



The Plumbline

Assessing Current Teachings, Issues and Events with Scripture

The Evangelical Immune System Is Switched Off!

The current version of evangelicalism appears to be terminal. The diagnosis has yet to be confirmed. But for those aware of the symptoms, the signs are obvious. The patient, however, is blissfully ignorant or at best in denial. This malignancy has been growing silently for years, but now the symptoms are becoming more apparent. The immune system of the body of Christ were switched off and now are operating. The body of Christ's provided defense is the authority of the bible writing apostles of the first century. But for some time now, the cancer cells of new self proclaimed apostles claiming authority for new revelation have been progressing and displacing the biblical cells unhindered. Cancer is a rogue form of life and in this case the apostolic/prophetic can appear new and exhilarating but will ultimately lead to death. The church has generally ignored submitting to biblical check-ups. Consequently this malignancy was not caught early. Is it too late for biblical chemo? Furthermore will the patient agree to the treatment?

There are some faithful biblical apologists, who have been sounding the alarm, but they are denounced as "heresy hunters" possessed by "religious spirits" and Pharisees etc. This handful of "heresy hunters" (a pejorative name) however, could shoot and never miss. There are just too many targets. The intoxicated church can only beller out "what's all the noise about? We are "whacked out " (John Crowder and Ben Dunn) on the spirit! Just go away!"

Many factors have enhanced the decline of biblical Christianity. It has been subtle but devastating. Cutting edge post-modern promoters paved the way in the non-charismatic arena. "For a number of years the American Church has been the target of marketeers interested in turning a profit. These hucksters will sell anything regardless of its content. We are inundated and buried under a deluge of fads, countless vapid books, and junk... The marketers get rich while the church is facing doctrinal poverty. The Church at large is sick unto death. A plague of doctrinal ignorance is stalking the land. As Isaiah once said 'the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faints.'" (Isaiah 1:5b)... Ken Blanchard, for instance, is selling us seminars entitled 'Lead Like Jesus,' but he himself has hardly led like Jesus. These seminars have the endorsement of leading evangelicals and no one can fault the premise. The rub is that Blanchard for many years has been personally endorsing and even more than that writing endorsements for New Age authors including Deepak Chopra. He has sung the praises of the Hoffman Process, which is of the occult. He is promoting enemy doctrine... We used to call it working both sides of the street. Blanchard's zero-percent discernment can also be seen in his endorsement of Henri Nouwen, a deceased Roman Catholic priest, who was sympathetic to Hindu and Buddhist beliefs... People are looking for inner voices when they should be finding appropriate verses... Add to the above is the fact that we are contending with the writings from what is called the emerging or emergent church movement. It is not a church *per se*, but is largely a protest against fundamentalism, evangelicalism and the past. Men like Brian McLaren, Rob Bell, Dan Kimball, and even the writings of the late Mike Yaconelli are telling us that the emphasis of churches should be almost entirely on tolerance, feelings, affections, experimentation, and experience (may I add, contemplative experience) - but not doctrine... Rob Bell is typical of the emerging mentality. He actually calls his church Mars Hill

and has a membership of 10,000. Mars Hill (Acts 17) was a place that existed to discuss every thought and theory that man could concoct. Bell's book regrettably published by Zondervan, is entitled *Velvet Elvis*. His premise is that the Evangelical church, until now, is like an old outdated Elvis picture painted on a velvet backdrop in the basement. Bell's goal is to paint a new Jesus and a new Church... Because Zondervan is publishing books both for and against the emerging church, the publisher might need to be renamed Mars Hill Press. In truth, the emerging church is simply repackaged liberalism and higher criticism. Paul had a dogmatic message to those at Mars Hill." (Richard Fisher, PFO Quarterly, Vol. 26, No. 3 2006).

On the Apostolic/Prophetic front the disregard of sole authority for biblical revelation is confusing. The apostles and prophets often refer to scripture but only to paint over it with new and novel apostolic revelations. Tommy Tenney has even referred to scripture as old musty love letters. The scriptures have some value but are not sufficient in themselves without new revelation from current apostles and prophets. This is a blatant disrespect for the New Testament apostolic bible writers. Nevertheless, this movement cannot speak with one voice. One would think that if God were actually speaking to this movement in new revelations they would be without contradiction. But their prophecies are so often proven false and dramatic healings are in the end disputed by the medical community. There are so many conflicting revelations and impartations and anointings that one would need a phrase book or glossary to sort it all out. Someone online suggested that such an Apostolic/Prophetic Dictionary should be written. Without spending more than 15 minutes I came up with 40 items. A sampling of these could be: New Breed, Davidic Worship, Open Heaven and Portals, Soaking, Joel's Army, Transformation Teaching, Mantles, Fivefold Ministry, Bridal Paradigm, Apostolic Decrees, Whacked in the spirit, Prophetic Worship, Prophetic Evangelism, 7 Mountains Eschatology, Angel feathers, Gold Teeth, Ecstatic Dancing, Prophetic Painting, Glory Clouds, a Breaker Anointing, Open Visions, the Corporate Christ and on and on

These are different and disparate roads that appear to lead to one end. An end time church with new apostles and prophets that will subdue the earth for a Christian Kingdom with nations governed by apostles. This church will be so endowed with special powers that Satan himself will be defeated and even the principalities and powers will be torn from the heavenlies to earth and destroyed. In the process billions of new believers will come into the last day's church. But there is a plethora of anointings and plans that are seen as the way to accomplish these goals. IHOP and Mike Bickle see the way forward in becoming mystically united to the Bridegroom. Others say that Tabernacle of David worship will unleash the power needed to conquer the earth. Some even see the church becoming so endowed with glory that the church will become incarnated into Christ making a second coming of Christ redundant. All of this is given a slight biblical veneer with the apostolic new revelations at the core for the teaching. Mixed in with this are allegorical appeals to promises given to Israel and redirected to the present. This is taken and blended with the new prophetic words and apostolic decrees. But all these prophetic streams have their own recipes for end time glory. It's like going to a "chili cook-off" and the people vote for their favorite new apostles and their new recipes... One obvious question cries out. If the new apostles truly reveal new truth being proposed to the church from God, why should it not be written down and inscripturated? ANYTHING GOD REVEALS HAS AUTHORITY. Early revivalists in the early part of the past century did write down prophecies and send them to believers. But that was seen as going too far. Even then as now these prophecies and apostolic decrees are so obviously contradictory and to write them down would only be an embarrassment. But Christians have short memories and vocal false revelations are soon forgotten.

Making the Bible Writing Apostles Obsolete!

The newly minted apostles claim great authority for themselves and feel they are the key to the final history of the church. However, uniquely, Bill Johnson has written some very direct comparisons to the first century and the present era. Bill Johnson seems a low key man and I personally like his persona. I am sure that he is passionate to bring heaven to earth. But our concern is about teaching that dilutes the sufficiency of scripture by asserting new revelation by new apostles. So I need to use him to show most clearly how the current apostles/prophets see themselves in relation to the first century. In my many references to the current apostles and prophets I don't want any of my readers to think that I accept these current apostles as the real thing. They are interlopers and self deluded frauds. The apostle Paul had to deal with "false apostles." Consequently it is not strange that today's church must do the same.

Bill Johnson is the Head pastor at Bethel Church (formerly AOG) in Redding Ca. He has a satellite ministry called Global Legacy. On the Global Legacy website he has two articles. One is entitled "Apostolic Teams" and the other "Faith." I want to begin with an excerpt from his article, from Apostolic Teams entitled "The Spirit of Revelation." Johnson states: "One of the things that helped to keep the early church strong was their devotion to the apostle's doctrine. However, you will notice that there is no mention of an official list of beliefs that the Bible declares to be the official record of important doctrines. It is safe to say the "apostle's doctrine" is referring to something other than a specific list. Peter understood this when he exhorted the church concerning "present truth." That phrase is to direct our attention to that which he exhorted the Lord is emphasizing for this season. That is the (current) apostle's doctrine. Fresh revelation carries fresh fire... Apostles (today) carry a blueprint in their hearts concerning the church and God's purposes on the earth. They are used to bring fresh revelation to the church. Apostolic teams are sent to represent their spiritual fathers, and carry the word that has been entrusted to their tribe." (Bill Johnson, the Spirit of Revelation).

In this article Bill Johnson uses the term 'official' list of important doctrines to suggest that we don't know what the first century apostle's doctrine really was. Johnson suggests that Peter understood this when he exhorted the church concerning 'present truth.' Please notice the quotes he put around "present truth."

Johnson then says regarding Peter's phrase "present truth" ... "That phrase is to direct our attention to that which the Lord is emphasizing for this season." Johnson lifts the phrase "present truth" out of that passage of scripture and uses it to support his idea that the "apostles doctrine" can refer to "present, fresh and current' truth." But unfortunately for Bill, Peter leaves no doubt how he uses the term 'present truth.' But in 2Peter 1:18 states clearly what he means.

"Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them and are established in the present truth." KJV. "Even though you already know them, and have been established in the truth which is present with you. NASV. "Indeed you know them and are firm in the truth you now hold." NIV.

If Peter was teaching a "present" truth, as Bill Johnson is defining it, then why did Peter say he was reminding them? How do you remind someone of 'fresh revelation'? Peter was reminding them of what he has already taught them. Johnson didn't actually study this verse or he couldn't have

used it like has... (from blog Bethelwatch.) In Johnson's article 'Faith' he says the following under the title "Ears To Hear": "So then faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God. Notice it does not say, faith comes from having heard. The whole nature of faith implies a relationship with God that is current. The emphasis is on hearing... in the now! In Genesis God told Abraham to sacrifice Isaac. As Abraham raised the knife to slay his son God spoke again. This time He told him not to slay his son ... It's a good thing that Abraham's only connection with God was not just over what was said, but was based upon what He was saying." What's the point Johnson is making? In other words what God is saying now is more important than what He has previously said... So what the current apostles and prophets are saying is more important than the words the biblical apostles and prophets have said. Johnson has just relegated biblical truth as not as important as current revelations.

Finally, regarding Ephesians 2:19,20. "Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, **built** on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ himself as the chief cornerstone." (NIV). If the foundation of the apostles has been **BUILT**, then why on earth do we need the so-called apostles and prophets with their "present and fresh" revelation? The verb is aorist passive. It can only be translated 'having been built.' You don't continue to build the foundation after it has already been laid and you can't build on a foundation until it has already been 100% completed. Even in the first century they didn't build houses on incomplete foundations. You can knock a structure down and still build on a properly laid foundation. The false apostles and prophets are trying to relay a foundation already completed in the first century. So what does a current apostle do? Simply build a new foundation of which Jesus cannot be the cornerstone. That is what the current apostles are trying to accomplish. Move believers from the true foundation of the true apostles and prophets as found in scripture, and away from sound doctrine, to their newly created foundation of fresh, new and present truth. (excerpts from the Blogger Bethelwatch).

Precious Memories

Something strange happened a couple of years ago in the Music business in Nashville. In order to keep a promise, Alan Jackson, the country music star, made a promise to his mother. He made a recording of hymns and gave them to his mother for Christmas. It was done quickly and without a lot of effort, practice and fan fare. Jackson did this just for his mother. The promoters had no plans to promote this in the usual way. But to everyone's amazement the CD began to skyrocket in sales. Suddenly this CD, that had been made just for his "mamma," began to move toward the top of the country music charts. In fact it was on the top for 19 weeks. It was the only Gospel album ever to debut at #1 on the country music charts. Paul Proctor gave this report: "The strangest thing of all about the hymns Alan sang is that you hardly ever hear them inside a church anymore. For many of us, they are truly *precious memories*. Why do you suppose that is? Could it be there's too much humility and holiness - and not enough sensuality and groove for today's 'Christian' consumer, who fancies rhythm and romance over reverence and repentance? That said, isn't it ironic that folks outside the sanctuary can't get enough of them?" (Paul Proctor, Forgotten Word Ministries).

Dr. Orrel Steinkamp, 74425 Co. Rd 21, Renville, MN 56284

Email: orrelsteinkamp@hotmail.com