



The Plumbline

Assessing Current Teachings, Issues and Events with Scripture

The Gospel: Going, Going, Going, Go.....

Just yesterday, I went for my annual physical. Anticipating the usual long wait, I took along something to read. It just happened to be an expose of IHOP. Finally, Dr. Johnson came into the room and asked me what I was reading. Dr. Johnson is a very active and well read laymen in a very conservative church. His son has just graduated from a college with a long evangelical heritage of which Dr. Billy Graham served as president. His son is looking for ministry, so I replied to the Dr's question that I was reading about IHOP saying this is not the International House of Pancakes. He replied confidently that he knew of IHOP in Kansas City in that his son had recently spent a long-weekend there at the recommendation of an elder at their traditional evangelical congregation. I then offered in as low-key fashion as I could that the paper was an expose of IHOP. The Doctor then asked why would anyone do an expose of IHOP? I diplomatically offered that Mike Bickle's whole ministry is predicated on prophetic words of Paul Cain, Bob Jones, and John Paul Jackson, and that Cain is a longtime homosexual and Jones is an admitted sex offender. I then added that the bible is our sole source of doctrine and practice, and the canon is closed isn't it? To this the Doctor grunted, suggesting yes! of course, I know about the closed canon. But his reply was to the effect that our young people desperately need to know the real experience of the Holy Spirit, sort of suggesting that this is more important than scripture. Suddenly, I realized Dr. Johnson was exhibit A of a sincere evangelical, who is now unknowingly carrying the Postmodern virus. Postmodern pluralism is for many not a mentally defined position but a mood. In a nutshell postmodernism asserts that truth is not absolute but different for everyone. Unfortunately, if everything is true to some then nothing is true to anyone.

Evangelicalism has become a mélange of mushy spiritual feelings. Years of Seeker-Sensitive pragmatism has set the church up for a host of extra biblical spiritual and mystical experiences. Externally within the wider culture Postmodern Emergents are pouring into City Evangelical. They, however, come in disguise as evangelicals and the biblically compromised city dwellers of City Evangelical welcome them through the city gates especially when Christianity Today writes positively about them. A handful of watchmen sound the alarm only be pushed to the side. Right behind the Emergents are the Comtemplatives whose meditation procedures often lead to altered states of consciousness. They also appear in evangelical outer garments with endorsements

from famous and influential evangelicals. The contemplative are promoted by Richard Foster, Dallas Willard etc. A missionary friend of mine who came under great pressure turned to the writings of former priest Henri Nouwen, whose eastern altered state mysticism eventually took him to the east where he died in a Buddhist monastery. How could a seminary trained evangelical missionary look to a Christian form of mantra meditation? There are thankfully, a few often maligned Online Discernment Ministries that have followed the every move of the contemplatives including Brennan Manning author of "Ragmuffin Gospel" and Leonard Sweet et al. But all of this has distracted many discernment ministries from another internal false teaching. The church is being invaded by another aberrant teaching. Virtually none of the ODM's (Online Discernment Ministries) have given much attention to another false teaching right in front of us - a fast moving departure from the gospel. The NAR and its apostles and prophets with their dominion mandate have been able to ride the "Save America , Tea Party" train into total acceptance broadly among the Christian Right Activists and celebrity Evangelical leaders. "The Seven Mountains of Culture " the agenda of the Apostolic/Prophetic Dominionists, has been bought by The Dobson's and Franklin Grahams. The National Day of Prayer used the 7 spheres (The NAR's seven mountains) in the printed program. Peter Wagner was listed as on the advisory board. In fact the 7 Mts Dominionist mandate is now already set to become part of the political agenda of the whole upcoming conservative Christian Right political campaign. Jim Garlow speaker at many Dominionists conferences has been tapped by Newt Gingrich as his religion advisor. The apostles/ prophets now have their agenda ready to go politically. The political fix is in. Dobson and NAR apostle Lou Engle have pieced together the Manhattan Declaration (a product of the old ECT people) headed by the Roman Catholic leaning ministry of Charles Colson with the 7mountain dominion scheme of the apostles and prophets as a joint political/theological effort. Readers will be aware that the Apostles and Prophets of the NAR have identified seven spheres of culture and named them the 7 mountains of culture. They propose that radical spiritual warfare techniques will place Apostles into governmental rule world-wide. So on the one hand, the Postmodern Emergents are coming through the gates and the Apostles and Prophets have gone political in order to eventually take dominion and rule the world. Indeed the evangelical patient, who really is sick and emaciated down to 92 pounds is nevertheless, flexing its muscles like a puny strong man that boasts they are about to create the third great awakening. The Postmodern Emergents see the dawning of a new age in the form of an ecumenical ancient future pluralistic church. The New Monastic's are parading their new altered states of intimacy with God ala eastern mysticism. The Apostles are being wined and dined by the political evangelicals of the Christian Right and see this as the step toward a Christian empire with false apostles and prophets perched on the 7 mountains of culture in absolute political dominion. Today only these current flavors are being advertised. The gospel of Jesus, Paul and the real apostles has been put on the back of the menu with the over 50 menu.

I just received my monthly books from IVF Book Club. The book I received is called "Breaking the Rules." by Fil Anderson. The sub-title is "Trading Performance for Intimacy with God."

The forward is by Brennan Manning. Manning is not even an evangelical but a defrocked Roman Catholic priest. He clearly teaches the "centering prayer" of contemplation in which a chosen mantra word is repeated endlessly until an alter state of consciouness with God is achieved. IVF is a historic evangelical publishing house. Yes! they still carry biblical titles but they are rarely featured and relegated to the last pages of the catalogue. With these conflicting new recipes of the Gospel there comes confusion and competing spiritual roadmaps. The result is that the Gospel becomes something like modeling clay and people can create their own gospel and it becomes a matter of personal preference and good advertizing. There are at least two essential ingredients that are most often neglected in this current gospel mix. They are: man is exceedingly sinful and God is exceedingly holy and righteous. How does a holy God accept sinful man and still retain **His essential character of holiness?**

Man is Exceedingly Sinful and God is Exceedingly Holy

The Gospel was designed by God to allow Him to retain His holiness unsullied and at the same time exact punishment for the sinful disobedience of all men in order that sinful man could be accepted into relationship with God. This plan of salvation is His creation and it centers in the Sinless Son of God paying the penalty of sin to God by a substitutionary death. This was the core of the Pauline Gospel and which was restored in the Reformation. It is called the Penal Substitutionary Atonement. But increasingly evangelicals are denying that this is a needed part of the gospel. It is not new to deny PSA. Charles Finney evangelist of the 19th denied this over a century ago. But in recent times more and more evangelicals reject this central feature of the gospel. Joel Green of Fuller Seminary and Mark D. Baker with a misleading title "Recovering the Scandal of the Cross" suggested that PSA was based on a mistaken view of the concept of the wrath of God. They suggested it would promote a child abuse model of the Atonement.

So the total depravity of man is no longer the primary view of evangelicals. Some are rejecting it outright and publically. For others It is simply being ignored or filed away as old business. The reason for and necessity of the Gospel was because of the total sinfulness of mankind. The current scene is like a medical doctor making a mis-diagnosis. We all know that medically the diagnosis is absolutely critical. For without a correct diagnosis a successful solution is impossible. So in preaching the gospel the diagnosis of the sinfulness of man is absolutely crucial. Get the spiritual diagnosis wrong and you get the gospel wrong. It is the starting point of the gospel. If man is not a sinner he really doesn't need a savior. If man can deal with his own deficiencies by law keeping and short cut mystical spiritualities, he can save himself with a little assistance of God.

Conversely, many current new evangelical gospels and spiritualities have diminished the absolute Holiness of "God. He is a kindly Old gentlemen that enjoys to give sinful mankind a pass without any consideration of the His holiness. Man's sin isn't really that much of a

hindrance for God. He is bigger and more loving than to allow man's sin to be any kind of obstacle to a loving relationship. In the end sinful man and a holy God can have a negotiated settlement. God apparently accepts the creative new spiritualities of sinful man and man is allowed to make spiritual shortcuts and end runs around the wrath of God and His holiness.

The Contemplatives simply disregard sin as a problem at all. For contemplatives every man is after all a part of the divine essence. Every human actually contains a part of divinity in his inner being. The reason humans have problems and feel separated from God is because the inner man has become cluttered and plugged up with all kinds of distractions. These distractions have to be taken away so the inner divine flame of God can be accessed and heard. So the mind has to be silenced because it is the repository of all the things that cover and hide the inner divinity. Consequently, techniques are produced to silence the mind. But the mind doesn't easily go silent. So a mind clearing procedure is used. A chosen word (mantra) must be repeated again and again.. (sometimes 20 minutes) until the mind becomes silent and a different and altered state of consciousness is attained. Into that silence the inner divinity can easily relate and to the all pervasive divine mind. Now voices purported to be God are easily heard and accepted. It is this altered state that is called "intimacy" with God. Two terms are code words for the contemplative experience. First is "Spiritual Formation" and "Intimacy" In this plan Jesus is an unnecessary savior but an eastern guru of peace and existential false joy.

The New Apostolic Reformation NAR offers a salvation from the surrounding culture of sin and evil. Sin is somehow picked up from all the evil rampant in the culture. They suggest that governmental dominion over evil can cure it. Their solution is to eliminate the sinful culture that surrounds us by extra- biblical spiritual warfare techniques. The Cross's answer to sin is seen as preparatory but not finally effective. Surrounding sin in the culture must be eliminated and newly anointed false apostles must become cultural rulers. The culture will become more or less holy and Christians can live the good life until Jesus returns to observe the elimination of evil by his apostles /prophets and spiritual warriors. The catch is that Jesus said it was not the things (from outside) that defile us, but rather the evil within that gives rise to all forms of evil.

Sinful man has three spiritual needs.

1. We deserve to die as the penalty of our sin.
2. We deserve to bear God's Wrath
3. We are separated from a Holy God by our sins

Jesus who was a perfect and holy man took upon Himself the guilt and penalty of our sin.

Jesus perfect life is credited to the sinners account and sinful man is acceptable to a Holy God.

Believers are reconciled to God and have been given the promise of Eternal life.