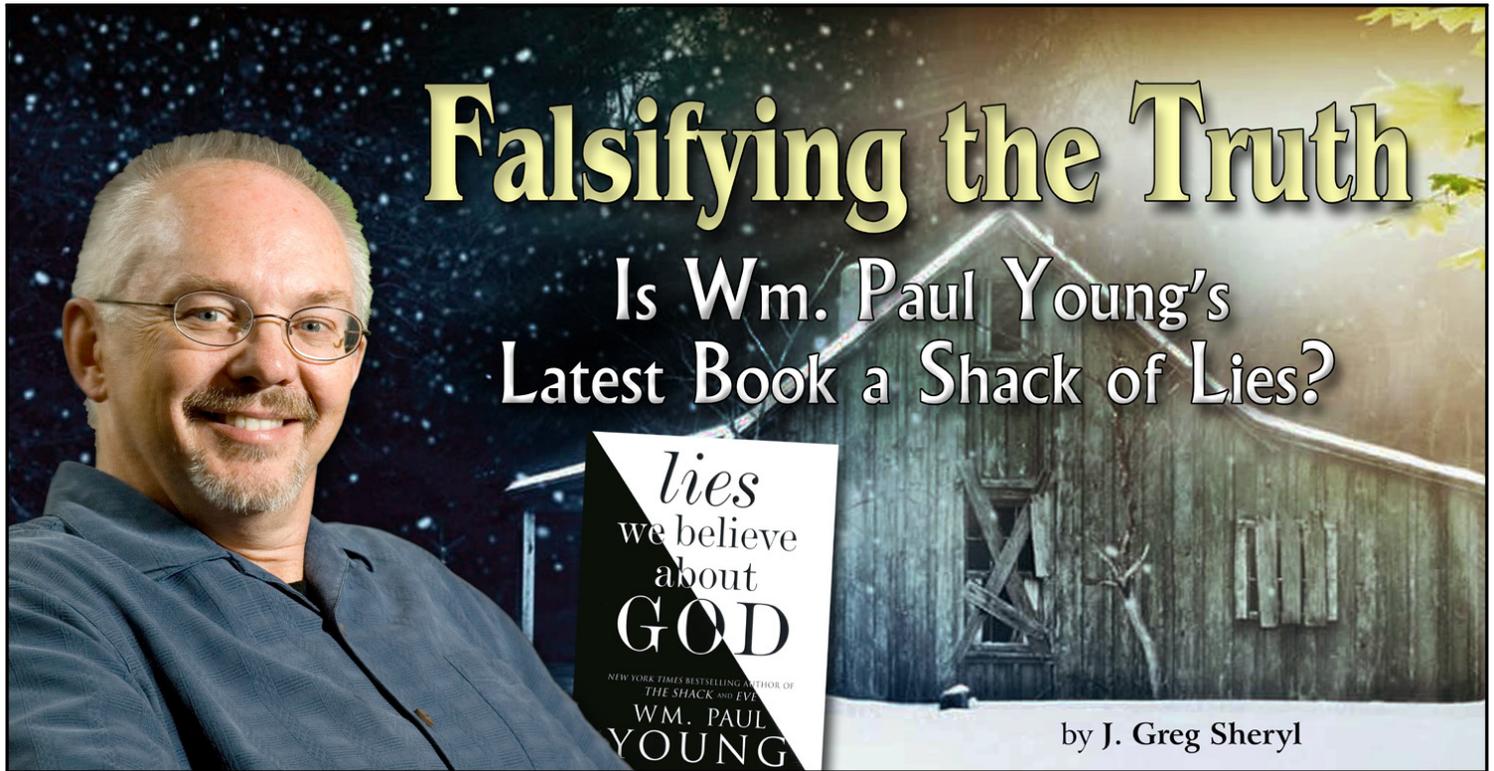
DEVIL BLAMED FOR DELAY OF CAHN'S NEW BOOK

Steve Strang, the Charisma Media publishing magnate who is behind a series of books written by self-styled Bible prophecy interpreter Jonathan Cahn, has blamed the devil and Hurricane Irma for a delay in the release of Cahn's latest volume which again claims to reveal ancient mysteries and biblical patterns being fulfilled in our day.

Writing in his blog, "The Strang Report," Strang stated, "*The Paradigm* is Cahn's latest book and, I believe, his most important. Because of the attacks that are coming, we believe the enemy must not be happy about its launch." He went on to say, "Charisma Media is specifically struck by Irma; thus the enemy is seeking to hinder the launch" and further noted, "I don't believe we can attribute everything to demonic attacks. But the pattern that exists is unmistakable."

Strang, in describing the delay, wrote, "Irma means 'goddess of war' — and this storm brought destruction. It crashed into Florida and closed our offices the very week before we launch Jonathan Cahn's newest book, *The Paradigm*." Charisma Media's offices are located in Lake Mary, Fla.

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Last March, Wm. Paul Young, author of the best-seller *The Shack*, published his first non-fiction book, *Lies We Believe About God* (LWBAG). The book's debut, which coincided with the release of the theatrical version of *The Shack*, contains 28 essays, each addressing a belief Young considers untrue. Most of the chapters involve a belief about God.

This past summer's issue of *The Quarterly Journal* examined some of Young's positions,¹ especially his promotion of universal salvation and his denial of God's sovereignty. That article concluded: "The God of Paul Young is an edited and truncated version of the God of the Bible."²

Young professes to be a Christian, and he uses Christian terminology. He also quotes from and/or alludes to Scripture in a number of places in LWBAG. He even devotes a section near the end of his book to a listing of a number of Scriptures he believes vindicate his belief that everyone will eventually be saved. However, simply because Young cites Scripture doesn't guarantee that he has correctly understood or accurately handled them. And, as we will demonstrate below through a number of examples, much

of Young's theology in LWBAG is clearly unscriptural, despite his appeals to Scripture. After we have shown this, we will suggest where Young may actually be deriving his sub-Christian and unbiblical theology.

A BIBLICAL CRITIQUE OF YOUNG'S "LIES"

While the previous *Journal* article examined the "lie" that God is in control, his position on the matter warrants further examination. Young states:

"Do we actually believe we honor God by declaring God the author of all this mess in the name of Sovereignty and Omnipotent Control? Some religious people — and Christians are often among their ranks — believe in grim determinism, which is fatalism with personality. Whatever will be, will be. It happened. And since God is in charge, it must be part of God's plan."³

Later Young declares, "The sovereignty of God is not about deterministic control. So how does God reign? By being who God is: love and relationship."⁴

He also states, "I don't believe that the word *control*, in the sense of deterministic power, is part of God's vocabulary. ... Control does not originate in God, but submission does."⁵

Young has constructed a straw man here. God's Word doesn't say that all things that happen are "good." Rather, God is able to make "all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28). "All things" includes bad things. God's promise applies only to those who love God and who are the called according to His purpose. In his chapter, Young seems to agree that God can make something good even out of our "messes." However, Young's apparent concession of the point denies God's sovereignty.

Theologians typically distinguish between two kinds of evil in the world: natural and moral. One source explains the difference:

"Moral evil refers to acts (sins) of creatures that are contrary to God's holy character and law. Natural evils include harmful or destructive events in nature that occur throughout the course of history and that negatively affect

creaturely life (e.g., earthquakes and famines)."⁶

The evil that men do and the malevolence of Satan and his demons cause some evil. For instance, Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery. This was evil and Joseph acknowledged their evil intent.⁷ However, God's purpose in sending Joseph to Egypt was for good. Afterward, Joseph told his brothers:

"But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive" (Genesis 50:20).

So, the intent of Joseph's brothers was evil, but God's design was good and He used the evil of Joseph's brothers to bring about a good result.

Satan hated Job⁸ and God allowed him to ruin Job materially, kill all Job's children, and afflict him physically. However, God delivered Job from his trials and blessed him (Job 42:10-17). Scripture says:

"We count those blessed who endured. You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome of the Lord's dealings, that the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful" (James 5:11, NASB).

Scripture also shows that Satan's effect on people has not changed (Luke 22:31-32; Revelation 2:10; 1 Peter 5:8-10; Ephesians 6:10-17).

Yet God is sovereign. He oversees all that occurs in His universe. Nothing catches Him off guard or takes Him by surprise. Scripture states this repeatedly. Jesus said:

"Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows" (Matthew 10:29-31).

Other Scriptures that declare God's sovereignty over good and evil include Isaiah 45:7; Deuteronomy 32:39; Exodus 4:11; 1 Samuel 2:6-8; Job 5:18; Lamentations 3:32-33 and Psalm 107.

Scripture also says that God is all-powerful and that He is sovereign over all events in the universe.

"Is anything too hard for the LORD?" God asked Abraham (Genesis 18:14). Jeremiah understood this and prayed, "There is nothing too hard for You" (Jeremiah 32:17). And God responded to Jeremiah, "Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh. Is there anything too hard for Me?" (Jeremiah 32:27). In the New Testament, we find the angel Gabriel telling Mary, "For with God nothing will be impossible" (Luke 1:37). Jesus Himself said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for You" (Mark 14:36).

If God were not sovereign over the universe, predictive prophecy would not be assured of fulfillment, as Reformed theologian R.C. Sproul has written:

"[I]f God is not sovereign, God is not God. If there is even one maverick molecule in the universe — one molecule running loose outside the scope of God's sovereign ordination — we cannot have the slightest confidence that any promise God has ever made about the future will come to pass."⁹

GOD AND GENDER

A second statement Young categorizes as a "lie" is that, "God is more he than she." Young states:

"My book *The Shack* surprised a lot of people, and not all pleasantly. Some, like my own mother, were completely put off by my portrayal of God the Father as a large black woman called Papa."¹⁰

In Young's explanation of his choice to portray God as a large black woman in *The Shack*, he offers:

"[D]o any of us truly think that God is more masculine, more male, more paternal than feminine, female, and maternal? All of maternity, as all of paternity, originates in the very nature of God. The image of God in us (*imago dei*) is not less feminine than masculine. The feminine/masculine nature of God is a

circle of relationship, a spectrum, not a polarity."¹¹

Young also says:

"And imagery? It is all over the Scriptures: masculine (Father, King, etc.), feminine (Nursing Mother, Woman and Coin, etc.), animal (Mother Bear, Eagle, Lioness, etc.), inanimate objects (Rock, Fortress, Strong Tower, Mountain, Shield). Imagery was never intended to define God; rather, imagery is a window through which we see aspects and facets of the nature and character of God. Is God more masculine than feminine? Absolutely not!"¹²

It is true, as Young says above, that "imagery is a window through which we see aspects and facets of the nature and character of God." And His creation, mankind included, reflects many aspects of His nature:

"In the day that God created man, He made him in the likeness of God. He created them male and female, and blessed them and called them Mankind in the day they were created" (Genesis 5:1-2).

God, a spirit, is genderless. Yet His image incorporates masculine and feminine characteristics. However, in *The Shack* Jesus was the only member of the Godhead who escaped Young's attempts at revising traditional concepts of the members of the Trinity.

Young's portrayal of God the Father in his novel as a large black woman was designed to be provocative. He also portrayed the Holy Spirit as an Asian woman. These gender portrayals of the Father and the Holy Spirit are not legitimate.

For example, in the Lord's Prayer, Jesus instructed us to pray, "Our Father in heaven" (Matthew 6:9; Luke 11:2). Jesus often referred to God as "Father" (Matthew 11:25, 26; John 11:41; 12:28; Mark 14:36), "my Father" (Matthew 7:21; 10:32; 11:27; 15:13; 16:17), or (in speaking to His disciples) "your father" (Matthew 5:16, 45; 6:8, 14, 15, 32; 7:11). In His high priestly prayer in John 17, Jesus ad-

dressed God as “Father” (vv. 1, 5, 11, 21, 24, 25).

Dallas Theological Seminary professor Robert Lightner has written:

“Christ did teach that God was His Father. At least twenty-nine times in the Gospels, Jesus referred to God as ‘my Father’ ... In an absolutely unique sense, God was the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”¹³

Jesus *never* referred to God as “Mother,” or “my Mother,” or, in speaking to His disciples, “your Mother.” One cannot portray God the Father in a way that Jesus Himself never did and portray God according to a feminine gender when Jesus never did so.

ARE ALL PEOPLE SAVED?

Young also believes it is a “lie” that people “need to get saved.” His discussion of this topic includes his explicit endorsement of universal salvation:

“God does not wait for my choice and then ‘save me.’ God has acted decisively and universally for all humankind.”¹⁴

Young states, “Are you suggesting that everyone is saved? That you believe in universal salvation? That is exactly what I am saying!”¹⁵ Near the end of the chapter, he says, “We don’t offer anyone what has already been given; we simply celebrate the Good News with each one: *We have all been included* [in salvation].”¹⁶

It stretches credulity to ask someone to believe that Jesus was crucified for teaching that everyone is saved, that Stephen was martyred for teaching universalism, or that the Apostle Paul was persecuted numerous times for spreading the “Good News” that everyone is already saved. John the Apostle was not exiled to Patmos for spreading the message that all were included in Christ’s salvation. The Jews and the Romans did not persecute early Christians for proclaiming such a diluted message.

If everyone is already saved, Christian missionaries and evangelism are unnecessary. The New Testament

speaks of the Gospel being “the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek” (Romans 1:16). If people are already saved, there is nothing to be saved from.

Scripture says that God is righteous and that righteousness does not allow unrepentant sinners to have communion with those who have been washed in the blood of the Lamb (1 Peter 1:2; Revelation 1:5; 7:14).

ARE ALL PEOPLE ALREADY CHILDREN OF GOD?

Young also believes that everyone is a child of God. Young mocks those who would say that an atheist isn’t a child of God. Young asks and answers his question about an unbeliever who expresses love:

“But does that make him a child of God? No, it doesn’t. He already was a child of God. I can hear someone at the back of the room say, ‘Well, everyone is a child of God in the sense that everyone is created by God, but ...’ ... and now comes the rationalization and justification for creating another box, another way to divide people into categories of value.”¹⁷

Although Young raises a valid objection to what he is saying — that the atheist is a child of God in the sense of being created by God, but not in the sense of being a member of God’s family — he denigrates it, but never responds to it.

However, Scripture indicates what the imaginary objector was getting at. For instance, Paul told the pagan Athenians at the Areopagus:

“...in Him [God] we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, ‘For we are also His offspring.’ Therefore, since we are the offspring of God...” (Acts 17:28-29).

So here, Paul acknowledges that there is a sense — a limited sense — in which it can truly be said that everyone is a child of God. This is because we are all created and sus-

tained by the one true God. However, Young wants to insist that his atheist friend is just as truly a child of God as is the Christian who has become part of the family of God by trusting in Jesus Christ as Savior. That is not what the Bible teaches.

Lightner wrote, “Jesus never ascribed God’s fatherhood to all people in a redemptive sense.”¹⁸ He later states, “Jesus unmistakably limited God’s fatherhood in the sense of salvation to the redeemed.”¹⁹ Below are some Scriptures that refute Young’s notion of both non-Christians and Christians all being “children of God” in the same sense.

The Bible declares, “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:12-13).

Here we find the Apostle John stating that people can *become* — not that they already are — children of God by believing in Jesus, which is the opposite of what Young is teaching.

Elsewhere in the New Testament, there are certain people who are called children of the devil! In John 8:44, Jesus tells the Jewish leaders He is speaking with, “You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do.” Lest there be any doubt that Jesus believed that these people were not children of God (in the sense that Young wants to claim for his atheist friend), Jesus tells them just three verses later, “He who is of God hears God’s words; therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God” (v. 47).

Also, in 1 John 3, we see a distinction made between the children of God and the children of the devil. For instance:

“In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother” (v. 10).

And:

“Cain ... was of the wicked one and murdered his brother” (v. 12).

Again, we see that some people are children of God and other people are children of the devil, contrary to what Young would have us believe. One further Scripture that bears out this contrast is found in Paul’s writings:

“Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God” (2 Corinthians 6:14-16).

It is appropriate and necessary for Christians to interact with non-Christians and even be friends with them. However, Paul warns us not to get involved in binding relationships that would pull us away from God.

DOES HELL INCLUDE SEPARATION FROM GOD?

A fifth belief Young considers to be a “lie” is “Hell is separation from God.” He writes:

“For many, the crux and conflict of the question is how we can posit an eternally Good God, whose very nature is Love, allowing human beings to be in conscious torment and pain for infinite time, as if that were somehow Just. The thought is so disheartening that, for many, it becomes an insurmountable obstacle.”²⁰

It can be difficult to harmonize the Bible’s teaching that God is love with the doctrine of everlasting punishment for those who reject God’s love. However, because the Bible teaches both truths and is the inerrant Word of God, the real question is, “Is what Young objects to taught in the Scriptures or not?” If Scripture is the inerrant Word of God, then our human reason must bow before His revelation.

The Bible reveals other truths that are difficult to reconcile, such as the truth of God’s sovereignty alongside man’s free will, and the Triune Godhead. Our inability to reconcile these apparent paradoxes doesn’t make it impossible for both to be true.

In the account of the sheep and the goats in Matthew 25:31-46, Jesus plainly teaches the very things that Young has enunciated difficulties with above. Jesus says:

“Then He will ... say to those on His left, ‘Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels; ... These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life’” (Matthew 25:41, 46).

The same Greek word is used in the passages above to describe the duration of the fire, the duration of the punishment, and the duration of the life. So, we see that the Bible teaches exactly what Young objects to above.

At the end of the same chapter in *LWBAG*, Young speculates:

“[P]erhaps hell is hell not because of the absence of God, but because of the *presence* of God, the continuous and confrontational presence of fiery Love and Goodness and Freedom that intends to destroy every vestige of evil and darkness that prevents us from being fully free and fully alive. This is a fire of Love that now and forever is ‘for’ us, not against us. Only if we posit that we have existence apart from Jesus can we believe that hell is a form of punishment that comes to us in our separation from Jesus. I propose the possibility that hell is not separation from Jesus but that it is the pain of resisting our salvation in Jesus while not being able to escape Him who is True Love.”²¹

What Young imagines hell might be like bears no resemblance to Jesus’ description. It is “eternal punishment” away from the Lord’s presence, not a remedial course for slow or obstinate learners.

Scripture clearly dispels Young’s romantic image of hell:

“[W]hen the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe” (2 Thessalonians 1:7-10).

One can believe the Bible or believe Paul Young, but not both.

CAN ONE DECIDE TO TRUST CHRIST AFTER DEATH?

Related to the one above, Young categorizes as a “lie” a sixth belief: “Death is more powerful than God.” Young relates what he means by this “lie” through a conversation he had with some friends. Here are some excerpts:

“I don’t think God would ever say that once you die, your fate is sealed and there is nothing that God can do for you.”²²

One of Young’s friends disagreed with him about this. Further on, Young asked:

“To be clear, you don’t think we have any choice postmortem, after we die? You don’t think we can change our minds?”²³

After Young’s friend insists that a choice for Christ has to be made while a person is still alive, Young replies, “But that means that love and relationship end with death. It means that death defines everything.”²⁴

After relating more of this conversation with his friend, Young writes:

“Personally, I do believe that the idea that we lose our ability to choose at the event of physical death is a significant lie and needs to be exposed; its implications are myriad and far-reaching.”²⁵

Near the end of the chapter, he states:

“I propose that the event of death introduces a crisis (*krisis* — the Greek word, as in ‘Day of ... judgment’), a restorative process intended to free us to run into the arms of Love.”²⁶

On the other hand, Hebrews 9:27 says, “it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment.”

One passage that disproves Young’s thesis of the afterlife is the story of the rich man and Lazarus:

“And being in torment in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off and Lazarus in his bosom. Then he cried and said, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.’ But Abraham said, ‘Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us’” (Luke 16:23-26).

The rich man refers to the place he is in as “this place of torment” (Luke 16:28). So, we see here that the rich man is tormented in Hades and that after he died the rich man’s destiny was fixed. He was not able to go to where Abraham was, nor was Lazarus able to go where the rich man was.

DOES SIN SEPARATE PEOPLE FROM GOD?

A seventh belief that Young categorizes as a “lie” is the belief that, “Sin separates us from God.” This is consistent with Young’s belief that hell is not separation from God. He writes:

“We Christians have long espoused a theology of separation. A lot of ‘my people’ will believe that the following statement is in

the Bible, but it isn’t: ‘You have sinned, and you are separated from God.’”²⁷

Amazing! One can only wonder what Bible Young is using, because the Bible actually says some things that either declare or imply what Young denies. For example:

“Behold, the LORD’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear” (Isaiah 59:1-2).

Notice here that, through the prophet Isaiah, God says that the peoples’ iniquities have separated them from God — the very thing that Young denies. Here are other Scriptures:

“[F]or all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).

“For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life” (Romans 5:10).

“Reconciled” implies that there was a relational separation between us and God. Christ reconciled us to God through His death on the Cross. And the Scriptures tell us that Christ died for our sins (Romans 4:25; 1 Corinthians 15:3) and our sins were what separated us from God:

“Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God” (2 Corinthians 5:18-20).

“For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men,

the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time” (1 Timothy 2:5-6).

If there were no separation between God and men, there would be no need for a Mediator. Consider further:

“But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ” (Ephesians 2:13).

“For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls” (1 Peter 2:25).

Yes, sin separates a person from God. But Jesus bridges the separation for the sinner who trusts in His work on the Cross.

DOES GOD HAVE EXPECTATIONS OF US?

An eighth belief that Young says is a “lie” is that, “God is never disappointed in me.” Although not everything Young says in his chapter on this is wrong, he also says therein, “God is never disillusioned by you; God never had any illusions about you in the first place. God is never disappointed in you; God has no expectations.”²⁸ And additionally:

“This God does not do abandonment. We will never be powerful enough to make God’s face turn from us. Because God knows us utterly and is with us always — *you* are never a disappointment.”²⁹

One wonders if Young has read in the Old Testament about how God turned Adam and Eve out of the Garden of Eden after they disobeyed Him by eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 3:23-24).

God gave the Israelites over into the hands of their enemies at different times in the book of Judges when they were faithless to the covenant by committing idolatry. God expected them to be faithful to Him. God knew ahead of time that they would commit idolatry. He didn’t abandon them utterly, but repeatedly delivered them from the hands of those who op-

pressed them. Yet He certainly expected them to be faithful to Him and He abandoned them to their enemies when they forsook Him.

Later, when Israel and Judah refused to heed the warnings of the prophets, God abandoned Israel into the hands of the Assyrians and Judah into the hands of the Babylonians. These abandonments were neither final nor total. However, because Israel and Judah refused to listen to the prophets He had sent them, God certainly gave them over into the hands of their enemies.

When the Jewish people as a nation rejected Jesus their Messiah, whom God sent them, Jesus predicted the destruction of Jerusalem because of their refusal to recognize the One Whom they were rejecting (Luke 19:41-44).

Young cannot say, "God has no expectations" and "This God does not do abandonment" without ignoring the plain witness of Scripture.

DID GOD PLAN FOR JESUS TO DIE ON THE CROSS?

A ninth so-called "lie" that Young finds fault with is, "The Cross was God's idea." Young seems especially hostile toward this belief, because — in addition to devoting a chapter to this subject — he also criticizes this truth elsewhere in *LWBAG*.

Young believes that Jesus died on the Cross, although it isn't clear whether Young believes there is any atoning or salvific value attached to Christ's death. However, what Young *appears* to object to is the idea that God specifically required Jesus to die on the Cross due to its being such an agonizing means of death. Perhaps Young regards the actual death of Jesus, by whatever means, as completely unnecessary to any of God's plan. However, we will give Young the benefit of the doubt and assume that he merely objects to the Cross being the means of Christ's death as opposed to, say, an accident or an illness.

For Young, if God originated Christ's death on the Cross, then God is "a distant deity who had a plan

that included the torture of a child."³⁰ Elsewhere in *LWBAG*, he writes:

"Nothing, not even the salvation of the entire cosmos, could ever justify a horrific torture device called a 'cross.' That God would submit to our darkness and then transform this dark machine into an icon and monument of grace speaks volumes about the nature of God, but it does not justify evil."³¹

And in the chapter on this so-called "lie," Young writes:

"Who originated the Cross? If God did, then we worship a cosmic abuser, who in Divine Wisdom created a means to torture human beings in the most painful and abhorrent manner. ... Better no god at all, than this one."³²

Either Young is confident that the Christian God didn't originate the Cross — and that the Cross as the means of Christ's death was *completely* the result of evil people — or else Young is explicitly rejecting the God of the Bible ("Better no god at all, than this one") in making statements like those above.

However, it does appear from the Scriptures that the crucifixion was *exactly* what God designed to happen to Jesus. In addition, Jesus willingly submitted to the Father's design, even though He certainly didn't desire the Cross. This is clear from His prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane, where He prayed, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for You. Take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will" (Mark 14:36).

That Jesus' death on the Cross was a *willing submission* to the Father's will for Him is made clear in the Scriptures. For instance, in Philippians 2 we read, "And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (v. 8, KJV; cf. John 10:17-18).

Jesus repeatedly predicted in advance His death by crucifixion (Matthew 16:21; 20:18-19; 26:2; John 12:32-33).

Scripture is clear that the Cross was God's designated means for Jesus' death:

"The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again" (Luke 24:7).

"Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death" (Acts 2:23).

"[W]ithout shedding of blood there is no remission" (Hebrews 9:22).

The writer of Hebrews also states, "Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many" (9:28) and, "But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God" (10:12).

Finally, fatal to Young's view that God did not design the Cross as the means of Jesus' death are David's words in the Psalms, where we read:

"You have brought Me to the dust of death. ... They pierced My hands and My feet; I can count all My bones. They look and stare at Me. They divide My garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots" (Psalm 22:15-18).

Like Young, when Jesus first told His disciples that God's plan for Him involved His crucifixion, Peter (whom Jesus had recently commended) became upset, "Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, 'Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!'" (Matthew 16:22). Jesus' response to Peter is instructive:

"But He turned and said to Peter, 'Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men'" (v. 23).

Because Young's positions on these matters obviously don't come from a sound interpretation of Scripture, we ask, "From where is Young's theology coming?"

YOUNG'S ACCEPTANCE OF KRUGER'S THEOLOGICAL FORMULATION

Early on in *LWBAG* we find something significant about Young's theology. It is his wholesale acceptance of his friend C. Baxter Kruger's theological formulations, which Kruger sets forth in the Foreword to *LWBAG*. Noting that Kruger is author of a number of books, Young writes:

"My theologian friend Dr. C. Baxter Kruger ... has written a foreword that sums up the foundation of what I propose as Truth. Here Baxter beautifully frames this entire book [*LWBAG*]."33

Because of Young's hearty agreement with what Kruger has written in the Foreword, it behooves us to know just what Kruger proposes there. Kruger posits a union between the Trinity and the whole of humanity (not just Christians). He writes, "Jesus is one being with God and one being with us"³⁴ and also speaks of "the absolute oneness between Jesus and His Father, and His absolute oneness with us as broken sinners."³⁵ And he states, "From my perspective, working out the implications of Jesus's identity as the eternal Son of God united with humanity in our sin is the task of truly Christian theology."³⁶

Further on in his Foreword, Kruger writes:

"I can give you my thesis. It is not perfect, but it is honest, and I think it will help you understand where Paul Young is coming from. Here it is: ... *Therefore, to speak the name of Jesus is to say that the Triune God, the human race, and all creation are not separated, but together in relationship. Jesus is Himself the relationship; He is the union between the Triune God and the human race. In Him, heaven and earth, the life of the blessed Trinity and broken human life are united. Jesus is our new creation, our adoption, our inclusion in the divine life, the new covenant relationship between God and humanity, the kingdom of the Triune God on earth.* You can see in my thesis

why Paul and I regard the widespread notion that human beings are separated from God as a fundamental lie, one that denies Jesus's very identity."³⁷

While Kruger is correct that we see in his thesis that he and Young regard as a fundamental lie that human beings are separated from God, he is incorrect in stating that his thesis in any way explains *why* he believes this is so or *how* he believes that this in some way "denies Jesus's very identity." To simply assert these things doesn't explain why he believes them, nor has he proven these statements merely by asserting them as though they were self-evident facts.

However, Kruger's thesis above *does* give us a context for understanding some beliefs Young considers "lies" in *LWBAG*, such as those noted above, including: "You need to get saved," "Hell is separation from God," "Not everyone is a child of God," and "Sin separates us from God."

Near the end of his Foreword to *LWBAG*, Kruger states:

"We are both committed to thinking out and communicating the implications of Jesus's identity in every way possible. The 'lies' that this book set forward are perceived as lies through the lens of Jesus's identity and what His identity shouts to us about God, about ourselves, about creation, about our destiny, and about our future."³⁸

YOUNG, PANENTHEISM AND PROCESS THEOLOGY

Young's universalism is certainly central in his theological system. This is also demonstrated by the fact that he devotes an eight-page section near the end of his book titled, "A Catena: God's Drama of Redemption,"³⁹ that provides a listing of 34 Scriptures that he believes supports his belief in universalism. Many of these are easily reconciled with other Scriptures that teach the everlasting punishment of those who have not trusted in Jesus for salvation. It also appears that in at least two or three instances, Young has misquoted a Scripture passage. In two of these instances,⁴⁰ he claims to

be partly relying on an English translation of the Bible from Aramaic — even though the New Testament manuscripts that most translators rely on are in Greek.

The previous *Journal* article on Young briefly touched on his apparent "panentheism."⁴¹ Because this appears to be a big part of Young's theology, we will here review and lightly probe into panentheism. One dictionary notes that panentheism is "the view that God is in all things. ... It differs from 'pantheism,' which views God as all and all as God."⁴²

Another source explains that "pantheism" is "the belief that God and the universe are essentially identical,"⁴³ whereas "panentheism" is:

"The belief that God's being includes and permeates the entire universe so that everything exists in God. In contrast to pantheism, panentheists declare that God's being is greater than and not exhausted by the universe. God is affected by each event in the universe, and thus God's knowledge must change and grow."⁴⁴

A third source defines panentheism in this manner:

"The view that the whole of the universe is included in God but does not exhaust God. The world is not distinct from God, as in theism, but neither is God identical with the world (pantheism). Panentheists sometimes think of the universe as the body of God, but they say God transcends his body in much the same way that a person transcends his or her material body. Panentheism is a common position in process theology."⁴⁵

Defined in this same source, "theism" is "The view that God, understood as one infinite, all-powerful, all-knowing, completely good person, exists and has created the universe. [It is] Equivalent to monotheism."⁴⁶

From the above definitions, we see that panentheism is sort of an intermediate position between pantheism and theism. Christian apologist Norman Geisler states that panentheism

“is the result of a mixed marriage between theism (God created all) and pantheism (all is God).”⁴⁷

Geisler actually uses the term “process theology” (mentioned above) as a synonym for panentheism, stating, “Panentheism also bears other names such as process theology.”⁴⁸ Process theology certainly has a panentheistic view of God and, as theology professor Gregg R. Allison states, process theology is “a type of panentheism,”⁴⁹ whether or not the two terms are synonymous.

Young and Kruger fit the definitions of a panentheist and it appears that Young has embraced a trimmed-down version of process theology.

PROCESS THEOLOGY

Process theology is not derived from the Bible, although those who espouse it sometimes refer to the Bible. The late Christian philosopher Ronald Nash explains:

“Most process theologians appear to have a highly selective biblical hermeneutic. Scripture is welcomed as authoritative when it agrees with panentheist options. But when Scripture conflicts with panentheist beliefs, it is conveniently ignored or casually discarded.”⁵⁰

British philosopher and mathematician Alfred North Whitehead (1861-1947) is the father of process theology. Process theologians regard his views as their primary authority rather than the Bible. While Whitehead was the son of an Anglican clergyman, he was not a Christian. The fact that process theology is not Christian is not surprising, although there have been attempts to blend Whitehead’s philosophy with Christianity.

Process theology involves a deity who is limited and ever-evolving but never arriving at perfection. This deity does not know the future and is not omnipotent.

Nash observed about the god of process theology:

“A being who is not essentially omnipotent or omniscient, who is not the sovereign and indepen-

dent Creator, is neither worthy to receive our worship nor to bear the title ‘God.’”⁵¹

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Young’s panentheistic god is not the God revealed in the Bible and is not the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Scriptures instruct us: “[I]n whom [Christ] are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Now this I say lest anyone should deceive you with persuasive words” (Colossians 2:3-4).

And Scripture warns us: “Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power” (Colossians 2:8-10).

During the week leading up to Jesus’ crucifixion, there was a concerted attempt by the Jewish religious leaders to discredit Jesus by posing trick questions. Jesus answered the Sadducees by saying, “You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God” (Matthew 22:29).

Wm. Paul Young is mistaken in much of what he says in *LWBAG* for the same reasons.

Endnotes:

1. J. Greg Sheryl, “Lies Wm. Paul Young Believes About God - More Unshackled Heresy from the Best-Selling Author,” *The Quarterly Journal*, July-September 2017, pp. 1, 10-18.
2. *Ibid.*, pg. 17.
3. Wm. Paul Young, *Lies We Believe About God*. New York: Atria Books, 2017, pp. 37-38.
4. *Ibid.*, pg. 41.
5. *Ibid.*, pg. 42, italic in original.
6. Stanely J. Grenz, David Guretzki, and Cherith Fee Nordling, *Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1999, s.v., “evil,” pg. 48.
7. R.C. Sproul, *Does God Control Everything?* Sanford, Fla.: Reformation Trust Publishing, 2016, pp. 59-63.
8. *Ibid.*, pp. 56-59.
9. *Ibid.*, pg. 36.
10. *Lies We Believe About God*, op. cit., pg. 65.
11. *Ibid.*, pg. 73, italics in original.

12. *Ibid.*, pg. 74.
13. Robert P. Lightner, *The God of the Bible and Other Gods: Is the Christian God Unique Among World Religions?* Grand Rapids, Mich.: Kregel Publications, 1998, pg. 163.
14. *Lies We Believe About God*, op. cit., pg. 118.
15. *Ibid.*
16. *Ibid.*, pg. 120, italics in original.
17. *Ibid.*, pg. 205, ending and beginning ellipses in original.
18. *The God of the Bible and Other Gods*, op. cit., pg. 163.
19. *Ibid.*, pg. 164.
20. *Lies We Believe About God*, op. cit., pg. 132.
21. *Ibid.*, pp. 136-137, italic in original.
22. *Ibid.*, pg. 182.
23. *Ibid.*, pg. 183.
24. *Ibid.*, pg. 184.
25. *Ibid.*, pp. 185-186.
26. *Ibid.*, pg. 187, italics and ellipsis in original.
27. *Ibid.*, pg. 231, italics in original.
28. *Ibid.*, pg. 214.
29. *Ibid.*, pg. 215, italic in original.
30. *Ibid.*, pg. 238.
31. *Ibid.*, pg. 39.
32. *Ibid.*, pg. 149.
33. *Ibid.*, pg. 20.
34. *Ibid.*, pg. 8.
35. *Ibid.*
36. *Ibid.*, pg. 9.
37. *Ibid.*, pp. 10, 11, italics in the original.
38. *Ibid.*, pp. 11-12.
39. *Ibid.*, pp. 241-248.
40. *Ibid.*, pg. 241, his citation of John 1:7, where he has “would” instead of “might” and pg. 244, his citation of Ephesians 2:8-9, where he has “we” instead of “you.”
41. “Lies Wm. Paul Young Believes About God,” op. cit., pg. 16.
42. Donald K. McKim, *Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996, s.v., “panentheism,” pg. 199.
43. *Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms*, op. cit., s.v., “pantheism,” pg. 88.
44. *Ibid.*, s.v., “panentheism.”
45. C. Stephen Evans, *Pocket Dictionary of Apologetics & Philosophy of Religion*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2002, s.v., “panentheism,” pg. 88.
46. *Ibid.*, s.v., “theism,” pg. 114.
47. Norman L. Geisler, *Creating God in the Image of Man?* Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1997, pg. 47.
48. *Ibid.*
49. Gregg R. Allison, *The Baker Compact Dictionary of Theological Terms*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 2016, s.v., “process theology,” pg. 172.
50. Ronald Nash, editor, *Process Theology*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1987, pg. 22.
51. *Ibid.*, pg. 27.

matics in the mainline churches. Using himself as a paradigm for this movement he said, 'I see myself as neither a charismatic nor a Pentecostal.' Although he spoke in tongues and was a leading advocate of signs and wonders, he said, 'I myself have several theological differences with Pentecostals and charismatics, which don't mar any kind of mutual ministry, but keep me from saying I'm a charismatic.'"¹

Moreover, while there is certainly overlap between the NAR and the third wave, they are not identical.

The universal mark of the NAR is the acceptance of the five-fold ministries. Many Christians believe that Ephesians 4:11 speaks of five essential ministries and offices of the Church, those of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, but that two of those offices — apostles and prophets — have ceased to function for centuries.

According to the NAR, the Lord has restored these two ministries to begin the process of setting up His kingdom on earth. In conjunction with the return of apostles and prophets, all the sign gifts have been reinstated as well and are expected to be evident in the lives of most, if not all, Christians.

There are several commonly held doctrines and practices within the NAR. Nevertheless, the unique feature of the NAR is the claim that the office of apostle has been reestablished. Pentecostals and many Charismatics have long held that prophets live among us, but only recently has anyone of significance claimed the same for apostles. But first we will look at the origin of the NAR and its leadership.

THE NAR FOUNDATION

Because the NAR is an alliance united by a distinctive understanding of the five-fold ministries, there is no organization or established leadership as such. Nevertheless, Wagner, who died in 2016, is the recognized

founder and father of the movement. Synan underscores Wagner's observations as to the breadth of the movement:

"It is the contention of people like C. Peter Wagner that a new 'third wave' of the Spirit is breaking out in the mainstream evangelical churches, including the Baptists. Studies have indicated that about 20 percent of all Baptists in America see themselves as 'Pentecostal or charismatic Christians.' According to a Gallup poll taken in 1979, at least five million U.S. Baptists feel this way. Some observers, including Wagner, estimate that in 2000 there are between two hundred and three hundred 'fullness' congregations in the Southern Baptist Convention."²

Wagner held much influence in a wide range of Christian thought and practice throughout his long life. He was a missionary, a professor at Fuller Theological Seminary's School of World Missions, author of over 70 books, president of Global Harvests Ministries, and chancellor of Wagner Leadership Institute, which is a training ground for those interested in the NAR.

As noted above, in the 1980s Wagner came under the sway of John Wimber and his third wave theology. Pastor and author Michael Moriarty explains that:

"Wimber has been influenced by the view that Jesus' ministry is to be an inbreaking of the kingdom by combining the proclamation of the kingdom with its demonstration (the casting out of demons, healing the sick, raising the dead, and so on). Christ's followers have received Christ's authority and must proclaim the kingdom and exercise that authority in his name. The key for effective evangelism is combining the proclamation (preaching the Gospel) with the demonstration (signs and wonders)."³

It was also in the 1980s when Wimber and Wagner famously "de-

signed and taught" the "controversial course" MC510 - Signs and Wonders and Church Growth at Fuller Seminary.⁴ Later Wagner adopted spiritual warfare ideas and techniques that even Wimber could not accept. These will be further explained below.

As Wagner began to draw other unusual doctrines from several sources, he tried to put them under an umbrella he called "The Postdenominational Church." Synan details the events:

"In May 1996, Peter Wagner convened a conference at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California, with the intriguing name National Symposium on the Postdenominational Church. After years of studying church growth in the 'postmodern' age, Wagner concluded that the day of the denomination was rapidly coming to a close while a new generation of 'postdenominational' churches was dawning. Before the conference could convene, however, many critics of the idea, including Jack Hayford, forced Wagner to choose a new name. He finally settled on the term 'New Apostolic Churches' to describe a 'New Testament model of leadership,' or indeed 'new wineskins' for a new church age."⁵

Thus Wagner at this point believed the Church had entered the "Second Apostolic Age," which he says began in 2001. Many of the ideas that Wagner would come to champion were not new and had been circulating in Pentecostal, Word-Faith, Vineyard, and other Charismatic movements for years. What the NAR has done to a large degree is incorporate and represent many, if not most, of these groups and ideas without forming an official organization.

Nevertheless, some of the leaders and establishments often associated with the NAR and accepting of most of their distinctions, include: Mike Bickle and his International House of Prayer (IHOP); the Kansas City Prophets, including the late Bob Jones and Paul Cain; Bill Johnson and his

Bethel Church; Rick Joyner, founder of Morning Star Ministries; Todd Bentley; Brian and Bobbie Huston of Hillsong Church; Cindy Jacobs of Generals International; Michael Brown; Rod Parsley; and Loren Cunningham and his Youth With A Mission (YWAM).⁶

In an interview by Bob Smietana, published in *Christianity Today*, Brad Christerson and Richard Flory, authors of the book *The Rise of Network Christianity: How Independent Leaders Are Changing the Religious Landscape*, labeled the movement with the title "Independent Network Charismatic" or "'INC' Christianity."⁷ The article stated that the INC "has become one of the fastest-growing faith groups in the United States"⁸ and described it saying:

"Largely behind the scenes, a group of mostly self-proclaimed 'apostles,' leading ministries from North Carolina to Southern California, has attracted millions of followers with promises of direct access to God through signs and wonders."⁹

THEOLOGICAL DISTINCTIVES

What differentiates the NAR from Evangelicals and even other Pentecostals cannot be nailed down with precision. That is because the NAR, as stated above, is neither an official organization nor monolithic in its beliefs. The NAR's adherents can be found in the Word-Faith, prosperity gospel, Pentecostal, Charismatic, and third wave movements. Those familiar with Bill Johnson and his Bethel Church in Redding, Calif., know that it clearly fits the NAR description, as does Hillsong, YWAM, and IHOP. But, increasingly the NAR doctrines and philosophies are creeping into mainline, non-charismatic churches and organizations. Therefore, while there remain significant differences between those aligning with the NAR, there are some common denominators that all would accept. All individuals, churches, and organizations that could be identified as part of the NAR would agree with the following distinctives:

The restoration of the five-fold ministries. This is the doctrine of the NAR upon which all its other philosophies rest. Based on Ephesians 4:11-13, and in conjunction with Ephesians 2:20 and 1 Corinthians 12:28, the NAR leaders believe that all five ministries listed in these texts, which were given to establish and equip the Church, are fully operational today.

Conservative Evangelicals have unanimously agreed that the offices of evangelist, pastor, and teacher have been functioning since New Testament times, although many maintain that grammatically pastors and teachers describe one office, not two (i.e., pastor-teacher).¹⁰ Historically, however, Protestants have taught that both offices of apostle and prophet ceased at the close of the New Testament canon as their purpose, which was to lay the foundation of the Church, was completed (Ephesians 2:20). Once the foundation of the Church was set, the roles of apostle and prophet were no longer needed and they faded from the scene.

Today, the work of equipping the saints is carried on by the evangelists and pastor-teachers. Pentecostalism, however, has taught from its inception that the office of prophet has been restored or never ceased to exist at all. If prophets still roam the earth, then new revelations from God can and should be expected, and Pentecostals have long embraced and assumed this to be the case.

In more recent times, not only have Charismatics accepted the existence of prophets, but so has much of mainstream evangelicalism. Wagner and the leaders of the NAR, however, believe that the office of apostle has now been restored as well. It is thought that God is doing a new thing in our day in preparation for the coming of His kingdom on earth and the modern-day apostles will lead the way. According to one source there are approximately 400 recognized apostles as of 2010 who are members of the International Coalition of Apostolic Leaders.¹¹

Supernatural signs and wonders. Signs, wonders, and miracles have a

basis in Scripture, but their frequency and purpose is often overlooked. First, as to their frequency, we find that there have only been three periods of time in which miracles were common in biblical history. The first was during the ministry of Moses (the Law), particularly in Egypt at the time of the Exodus and periodically during the wilderness wanderings. Following the death of Moses, and under the leadership of Joshua, God certainly did some wonderful things, but miracles of the type Moses performed are not evident.

Centuries later, during the ministries of Elijah and Elisha (the Prophets), a second season of miracles was evident with a combined total of 21 miracles performed. With Elisha's passing it would not be until the time of Jesus' ministry and that of the apostles, that miracles would re-emerge (the New Testament). Signs and wonders, contrary to the assumption of some, simply did not occur throughout biblical history, but were confined to these three segments of time.

Why this is true speaks to the issue of the purpose of signs and wonders. God is always able to perform miracles and often does so as He wills. But when He has chosen to do so at the hands of individuals, there is a reason. Miracles serve to authenticate the lives, ministries, and message of these individuals who were sent by God.

Moses came to Egypt able to call down judgments on the Egyptians and their gods to demonstrate that Yahweh was superior to all the mythological deities worshipped by the greatest nation on earth. At the same time, the Israelites became convinced that Moses was God's man calling them to return to the Promised Land.

Elijah and Elisha appeared during a dark hour in the land of Israel to remind the Jews that God still reigned despite the corruption permeating God's people. The time had come for them to choose between Baal and Yahweh, and the prophets' miracles gave forceful and clear evidence as to who was truly sovereign.

When Jesus began His public ministry, no one had performed a miracle in centuries, nor had prophecy been given by God since Malachi, some 400 years prior. The ministry of Jesus was filled with miracles including everything from healing the sick (John 4:46-53), to feeding thousands (John 6:1-14), to raising the dead (John 11:1-44), to commanding the weather and nature (Matthew 15:28-33), to casting out demons (Matthew 8:28-34). The question is why did Jesus do these things? We are not left to speculate. Jesus was not putting on a magic act, nor was He merely relieving suffering. He was giving irrefutable evidence that He was God and salvation is found only in Him. "And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and that believing you may have life in His name" (John 20:30-31). The signs were not just random acts of mercy and power, they pointed to the person and message of Jesus.

The apostles followed this same pattern after the ascension. The book of Acts, beginning with 2:43, records dozens of "wonders and signs" that took place through the apostles during the early days of the Church. Their purpose was not simply to heal people, cast out demons, or even to cause death (5:1-11), but to demonstrate that God had given them the authority to lead the newly formed Church and proclaim the message of the Gospel.

Power attracts certain kinds of people and so we are not surprised that a number claimed to be apostles who were not sent by God (2 Corinthians 11:13-15). But how were the people to distinguish between false apostles in the New Testament with their deceitful message and God's apostles with the message of truth and life? Paul shows the criteria in 2 Corinthians 12:12, "Truly the signs of an apostle were accomplished among you with all perseverance, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds."

The supernatural abilities that the Lord gave His early spokesmen verify that they had His authorization and, most importantly, His inspired message. Later, the author of Hebrews concurs, saying: "how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him, God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will" (Hebrews 2:3-4).

It was for this reason that Jude could confidently write, "But you, beloved, remember the words which were spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ" (v. 17). And Peter affirmed the same, "that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets and of the commandment of us" (2 Peter 3:2). The apostles were the divinely appointed foundation of the Church (Ephesians 2:20) who spoke an authoritative message, inspired by God Himself (Ephesians 3:5).

Because the early Church did not yet have the New Testament Scriptures, which would be the written record of the apostles' teachings (Acts 2:42), it was necessary that those who had God's infallible communication be vindicated by signs. With the completion of the New Testament canon such vindication is no longer necessary. The Word speaks today from the authority of an inspired, God-breathed text. It is for this reason Peter could write, "And so we have the prophetic word confirmed [literally: *we have the even more sure prophetic word*], which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts" (2 Peter 1:19). God's revelation, as found in Scripture, is more than able to make us "complete" and "thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 2:17b). Nothing needs to be added, nothing should ever be taken away (Revelation 22:18-19).

With this biblical backdrop, it should be noted that miracles and

healings are a key component for the NAR and all who are involved. The NAR's followers believe that modern Christians are called to be part of an army of miracle workers. And it is believed that doing miracles is a skill that can be taught.

Consider Bill Johnson and Bethel Church's School of Supernatural Ministry which boast 2,000 students who are taught how to do miracles.¹² Some of the miracles border on the ridiculous. For example, claims of gold dust falling, heavenly clouds (the Shekinah Glory) appearing, angel feathers flying about, and teeth being filled with gold are not uncommon.¹³ *Christianity Today* reported that Johnson's wife and some other Bethel leaders "have been said to practice 'grave sucking' or 'grave soaking,' purportedly a means of absorbing the spiritual anointing of deceased Christians by lying atop their graves."¹⁴

Called by various names, such as Manifest Sons of God and Joel's Army, some believe that greater wonders are taking place than even happened at the hands of Jesus.¹⁵ But when we examine the many reports of miracles and healings, a serious disconnect between Scripture and contemporary practices is evident. At the hands of Jesus, or the biblical apostles, healings were immediate, complete, and undeniable. But these features do not attend the claims of healing ministries today. Jack Deere, a Charismatic theologian and former professor at Dallas Theological Seminary, defends this disconnect:

"... it is wrong to insist that the apostolic ministry of signs and wonders is the standard for the gifts of healing given to the average New Testament Christian."¹⁶

Deere clearly recognizes that modern healings are not of the same nature as healings found in Scripture. Whatever is going on today in the Charismatic movement is not on par with what was taking place in the New Testament and that is admitted even by its strongest supporters.

Demonic warfare. Hand-in-glove with miraculous gifts goes demonic or

spiritual warfare. The NAR did not originate today's obsession with the demonic which has roots that go back to the early days of Pentecostalism, but the NAR has added some new twists and wrinkles.¹⁷ Many bizarre claims and teachings fall under this grouping. For example, believing a demon called the Queen of Heaven, who rules over the 10/40 Window, was camped out on Mount Everest, some of the NAR's leaders claimed to have climbed to her encampment to engage her in spiritual warfare (although no independent source has verified this expedition).¹⁸

Wagner himself taught three levels of spiritual warfare in his book, *Confronting the Powers*. The highest level is known as "strategic-level intercession" in which attempts are made to confront and dispose of territorial demons. Popular methods often used include "spiritual mapping," in which research of a city, region, or nation is engaged to discover which territorial spirit reigns in that area. Once discovered, the spirit is confronted by name to "tear down its strongholds."

Another popular method is prayer walking, in which teams of believers walk neighborhoods, cities, and the like to engage in spiritual warfare prayer. According to NAR proponents, demons apparently control geographical regions and must be dethroned by these methods. Demons also seek to bring harm to individuals through generational curses: curses placed upon one's ancestors that can be removed only through spiritual warfare techniques developed by means of extrabiblical experimentation. Economic struggles, health problems, and strained family relationships often are traced to demonic activities.¹⁹ Demons with names such as "cancer" or "poverty" must be cast out in order to bring relief.

Dominionism. Closely connected with spiritual (or demonic) warfare is the idea that, because Adam lost dominion of the earth to Satan, it is now our task to take it back. Specifically, there are seven areas that Christians must endeavor to dominate: government, arts, finances, education,

religion, family, and media. This is known within the NAR as the Seven Mountain Mandate.²⁰ As Christians take control of these seven mountains, the kingdom of heaven will be brought to earth and Jesus will return. This is known theologically as post-millennialism.

Revivalism. Some see "Revival on a massive scale is key in this movement."²¹ By that it is meant that the NAR sees itself ushering in the kingdom of God via an end-time harvest of souls. In addition to the methods already mentioned in this article, the NAR's leaders use music (Hillsong Church and Bethel Church set the standard), large rallies in stadiums that are live-streamed globally, and a plethora of other big means and events in an attempt to bring about worldwide revival.

The NAR's postmillennialism allows little place for an end-time falling away from the truth. Rather the NAR's message is promoted heavily in order to bring about the revival that will allow for the return of Christ. As reported in *Christianity Today*, "Revival is the unifying theme at Bethel."²² Although Bethel Church can check off every one of the characteristics of an NAR-connected organization, Bill Johnson in the *CT* article denies any official ties with it. This shows the difficulty of nailing down those involved.

Extrabiblical revelation. At every level, and in every related group, personal revelation supposedly from the Lord is central. This should be expected because what distinguishes the NAR from most other evangelical teachings is the difference in the source of their revelations. While the NAR claims to be committed to Scripture, the prophecies given to and by their apostles and prophets undermine and add to the inspired Word of God. Even at the grass-roots level the average adherent to the NAR expects to hear a personal word from the Lord regularly and these messages determine what they believe and how they live far more than the Bible.

As such, the Bible itself is being invalidated by these supposed mes-

sages from the Lord. Recently the "apostle" Brian Simmons claimed that he was directed by the Lord to produce a new translation called the *Passion Translation* which twists Scripture to support the NAR's theology.²³ At best, the *Passion Translation* is a one-man paraphrase designed to give some validity to the methods and teachings of the NAR. It is being used widely by those in the movement.

Having now surveyed the foundation of the New Apostolic Reformation along with several of its theological distinctives, we will now press on to investigate its infiltration into wider evangelical circles and will then put the teachings of the NAR to the test of Scripture.

INFILTRATION

From its inception, the influence of the NAR has bled into mainstream evangelical churches. Today the effect of the movement has become broader, and therefore more dangerous, as many of its ideas are gaining a wider and eager reception by even more traditionally non-charismatic churches and organizations. This acceptance is due to several factors.

- The worship music produced by Bethel Church, Hillsong Church, and IHOP has found enthusiastic welcome in churches, youth ministries, and among young adults throughout the evangelical spectrum.

- Many have no understanding of the teachings of the NAR and no concept of what it is.

- Influential NAR teachers and books are making inroads into evangelical circles.

- Due to rampant biblical illiteracy and general apathy toward Scripture and theology, fewer Christians are alarmed or even aware that false teaching and deception is taking place. Those who attempt to warn about the NAR or other false teachings are often vilified and labeled as negative, legalistic, and haters.

All of this makes way for the mainstream evangelical Church to be ripe for the infiltration of the NAR and so it should come as no surprise

that many are embracing this errant teaching.

A prime example of how this is taking place can be demonstrated from the 2016 book by Nathan Brewer titled *The Pulse of Christ*. Brewer is founder and director of Kyrios Ministries, which is devoted to international discipleship and missions. He has fully embraced and in his book has promoted the five-fold ministries as propagated by the NAR. Both in Europe, where he currently lives, and in the United States his book and ministry are being endorsed by non-charismatic evangelical churches and Christians.

Two observations should be made at this point. First, Brewer never mentions the NAR, although he references some of its resources and adopts its theology. Secondly, Brewer never tries to explain or defend his interpretation of Ephesians 4:11, an understanding which is held by very few Christians and virtually no conservative Bible scholars. However, Brewer is concerned not with exegesis, but with application, toward which end he offers numerous practical exercises to develop the five-fold gifts. He believes that all five gifts are not only operational today, but to some extent all Christians possess all five and should develop them,²⁴ although some have a distinct calling.²⁵ Brewer maintains that these gifts need to be pursued and developed.²⁶ Therefore he devotes a chapter for each of the five gifts, complete with several exercises to be used in small groups. Some of the exercises, especially on evangelism, teaching, and shepherding are useful. However, the problem comes in the areas of apostleship and prophecy. Let's take a look.

Apostles — If apostles exist today, it would be expected that the rest of the Church would submit to their authority. With this in mind we learn, "The NAR practice of submitting to an apostle is referred to as seeking spiritual covering (or spiritual protection) under the authority of an apostle."²⁷ New Testament apostles were chosen specifically by Christ (Matthew 10:1-4), had to be eyewitnesses of the

resurrected Lord (1 Corinthians 9:1; 15:7-8), were assigned the task of laying the foundation of the Church (Ephesians 2:20), and were limited to 12 men (Revelation 21:14). The NAR apostles, by contrast, are chosen by other "apostles," have not seen the resurrected Lord (although some have claimed to have done so), have no need to add to the Church's foundation, and number 400 and counting.

Brad Christerson explained to *Christianity Today* the process of how one becomes an apostle in the movement:

"It's all sort of self-appointed. Leaders in the movement would say that people are recognized as apostles because of the influence that they have — not only over your own congregation but over other leaders. But there's definitely a good deal of self-appointing going on. Peter Wagner, a leader in the New Apostolic Reformation movement, referred to himself as a 'super apostle,' because he was influential with a bunch of other apostles."²⁸

Christerson also described how this plays out in the lives of individual followers:

"They would use the word prophetic or apostolic — or they would align themselves with one of the apostles. They would say, 'I am a follower of Bill Johnson,' or Mike Bickle, or Cindy Jacobs. People would tell us, 'he's my apostle' or 'he's my prophet.' The other term we hear a lot is 'spiritual covering': There's this idea that you are under spiritual covering of your specific apostle or prophet. A related term is 'impartation.' The apostles basically impart their power to you. If you are under them, the power that they have straight from God trickles down to you."²⁹

The need for apostles in the NAR system becomes evident when one notes from the New Testament that the apostles received prophecies and gave God's people inspired revelation (1 Corinthians 2:13; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Timothy 1:13; 2:2; 3:14-17;

1 John 1:1-4; Jude 17), performed signs and wonders and miracles (Acts 2:43; 3:3-11; 5:12), and had authority over the churches (1 Corinthians 5:5; 1 Timothy 1:20; Philemon 9). It is based on the idea that the office of apostleship has been restored. The NAR's teachers believe additional revelation, prophecies, miracles, healings, and exorcism are all fully functional today. They contend we have returned to the apostolic age, the Kingdom has begun, and the new super-apostles of the NAR are leading the way.

Brewer believes that both the gift and office of apostle exist today and that every Christian has and should develop this gift,³⁰ although as noted above some have been distinctively called to be apostles.³¹ Coupled with apostleship are the miraculous sign gifts, particularly healings and demonic warfare. In regard to miraculous healings, Brewer patterns his thinking after the "Power Healing" ministry of John Wimber and the third wave movement.³² Those implementing these methods are encouraged to go out into the streets, find someone they think needs to be healed, and "Command the pain to go, or the certain body part to be restored, in Jesus [sic] name."³³ Brewer offers no guarantee that the healing will be successful, but promises "the outcome of increased intimacy with the Father from praying outweighs healing."³⁴

Concerning spiritual warfare, including tearing down demonic strongholds, Brewer says these can take place through the "apostolic strategy" of going to "a high place overlooking the city and transform your city through prayer."³⁵ These apostolic gifts and strategies are not an end in themselves, they are a means by which the kingdom of heaven is brought to earth. Brewer writes:

"As ambassadors of the King and his culture in heaven, we bring heaven to new area on earth, which moves toward the Kingdom in its fullness of healing and wholeness."³⁶

As was mentioned earlier, the NAR's leaders believe they have been called to take back dominion of the earth from Satan. This is done largely through miraculous powers spear-headed by apostles who have authority over all who oppose Christ.

Prophets — These modern-day prophets are second only to apostles in the New Testament and the NAR, along with many in the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements who are in lockstep with the NAR and believe that the office of prophet has also been reinstated. However, odd as it may seem, virtually no one believes that today's prophets have the same status that the biblical prophets had. Old Testament prophets, when prophesying for the Lord, were incapable of error and faced death if they were wrong (Deuteronomy 18:20-22). But many in the contemporary Church have accepted Wayne Grudem's thesis that New Testament prophecies were and are fallible, being a mixture of a word from God and one's own ideas or imagination. In his *Systematic Theology* Grudem writes:

"So prophecies in the church today should be considered merely human words, not God's words, and not equal to God's words in authority. ... Most charismatic teachers today would agree that contemporary prophecy is not equal to Scripture in authority. Though some will speak of prophecy as being the 'word of God' for today, there is almost uniform testimony from all sections of the charismatic movement that prophecy is imperfect and impure, and will contain elements that are not to be obeyed or trusted."³⁷

Jack Deere, who claims to be a prophet himself, admits that modern prophets are prone to errors and says:

"Prophets are really messy. Prophets make mistakes. And sometimes when a prophet makes a mistake, it's a serious mistake. I mean, I know prophets just last year that cost people millions of dollars with a mistake they made. I talked to people

who made the wrong investments, actually moved their homes, spent tons of money."³⁸

As is obvious, prophecies of today are not in the same league with the inspired prophecies of the Scriptures and one must question the value of fallible and mistaken prophecies. Nevertheless, supposed prophecies today are often published in places such as the *Elijah List* and *Charisma* magazine, apparently with little concern for their accuracies.

Brewer believes the gift of prophecy has been restored and defines it as "receiving from God his love and perspective about a person, church, city or nation, and communicating it for the purpose of encouragement, strengthening and comfort."³⁹ All Christians have the ability to prophesy, Brewer tells us,⁴⁰ and when God gives them a message they should write it down and refer to it later, much as one would the Bible.⁴¹ So convinced is Brewer that all can prophesy on demand that he provides an exercise in his manual in which participants draw random numbers and prophesy on the spot concerning those who correspond to those numbers.⁴² Brewer admits that not all prophecies are fulfilled and that the source of these supposed revelations might very well be our own spirit, or even an evil spirit.⁴³ But none of this keeps him from encouraging all believers to exercise the gift of prophecy.

Extrabiblical Words from God — In a related category, but perhaps not quite up to the level of prophecy, are the constant references throughout the NAR of God speaking to virtually all believers, audibly and inaudibly. Such assertions are hardly shocking today because they are prevalent throughout all spectrums of evangelicalism. Indeed, those who are far removed from any official form of Pentecostalism regularly declare revelations from the Lord. Brad Christerson rationalizes:

"And then you have the appeal of direct access to God — getting direct downloads from God. God is going to talk to me and tell me

what to do. Or my leader is getting direct downloads. For many people, that's more exciting than a 45-minute sermon examining the Greek terms from Paul's writings."⁴⁴

While these revelations are seldom elevated to the level of inspiration, we would have to ask in what sense does God ever speak in a non-revelatory manner? Can God speak in a non-authoritative way? Can God whisper fallible, errant ideas and words into the minds or ears of His people. If so, no such revelatory example can be found in the Scriptures. As with all other modern-day Charismatic practices, whether they be tongues, miracles, healings, or prophecies, hearing from the Lord apart from Scripture does not match what took place in the New Testament.

Nathan Busenitz, who serves as part of the pastoral staff of Grace Community Church, addresses this subject in the book *Right Thinking in a Church Gone Astray*:

"When we approach the continuationist/cessationist debate by first defining the gifts biblically, it becomes apparent that modern charismatic practice does not match the New Testament precedent."⁴⁵

For example, tongues in the New Testament were the supernatural ability to speak authentic foreign languages unknown to the speaker. But virtually no one in the Charismatic movement today would make such a boast. D.A. Carson, himself a continuationist (that is, one who believes that the Lord speaks to us today apart from Scripture), confirms:

"Modern tongues are lexically uncommunicative and the few instances of reported modern xenoglossia [speaking foreign languages] are so poorly attested that no weight can be laid to them. ... How ... may tongues be perceived? There are three possibilities: [1] disconnected sounds, ejaculations, and the like that are not confused with human language; [2] connected sequences

of sounds that appear to be real languages unknown to the hearer not trained in linguistics, even though they are not; [3] and real language known by one or more of the potential hearers, even if unknown to the speaker ... [T]he biblical descriptions of tongues seem to demand the third category, but the contemporary phenomena seem to fit better in the second category; and never the twain shall meet."⁴⁶

Modern tongues simply are not languages as was true in Bible times. Turning to prophecy, we find biblical prophecy authoritative, inspired, and inerrant, but such is not the case concerning modern prophecies which can be in error, partially given by God and partially from one's imagination. This is admitted by even the strongest supporters of contemporary prophets. When we turn to miracles and healings, the same disconnect between Scripture and present-day practices is evident. At the hands of Jesus or the apostles, healings were immediate, complete, and undeniable, but these features do not attend the claims of healing ministries today. As earlier noted, whatever is going on today in the Charismatic movement is not equivalent to what was taking place in the New Testament.

Somehow this seems to go unnoticed by many, and that is true of those connected with the NAR. Nathan Brewer writes, "Many Christians struggle to hear from God or say they can't, but that's a lie from the enemy. Come to him with an expectation, He loves to communicate with His children."⁴⁷ Brewer even teaches techniques on how to hear from God:

"Prepare your heart and mind to receive from the Lord. Relax by taking a few deep breaths. Tune out things around you. ... Invite the Holy Spirit to come into your mind, fill your heart, and speak to you in a personal way. This process to relax and tune out may take a few minutes, so just be patient and wait in his presence. ... After you sense some-

thing, write it down. Even if you are unsure if it was from God, just write it down."⁴⁸

It is instructive to read the biblical basis given for these prescribed techniques. While stating in other places in his book that God speaking to believers today is not equal to the inspired revelation of Scripture, Brewer nevertheless uses God's words given to the biblical writers as his rationale for God speaking to us now and for us writing down His supposed words. For example, Brewer informs us that God told Isaiah to "Take a large scroll, and write on it with a man's pen" what the Lord had shown him (Isaiah 8:1); Habakkuk was exhorted to "Write the vision; and make it plain on tablets" (Habakkuk 2:2); the Apostle John is commanded, "write what you see in a book" (Revelation 1:11), and again "write this down" regarding the vision of the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:5).⁴⁹

Yet somehow Brewer and most others who accept the view that God is speaking to us today outside of Scripture miss the clear implication of what they are saying. Certainly the human authors of Scripture were "holy men of God [who] spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:21) and directed to write down their revelations. But that does not give other Christians the right to give the words that come to their minds inspirational authority, nor are they commanded to write them down because the biblical authors did. There is a link missing between how God spoke to those who would record His Word and the supposed words from God that many are claiming today. That link is Holy Spirit inspiration.

The biblical authors confidently spoke and recorded the very inspired words of God (1 Thessalonians 2:13). They did not need to learn a technique on how to discern the voice of God, nor did they have to wonder if God was speaking to and through them, or if their imaginations had deceived them. But Brewer, representative of so many others, is not concerned if God is truly speaking, offering the caveat:

"Do not be discouraged if you feel like you can't sense the Lord's voice. It's a gradual learning process, like a skill that can be continually improved."⁵⁰

In contrast, those who heard from God, as recorded in the Bible, did not need to learn a skill, never doubted if the voice they heard was God's or their own, never mixed revelation from God with their imaginary thoughts, never spoke of inner voices that were inaudible, and never doubted the authority of the words they heard. They were hearing from God, and their witness of God speaking was very different from the claims we have in the twenty-first century.

A BIBLICAL EXAMINATION

Challenges to the NAR's theology have already been addressed throughout this article, but it would be helpful to briefly summarize the biblical teachings on some of the key components of the movement.

The Cessation of Apostles and Prophets — At the heart of the NAR's theology is the interpretation of Ephesians 4:11-13, which the NAR's leaders believe teaches the present existence of the five-fold ministries. Two exegetical mistakes are made with the text. First, and of lesser consequence, is the separation of "pastor" and "teacher" into two separate offices. While some English translations give the appearance that pastors and teachers are distinct, the Greek implies otherwise. Thus, some Bible expositors maintain from this verse that there are only four God-given ministries, in that the pastors who are charged with shepherding are also charged with the responsibility of teacher, hence one office of pastor-teacher.

Pastor and author John MacArthur summarizes the consensus view in his commentary on Ephesians:

"Though teaching can be identified as a ministry on its own (1 Cor. 12:28), **pastors and teachers** are best understood as one office of leadership in the church. Often the word **and** (*kai*) means 'that is' or 'in particular,' making teachers in this context explana-

tory of **pastors**. That meaning cannot be conclusively proven in this text, but the text of 1 Timothy 5:17 clearly puts the two functions together."⁵¹

Others suggest a close connection but with a slight distinction. For example, Bible teacher and author Alexander Strauch proffers:

"According to the grammatical structure of the phrase, 'and some as pastors [shepherds] and teachers,' shepherds and teachers are closely linked together but not identical. Shepherds are included in the category of teachers, but not all teachers are included in the category of shepherds"⁵²

In an endnote to the above, Strauch further comments:

"Most commentators think that the two terms 'shepherds' and 'teachers' refer to one group: shepherd-teachers. Others think that 'shepherds' and 'teachers' are two entirely distinct groups. Daniel B. Wallace argues quite effectively for the view that the two terms are distinct, yet related. He argues that the first term 'pastor' is a subset of the second, 'teacher,' since similar formations are well attested in many other adjective and noun constructions."⁵³

But more important are the positions of apostles and prophets. Both roles were clearly foundational in the New Testament as the Church is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets (Ephesians 2:20). If there were additional apostles and prophets today their function would still be that of laying the foundation of the Church. That is, additional doctrines and instructions to God's people would be laid on what is already found in the New Testament — which would be a recipe for confusion and disaster.

The apostles and prophets received divine revelation to pass on to God's people (Ephesians 3:5). It was to them that "the faith" (the New Testament body of truth) was "once for all

delivered to the saints" (Jude 3, cf. v. 17). Peter called on his readers not to seek additional revelation, but to "be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandments of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior" (2 Peter 3:2). The book of Hebrews concurs, "After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard, God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by the gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will" (Hebrews 2:3-4, NASB).

The NAR leadership knows these passages, but rejects their meaning by teaching that God is doing a new thing in our age. In order to do a new thing there needs to be new authority. And new authority, which adds to or supersedes the teachings of Scripture, requires apostles. And thus, we have the rise of the office of apostle, an office even historic Pentecostals recognize as no longer operative. Not only does Revelation 21:14 clearly teach that there were only 12 apostles of the Lamb, but also nowhere in the New Testament are instructions given to replace the original 12. As they died they were not supplanted by others and, with the death of John, the last of the apostles left this earthly scene and none has taken on the role.

Another exegetical fallacy the NAR makes with the text is that the grammar of the Ephesians 4 passage does not support the assertion that these ministries were expected to continue throughout the Church age. Nathan Busenitz writes:

"Rather, it is the 'building up' process of verse 12 (and not the 'giving' of apostles and prophets in verse 11) that is said to continue until the church reaches a state of maturity (verse 13). Though the apostles and prophets were limited to the foundation stage of church history (a point already established by Paul in Ephesians 2:20), the 'building up' of the church has continued throughout the centuries. In other words, the edifying effects

of their ministry in the first century (particularly through the writing of Scripture) continue to reverberate throughout the subsequent epochs of church history."⁵⁴

The Working of Miracles — A key teaching of the NAR is that people can be trained to work miracles today. Yet not only is there no evidence in the New Testament that anyone was ever taught how to do miracles, instead miracles were performed only by a very select group of people and for a very particular reason. Jesus, as we saw earlier, performed miracles of all kinds, but as a sign pointing to the fact that "you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and that believing you may have life in His name" (John 20:31).

Almost all miracles recorded in the Bible after Jesus were at the hands of the 12 apostles and Paul. As Luke records, "and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles" (Acts 2:43). While the numerous miracles in the book of Acts come through the ministries of the apostles, there are only two instances where non-apostles did so: Stephen (Acts 6:8) and Philip (Acts 8:6), and these men would easily fit the category of biblical prophets who laid the foundation of the Church (Ephesians 2:20).

To our knowledge, no one else ever worked a miracle, nor do the New Testament epistles, from which we derive our Church-age teachings, do anything more than mention miracles in passing (e.g., 1 Corinthians 12:28-30). It is obvious that miracles were not a key ingredient in the early Church. We do find, however, that they had an important function — to authenticate the true apostles. In the face of some who claimed to be apostles, whom Paul called false apostles (2 Corinthians 11:13), he verified his apostolic credentials by saying, "Truly the signs of an apostle were accomplished among you with all perseverance, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds" (2 Corinthians 12:12).

Add to this biblical evidence the fact that the supposed miracles and

healings today bear little resemblance to the New Testament counterparts. Whatever is going on today in the Charismatic movement and within the NAR, it is not the same thing that happened in the first century.

Demonic Warfare Strategies — Almost nothing that the NAR advocates concerning battling demons has a biblical base. Spiritual mapping is never found in Scripture, there is no evidence for territorial demons, nor prayer walks, nor rebuking demons, nor ancestral curses.⁵⁵

Jesus and a handful of apostles addressed demons, but believers are never instructed to do so in the New Testament. There are only three texts in the epistles that inform us of how to war with demons, and all three say the same thing. In James 4:7 and 1 Peter 5:8 we are told to resist the devil, and when we do he will flee from us. Ephesians 6:10-18 expands on the instruction of James and Peter by commanding the believer to be strong in the Lord's strength, stand firm against the schemes of the devil, resist in the evil day, and put on the full armor of God. Paul concludes by calling us to prayer. But at no point are we told to take an aggressive stance, to rebuke the devil, break down his strongholds by marching around his territory, or any other such techniques. Resist and stand firm are defensive stances, and to that we are called.

Our mission is to draw near to God (James 4:8), be firm in our faith, (1 Peter 5:9), apply God's spiritual armor (Ephesians 6:14-17), and pray at all times in the Spirit (Ephesians 6:18). In other words, focus on Christ (Colossians 3:1-4) and the means that He has supplied to grow in grace. Fixation on the devil is a distraction and a trap and is never called for in the Scriptures.

CONCLUSION

Identification of NAR adherents and congregations is often difficult, not only because there is no official organization or membership, but also because those who are involved often claim to be evangelical and hold many orthodox theological views.

For example, the website for a newly planted NAR church in this writer's city offers this in its section on what they believe:

"We are 'Good News' Christians; in church lingo that means 'Evangelical Christians.' We believe that God is in a good mood and brings Good News though [sic] Jesus Christ. Our beliefs have foundations in the Apostles' Creed (c. A.D. 215) and the core principles of the Protestant Reformation (A.D. 1517), namely the ultimate and essential authority of the Scriptures for Christian faith and practice, salvation by faith alone, the priesthood of all believers and the power of the Holy Spirit. We believe in the trinity; that God is the Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit. We believe that Jesus was born of a virgin, died on the cross, that He was physically raised from the dead, ascended to heaven and will someday return. We also believe that an individual's personal relationship with Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior determines an individual's eternal destination of heaven or hell. When Jesus said, 'Come, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest...' (Matt 11:28-30) the plea was for everyone to come, no exceptions. Our hearts desire is not to change you but instead to do our best to be **REAL**. To be **RELEVANT** and to walk with each other in **RELATIONSHIP** so that together we might find ourselves being more like Jesus every day."⁵⁶

When one digs deeper they will find that this church has all the theological errors of NAR-related churches, yet they affirm the Apostles' Creed, claim to be evangelical, and to hold to the core principles of the Reformation. It is not until one gets to the last paragraph that anything appears to be askew. After all, the call of the Church is not only to be real and relevant, but also to produce regenerated disciples of Christ — to change us — yet this local church makes no promises to do so.

When a description of the "Pastors" of this church is read, things really begin to come into focus. The biography for the "Senior Leaders," a husband and wife team, claims that the husband "functions with an apostolic anointing" and the wife "moves more prophetically." Together they founded "Destiny Church and Five Fold International Ministries" and "love to equip and release ministers to go into all of the world."⁵⁷

Another couple, who are both identified as "Pastors" of this church, are "graduates of Bethel School of Supernatural Ministry in Redding, CA" and "They both have a heart to see the Kingdom of God advance." The husband serves as "the Chief Financial Officer for Destiny Church," while his "pastor" wife "is the head of missions as well as the Director of Five Fold International, which is the covering of Destiny Church."⁵⁸

Terms such as "Bethel School of Supernatural Ministry," "advancing the Kingdom of God," "Five Fold International Ministries," and "covering" should alarm us.

Safeguarding ourselves from the destructive influence of the NAR requires a good and growing grasp of Scripture and theology. Deception is most powerful when people are lacking knowledge. A mechanic can take advantage of me, if he wants to, because I do not know much about cars. Similarly, false teachers prey on those who are ignorant of the fundamentals of the faith.

Even those with a good grasp of biblical truth can be deceived by movements such as the NAR if they believe that new revelations, which move beyond and are not tied directly to Scripture, are possible. It is essential to understand that all we believe concerning life and godliness must emerge from the Word of God (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:3). It is not enough that a teaching does not seem to *contradict* Scripture. The real issue is whether it is *drawn* from Scripture.

Moreover, our discernment skills should be sharp. Hebrews 5:14 calls

for maturity and chides believers who have become lax and apathetic in their Christian walk: "But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."

When virtually every New Testament book warns of false teachers and deception, and 1 Timothy 4:1 says, "that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons," it is time for believers to take these warnings seriously. The contemporary Church is woefully unprepared to combat fraudulent theology on the level of the NAR, and it is for that reason that it and related groups are growing rapidly.

Finally, believers should be involved in a local church which takes the Word of God seriously. Far too many Christians are content to attend mediocre churches that have entertaining music, fun programs, and excellent coffee bars. Churches are to be "the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Timothy 3:15) and, if the one you attend is not living up to its divine job description, a new one which does should be sought out, if possible.

Believers need like-minded brothers and sisters who are serious about the Word and serving Christ based on that Word (Hebrews 10:23-25). If you can't find a good church that teaches the Bible faithfully, find a believer or two who shares your commitment to sound theology and truth who will sharpen you in the faith. None of us can afford to be ignorant of Satan's schemes (2 Corinthians 2:11) and our only safeguard is the inspired, infallible revelation of God in the Bible itself, not the imaginations of people.

Endnotes:

1. Vinson Synan, *The Century of the Holy Spirit*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2001, pg. 359.
2. *Ibid.*, pg. 192.
3. Michael G. Moriarty, *The New Charismatics*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing, 1992, pp. 100-101.
4. G.B. McGee and B.A. Pavia in Stanley M. Burgess, Editor and Eduard M. Van Der Maas, Associate Editor, *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and*

- Charismatic Movements*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2002, pg. 1181.
5. *The Century of the Holy Spirit*, op. cit., pg. 377.
6. See further, "New Apostolic Reformation (NAR)" from Berean Research website. Document accessed at: <http://bereanresearch.org/dominionism-nar/>. Also see, R. Douglas Geivett and Holly Pivec, *God's Super-Apostles, Encountering the Worldwide Prophets and Apostles Movement*. Wooster, Ohio: Weaver Book Company, 2014, pp. 84-85, 89.
7. Bob Smietana, "The 'Prophets' and 'Apostles' Leading the Quiet Revolution in American Religion," *Christianity Today*, online post dated August 3, 2017. Document accessed at: www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2017/august-web-only/bethel-church-international-house-prayer-prophets-apostles.html.
8. *Ibid.*, quotation rendered in italics in original.
9. *Ibid.*, quotation rendered in italics in original.
10. This interpretation of Ephesians 4:11 will be discussed in greater detail later in the article.
11. *God's Super-Apostles*, op. cit., pp. 16-17.
12. Martyn Wendell Jones, "Kingdom Come in California?," *Christianity Today*, May 2016, pg. 33.
13. PFO has published a variety of articles examining the excesses in the Charismatic movement. See, for example, G. Richard Fisher, "All That Glitters... Gold Fillings and Truth Decay in Toronto," *The Quarterly Journal*, July-September 1999, pp. 5-11.
14. "Kingdom Come in California?," op. cit., pg. 33. See also Andrew Strom, "Bill Johnson, Bethel, and the New Age" video. Accessed at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=6wKPjf1mjb8.
15. *God's Super-Apostles*, op. cit., pp. 102-114.
16. Jack Deere, *Surprised by the Power of the Spirit*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1993, pp. 66-67.
17. While not specific to the NAR and demonology, for a helpful overview of today's deliverance movement and its key players, see M. Kurt Goedelman and J. Greg Sheryl, "Obsessed with Demons," *The Quarterly Journal*, October-December 2014, pp. 4-16.
18. *God's Super-Apostles*, op. cit., pp. 79-80.
19. *Ibid.*, pp. 1, 49, 79-90, 102-114.
20. *Ibid.*, pp. 51, 87-88, 94-95, 145.
21. "New Apostolic Reformation (NAR)," op. cit.
22. "Kingdom Come in California?," op. cit., pg. 33, italic in original.
23. *God's Super-Apostles*, op. cit., pp. 67-69.
24. Nathan Brewer, *The Pulse of Christ, A Fivefold Training Manual*. Fairfax, Va.: Xulon Press, 2016, pp. 25, 32-33.
25. *Ibid.*, pp. 33, 81.

26. *Ibid.*, pg. 172.
27. *God's Super-Apostles*, op. cit., pg. 11.
28. "The 'Prophets' and 'Apostles' Leading the Quiet Revolution in American Religion," op. cit.
29. *Ibid.*
30. *The Pulse of Christ*, op. cit., pp. 45-75.
31. *Ibid.*, pp. 33, 81.
32. *Ibid.*, pg. 64.
33. *Ibid.*, pg. 68.
34. *Ibid.*, pg. 69.
35. *Ibid.*, pg. 49.
36. *Ibid.*, pg. 63-64.
37. Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994, pg. 1055.
38. Deere cited in Nathan Busenitz, General Editor, *Right Thinking in a Church Gone Astray - Finding Our Way Back to Biblical Truth*. Eugene, Ore.: Harvest House Publishers, 2017, pg. 239, endnote 7. Busenitz is citing, Jack Deere, National School of the Prophets, "Mobilizing the Prophetic Office," May 11, 2000, 11:30 AM, tape #3.
39. *The Pulse of Christ*, op. cit., pg. 79.
40. *Ibid.*, pg. 81.
41. *Ibid.*, pg. 85.
42. *Ibid.*, pp. 87-90.
43. *Ibid.*, pg. 90.
44. "The 'Prophets' and 'Apostles' Leading the Quiet Revolution in American Religion," op. cit.
45. *Right Thinking in a Church Gone Astray*, op. cit., pg. 119.
46. Carson cited in *ibid.*, pg. 240, endnote 9, brackets in original, initial ellipsis added, subsequent ellipsis in original. Busenitz is citing, D.A. Carson, *Showing the Spirit*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1987, pp. 84, 85.
47. *The Pulse of Christ*, op. cit., pg. 83.
48. *Ibid.*, pp. 84-85.
49. *Ibid.*, pg. 85.
50. *Ibid.*, pg. 86.
51. John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary - Ephesians*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1986, pg. 143, commentary on Ephesians 4:11, bold type in original.
52. Alexander Strauch, *Biblical Eldership*. Littleton, Colo.: Lewis and Roth Publishers, 1995, pg. 210, brackets in original.
53. *Ibid.*, pp. 314-315, endnote 27.
54. *Right Thinking in a Church Gone Astray*, op. cit., pg. 122.
55. For a helpful critique of ancestral curses, see G. Richard Fisher, "The Plight of Ancestral Bondage," *The Quarterly Journal*, July-September 2010, pp. 1, 11-18.
56. "About Us, Who We Are" page from Destiny Church (Springfield, Illinois) website, ellipsis and upper case bold type in original. Document accessed at: www.destiny217.org/who-we-are/.
57. "About Us, Pastors" page from Destiny Church website. Document accessed at: www.destiny217.org/our-pastors/.
58. *Ibid.*

punishment or evil punishment to quell the actions of evildoers like Kim Jong Un,' he said."

How — or why — Jeffress employed such a use, interpretation, and exegesis of Romans 13 is bewildering.

There is no argument that it is the God-given right for the state to maintain a military force in which to protect its people from enemies — both from without and within. But it is that latter aspect that is the point Paul is driving home in Romans 13:1-4; namely that the state has the moral obligation to restrain evil from within by punishing those who propagate crime and disorder. As A.T. Robertson writes, "Paul is not arguing for the divine right of kings or for any special form of government, but for government and order" (*Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Vol. IV, Epistles of Paul, Romans, pg. 407).

Astonishingly — and perhaps regrettably — there are those far less qualified in biblical studies who see Jeffress' faulty exegesis. Writing in the politically liberal news and opinion website *HuffPost* (formerly *The Huffington Post*), Peter Henne wrote, "Robert Jeffress, a Texas evangelical Christian pastor (and outspoken Trump supporter) backed Trump's hostile moves. He specifically pointed to a Biblical passage on government authority — Romans 13 — to justify a potential war against North Korea. Jeffress' use of this passage to support military action, however, is a dangerous misinterpretation of what the Bible actually says." Henne describes himself as "neither a theologian nor a religious studies scholar." And while one may debate his judgment of Trump's "hostile moves," he is spot on in his judgment that Jeffress has employed "a dangerous misinterpretation of what the Bible actually says" regarding Romans 13.

Henne further demonstrates the fallacy and weakness of Jeffress' use of Romans 13:

"But when we apply a passage from religious scripture to a contemporary issue, we need to think about three things. First, do we understand what it actually says? Second, does our understanding fit with the context of the passage? Finally, does our understanding fall within traditional approaches to the issue? Jeffress' statement fails on all three points."

Others in the secular news media also shared Henne's concerns. Philip Wegmann, a commentary writer for the *Washington Examiner*, wrote, "Both as a matter of theology and politics, this should be disturbing. It's well and good to acknowledge the Christian scriptural tenet that, in principle, war can be justifiable in certain cases. But this alone can't be the basis for 'taking out' a particular ruler or making specific policy decision about a specific war."

Wegmann added, "Moreover, Romans refers to the use of force by *legitimate* state powers. Under our Constitu-

tion and its structure of divided powers, Congress has to be part of the leadership that authorizes war."

Even those distant from a liberal view and more at home with Jeffress' conservatism express concern. On "Caffeinated Thoughts," a website said to be devoted to "looking at culture, current events, faith and politics from a Christian and conservative point of view," Shane Vander Hart, the website's founder and editor-in-chief, wrote, "Dr. Jeffress' advice is why cherry-picking a Bible verse is dangerous. If you read the context of this passage, it isn't talking about war powers. The Apostle Paul addresses how Christians [sic] subjects (or in our case citizens) should respond to our governing authorities. We are to obey them because God has given them authority over us and the ability to punish those who break the law. This passage does not give the 'governing authorities' absolute power as they are to approve what is good. This passage also refers to governing authorities as 'God's servant for your good,' 'the servant of God,' and 'ministers of God.' At the time Paul wrote this Christians suffered injustice from the Roman government. This particular text paints an ideal picture, and it doesn't mean God affirms everything that is done by a ruler."

In his conclusion, Vander Hart states, "I am not saying there aren't circumstances the United States should respond to North Korea with military action, but it shouldn't be on a whim especially considering they have nuclear weapons with a leader who is unstable enough to use them. ... Any military action certainly shouldn't be done based on a misuse of scripture."

Here, too, Vander Hart is on much safer biblical ground than is Jeffress. Clearly, there are times when a government must stand against oppression and tyranny in the world. Few would argue against the war waged by the United States in response to Adolph Hitler.

Maybe Jeffress would have found himself on a more solid biblical ground had he used the record of the just war in which the Old Testament patriarch Abraham engaged (Genesis 14). As apologist and pastor Robert Morey tells us, "Abraham was initiating the conflict by pursuing and attacking a tyrannical enemy. In this light, it is clear that wars of aggression in which one strikes the first blow against tyrants can sometimes be viewed as perfectly just and righteous" (*When Is It Right to Fight?*, pg. 24). Morey further notes, "Abraham's aggressive use of force to deliver his brothers from tyranny and enslavement justifies all other wars fought for the same reason" (*ibid.*, pg. 25).

Mark Twain once mused, "In religion and politics, people's beliefs and convictions are in almost every case gotten at second-hand, and without examination." Tony Campolo, one far removed from stable biblical interpretations on many fronts, articulates, "Mixing politics and religion is like mixing ice cream and manure; it doesn't affect the manure much, but it really messes up the ice cream." I assume in Campolo's simile he is equating the ice cream with religion and not the other.

Yet Jerry Falwell, the late Baptist preacher and founder of the political organization Moral Majority, argued the opposite, saying, "The idea that religion and politics don't mix was invented by the Devil to keep Christians from running their own country."

Hopefully, if nothing else, Robert Jeffress will learn from the criticism he has received that when it comes to counseling the president, he needs to stick to areas of salvation and sanctification and leave foreign policy and action to the military and elected leaders. And then for us, we too can learn a lesson from Jeffress that if we choose to mix politics and religion, it must be based upon a careful and sound hermeneutic. Whether for our own personal study and edification or in providing council to others — especially if the person is said to be the leader of the free world — we are mandated to properly read and interpret Scripture so that we are workmen unashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15).

—MKG

NEWS UPDATES

(continued from page 3)

Hurricane Irma was ranked as one of the most powerful storms recorded in the Atlantic. But as the hurricane, earlier designated Category 5, approached the

Tampa-Lakeland area, it had downgraded to a Category 2 and then weakened to a Category 1 as it made its way further into Florida's interior. Lake Mary is approximately 100 miles northeast of Tampa.

In a survey of the damage, it appears that Strang may be giving the devil more credit than necessary. Strang reported, "I lost power at my house for only 28 hours, and a huge pine fell but did no damage. At the office, our sign was blown over. We had to work remotely for four days until power could be restored to our building." Yet Strang apparently sees Satan and Irma as a good strategy to market his publication of Cahn's new book. "I ask intercessors who have the ability to see what is happening in Scripture to pray against these attacks and also that the message of *The Paradigm* will have wide distribution," he said.

Strang also appears selective in his reporting of the name Irma. The name Irma originated as a German name and its more customary meaning is "complete one" or "universal." Strang, without qualification, draws the meaning of Irma from a lesser derivation, the name Irmin, a German mythological god of war.

"*The Paradigm* reveals a biblical blueprint that shows that patterns in ancient Israel are repeated in our day and are specifically tied to Bill and Hillary Clinton, Barack Obama and even Donald Trump," Strang wrote in his blog.

—MKG

PERSONAL FREEDOM OUTREACH — STATEMENT OF BELIEF

- I. THE BIBLE AS THE DIVINELY INSPIRED, INERRANT WORD OF GOD: IT IS IN ITS ENTIRETY THE SOLE AUTHORITY FOR ALL MATTERS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF AND PRACTICE.
- II. THE ONE TRUE GOD. IN THE ONE TRUE GOD THERE EXIST THREE PERSONS, BEING: THE FATHER, THE SON JESUS CHRIST, AND THE HOLY SPIRIT.
- III. JESUS CHRIST: HIS DEITY, HUMANITY, VIRGIN BIRTH, SINLESSNESS, DEATH AND BODILY RESURRECTION; WHO WILL PERSONALLY AND VISIBLY RETURN AGAIN TO EARTH.
- IV. THE PERSONALITY AND DEITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.
- V. THE EXISTENCE AND PERSONALITY OF SATAN, HIS TOTAL OPPOSITION TO GOD, AND HIS POWER OVER THE UNREGENERATE.
- VI. THE COMPLETE AND TOTAL DEPRAVITY OF ALL MEN WHICH MAKES THEM HOPELESSLY LOST WITHOUT THE NEW BIRTH OBTAINABLE THROUGH FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST.
- VII. THE FINAL ESTATE OF MAN: FOR THE SAVED, EVERLASTING LIFE IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD AND FOR THE UNSAVED, EVERLASTING PUNISHMENT BECAUSE OF THEIR UNBELIEF.
- VIII. THE GOSPEL BY WHICH WE ARE SAVED BEING SUMMED IN THE DEATH, BURIAL, AND RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.
- IX. THE CHURCH BEING THE BODY OF CHRIST, UNITED IN THE HOLY SPIRIT, CONSISTING OF THOSE WHO HAVE RECEIVED JESUS CHRIST AS SAVIOR. A LOCAL CHURCH IS AN ORGANIZED ASSEMBLY OF BELIEVERS UNITED FOR THE PURPOSE OF CARRYING OUT THE GREAT COMMISSION OF CHRIST.
- X. THE GREAT COMMISSION OF CHRIST BEING TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO ALL MEN, BAPTIZING AND DISCIPLINING THOSE WHO HAVE BELIEVED.



Books in Review

EVERY THOUGHT CAPTIVE

by Richard L. Pratt, Jr.

P&R Publishing, 142 pages, \$9.99

This volume, first published a number of years ago, presents apologetics from a presuppositional model: the believer defends Christianity by presupposing its truth. Sometimes labeled as “Van Tillian apologetics” — the method was spearheaded in modern times by Cornelius Van Til — it is affirmed by many within the Reformed tradition, including author and apologist John M. Frame.

While *Every Thought Captive* is said to be a study manual for high school students, any reader can benefit from it. Frame writes in the book’s Foreword, “I found it hard to believe that anyone would try to teach Reformed apologetics at that [high school] level” (pg. viii). But, Frame assures us, Pratt has done so and that he has presented Reformed apologetics “in genuinely popular language” and that the book “is not an exposition of Van Til’s thought,” but rather a “*training manual*” (pg. vii).

The book’s opening is more philosophical than practical, which may make it a slow read for some. But it is in this section that Pratt reminds us that the study of apologetics and defending the faith is not “the job of the so-called professionals” (pg. 7), the important truth that the “ability to defend our beliefs will make our evangelism more effective” (pg. 8), and the call to clarify distinctions of speech — “what one *says* in contrast to what one *means*” (pg. 34).

In the latter section of the book, Pratt addresses the more practical aspects of apologetics.

In presenting his “how-to’s,” he begins with a word on attitudes and actions, calling for a consistent life, a careful approach, and a correct procedure. It is here that he addresses one of the most important factors — and failures — of the believer. He writes, “A consistent daily Christian walk is an indispensable aspect of a biblical apology. All too often Christians become so interested in the techniques of practicing apologetics or the theory supporting apologetics that they forget how their lives affect their defense” (pp. 62-63). He then states, “We must involve ourselves daily in the reading and application of God’s Word to our lives. ... Only one who is

familiar with the Bible through regular reading and meditation will have the wealth of knowledge necessary to give biblical answers to the questions of non-Christians. Without the knowledge of Scripture a biblical defense is practically impossible. Moreover, a consistent prayer life is a key to effective apologetics” (pg. 64).

In detailing the approach he offers, Pratt instructs believers to: exercise a *gentle firmness*, be *respectful in challenging*, give *directed answers*, and have a *concerned preparation* (which is a flexibility to handle “each situation and person with concern and Christian love”) (pg. 68).

Christians who have benefited from and appreciate the writings of Paul Little may question Pratt’s use of the late evangelism professor as one who presented an apologetic model that Pratt says falls short and fails to challenge the unbeliever. Little is said to have helped many Christians find a reasonable basis for their faith, but Pratt maintains that Little presents “an unbiblical view of human reason” (pg. 72). Despite his challenges and cautions, Pratt does concede, however, that “there is a great deal of good and useful work done by those [like Little] who have worked so hard in these areas” (pg. 72) and that “we can surely benefit from much of the work of apologists” like Little (pg. 80).

Another of Pratt’s practical applications is to challenge the unbeliever on his epistemology. He instructs the Christian to respond to the arguments of the non-Christian by asking “Why do you believe that?” or “How do you know that?” (pg. 91). Calling into question the source of one’s “truth” can be an effective way in disarming the unbeliever’s justification.

Pratt closes his book with “an apologetic parable,” in which he presents what he sees as the weaknesses of other apologetic models and the strength of his own.

It is helpful for the student of apologetics to have a basic understanding of the different views of apologetics (e.g., classical, presuppositional, and evidential methods), thereby drawing from the strengths and avoiding the weaknesses of each model. *Every Thought Captive* will provide the particulars of the presuppositional method and enhance a believer’s ability to effectively respond to objections to the Christian faith. While one may not accept Pratt’s model wholesale, much can be gleaned from it.

—MKG

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