



IBFNA THE REVIEW

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Our Debt to the Next Generation

by Dr. Richard Harris

The Theme of our Conference this year in Williamsburg, Virginia is “Faithful: From Generation to Generation.” This is a crucial conference, and I want each of us to be prepared to make some real progress toward some specific goals this year. I want to share with you my heart’s desire and challenge you to work with us as the Lord enables you to do so.

Intimidation and persecution in very subtle ways are already present with us, and some of our younger soldiers of the cross are feeling it already. If you read between the lines of the secular news media and watch the machinations of the left wing religious zealots, it is easy to see where they are heading. Their ultimate purpose is to silence the voices of Bible-Believing Christians. Intimidation is already being used against houses of worship and those who lead them. Many of you received a letter from Barry Lynn from the Americans United for the Separation of Church and State before the November elections. In it, he warned preachers about what would happen if we dared to endorse a candidate in the election process.

My purpose in this article is not to discuss the many ways in which the enemies of Christ are moving against the Lord’s people. We have ample opportunity to cover that at a later time. What I am concerned about is the debt that we owe to the younger generation, which may very well bear the brunt of these attacks in the future. I am 72 years old and have been recently thinking of the times in which I have lived. In one respect, it was one of the best times I could have been alive. Being born during the depression, I remember little of the hardships, though we experienced them. I do remember vividly World War II, having older brothers who served both in the European and Pacific theaters. What I remember most about that war is the united stand of the American people behind the war effort and the total cooperation our troops received. We lived for the news each day. I remember the “50’s” and the tremendous growth of the American economy. The “60’s” hit us like a ton of bricks. Many people were not sure that America was going to come out of that decade intact as a free republic. We saw the assassination of President J. F. Kennedy, the killing of Robert Kennedy, and of Martin Luther King. We came through that decade, however; and we have watched our nation reach a pinnacle of material success never achieved by any other country. As I said, it was a blessed time to be alive. We saw massive change in every field of endeavor.

On the other hand, I have thought often of the culture and spiritual heritage that was given to me by the previous generation, and I was blessed because of it. But, tragically, we are not passing on that spiritual heritage to the next generation. The nation and world that our youth and young adults are growing up in is nothing like the one I remember. We have not done a very good job of the stewardship of our spiritual resources. We did survive the “60’s,” but they changed us for the worse. I fear for the future and what our Christian leaders will have to face because of our failure. We owe them a debt to build them and prepare them for tomorrow. This is one of the motivations for our theme at the conference. It has challenged me to use the time that I have left to help those who are going to walk after me.

One of our retired pastors in the Fellowship has offered a substantial gift to start a fund expressly for the purpose of encouraging young preachers to attend and get involved in the Independent Baptist Fellowship of North America. We are working now on a program to facilitate that goal. We are going to need funds to do it. We are also going to have to develop a method of helping younger preachers in a way that is encouraging and supportive. We also have to find these younger preachers

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Membership & Subscriptions:

IBFNA
754 E Rockhill Rd
Sellersville, PA
18960-1799
215.913.6181
ibfna@verizon.net
www.ibfna.org

DOES IT REALLY MATTER?

BY PASTOR JERRY JOHNSON



Does it really matter what one believes? When I came across the web site where the Evangelical Free Church of America (EFCA) was publicly trying to tell the world exactly what it believed and where it stood on the Bible, that was the question that kept repeating itself in my mind. Having a brother and family who are faithful and long-term members of that denomination just added to the interest. Upon reading their attempts to revise and sharpen their Statement of Faith, I was both pleased and saddened. Pleased because they were making the attempt in an honest and forthright fashion; saddened because I came away from reading their Second Draft Revision and asking myself, “Does it really matter what you believe?”

I had never studied in great detail the EFCA other than seeing some of their churches around and knowing that I had friends and family who were members. I always understood that they were evangelical and boldly preached the true gospel. I also believed the word “Free” in their name meant or implied that one was free to believe pretty much what they wanted to and could still be under the ‘umbrella’ of acceptance within the denomination. Imagine my surprise to read that the word “Free” did not mean one is free to believe whatever one wanted to but instead it means, according to them “an affirmation of our structure and organization (we are congregational).” After reading their Statement of Faith and Commentary to the Second Revision, I think I may have had it right all along.

Let me take two articles, of the many, and show you what I mean. In the article on the Church they specifically deleted a statement regarding the church’s being for this age. They didn’t want to limit their fellowship to those who were dispensational. Clearly one’s hermeneutic doesn’t matter. They also eliminate the only reference to local church autonomy and the congregational form of church government. “We believe that there are other Evangelicals who are not congregational but whom we would not want to exclude from fellowship simply because they could not in good conscience sign our doctrinal statement affirming that congregationalism is the... biblical form of church government.” While they had made the claim earlier that the word “Free” in the title of the denomination clearly means they are congregational, it becomes clear it doesn’t matter what you believe about that form of church government. Therefore is it really the Evangelical Free (congregational) Church of America? Clearly it doesn’t matter what one believes about local church governance. One can be free about what one wants to believe and yet not be Free as in Evangelical Free!

The biggest change, and they admit the one that is causing the most discussion in their midst, is their statement on Christ’s imminent return. They go to some length to remove any statement

that would exclude those who would disagree that Christ’s return is imminent. Since they freely allow Pastors to hold to post-tribulational positions, they find they can no longer require them to sign a statement of Faith that is pre-tribulational. And again, it doesn’t matter what one believes.

In a post-modern world, where truth is a construct and can be whatever you believe it to be, the EFCA has come out and publicly stated it has joined the post-modern world. It really doesn’t matter what you believe about an increasing number of things. It will not be long before they will be forced to the position that it really doesn’t matter what one believes about anything – as long as one is sincere in what it is that he does believe.

I read the Scriptures differently. My Bible informs me that I am to “earnestly contend for the faith” once (and for all) delivered to the saints. My Bible informs me that I am to reject and separate from those who abide not in the doctrines of Christ (including church government & the time of Christ’s return to earth among other truths). My Bible informs me that I am to mark those who cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine, which we have learned

“Earnestly contend for the faith”

and avoid them (not embrace them). My Bible informs me that it is vital and important to know and hold fast to that which the Scriptures teach. In fact, my prayers will not be answered (John 15:7) and I’ll not overcome the wicked one (I John 2:14) if the Word of God does not abide in me. I’m not allowed to pick and choose what I want to believe. That was the beginning of the downfall of the Liberals into unbelief. They could pick and choose what they wanted to believe and what they thought was important. To them it didn’t matter. My Bible informs me that Satan’s first lie to mankind was, “It doesn’t matter what God said. Make up your own minds and become as gods yourselves.” It didn’t work then and it doesn’t work now. It matters what one believes!



Pastor Jerry Johnson has served in many ministry positions over the years. Along with his wife, he has served as a church planting missionary in the United States starting several churches in Iowa and Pennsylvania. He has served as Executive Director of a mission board and as assistant pastor and senior pastor at churches in Iowa, Pennsylvania and New Hampshire.

2007 PERSPECTIVES

BY DR. RALPH COLAS



Though it has been at least 50 years ago, I recall an incident that took place in my first pastorate in Kansas. One of our members spoke to me prior to the beginning of Sunday school. “Pastor Colas,” she said, “something unusual happened to me last night.” Without giving it careful thought, I asked her to tell me what it was. She then recounted how she was awakened during the night before because Jesus was standing by the foot of her bed. Then she added, “Jesus tweaked my toe!” (I never did ask her which foot it was or which toe He supposedly had tweaked.)

In one of the books that he wrote, Benny Hinn boasted, “the most unusual thing happened to me. In an instant I was out of my body and as the Apostle John said, ‘I was in the spirit’ which means John was out of the body. I then saw and heard the angels, but I did not do so until, like the Apostle, I was out of my body.” Thus, Benny Hinn made up his space travel story and fabricated his “out of the body” experience.

Hinn’s world is not only confusing, but it is a disastrous one as well. However, not only does Hinn relate such “experiences” but others do the same. For some it results in large royalty checks, because they publish books that some so-called Christian leaders endorse, so that gullible people by the hundreds of thousands purchase such “Alice In Wonderland” stories.

Choo Thomas has written a best seller using the title, *Heaven is Real*. More than 500,000 copies have already been sold. Her book was endorsed by Dr. David Yonggi Cho, who also wrote the book’s foreword. Cho declared, “I have received a lot of insight about heaven and have been blessed. It has become the # 1 bestseller in Korea.” Dr. Cho is the senior pastor of the Yoido Full Gospel Church in South Korea. This church claims to have more than one million members! (Some years ago the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) featured Dr. Cho as a mainline speaker at an NAE Convention.)

Choo Thomas said her heavenly experience started in 1996 when Jesus escorted her into heaven. While she was there, Jesus told her to record what she had seen and heard. “The Lord Himself took me to heaven 17 different times, in my transfigured spirit body, and showed me countless things in heaven He has prepared for His people, and He also showed me hell twice.” She then added, “He also showed me things during the time of the tribulation, after He took His people to heaven.”

Another woman, Yvonne Brett, who is a part of co-pastors John and Carol Arnott’s group in Toronto, Canada, has now written how she went to heaven three times. (Apparently Brett made the journey 14 times less than Choo Thomas who

said she went 17 times!)

Brett begins her account by telling that she began “to float away. As I passed through another area, there were both angels and demons of all kinds. The demons were cursing me to my face. I grabbed one of them by the throat and shouted, ‘YOUR CURSE IS BROKEN’ and it left.”

“At that moment I saw the entrance of heaven. Then Jesus Christ came to welcome me in. Jesus said, ‘I love your company. Come in’ but I had to refuse that offer, so Jesus put a crown on my head and sent me back into my frozen body.”

“However, I went upward again and I stopped in mid air and saw people dropping into the chaos of hell. I cried out to them, ‘You are going the wrong way’ but it was too late.”

“I sped to heaven again and this time Jesus asked me, ‘Are you sure you do not want to come in?’ It looked even more beautiful but I refused again.”

“The third time I went up Jesus and His angels said, ‘Come in and let us show you around heaven.’ I knew if I went in there then there was no way I would even want to leave again. But I refused and went back. The very next day Jesus came to earth and walked up to me carrying a bowl of warm water and a towel. He dipped my hand in the water, and as He dried my fingers He said, ‘I am going to love and nurture you back to life.’” One should not be surprised reading such stories (and that is all they are), when visions, dreams and additional revelations are a part of the Pentecostal/Charismatic movement.

In 2006 there was a large celebration in Los Angeles, CA on Azusa Street. It was a recognition that 100 years before special meetings were held which many claim to have been the start of Pentecostalism. It has grown during the past century so that they now number about 600 million adherents around the world. Some historians now say that Pentecostals along with the Charismatics are the third great segment of Christianity after Roman Catholicism/Eastern Orthodoxy and Protestantism.

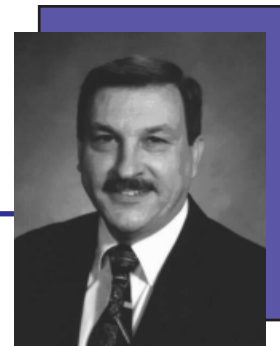
Charisma magazine often issues an honor roll in which they list Jack Hayford, Reinhard Bonnke, John Hagee, Rod Parsley, Joyce Meyer, Richard Roberts and others as the greatest representatives of the Pentecostal/Charismatic group. Steven Strange, founder and publisher of *Charisma*, also brings

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Perspectives is written by Dr. Ralph G. Colas, Executive Secretary American Council of Christian Churches PO Box 5455 · Bethlehem, PA 18015 tel (610) 865-3009 fax (610) 865-3033

Philadelphia Perspective

Postmodernism: Theology's Latest Black Hole



by Dr. Charles L. Dear, Editor

It is hard to look at the new fads in theology and take them all that seriously, considering that there is nothing new under the sun (Ecclesiastes 1:9) and that the 21st century is littered with repackaged theories that have failed in centuries before. Postmodernism fits such a category, except like the black holes of the universe, it threatens to swallow up and destroy anything that ventures close enough to come under its gravitational pull; and there are some foolish enough to come under its spell who do not recognize the doom staring them in the face.

That is the concern we have for a system that denies the very existence of absolute Truth. It is the ultimate destination of those who relentlessly have pursued the goal of Relativism in every aspect of our lives and have preached the gospel of Toleration of everything and anything-except Biblical Christianity, of course. It has all the earmarks of rampant Existentialism and offers no more hope than Nihilism. It embraces the subjective spirit of Neo-Orthodoxy and is as reactionary as the antiwar movements of the 60's. On its face, it promises to open wide the door to personal freedoms to a generation that has known more choices than any generation before it and has been taught that the pleasure of the individual is the supreme end of human existence.

Remember Peter's words in II Peter 2:18-20:

For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error. While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage. For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning.

The promise of liberty, however, has already begun to unravel; and we would do well to give Postmodernism and its prophets wide berth, lest we be overcome again by what we had escaped before by the grace of God.

Those hovering closest to the back hole of

Postmodernism seem to be the Evangelicals and Pseudo-Fundamentalists. These are the ones who have politicized the work of the Lord, being driven more by the "Church according to Barna," removing any potentially offensive titles, like Baptist, and pronouncing themselves to be seeker-sensitive. At best, it is a confusing bait-and-switch ploy to bring people in the doors on their terms and send them out with a weak Gospel commercial. At worst, it is the gutting of any substantial preaching about sin, judgment, Hell or the necessity of being born again from above. However, what is not realized is that once they cross the precipice of Postmodernism, not even a weakened Gospel will matter any longer. With the "death" of Absolute Truth, any pretense toward Biblical authority will be irrelevant. Salvation will become as you please, if necessary at all. Everything will be absorbed into the here and now, with no more need for churches than Liberalism had in the century before.

The truth, however, is that Postmodernism is a failure because it has only served to enlarge the spiritual void in the hearts of men more than any of its theoretical ancestors. It has vainly tried to solve the problems of men by attempting to deny or remove the vital questions of life and eternity, instead of providing truthful and fulfilling answers. The result has been, yea can only be, a nagging hunger for something more and better than the hopeless black hole of Nihilism. I am so glad that we have something far better to offer to any age, anywhere that will fill that spiritual void.

First, let us understand that Postmodernism is yet another attack upon Biblical Christianity. It is our sworn enemy, not to be coddled nor embraced as friendly or neutral on any terms. Postmodernism has no time for the Biblical supernatural, although it may indulge experimentally into New Age, the occult and Satanism. Its priesthood can be drawn from the ranks of business or secular psychology, and its gospel is self-realization and self-esteem. It is utterly secular and mundane, seeking unity at the expense of any defining doctrine; and it requires that any instruction, religious or otherwise, be culturally relevant and culturally conditioned. At the same time, however, it has been clever enough to adapt religious-sounding language to deceive the people and achieve its anti-Christian goals.

It is a challenge to our steadfastness that we would not

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be deceived nor discouraged by the impact of Postmodernism. While it makes our outreach more complicated, even challenging, we must remain confident that the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the whole counsel of the Word of God remain the only answers that truly satisfy the needs of the soul. The 1964 presidential race was marked by the campaign slogan of Barry Goldwater: “A choice, not an echo.” While that slogan did not overcome the rising tide of anti-conservatism in that election, it is a noble principle that ought not to be lost in this current battle. One of the current authors on Postmodernism, Gene Edward Veith, Jr, looks to our role in filling the void left by Postmodernism:

...Christians, if they are to be an alternative to postmodern relativism, need to confess their faith in word and deed...Biblical churches with doctrinal integrity will have a stronger witness than muddled, eager-to-please-everyone congregations that do not stand for anything in particular. (P. 220)

He further writes:

The postmodern mind is open to the past...The traditions of the church- including traditional forms of worship-may have more appeal than we realize, especially to a generation that lacks traditions but yearns for them...Churches are right to seek ways to communicate with and appeal to contemporary society. They must remember, however, that while they need to reach out to postmoderns, they dare not leave them where they found them...The church may have to appeal to people’s emotions, but it then must teach them how to think Biblically. (P. 227)

Lastly, Veith offers this conclusion:

Throughout its history, the church has always had two options-to go along with the times or to counter them. One could argue that the most vital theological movements in church history have been those that went *against* the trends of their time. (P. 230)

I think the Apostle Paul already taught us that in Romans 12:2, “And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”

Postscript: If you want to read more about Postmodernism, I suggest the following:

1. Postmodern Times: A Christian Guide to Contemporary Thought and Culture, Gene Edward Veith, Jr. Note: If you can’t wade through the first nine chapters, be sure to read the last four.
2. This Little Church Stayed Home: A Faithful Church in Deceptive Times; Gary E. Gilley Note: A book on the subject for the rest of us. *

IBFNA 2007 Family Conference

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Faithful: From Generation to Generation

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and get men to point them in our direction so they will be enabled to take advantage of our offers. It would be exciting for me to hear from some of you with suggestions along these lines. We have already thought some things over and have a general outline, but “Without counsel purposes are disappointed: but in the multitude of counselors they are established” (Prov. 15:22).

If we could find Independent Baptists who stand squarely on the same principles of the IBFNA, we could help to give them the information they need, give them the strength that comes from fellowship with men of “like precious faith,” and be a blessing to them. If you are interested in helping young pastors who have never been to our conference, drop us a note and let us know. Send us a gift and designate it for that purpose. Just call it the Young Preacher’s Fund, and we’ll use it to help pay some of the costs of men who have never attended the IBFNA. If you know of some younger preachers below the age of 39 who would like to come, let us know and we will contact them. I would like to see a whole group of younger men at the Conference this year and encourage them for the future.

*



The Perils of Prophetic Preaching

By Dr. Robert Payne

Years ago J. Dwight Pentecost penned these words concerning Christ’s imminent return in the air for His saints:

...Many signs were given to the nation Israel, which would precede the second advent, so that the nation might be living in expectancy when the time of His coming should draw nigh. Although Israel could not know the day nor the hour when the Lord will come, yet they can know that their redemption draweth nigh through the fulfillment of these signs. To the church no such signs were ever given. The church was told to live in the light of the imminent coming of the Lord to translate them in His presence....

This doctrine of imminence, or “at any moment coming,” is not a new doctrine with Darby, as is sometimes charged....Such a belief in imminency marked the premillennialism of the early church fathers as well as the writers of the New Testament.¹

Those of us who believe in a literal interpretation of the Word of God can add a hearty “amen” to the preceding words. Nevertheless, our concern is aroused as we observe some very disturbing modern trends in prophetic preaching. Many evangelists, Bible teachers, and pastors have traded in sound hermeneutics with its doctrine of imminency for an emotional, sensational, popular approach to prophetic preaching. With this style of preaching the newspaper becomes more important than the Bible, and prophetic scriptures are twisted and reshaped to fit into the mold of current events.

In this doctrinally confused generation we need to return to literal hermeneutics and a Bible-centered style of prophetic preaching. May those of us who are dedicated to “rightly dividing the word of truth” avoid the following perils of modern prophetic preaching:

THE PERIL OF PREDICTION

Some preachers would never be bold enough to predict an exact date for the rapture of the church, but they come dangerously close:

...The magnetic polar reversal, predicted by computer model for 2012 is gaining more attention since its likelihood was first announced. Having moved several hundred

miles across Canada the Magnetic North Pole is currently headed for Siberia. While the effects of a Magnetic Polar Reversal have never been observed by mankind, it has apparently happened in the distant past. What’s unique this time is that the Sun is due for a polar reversal at the same time. I’ve speculated that the effects of the polar reversal could fulfill Revelation 6 and if the projected time of 2012 is correct, it fits nicely into the End Times prophecy window we opened above.²

No doubt, language like this is sensational and exciting, but is it biblically accurate?³ Does it reflect a sound biblical understanding of the doctrine of Christ’s imminent return?

Paul wrote to Titus: “Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ.” We see here that Paul and the saints of his day were looking for Christ’s coming in the air. They believed His coming to be *at any moment*. The doctrine of imminency does not teach us that Christ must come by 2012 (although I pray that He does!), nor does it even teach us that Christ must come *soon*. What it does teach us is that Christ could come at *any moment*; therefore we *always* need to be ready (1 Jn. 3:3).

THE PERIL OF “SIGNS”

Those who preach the message of “pop eschatology” frequently pull passages out of context from the Olivet Discourse (which deal with the time preceding the Millennium, *not* the

We live in an age where people read more novels about prophecy than they read the actual prophecy.

rapture) and distort them in such a

way as to make current events fulfill them. Once again, this violates the biblical doctrine of imminency and distorts the meaning of the scriptures.

Some years ago, I recall a Bible teacher saying that the increase in heart disease that he saw in our country was a fulfillment of the prophecy that we see in Luke 21:26 (“men’s hearts failing them for fear”), and a sign that Jesus’ coming was very soon!

Recently I read an article on the Internet by an author who used the same faulty hermeneutic. After listing various “signs”

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from the Olivet Discourse that “prove” that Jesus’ coming must be soon, he writes in conclusion:

As you know most of the signs in the Olivet Discourse are progressive and all are described as happening well before the end. Their main interest to us is found in the phrase “beginning of birth pangs.” Natural disasters, the tendency toward war as a tool of diplomacy, famine amidst plenty (35,000 children die each day of starvation and related diseases) and pestilence are described as being common to the era but increasing in frequency and intensity as the end approaches. This was certainly the case in 2005 and is an indicator of how close we are to the end.⁴

I still wonder about one advertisement that I saw for a video about prophecy concerning Jerusalem. I’m not sure what proof text the author would use to defend this statement: “...and even see how the first moon landing fit into Bible prophecy about Jerusalem!”⁵ May God help us to avoid this kind of poor theology and careless hermeneutics!

THE PERIL OF SPECULATION

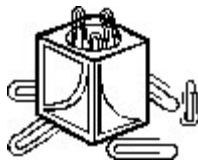
We live in an age where people read more novels about prophecy than they read the actual prophecy. Moreover, American Christian culture is enthralled by the speculation that they see in these novels. The official “Left Behind” website now lists 12 novels in the “Left Behind” series (from which came multiple movies), as well as “Left Behind” video and PC games, and many other “Left Behind” products. As long as there is money to be made, this “Left Behind” speculation craze is likely to continue for some time.

Some preachers of the Word of God have latched on to this speculation obsession. No longer is the Bible at the hub of their prophetic preaching. Now, speculation over who the Antichrist might be, or what part terrorism might play in prophecy takes center stage.

There are indeed some dangers in prophetic speculation:

1. Some speculation violates the normal, literal sense of the biblical text.
2. Some speculation gives everything in prophecy a natural explanation and so removes the supernatural element (e.g., the creatures of Rev. 9 are helicopters).
3. Some speculation partakes of urban legends (e.g., there is a computer in Europe called “the Beast”).
4. An over-emphasis on speculation focuses on *constantly changing* current events and distracts from the exposition of the *unchanging* Word of God. Also, becoming fixated on current events

News and Notes



IBFNA Membership Directory change:
Pastor Carlos Galvin’s new email
address is: bbcbbd@sbcglobal.net.

leads to disappointment, discouragement, and doubt when the promise of a *soon* return (instead of an *imminent* return) does not come to pass.

5. An over-emphasis on speculation leads to a pre-occupation with what *might* happen than with the purpose for which a prophecy was written. This may very well lead a person to read biblical prophecy the same way that he would read a cheap science fiction novel.

Although some minor speculation concerning what a particular prophecy might be referring to is inevitable, any type of speculation must be kept in perspective. In prophetic preaching speculation must be kept well in the background, the Word must be at the forefront. Moreover, speculation is speculation. It must not be given authority on par with the Word of God.

OUR FOCUS

Prophetic preaching must remain focused on a literal interpretation of the Word of God, and the any-moment return of the Lord Jesus Christ for His church. The preacher must be cautious not to predict the time of the coming of Christ, nor twist the scriptures in an effort to show that His coming is near. Furthermore, those who handle the Word of God must be extremely careful not to over-emphasize prophetic speculation. In this day of doctrinal drift and sensationalized ministry, prophetic preaching must be anchored in the Word of God.

(Footnotes)

¹J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1958), pp. 202-203

²Jack Kelly, “Seven Major Prophetic Signs of the Second Coming,” from <http://www.raptureready.com>.

³Or scientifically accurate for that matter. Remember the “prophetically significant” planet alignment of the 1980’s?

⁴*Ibid.*

⁵*Perhaps Today*, pdf-formatted, web version (Sept.-Oct. 2006), p. 8

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forward Pope John XXIII who, Strange said, prayed for “a new Pentecost.” Strange declared if every Christian joined in that prayer, “God will send His fire in answer to our prayers.”

Looking at the “BIG PICTURE” out in the religious world, it is easy to observe that the Pentecostal/Charismatic movement is on the increase. However, some may forget or overlook the fact that emotion and experience make up the “power” that thrusts them forward. Multiplied articles and books have been written that supposedly record those who made visits to heaven and to hell. These are only the figments of vivid imaginations. There are no exits out of Hell. Luke 16:26, “And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither

can they pass to us, that would come from thence.”

There are no personal encounters with the Risen Christ Who ascended to heaven but now issues appeals for certain individuals to enter heaven and then that one invited declines such an invitation.

Our authority is the inspired, inerrant Word of God, and such experiences attempt to supercede God’s Truth. One bold charismatic put it this way, “I do not care what the Bible says, I have had the experience.” Such an attitude of pride places his “experience” over and above the Holy Scriptures.

“To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them” (Isaiah 8:20).

✱