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DEDICATION

This Book is dedicated to Travers van der Merwe (1935-1995).

The burning passion of Travers' heart was to give a clarion call to the Church that he saw falling in line with Gnosticism and leaving the simplicity of the Word of God.

In severe pain he preached his last message on the subject of mysticism. After his departure from this life, the following definition was found in his jacket pocket, in his handwriting:

"Mysticism: The timeless quest for higher/hidden truth, spiritual experiences and knowledge of God by using imagination, intuition, so-called 'Holy Spirit revelations' and subjective feelings rather than fact, reason and the undistorted Word of God."

FOREWORD

The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun. Is there any thing whereof it may be said, See, this is new? it hath been already of old time, which was before us. (Ecclesiastes 1:9-10)

Some books are written before their time. This is one such book. It was never our privilege to know Travers van der Merwe but we had heard of his exemplary walk before God and man while on Earth. While battling cancer, a painful ordeal that lasted for many years, Travers and his wife Jewel penned this book. He saw an ancient heresy arising in the modern Christian church and it weighed heavily on his heart.

After the book was completed, it lay dormant for several years. In the meantime much was happening in the Christian church nationally and internationally to confirm that there was a revival going on - not accompanied by repentance and a turning away from dead works - but of Gnosticism.

Gnosticism has a chameleon-like ability to appear like the genuine article, true Christianity, and thus has managed to transform itself to fit the times in countless new wrappings over the centuries. It particularly adapts itself to that place where the ideas of the east and west meet. Whenever eastern mysticism and western rationalism collide, one can find there the seedbed for a pseudo-Gospel that mimics the real thing.

Gnosticism is fool's gold, shiny and beckoning on the surface yet phony. Modern Saints are poorly equipped to recognize the counterfeit. Much Gnosticism enters the Church via the popular Christian media, where the real and the false get mixed up in a garbled soup of doctrines and teachings. The rise of the New Age movement, and the extent to which it has permeated

Christian thinking, further clouds the issue. How is a Christian to sort out these strange teachings?

When Jewel first sent us the unpublished manuscript for the book it was because we had been asking her for more information about the rise of modern Gnosticism. The book, she said, would answer many of our questions. Indeed, it did. So many, in fact, that we then began pressing her to let us publish the book. We believed that it should be widely disseminated and read by Christians who were seeking to understand their growing uneasiness with the "new" moves of God, signs and wonders, "laughing revivals", and ecumenical unity.

***Strange Fire* is a brief, easy-to-understand book that explains how to tell the Truth from the Lie. It doesn't dwell on the spectacular manifestations, but concisely illustrates modern Gnosticism. The real gold of the Gospel is presented in such a way that it outshines the fool's gold of Gnosticism. Readers will have no doubt as to which is which. This handy tool enables even the unlearned to discern Gnosticism the next time they encounter it.**

This is one little book that may save many a soul from walking into the error and falsehood so prevalent in our time.

Lynn & Sarah Leslie; December 1995

Chapter 1: Strange Fire

"And Nadab and Abihu died before the Lord, when they offered strange fire before the Lord, in the wilderness of Sinai, . . ."

(Numbers 3:4).

Even though Nadab and Abihu were the sons of Aaron the high priest, they failed when they presented their offering to God. They knew they were in the wrong. However, like Cain, they thought their way was better! They had obviously taken up with a "new thing" with which they thought God would be pleased.

God created man and woman to live on this planet called Earth. In his Infinite Wisdom, He set forth the laws of nature, looked upon His creation and was satisfied. He said, "it is good". The universe continues day by day, ordered by God's commands that issued forth in the first book of the Bible.

God's Plan and Purposes

From the beginning God set forth His PLAN and PURPOSES in clear unmistakable language. Beginning with His directives to Adam and Eve, and throughout Scripture, He did not do anything that was not explicitly laid out to His creation, who were the inhabitants of this planet. What an all-Wise and all-Knowing God! He made known His Ways to the children of men!

Every prophecy given in the Old Testament concerning the coming of the Messiah was fulfilled literally and in minute detail at the coming to earth of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. God's PLAN and PURPOSES were on course!

Down through the annals of human history, man in his disobedience, has continually tried to take matters into his own hands. Eve desired to eat of the fruit that God had commanded Adam to avoid. Cain determined that his sacrifice was sufficient as it was the fruit of his labours. Even to this present day, man continues to try in his own strength to replace God. God is abandoned from his thoughts and replaced instead by his accomplishments. Man becomes tired and impatient. He does not like to wait for God and instead tries to help God along in His work. Man's efforts at the best are not sufficient! However hard he tries, his wisdom comes to naught.

Despite the attempts of mankind to improve on His wisdom and programme, the PLAN and PURPOSES of God move steadily forward with infinite precision. The courses of empires are ordained by God. All things are created by HIM and for HIM. Even the heathen king Nebuchadnezzar had to come to acknowledge this fact. After his humiliation he declared:

I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation: And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou? (Daniel 4:34, 35)

Every Scripture concerning Christ's return to this planet, this planet Earth that God loves, will be literally fulfilled. God gave His Son, His only Begotten Son to die for this sinful Earth in order to fulfill His PLAN and PURPOSES. Because man was corrupt in all his ways (having forfeited God's commands and reign) God in His infinite Mercy gave His only begotten Son to die for corrupt man in order to redeem him and thereby fulfill His PLAN and PURPOSES.

The supernatural realm has always been held in fascination. Imagine being able to partake of the supernatural! Experiences of the beyond

continue to titillate the imagination. Yet man was not created to live in that (the invisible) realm. He was created to glorify God on this Earth. Man's obedience in the natural world and faith in God's Word serves as *a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to man* (1 Cor. 4:9). The supernatural realm regards God's creation in wonder. The angels are amazed at God's glorious plan of salvation as they see mortal man (through Jesus Christ) faithfully follow the Word that God has spoken. As believers we are being closely watched by angels and men - as the revelation of redemption unfolds as the prophets foretold:

Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us, they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the Gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into. (1 Peter 1:12).

To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in the heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord: (Eph. 3:10-11)

To live according to God's PLAN and PURPOSES here on this Earth takes faith! It is the faith of Hebrews 11 that trusts unquestionably in the God whose mercy endures forever. In the face of trials, whether by tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril or sword - we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us! The child of God rests in the knowledge that God is faithful!

Hersey Hunters or Bereans?

As menacing teachings permeate the fibre of the Church, there is a vigorous attempt being made to silence anyone who opposes the status quo! Labels are handed out freely if you question what is happening. The most popular label is "heresy hunter". Anyone who does not "go with the flow" for unity is considered "divisive". Whatever happened to the ability to *contend earnestly for the faith which was once delivered to the saints*? Many pastors who are "going with the flow" refuse to even read an article that will question some of the popular practices posing as "new revelation" and "deeper truths".

When asked if they have read a book or an article documenting some of the heretical thoughts being propagated, pastors will invariably have several excuses among which are: (a) "the author only wants to sell books", (b) "I'm too busy", or (c) "I'm not really interested". In the meantime the hole in the dyke has given way to an avalanche of false teaching and heretical thought.

It is frightening to realise that beliefs can be created merely by passively accepting information without attempting to analyse if what is preached or taught is truth! Unfortunately today much depends on the personality delivering the message. If it is a charismatic figure with a certain appeal, he/she can say anything they want and get away with it! The only criteria for truth seems to be if a book has been published and sold many copies, the author must be right.

This is why the knowledge of the Word of God is so important. It is not enough to parrot off someone else's teaching and sound like a great name in miniature. Any man can lead you astray - no matter how nice or how spiritual he sounds. You have to stand before God yourself! The Word of God says explicitly, *Study to show thyself approved, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed.* (1 Tim.2:15). Listening to hours and hours of tapes or watching "Christian TV" is not a substitute for honest and earnest study of the Word of God. Be like the Bereans who checked out everything they heard to see if those things were so. (Acts 17:10-11). They were commended for doing so - not told they were divisive, critics, fault-finders and "heresy hunters".

An astonishing event was an outburst by Paul Crouch on the world's largest Christian TV network as he denounced anyone who would speak out for sound doctrine and against the "gnostic" trends in the church today.

. . . that old rotten Sanhedrin crow, twice dead, plucked up by the roots . . . they're damned and on their way to hell and I don't think there's any redemption for them . . . the hypocrites, the heresy hunters that want to find a little mote of illegal doctrine in some Christians' eyes . . . when they've got a whole forest in their own lives . . .

I say, 'To hell with you! Get out of my life! Get out of the way! Quit blockin' God's bridges!' [CIB Bulletin, vol.7, no.7, July 1991]

There is a concentrated attack on those who have been labelled "heresy hunters". Unfortunately there are those who hold to the contention that "most Christian truths were formulated and defined in response to heretical half-truths. Thus, heresy comes before orthodoxy - and may in fact be a precondition for orthodoxy." [‘Confusing the Roots with the Fruits’, William L. DeArteaga, Ministries Today, July/August 1991, p.56]

The DeArteaga article also said that

The critics have tragically misunderstood how the Holy Spirit accomplishes His work in instructing, reminding and moving the body of Christ into truth. From a biblical and historical perspective, the process is plain: The Holy Spirit sovereignly uses both heathen and heretics to move the church

from a status quo of theological laziness and conventionally accepted error to a position of corrected, renewed and invigorated truth.

So the author actually says that:

The idealist cults understood the critically important role that the mind, acting in faith, had in prayer and the miraculous - especially in healing. Christian Scientists, regardless of their heretical view of sin and evil and their muddled view of God, did have successes in their healing ministry . . . it was semipagan, but persistent enough to channel God's healing power.

He continues by saying that New Thought leaders "moved steadily closer to biblical reality". Among these he included Emmet Fox and Glenn Clark, yet he admitted they never separated from their Gnostic origins. In mentioning Agnes Sandford he said that:

Her healing theology might best be considered a second-level 'Bible filtration' by which the half-truths of Christian Science were discerned, separated and amplified in a biblically valid form for the Christian community.

So DeArteaga's conclusion is that:

The church has experienced heightened power for ministry and evangelisation - all because God chose to repeat the ironic heresy-before-orthodoxy process that has occurred many times before in the life of the church. ['Confusing the Roots with the Fruits', William L. DeArteaga, Ministries Today, July/August 1991]

This is pure "Gnosticism" and it was in response to the impact of Gnosticism in the early church that the church decided on the "Canonicity of Scripture" and the "Apostles Creed". Most of the heretical trends in the church can be traced to the ancient religion of Gnosticism. Benjamin Walker writes: "There are few unorthodox, schismatic or heretical movements in Christian history that cannot be traced back to gnostic sources." [Benjamin Walker, Gnosticism: Its History and Influence, The Borgo Press, 1983, p.163]

This was precisely the philosophical and mystical religious concept of the Gnostics, propagated in John the Revelators day. It was called "the doctrines of the depths of God", while in fact it was the doctrine of the depths of Satan. (Revelation 2:24).

What is Gnosticism?

Gnosticism was an esoteric religious movement that flourished during the second and third century A.D. and presented a major challenge to orthodox

Christianity. Most Gnostic sects professed Christianity but their beliefs sharply diverged from those of Christianity in the early Church. To its adherents, Gnosticism promised a secret knowledge of the divine realm. Sparks or seeds of the Divine Being fell from this transcendent realm into the material universe, which is wholly evil, and were imprisoned in human bodies. Re-awakened by knowledge, the divine element in humanity can return to its proper home in the transcendental spiritual realm. [Gnosticism, Funk & Wagnalls New Encyclopedia, Vol.12, p.10]

The definition of Gnosticism is "a system of religion mixed with Greek and Oriental philosophy (1st-6th century A.D.), intermediate between Christianity and paganism, which taught that knowledge, rather than faith, was the greatest good, and that through knowledge alone could salvation be attained." [Webster's Encyclopedia of Dictionaries; Baltimore, Maryland, Ottenheimer, 1978]. Basically what is being said here implies that man's redemption and justification is not by faith in God according to the Scriptures, but rather in "mystical knowledge" acquired by a personal experience. This is the theme that is intrinsically intertwined in all the doctrines of the cults and occults.

The issues at stake are serious. It is not merely a "cosmetic" problem. The "roots" are not only being threatened, they are being "chopped off". As this dreadful surgery is being carried out, the life is slowly sapped and in its place is another gospel. This is a gospel that puts man on the throne. A gospel that does not need the cross, the blood or even acknowledge the deity of Jesus Christ.

The more you get to be like Me, the more they're going to think that way of you. They crucified Me for claiming that I was God. But I didn't claim I was God; I just claimed I walked with Him and that He was in Me. Hallelujah. That's what you're doing. [Voice of Victory, Feb.1987, Kenneth Copeland prophecy, Dallas, Texas]

This "divine utterance" is given in the first person. We must take this as Jesus Himself speaking to the Church. But, if Jesus didn't claim to be God, who was He?

The Scriptures are very clear:

Jesus is called God. Isaiah 9:6 says:

For unto us a child is born, and unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

2. Jesus accepted worship. Jesus expressed to Satan in Matthew 4:10 that:

Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.

Jesus accepted worship in Matthew 14:33:

Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, of a truth thou art the Son of God.

Are we to sit by and let these strange teachings develop without a word? Must we just ignore what is happening and smile passively in agreement without a protest?

A popular evangelist will stand before a congregation and ask, "how many here have read my books?" As hands go up, the evangelist will nod his approval and continue. He will give a Scripture text, but does not refer to it again. Instead he will quip out phrases that are met with cheering and clapping from an adoring audience. Before long it sounds like a pep rally with enthusiasts ready to jump on whatever bandwagon is presented with no thought to what has even been said.

The more vociferous the participants become in proclaiming useless verbalisation of nonsensical half-truths, the more the cry goes out, "Do not name names". In other words, you can freely quote the heretical statements, but just don't let anyone know who is preaching the error!

We have to use caution and not lump many names together and paint them all with a single brush. The Latter Rain Movement will be alluded to in the course of this book. Within the movement were many children of God who remained true to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. However, there were those that started out well, but along the way were influenced by "strange" fires that has brought the church to accepting so many different teachings today.

Chapter 2: Gnosticism

The word itself conjures up an image of obscure men in long robes, poring for hours over ancient texts and scrolls, seeking in musty tomes the essence of truth. In reality this teaching was in existence long before the formalisation of Christianity. Today it is also among the most prevalent new concepts. Its influences are not confined to the long dusty bookshelves in some forgotten college library, but are seen and heard worldwide.

An abundance of information on Gnosticism is readily available. Many books and articles on the subject have been written and can be obtained in any quality bookstore or library. Old manuscripts with reference to Gnosticism dating back to the early Church are also available, and provide great insight into the teachings and influence of Gnosticism on the world and in particular, the Church.

W.H.C. Frend writes that "in the second century Gnosticism was a world-wide movement." [The Early Church, W.H.C.Frend, Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1965, p.62]. Gnostic sects sprang up all over the world. Jacques Laccariane says, "No sooner was gnostic thought born than it began to be disseminated along the great routes of the Orient". [The Early Church, W.H.C.Frend, Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1965]. Since that time Gnosticism has entrenched itself in the major religions of the world and not least of all Christianity. Gnosticism, while appearing to be a complex system of thoughts, is really quite simplistic and can be rather easily defined and understood.

The following attempt to set forth and explain some of the basic Gnostic thoughts will help some Christians to be on guard against the "winds of doctrine" blowing through the Church. The greatest challenge in the Church today is to discern between Gnostic thought and Christian thought.

What is Gnosticism? According to Webster, it is "an occult salvational system . . . stressing [knowledge of spiritual things] as essential . . . combining ideas derived especially from mythology, ancient Greek philosophy, ancient religions, and eventually, from Christianity". [Webster's New World Dictionary, Simon & Schuster, Inc., 1988, p.577].

The doctrinal core of Gnosticism is basically a form of mystical religious or philosophical doctrines which other adherents and some early Christian sects spread and which the early Church leaders vehemently rejected as heresy. Believers in Gnosticism are called Gnostics. The word "Gnostic" is derived from the greek word *gnostiko* or *gnosis* (inner mystic knowledge). The Gnostics believe that "gnosis" is subjective (internally perceived by the mind or feelings) knowledge of the divine element or spark in every man that needs to be discovered to be known. They believe the divine spark originally came from the "realm of light" (totally alienated from the world and the flesh), and is resident in the soul of man and is held there in captivity by the flesh (a product of demons). The only way to release the divine spark is through divine "revelation knowledge", experienced within in the spirit. Also they believe that only when the unconscious spirit in man is awakened by revelation from the "realm of light" can he come to know his real self - the god within.

Explained in a nutshell:

God is within, waiting to be revealed. Any external influence (matter) is evil. Finding the god within comes only via your mind or feelings. There are no external checks or balances, only those which your inner spirit appropriates as you progress in your revelation.

Characteristics of Gnosticism

1. Man is Co-Substantial with God

As soon as man by "gnosis" (self knowledge) discovers and releases the imprisoned divine spark (spirit), he then starts on a mystic ascent to divine substance and on into the "realm of light". Through divine revelation knowledge experienced in self, man becomes conscious of his origin with God, his essence as God and his transcendent destiny - all God. The unconscious self of man (the unawakened inner spirit) is co-substantial with the Godhead, i.e. having the same substance or essential nature. This is the kernel Gnostic thought that has led to the creature being deified, worshipped and served more than the Creator.

2. Elitism

The mystic "gnosis" (or knowledge) is only taught to the elite - those who have a special capacity beyond the force of reason and the flesh. According to Gnostic writings, this special capacity was imparted by a messenger bearing a "spark" of light from the "realm of light" even before the creation of the world. The goal of the Gnostic is the release of the inner man by virtue of gnosis (inner knowing) and his return to his native "realm of light". There seems to be a special "place" for a special "people" who are called out or chosen. That is how the spiritual elitism comes forth. It is this Gnostic thought that is behind many of the aberrant teachings of the Latter Rain Movement. (This will be discussed at length in Chapter 3).

3. Intuitive

The Gnostic concept of God is determined by the depth of illumination and revelation subjectively (by mind or feeling) experienced "about God". The concept rejects external faith in God the Person. The reference point for godhood is in self. Gnostic revelation must be distinguished from Christian revelation because it is not rooted in history and transmitted by Scripture. It is rather the intuition of the mystery of self. The dark cloud of mysticism that overshadows the Church can readily be traced to the Gnostic's "intuition of the mystery of self".

4. Self-Knowledge

The Gnostic believes that gnosis (self knowledge) is redemptive and as such needs to be discovered and known. As a result of gnosis, man subjectively discovers as a creature, the reality of his lasting unity with the transcendent God. He discovers that his life is immortal and that he is an ongoing manifestation of the light and the god that dwells in his inner self. This knowledge, it is believed, has a redemptive quality that takes the spirit in man to the ultimate realm of light such as the fulness of God.

5. Redefinition of the New Birth

Love and salvation are reckoned obvious consequences of "gnosis". Pure knowledge without subjective reality provides intellectual enlightenment that comes from force of reason and must be avoided because it suppresses the gnosis of Divine Reality. The only substantial evidence of Divine Salvation comes from within the self-consciousness of man. It is in the experience of the inner gnosis that the Gnostic is "born-again". The redemptive quality in man must not be sought in the incarnation of God in Christ through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the Holy Scriptures or in faith through grace, but rather in the self-conscious seat of his own divinity. In other words, the fullness of divine self-consciousness is the source and evidence of the Gnostic's "New Birth".

6. Divinity

To the Gnostic the mystery of God was already unveiled (at least in secret) long before the birth of Jesus Christ and even before the Scriptures were written. In fact, they say it was revealed and buried in man before the creation of the world. Therefore, the only way for man to know about God is through gnosis (self knowledge). As a result, he will experience and know the Divine Spark within himself and know he is a member of the Elite - a "Manifest Son of God".

He who exalts and prizes above everything else, the Divine Spark within himself and sincerely believes that eternal life is found only in the Divine Element will be certain to come into harmony with all of life and thereby bring into consciousness the Spark of Divinity and so immortalize his soul . . . by obedience to the Divine Law, man attains unto Christhood, become the Son of God. [Jacques Lacarriere, The Gnostics, Peter Owen, London, 1977, p.43]

The Gnostic strives to find God in the creation, i.e., in "self" rather than in the Person, Christ, who is the Creator! This pursuit winds up in pantheism.

Perturbing Trends

Unfortunately, Gnostic trends are developing at an alarming rate within the Church. As early as the Second Century, Gnosticism infiltrated Christian theology. Since that time, it has gradually saturated the Church and is now, in these last days exploding not only within the Church, but also within secular institutions. The world is being prepared for a predominant Gnostic religious form, a New Order that will govern a great part of the world before Christ returns.

Because certain "popular" theological concepts are not being measured and subjected to strict Scriptural scrutiny, Gnosticism is

gaining a stronghold. As a result of new theological thought, even fundamental orthodox doctrines are being grossly changed into seed-beds for Gnosticism.

The statements below (originally in chart form) is adapted from *Which Jesus Do You Follow?* by M. Dauer.

FUNDAMENTAL ORTHODOX CHRISTIANITY:

- **Based on: God's Word.**
- **Acknowledges: Deity of Jesus Christ.**
- **Believes: Man is basically sinful, and only GOD can correct the evil in him.**
- **Gives glory to: GOD**
- **God: Believe in a PERSONAL GOD who is all good.**
- **Salvation: Spiritual rebirth that takes place when an individual chooses to believe by faith the DEITY of JESUS CHRIST, recognises the SIN in his life and chooses to follow Christ and turn from his sin according to the Scriptures.**
- **Faith based on: The Word of God.**
- **The Answer: Jesus Christ - according to the Scriptures.**
- **Christ: Jesus Christ, the one and only fully God and fully man.**
- **The Bible: NOTHING should be added and NOTHING should be taken away from the Bible. It is the COMPLETE WORD OF GOD. Interpreted literally and the literal meaning received.**
- **Commitment: To the Lord Jesus Christ according to the Scriptures.**

GNOSTIC/NEW AGE THOUGHT:

- **Based on: Man's word.**
- **Acknowledges: Deity of man.**
- **Believes: Man is good and getting better.**
- **Gives glory to: Self**

- **God:** Belief in God or a great force or energy or One Mind. An impersonal God with both good and bad.
- **Salvation:** Spiritual awakening that comes when an individual experiences "his own divinity".
- **Faith based on:** Experience.
- **The Answer:** Finding the "self" or "god" within and striving with "works".
- **Christ:** A position of status held by all deserving members. Arrived at by "self", "experience" and "works".
- **The Bible:** They pick and choose Scriptures to suit their purposes. They say the Scriptures can be "interpreted" in many different ways. Spiritualised to say whatever they want.
- **Commitment:** To self - or God through a passive or emotional experiential form of religion.

... they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also other Scriptures, unto their own destruction (2 Peter 3:16)

Chapter 3: A Gnostic Gospel?

Having defined and illustrated the doctrinal core of Gnosticism, we can now effectively identify Gnostic thought as it emerges in the church today. There is a growing network comprised of loosely linked groups with a common Gnostic theme. They refer to themselves in many ways. They use Biblical sounding titles such as "Overcomers", "The First Fruits", "Manifest Sons of God", "The Elect", "A New Breed", "Son of Man Company" and even "The Manchild Company". These groups can be involved in a wide spectrum of teaching from anti-Semitism, Prophets and Apostles, Restoration, Kingdom Now Theology, and most sinister of all - the New Age philosophy.

Though diverse in their outworking, these groups have a common origin in three main bodies of teaching: the Latter Rain Movement, the New Order and the Rosicrucian Order. We will study these three groups in detail, and as we do, the underlying Gnostic philosophy will be evident. Bear in mind, the essence of Gnosticism is finding your divinity - the god within you, by subjective experience.

The Latter Rain Movement

Most Pentecostal history books date the historic Pentecostal revival of the Latter Rain movement to 1948 and attribute its geographical origin to North Battleford, Canada. Its beginning was explosive among the Pentecostals and like a wild fire spread quickly throughout North America and many places around the world.

The movement was characterised by many healings and miraculous phenomena . . . There was an emphasis on spiritual gifts which were to be received by the laying on of hands. [Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements, Zondervan Publishing House]

Leaders felt that God was giving the Church, in these last days, great insight into the mind of God by prophetic revelation and manifestations. With the outburst of the revival the ministry of an apostle and a prophet was elevated to the rank of an "office". "The ministries were not restricted to penetrating the mysteries within the Bible but included the unveiling of people's lives and heart." [Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements, Zondervan Publishing House (emphasis added)]. New revelations into the spiritual world emerged - communication with angels, divine visitations, and out-of-body experiences.

Dangers

Revealing a "new thing" or gaining knowledge either by allegorising the Scriptures or by personal prophetic revelation was the spirit of absurdity that overtook what initially seemed to be a move of God. The records show that the revival started out well. Unfortunately, in certain major respects, it ended in abuse and apostasy, thus showing once again the need for the teaching of true Biblical doctrine.

The Latter Rain Movement had a notorious reputation for imparting an assortment of strange teachings. The origin of these teachings, which have no thread of Scriptural foundation except where the Scriptures have been applied out of context, can be traced beyond any reasonable doubt to the occult. These teachings are invariably accompanied by what seems to be supernatural manifestations, which when examined, are characteristically descriptive of the occult. There is evidence that with the Latter Rain revival came a blaze of subjective theology that centred on man, his senses, imagination and intuition above the objective and scriptural knowledge of truth.

This new emphasis started a paradigm shift. The initial paradigm, an orthodox perspective of Christ shifted or changed, caused Christians to be receptive to subjective impressions of Christ, experiences and ideas. To maintain the interest of followers, new ideas and new revelations were (and are) continually in the making.

Most people who have had any history in Pentecostalism at all have been influenced at some time in their lives by the Latter Rain Movement. There have been many sincere people who felt they were part of the move of God for the Last Days and were earnestly partaking of the fruit that was offered. Since 1948 the Latter Rain influence has permeated the churches, Bible Colleges, evangelism and Christian television broadcasting networks. The overall magnitude of its influence makes it more difficult to warn of the inherent dangers that are involved.

As a result of the Latter Rain influence in the Christian Church two basic streams of thought exist side by side. Sometimes it is hard to distinguish the one from the other. Like the tares and wheat they have grown up together. Only through God's written Word can a true separation be discerned. The first stream is "Gnostic" thought - the inspiration of many masquerading as apostles and prophets. The second is "Christian orthodoxy" thought based on the Holy Scriptures. It is the Gnostic stream of thought that divides the Christian Church into a dichotomy.

Tangents

Here are some of the subtle doctrinal concepts the Latter Rain fraternity have come to popularise:

- **Positive Confession and Prosperity Message**
(Hagin, Copeland, Capps, Price)
- **Restoration - Apostles, Prophets and the "Inner Voice"**
(Bickle, Hamon, Cain)
- **Shepherding/Covenantalism**
(Simpson, Godwin, Mumford)
- **Kingdom Now Theology**
(Paulk, Hamon)
- **Manifest Sons of God**
(Cerullo)

There are many more names and new ways these streams are flowing together now. In spite of these erroneous teachings, many souls around the world have come to receive Jesus Christ as Saviour. However, through these aberrant doctrines, many Christians have or are being swept into a form of religion that too often fits the description of the cults and occult.

Prophets and The New Order

Today with the rise of new "prophets" and "apostles", we are hearing terminology that is clearly unscriptural. Yet, enough Scripture references are used to make the teachings palatable to the average Christian.

The elevation of prophets and apostles obviously made way for individuals to abuse Scripture. It allowed some to give the 'Spoken Word' equality with Scripture. 'There could be no greater error', denominational leaders warned . . . [The Assemblies of God] General Secretary, J. Roswell Flower cautioned, 'Predictive prophecy resulted in untold disaster wherever it had been given free course'. Flower was well-versed in the history of Pentecostalism and recalled numerous prophecies that had come to nothing. The New Order of the Latter Rain in fact was nothing new. The ground had been covered before, with lessons learned through costly mistakes. Now a new generation seemed to want to repeat it all. [The Assemblies of God, A Chapter in the Story of American Pentecostalism, Vol.2, Edith Blumhofer]

This "New Order" has survived and has influenced the course of Pentecostal history. All along there has been interaction among the salvation/healing revivals and the Charismatic movement for the past 40 years. Now another generation later, we are facing the same situation that our forefathers faced, only this time it is exacerbated because of the mass media, telecommunications, huge conferences and a strong interlocking network.

When the terms "Illumination", "New Revelation" and "New Order" are used, immediately the imagination is titillated into wondering, "What does God have new in store for me?" Promises of a "New Anointing" and a "New Thing" keep the conferences filled and the tape and book sales rolling! When the term "New Thing" is used, the following are some of the thoughts behind the term:

- 1. New "mysteries" revealed;**
- 2. New "knowledge" of the Christ within - self consciousness;**
- 3. New "form of godliness" that will be the light of the world;**

4. New "power" that will do marvellous new things;
5. New "Law of Love" without Scripture;
6. New "Inner Voice" above the Scriptures to guide and govern;
7. New centre of divinity - the soul;
8. New ministries that exceed even those of the prophets and apostles of old; and
9. New consciousness/self potential - self-esteem, self-immortalisation and self-the temple of illumination.

These thoughts are the bedrock of Gnostic experience and its objective of self-realisation of the god within and its subsequent fruit of love and works (born not out of the working of the Holy Spirit but of connecting with your inner self.)

The Rosicrucian Order

There is a clear link in modern trends and the above teachings to what is known as "The Rosicrucian Order". (A Gnostic religion). This seems like a bold drastic statement. However, in 1925 there was a book written entitled *The Sons of God*. It was "A Foreshadowing of the Coming World of the Messenger of The New Age" (R. Swinburne Clymer). Note the similarities in the following quote:

In each life is a spark, a germ of the Divine Nature. This spark is the potential Christos or the potential individual Soul or that 'light which lighteth all the world of man's consciousness'. When man becomes conscious of this light within his own being and recognises and obeys its 'still small voice', he has reached a state bordering on Illumination of Soul or Immortalisation. When he has found within himself the CENTRE whence cometh the LIGHT, Soul Consciousness is attained. This is the beginning of Initiation; the first revealment of the Divine Mysteries. The Divine Spark in each individual may be developed into a centre or globe of pure white fire; it may become a dynamic nucleus of living fires - the Fire of Love and Immortality. This fact gives the key to the significance of the term 'Temple of Illumination'. Man in toto, is the nucleus of Illumination, the Temple of the living, radiating Christos . . . 'God in me and I in you'. Thus, by obedience to the Divine Law, man attains unto Christhood, becomes the Son of God. (page 15)

Out of Gnosticism a variety of religious cults and orders emerged, one of which was Druidism that spread rapidly during the mediaeval era throughout Europe including Britain. It became a prime factor in

the direction of all European culture, religion and society. From Gnosticism and Druidism evolved what has come to be known as the Rosicrucian Order that openly admits to having originated in Gnosticism.

We can date the Rosicrucian Order back to 1379. According to their own writings, a Rosicrucian is one who has learned, or is learning a philosophy of life - a path to confident living. Among famous people who were known Rosicrucians were to name a few: Gottfried Leibnitz 1646-1716, Francis Bacon 1561-1626 and Benjamin Franklin 1706-1790. The Rosicrucians boldly advertise "Become united with enlightened minds everywhere". The tragedy is that men who were great thinkers and spiritual leaders in their day became influenced by the Rosicrucians, just as the same thinking is influencing the church in varying degrees today.

As a result of the Rosicrucian philosophy in the eighteenth century, the Freemason Society became one of the strongest influences in Europe and North America. Thus, in the USA as well as in other parts of the world, Gnosticism helped shape much of the Christian thought, culture and politics of the day.

The book *Ancient Wisdom and Secret Sects* by Time-Life Books not only seems to confirm the fact that Freemasonry in part owes its existence to Rosicrucianism, but also substantiates the fact that Gnosticism is at the core of Freemasonry. With reference to the enormity of Freemasonry influence on North America, this book says:

Today of course, the fraternal service group known as the Free and Accepted Masons is a secure strand in the social fabric of the developed world. In the United States alone, some 16,000 lodges welcome several million member Masons, and the leading citizens of many a town consider it a privilege to belong. In some ways, however - in the observance of hidden rituals, the profusion of symbols and honorary titles and high-flown ceremonial language - the Masonic order remains the secret society it has been for centuries untold. (page 83)

Needless to say, a great portion of Freemasonry membership comprises of the Christian clergy and to some extent accounts for the strong Gnostic influence in the Church.

According to the same book, on page 53:

Rosicrucianism's spread in seventeenth-century Germany may have gained impetus from a Gorlitz cobbler named Jakob Boehme. Boehme reportedly has his first spiritual 'illumination' in 1600 when, at the age of twenty-five, he sat gazing at the light reflected from a pewter dish. The revelation led the shoemaker to abandon his trade for mystical studies. It was William Law's introduction to Jakob Boehme which poured light into Law and inspired

him to write *The Spirit of Love and The Spirit of Prayer*. People who love William Law's writings and respect his teachings cannot believe he was influenced in any way by Rosicrucian thought that was basically Gnostic.

The founder of InterVarsity, Norman Grubb, testifies in his biography,

... from Boehme, most difficult to read because he could not easily put the depths of his illuminations into readable form, I got my answer, and to this day know no writer to match him . . . He is the last word to me . . . I am saying that everything is a form by which He manifests Himself, much as my body is not exactly I, but an outward form of the inner me. This fact, gleaned through Boehme, confirmed through the writings of many others, with the foundations in Scripture, has given me my anchor. [Once Caught, No Escape, Norman Grubb, Intervarsity Press]

Norman Grubb confessed to receiving more from mystic writings than from studying the Bible. Apart from Boehme and William Law, other great mystic writers that proved a spiritual help to him were as follows: Saint Teresa, Meister Eckhart, Henry Suso, John Tauler, John of Rusbroeck, Walter Hilton, Plotinus, Angelus Silesius, Richard Rolle, Lady Julian of Norwich, Evelyn Underhill, William Kingsland and Rufus Jones. These names are well known for their Gnostic and even theosophical ideas. With reference to some of the mystic writers he said, "These are out of bounds to the orthodox; but I have often got more from them than from normal Bible exegesis". According to his own testimony, during a time of severe despair and doubt as to the existence of God, he desperately sought for answers amongst the writings of mystics. "My answer came through the mystics and has been widening ever since", he writes.

Norman Grubb is a typical example of countless others, who for whatever reason, struggled to walk by faith and unfortunately turned to Gnostic ideas (mysticism) to experience a sense of spirituality and a feeling of belonging to God. Like Norman Grubb, numerous Christians, in spite of all of their experiences, are floundering in doubt for lack of faith in God's Word and instead are searching for answers in mysticism - the spirit of Gnosticism. No wonder the masses are receptive to the modern Gnostic apostles and prophets.

Chapter 4: The Supernatural

Scripture very clearly gives us insight into the realm of the supernatural. We know that the supernatural realm suffered a terrible rebellion as Lucifer made his bid for godhood. God became man, and this man was Jesus Christ who was born of corrupt humanity. He bridged the supernatural chasm between God and

man. All things work and progress according to God's PLAN and PURPOSES and the supernatural realm functions within the parameters God has set. As natural man, we are forbidden to attempt to even peer into those unseen things that scripture refers to. We are presently to be occupied with bringing the Gospel to the natural realm, the creation.

However, there is a time soon coming, even the angels know that at this appointed time, when the last trumpet heralds the return of Jesus Christ, the saints will put on immortality, cross the supernatural barriers and judge angels (1 Cor. 6:3).

Today we are seeing a strange trend as again, man, but his own endeavours (experientially and philosophically), tried hard to relate to the "supernatural realm" and walk in a sense of godhood. The nature of this is clearly characterised as the New Age philosophy, as opposed to Orthodox Christianity. Regretfully, a great part of the church has latched on to this trend. By all appearances, Christians are knowingly or unknowingly dabbling in eastern mysticism and the spirit world. Unless they resist this temptation, they will ultimately fall prey to Satan's control. Deeper spiritual understanding seems to be the motivation behind it all. The problem is that Christians are no longer satisfied with the literal Word of God. They are looking for experiences "beyond the sacred page". The Bread of Heaven, according to their inner "sacred feelings", has become stale and outmoded.

Scripture indicates that participation in the supernatural realm is ours to be had. However, not until the prescribed Biblical time - the literal return of Jesus Christ! Any participation in the supernatural realm apart from this is treading on the same path that Lucifer walked in pursuit of going beyond his limits. Until this appointed time, the saints should be content to live and rest in the Word of God. They are to live by faith, keep God's commandments and with a passion, resist dabbling in the spirit world.

To Believe or Not to Believe

With the variety available on the "gospel menu today, how does the ordinary person discern between truth and error? We are hearing tales from those who are preaching on "spiritual warfare" that make the toes curl. Their so-called experiences and encounters with the spirit world not only renders the cross of Christ of no effect, but clearly manifests spiritual deception and a departure from the Holy Scriptures. We have heard reports of people, when engaging in the recent "spiritual warfare" craze, that have received actual bruises and injuries from their encounter with territorial spirits or demonic beings. Almost a reward in itself, the recipients' reaction to this

phenomenon is one of gratitude, as if he or she has truly entered into a high spiritual level to have been so offensive to the enemy to experience such an attack. Prophets are proclaiming that God is now "birthing" the supernatural, and new revelations, based on dreams, visions and personal experiences. Mysticism is on the increase. Yet, we hear with all sincerity, "It must be God" because the advocates have an intuitive witness that it is true, whether it accords with Scripture or not. Be on your guard whenever you hear this defense. It is not a defense, it is an excuse for deception!

It is abundantly clear in the history of the human race that humanity finds it easier to believe in mysticism rather than doubt it. Inquiring minds always tend to want to know or experience something new. In religion, this is especially true. More than 2,300 years ago even the Greek philosopher Aristotle said, "the ability to doubt (mysticism) is rare, . . ." The general responses of Christians to pagan practices and Gnostic doctrines shows that many are gullible and ignorant of the Scriptures.

Mysticism

In listening to many tapes that are coming out of the present day "prophetic movement", the underlying current is mysticism. *Funk & Wagnalls New Encyclopaedia* defines "mysticism" as "an immediate, direct, intuitive knowledge of God or of ultimate reality attained through personal religious experience". Experiences are being set up as the criteria for truth. There are many Christians who cannot communicate spiritual knowledge without the use of this term. The danger lies in that when experience is the basis for faith instead of the Word of God, erroneous theological ideas arise. This gives way for a deviance from the Word of God.

The interest in mysticism grows strongly as the churches become ever emptier and the religious festivals become mere periods of recreation amid a boisterous, heedless world. It is evident that contemporary society, if it is at all interested in spiritual things demands direct experience and not merely teaching that comes from ancient texts, nor is it impressed with traditional doctrine that does not have a savour of a living force behind it. [The Mission of Mysticism, Richard Kirby, London SPCK, 1979]

A lady had called to a local radio talk show exuberantly declaring her belief in Inner Healing. When referring to Ruth Carter Stapleton, she just oozed with the "wonder experiences" she had had as a result of Ruth's ministry. When questioned about some of Mrs. Stapleton's strange beliefs that did not accord with orthodox Christianity, the caller assured her listeners that she had been to Bible College. Yet she could not establish a basis for Mrs. Stapleton's teaching other than her own experiences.

Those associated with the "prophetic ministries" on the scene today bristle when they hear that some say they are New Age. A New Age book states that "Charismatic congregations in mainline churches are entry points into the Aquarian frontier". [Unfinished Animal: The Aquarian Frontier and the Evolution of Consciousness by Theodore Rosak]

Why would a New-Ager even try to make an inroad with someone who makes a claim to be part of the blood-washed body of Christ? We believe that instead of the attention being drawn to the cross of Christ, it is being directed to supernatural experiences which have become the basis of faith. This has caused an almost imperceptible cross-over. Johanna Michaelsen said it well,

We have ever so subtly allowed our base to shift from the solid objective grounding of God's Word and have come instead to place our focus on our experiences as the standard for our beliefs. [Ministries Magazine, Spring 1985]

The apostate church is a bearer of mysticism as her structure and institutions are subtly being overtaken. From the very beginning, mysticism has plagued the church. In these last days we are witnessing ominous manifestations. This should not be surprising for the Scriptures foretold this:

The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine . . . they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned to fables. (2 Tim. 4:3-4)

But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. (2 Peter 2:1)

Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils . . . (1 Tim. 4:1)

The following quote is how a Gnostic looks at the Church today:

The implication of the continuation of Christian mysticism (admittedly under the guise of spirituality, with which it is none the less almost synonymous) is simply that Christianity cannot be thought . . . to be redundant in the face of the proliferation of modern mysticism. Far from it: Christianity has always been the womb and the cradle of western mysticism, and it welcomes rather than fears modern mysticism. [The Mission of Mysticism, Richard Kirby, London SPCK, 1979]

This takes us back to Gnosticism. It was already manifest in John's day. It was called "the doctrines of the depths of God", while in fact

it was the doctrine of the depths of Satan (Revelation 2:24). It boils down to the fact that in Gnosticism man's redemption and justification is not by faith in God according to the Scriptures, but rather in "mystical knowledge" acquired by personal experience. This theme is intertwined in all the cults and occults.

Though the heavens disappear in a burst of fervent heat and the earth is obliterated out of existence - what will abide? Your experience - or the Word of God?

TAKE HEED PASTORS! You may not want to agree with every statement listed below; however, for the sake of your flock and the Lordship of Christ, discern every form of mysticism clearly adverse to Scripture and deal with it. By no means do I suggest a witch hunt. At this time in the history of the Church, extreme caution is of the utmost importance.

Signs and Entry Points to Mysticism

- 1. The cross of Christ is not the sole basis for redemption.**
- 2. The Holy Scriptures are not the complete single revelation of God to man.**
- 3. Experience is the way to perfection and knowledge.**
- 4. Experience takes the precedence over the Scriptures.**
- 5. Intuition is given preference to Scripture and sometimes a substitute for the Holy Spirit.**
- 6. Faith in the Word of God is defected to faith in the Church, man, self, experience, etc.**
- 7. Transubstantiation of the Eucharist becomes Christ in you - i.e. symbols of Holy Communion namely the bread and the wine are transformed into the literal flesh and blood of Jesus Christ.**
- 8. Mediators other than Jesus Christ are acknowledged and believed on.**
- 9. Self is deified.**
- 10. The allegorical method of interpretation replaces the literal.**
- 11. Salvation is based on experience and not the Word of God.**

12. The coming of Christ for His Church is spiritualised.
13. The presence of God is sought in a mystical sense.
14. Astrology (the Zodiac) is seen as an accessory to the Gospel - a source of enlightenment.
15. The Church is the ongoing incarnation of the literal presence of Christ.
16. Inner Healing, imagery, centering and "psychology" are substituted for the power of the Gospel.
17. Personal revelations, dreams and visions are given priority to Scripture as final reference in judgements, decisions and guidance.
18. Experiences are sought rather than God's will and His righteousness.
19. A euphoric form of love and unity with little or no regard for Scripture or sound doctrine.
20. Like Simon the sorcerer, signs and wonders are sought instead of true repentance and a right heart before God.
21. Hyper-faith, positive thinking, self-potential, and self-deification are taught as gospel truths.
22. Finding Christ or forming Christ within according to Eastern mysticism or New Age philosophy.
23. Meditation void of the Scriptures and reality.
24. The obsession of "spiritual warfare" with a Gnostic and "New Age" slant - allegedly doing battle in the supernatural realm to free cities and areas from the control of spirit beings before the Gospel can be preached effectively or have power to save sinners in the natural world.

True Spiritual Warfare

The Christian's battle (true spiritual warfare) is not a reeling, an intuition or an imaginative experience in the spirit realm - however real it might seem. On the contrary, the warfare is against every form of mysticism that ties the feelings, intuition and imagination into the spirit world which God strictly forbids. (Deut. 18:10-12).

As Christians we war against the strongholds of spirit mysticism that war against our minds, feelings and intuitions. By the power of the Gospel of Christ and Him crucified we cast down:

- Reasonings, pagan philosophies, Gnostic concepts and carnal dogmas that nullify the Word of God.
- Imaginations, theories, religion, fables, metaphysics, theosophy and meditations that defy the knowledge of God; and
- Every thought, form of godliness and spiritual intent or practice opposed to the Gospel of Christ.

For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds: Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ . . . (2 Cor. 10:4-5)

Chapter 5: The "Elite" Concept

No matter how we view Gnosticism, it is always an elitist faith. Each member esteems himself superior to heaven (no wonder the "Gnostic Christian" shows no interest in heaven or the personal return of Christ). Only the "elite" (the subjectively illuminated ones) can achieve godhood.

All evidence of the writings of the Gnostics leads to an egocentric direction which is a religious life with self as the object of its devotion. It is a form of narcissism with an escape from the real world into a world of myth and fantasy where no absolutes, parameters or judgements apply. This is why "spiritual warfare" as promulgated today has such an appeal to many. The imagination is titillated as the "spirit realm" is unveiled, and excited warriors find they can do battle with creatures of the netherworld.

The essence of a "Gnostic" is a life-long journey into self. His (imaginary) pursuit is perfection, immortality, godhood and an "elite" form of godliness that sets him apart from the flesh and the world and takes him into the "unknown".

Elitism

There are certain groups of Christians that fall into the category of "elitism" notwithstanding their affiliations. They use the same catch phrases: "Come out of your man-made systems", "Denominational walls are breaking down", and "Christians need to be 'delivered' from 'Spirits of Religion' and sound doctrine". The guilty groups are primarily among the Charismatics. They go by many names and sometimes no name at all. We spot them by the teachers that are involved and by similarities in their teachings. There may be some variations among the different groups; however the common denominator that ties them together is the "elitism" concept. This is set out as follows:

God is forming an overcoming company within the body of Christ called, among other names, "The Manchild Company", etc. (Revelation 12:5). The Manchild is the true church. Those that are the real Christians are the Overcomers (Revelation 2 & 3) and are becoming more and more perfected so that they will be able to drive Satan from the world. This must be done before Jesus can return. They believe that the church is not ready for the coming of the Lord. They are not looking for His imminent coming. They believe that Christ must come TO His Church before He comes FOR His Church.

All do not necessarily use this terminology, but the premises are the same. The language is becoming increasingly militant as the "Army of God", "Gideon's Army", or "Joel's Army" take shape. A common thread is that they are expecting a "New Order": "In all revolutions there are noisy and dangerous times as the OLD ORDER is replaced by the new . . . after the dust settles, we can proceed to build the beautiful kingdom that the Lord has purposed from the foundations of the world", says Vinson Synan, one of the leaders of A.D.2000. [Fulness, Jan-Feb 1990, Vinson Synan, p. 24]

Gary North, a leader of the Reconstructionists, proclaims:

We are now witnessing the beginning of a true paradigm shift . . . the Christian community in the United States has at last begun to adopt the intellectual foundations of a new world view, and this is always the first step in the replacement of a dying civilization which is based on a dying world view . . . the rotten wood is ready for burning, and a new civilization is being prepared to replace it. [Dominion and Common Grace, The Biblical Basis of Progress, Gary North.]

It all has such a spiritual sounding ring. One of the modern day prophets, Paul Cain, calls this elitism the "inner court experience". He announces joyfully that there is an empty place on Jesus' bosom for those who can "enter in". The problem with this "elitism" theory is that Christians are to enter into the "inner court" of God, not by the way of the Cross, through faith, but through a subjective experience of a "nirvana" experience.

A Manifest Son adherent says:

But the purpose of God reaches from before the foundation of the world. It plans the transplanting of his sons and his daughters. It plans the creation of a NEW ORDER (the elite) on the earth and thus it transplanted celestial children to a physical world. It brought them forth into being in the bodies of the Adamic race. [Tape recording by William Swift]

A "prophet" from the Kansas City Fellowship in an interview session in 1988 proclaims that the Lord looked at him and said, "I have called the best of every blood line in earth unto this generation . . . I have elected to bring them forth in this generation . . . the ELECT GENERATION. [Bob Jones transcribed from 1988 tapes]

This "New Breed" does not believe in the Rapture eschatology. According to Rick Joyner, one of the "Prophets":

. . .the doctrine of the Rapture was a great and effective ruse of the enemy to implant in the Church a retreat mentality . . . already this yoke has been cast off by the majority in the advancing church, and it will soon be cast off by all. [The Harvest, Rick Joyner]

The Scripture, *Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken and the other left.* (Luke 17:34-36) is being construed to mean that the imperfect one shall be taken (removed from the earth) and the perfect one left. Since the Elite (The Manifest Sons) are being perfected on earth, the true Church is to become The Christ - the ongoing Incarnation of Christ. Therefore, the Church as "The Christ" is empowered to drive all demons from the earth, perfect the Church and establish the Elect's reign. The emphasis is always on the super spiritual race rather than on the person, Jesus Christ. One well known teacher summed it up as follows: "It is time to take him (Jesus) off and move up into the place God has ordained for us."

This is heresy in its diabolic essence.

The Foremost Danger in Elitism

The foremost danger in these divisive teachings is that Jesus Christ is removed from His high place as God the Son, to the level of all the sons of God. The sons of God are moved up to Christ's place. The truth of the humanity of Christ is taken to an extreme. This is one of Satan's chief ways to discredit and finally destroy God's Word - to add to His message by pushing it to the extreme. History shows that the worst danger in Gnosticism, especially in the concept of elitism, is its inherent propensity to extremism. Given free reign, it inevitably leads to moral, political and spiritual extremism.

An immediate case in point is its extremist abuse of the Scriptures. Gnosticism has a notorious reputation for riding roughshod over the Scriptures then adding and subtracting in pursuit of extreme religious ideals. Revelation 22:19 clearly reveals what happens to anyone who adds to God's Word.

And if any man shall take away from the Words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.

Undermines Evangelism

The new Elite doctrine undermines the message of evangelism. Everyone is just where he is supposed to be - where God wants him at that time. Recruits for the movement are not obtained from the ranks of the unsaved, but are plucked off one or two at a time from Christian groups by phrases like "Wouldn't you like to learn new, deep truths?", "Have you entered in?", "Come into the inner court", or "Surely, you want to move on with God?". These phrases stir spiritual pride and elitism in most, as well as a sense of inferiority or feeling of being unspiritual if we do not understand and want to participate. Everyone else seems to understand, why not us? Spiritual pride comes to those who think they understand and are part of the "New Thing" because they have these "new deeper truths" and the rest are just poor babes.

The Restoration Movement has had a profound impact on the Charismatic movement. With the new call to "unity" with no regard to doctrine, the influence is flooding all aspects of evangelical Christianity. Restorationism presents a great challenge to conservative Biblical interpretations and is successful because it appears to be more "spiritual". This "spirituality" actually causes a deterioration, becomes divisive and splits churches. A spiritual "elitism" is formed. Others who do not get into the same "deep revelations" of the hidden meanings of Scriptures are left out and made to feel that they are not "spiritual".

Elitism Undermines the Word of God

The new and yet old elite doctrine that has suddenly burst forth in the church is in actuality the brain child of New Age Christian Gnostics. Many of them do not even realise they are "Gnostics". At the expense of God's Word, the Scriptures are spiritualised to illustrate "The Church" (as they define it) as a special "breed" of God's people.

The Bible is perceived as a symbolic book. As a result of symbolic interpretations, preposterous thoughts and blatant cultish concepts have emerged. Rejecting the literal sense of the Word allows the Scriptures to be interpreted and applied indiscriminately. For example, 2 Corinthians 3:6 (*The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life*) is allegorised to mean the Scriptures is a dead letter without the Spirit. However, that is not what the Apostle Paul is saying. Paul is making a difference between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant. The old brought death whereas the new as a life-giving spirit.

To the mind of the Gnostic, the true meaning of the Scriptures appears only when they are allegorised or spiritualised. Unless this rule is applied, the Scriptures remain a dead letter. By this non-literal method of interpretation, the neo-Gnostics have spiritualised themselves into being "Sons" equal with Christ and part of the "elite order" in the Church.

Immortality for the Elite

This teaching is becoming more widespread as popular circuit "Prophets" proclaim in Kansas City

. . . There is a ministry after the five-fold called the ministry of perfection - the Melchisedek Priesthood . . . your children will be moving into the ministries of Perfection . . . coming into that Divine Nature of Jesus Christ . . . they themselves will be that generation that's raised up to put death itself underneath their feet . . . because the Lord Jesus is worthy to be lifted up by a church that has reached the full maturity of the GOD-MAN! [Bob Jones, (Kansas City Fellowship) transcribed from 1988 tape]

Those who are overcomers believe they will never be sick or die and they will be here when Christ returns. They believe they are now living in the prophetic time when the Church is being restored and perfected by the five-fold ministries (apostles, prophets, etc.). The Elite (Overcomers) are now in the process of putting on immortality, perfection and godhood and taking dominion of the earth. The Church is about to birth the Man-child - the Sons of God, the incarnation of Christ and brotherhood of Christ.

The essence of this concept is pure Gnosticism and actually accords with the following New Age thought (Gnosticism):

The real object of man's life on earth is primarily his self-improvement and his own ultimate perfection. This perfecting process depends upon the attainment of unity within himself, a harmonising between his physical and spiritual forces; the unity of human with the Divine nature, which is the essence and, in a spiritual sense, the NEW BIRTH. This perfection, or unity,

becomes a STATE of the Soul, a degree of being, a SENSING and FEELING rather than a mere belief. This condition or state of being is possible only through the development of the divine nature of man from WITHIN himself and is the result of a process by which whatever is evil and unworthy is transmuted, i.e. changed or SUBLIMATED into the higher or spiritual entity - IT IS A BECOMING; the change from the purely animal-human to the human-Divine.

The second object of man's life on earth is to lead other men VIA the same path so that ultimately all men shall have developed and brought into manifestation and activity this same nature and thus will God's church or universal Brotherhood become an established fact. [The Sons of God by R. Swinburnbe Clymer, Published by The Philosophical Publishing Company (emphasis theirs)]

Secret Coming for the Elite

The neo-Gnostic believes the manifestation of the Sons of God comes about in a secret inner coming of Christ TO some Christians which would transform them into "Overcomers". "Christ should visit the saints . . . and minister His life 'in secret' before He is openly manifest." [The Feast of Tabernacles, George Warnock, Springfield, MO - Bill Britton, 1951, pp 108]. In doing this they reject the literal resurrection and Rapture (the personal coming of Jesus Christ FOR His Church). It is interesting to note they will acknowledge Christ is coming, but His coming is off in the future. The emphasis is not on Christ's soon appearance but on the great "power" or "new anointing" that is to be manifest in the Church. Again, a subtle change of emphasis.

Chapter 6: The Mystic "Link"

The Apostate Church, New Age and Elitism

The exaltation of self, "I am a god", or "I am divine" is the Gnostic connection with the "New Age" and "elitism".

The following quotes identify the Church's new wave link with New Age thought. It shows the source of the elite mindset taking over in the Church as well as the secular world:

1. The Principle of the Cosmic Christ = Pantheism.

. . . it is not those who rely upon a personal historical Jesus for their salvation by 'belief', but the real Christians are those who have recognised that the Cosmic Christ principle is verily and truly their own higher Self, and who strive to have that 'brought to birth' in them, so that even here and now they may act in the power of that supreme divine nature, even as the historical man Jesus is reputed to have done. It is these alone who can truly say that their 'life is hid with Christ in God.' (Col. 3:8)

'The discovery of the Mystic Christ in you is being "born from above". This knowledge is of the utmost importance to human victory over the lower self. The imperishable secret of human life is the mystic Christ in all men, their hope of glory.' [Archdeacon Wilberforce, Mystic Immanence, p.5]

↓ 2. Man is inherently divine - a 'god'.

Yet verily, this is a mystery. We can but dimly apprehend the heights and depths of it. We can but follow, each in his own manner and circumstances, that Road, that **PATH BY WHICH TO DEITY WE CLIMB**, which has been pointed out to us by the great teachers of the past, and of the present . . . 'enter in at the straight gate' which leads to life eternal; it will only be a few who will accept that underlying teaching of the Christian Scriptures which I have here endeavoured to elucidate as being in line with what the Sages and Initiates of the Ancient Wisdom have taught in all ages, i.e. the great fact of Man's inherent divine nature, and the potentiality which every individual possesses of realising that divine nature in all its potency to overcome every human disability - sin, sickness, death - and thereby to attain, even here and now, 'the peace which passeth all understanding . . . '

It is by belief in or recognition of this great fact of the indwelling 'Christ' (not the historical Jesus) that the individual may start on his return journey to his 'Father's home', and step by step may attain at last, here and now, to the conquest of sin, suffering, and death, even as the man Jesus is represented as having attained. [The Gnosis or Ancient Wisdom in the Christian Scriptures, Bradford and Dickens, London, 1936, pp. 211-15]

↓ The Soul or Spirit of man is the centre of divinity - making subjectivity and not objectivity of the Word of God the final authority.

Truth is within ourselves; it takes no rise From outward things whate'er you may believe. There is an inmost centre in us all Where truth abides in fullness; but around, Wall upon wall, the gross flesh hems it in.

In the **CENTRE** of our being is to be found the Soul, the source of all truth, and the Christos, wherein will come the Father. Toward this **CENTRE** we must direct our search. But before we can drink of this fountain of life and wisdom, which as a spring of clear and living water, we must break through "wall upon wall" of "the gross flesh" that "hems it in" [The Sons of God by R. Swinburne Clymer, Published by The Philosophical Publishing Company, 1925]

From the above three quotes we learn:

- The Rosicrucian and the modern "New Age" Christians believe in the "Cosmic Christ principal", i.e. the divine nature element resident in every man.
- The "god-man", "the Christ" is the dormant or quickened spirit/inner soul of every man.
- The way to conquer sin, suffering and death is through the divine spirit (force or spark) in man.
- The power of redemption lies within the soul or spirit and is therefore independent of the Gospel of Christ and redemption through the blood of Christ.

The following quote chosen from a vast file of material gathered from modern T.V. evangelists proves how current Christian thought ties in with Rosicrucian (New Age) and "Manifest Sons of God". It shows how an "elitist" mentality is permeating Christian thought.

Your spirit, ladies and gentlemen, is God-like, he's God-like in every way . . . The second this spirit-man comes into our being, pops into our bodies, we're born again. He's spirit, what's born of the spirit is spirit. Say after me, within me is a God-man. Say it again, within me is a God-man. [congregation repeats]. Now let's say even better than that, let's say, I am a God-man. When you say I am a God-man you're talking about your spirit-man. Become spirit-man conscious. Become new creation conscious . . . This spirit-man within me is a God-man. Say after me, he's born of heaven, he's a super being. This spirit-man within me never makes a mistake. I do but he never. This spirit-man within me never sins, I do but he never does . . . Say after me, my body is the sinner, my spirit is the saint . . .

Say I'm born of heaven - God man. I'm a God-man. I'm a sample of Jesus. I'm a super being. Say it! Say it! Who's a super being? I walk in the realm of the supernatural. Say it! Who walks in the realm of the supernatural? . . . Say after me . . . Here's what I want you to say after me OK?

Col. 3:10 Get the knowledge, get the spirit-man renewed, get him strong, and when he's strong, he'll hold off sickness. He'll keep your body well, and brother, you want to prosper. Money will be falling on you from left, right and centre. God will begin to prosper you, for money always follows righteousness and righteous living . . .

Say after me, I hold my destiny . . . The reason many of us ask and never get is because our spirit-man isn't strong enough to give it to us. Say after me, everything I ever want is in me already. [Benny Hinn, aired on Saturday, October 20, 1990 on TBN]

Although Benny Hinn has since made a public statement to the effect that he has recanted much of his earlier teaching, the mindset and receptivity among Christians toward this Gnostic philosophy is very evident. At the time of the airing of these ideas, few believers responded in the Berean-like way, comparing Hinn's

ideas with Scripture. Those that did respond with justified criticism were often met with counter-criticism. The majority of listeners, already receptive to the idea of "new deeper truths", sat passively glued to the T.V. sets, absorbing yet another "deep truth" and becoming more entrenched in Gnostic philosophy.

An Example

The following is an account of Frank B. Robinson, the notorious cult leader of the "Psychiana Movement" in 1928 (Moscow, Idaho). At the time he was in his room crying out to "find God".

As the moment passed he stood perfectly still, hopefully waiting for he knew not what. Then he fell to his knees, closed his eyes, and heard himself say, 'The spirit within me is the Spirit of God, the same spirit that has moved in the lives of all great men. I have confessed this Spirit for many years, but I have also suppressed it. I want to express it from this moment on - fully, completely, perfectly.'

Kneeling there, he felt his mind cleansed of every thought save the thought of the presence of God. His eyes filled with tears and he found himself breathing deeply, repeating with every inhalation words which seemed to have been whispered to him, 'I believe in the Power of the Living God!'

He had the vivid feeling that he was not alone in the room. He could sense the Presence of something or someone, although he could see no one nor hear anything but the words he so earnestly repeated. Yet something had drawn aside a curtain deep within him and he seemed to be standing face to face with the Power that is life. No longer, he said later, did he feel a limiting consciousness; he felt only a single specific sense of complete unity with God. In that flashing moment of insight, he realised as never before that he was the inner counterpart of a divine creative power. From then on he was convinced that he was the personalised activity of cosmic force . . . after that afternoon he was a changed man. [Strange Sects and Curious Cults: A Study of Their Origin and Influence, Larsen, Egon, New York: Hart, 1972]

Frank B. Robinson's Gnostic premise rejected:

1. The deity of Christ.
2. The blood of Christ.
3. Confession of sin.

He believed in:

1. Unity with God through universal consciousness.

2. The gospel of prosperity and personal revelations apart from and contrary to the Scriptures.

3. The voice of God with no respect to the Scriptures.

4. The spirit of man is the final voice on matters of divinity.

The concept that the spirit or soul of man is the divine element in man is the form of mysticism that races against the Scriptures for the prize - thought to be true spirituality.

Mysticism Defined

"Mysticism is the idea that direct knowledge of God or ultimate reality is achieved through personal, subjective intuition or experience apart from, or even contrary to, historical fact or objective divine revelation." Arthur Johnson, a professor at West Texas State University, elaborates:

When we speak of a mystical experience we refer to an event that is completely within the person. It is totally subjective . . . Although the mystic may experience it as having been triggered by occurrences or objects outside himself (like a sunset, a piece of music, a religious ceremony, or even a sex act), the mystical experience is a totally inner event. It contains no essential aspects that exist externally to him in the physical world . . . A mystical experience is primarily an emotive event, rather than a cognitive one . . . Its predominant qualities have more to do with emotional intensity, or 'feeling tone' than with facts evaluated and understood rationally. Although this is true, it alone is a woefully inadequate way of describing the mystical experience. The force of the experience is often so overwhelming that the person having it finds his entire life changed by it. Mere emotions cannot effect such transformations.

Furthermore, it is from this emotional quality that another characteristic results, namely, its 'self-authenticating' nature. The mystic rarely questions the goodness and value of his experience. Consequently, if he describes it as giving him information, he rarely questions the truth of his newly gained "knowledge". It is this claim that mystical experiences are "ways of knowing" truth that is vital to understanding many religious movements we see today. [Our Sufficiency in Christ, John MacArthur, Jr., Word Publishing, 1991]

The concept of Gnosticism is at the heart of Rosicrucianism, New Age thought and Manifest Sons of God teachings. By Christian orthodox definition the core of these thoughts (inner mystic knowledge) and beliefs are occultic. In varying degrees this thinking has and is infiltrating the church at an alarming rate. The Pentecostals and Charismatics are not exempt. The most common characteristic is an "elitist" mentality.

Heresies

The following ideas and beliefs are characteristic of Rosicrucianism and Manifest Sons of God, some of which, and in some cases all, are being received and taught by a great part of the church. See whether you can identify any of the following heresies:

- 1. Have an "elitist mentality".**
- 2. Consider themselves essentially Divine, equal to Christ.**
- 3. Believe they are the Manifest Sons of God.**
- 4. Believe their Divinity comes from within themselves.**
- 5. Reject the literal Biblical view of the resurrection and the "rapture" of the church.**
- 6. Are Overcomers and Conquerors of evil and the world.**
- 7. Are in the process of becoming perfect and immortal in this age.**
- 8. Claim to be members of the Melchizedek Order - High Priest with Christ.**
- 9. Will purge the world of undesirables.**
- 10. Will reign on the earth as gods.**
- 11. Attribute their revelations to the Divine Gnosis (knowledge) located in them.**
- 12. Share the same political ambition to establish the government of the "Sons of God" to the exclusion of the personal presence of Jesus Christ.**
- 13. Insist the Bible should be interpreted allegorically, symbolically and spiritually.**
- 14. Believe it is wrong to interpret the Bible literally.**
- 15. Reject Israel as a chosen nation of God.**
- 16. Are anti-Semitic.**
- 17. Reject the written Holy Scriptures as the final, inerrant and infallible Voice of God above all other voices or experiences.**
- 18. Stress love and unity with little or no regard for sound doctrine or a sound mind.**

19. Reject the resurrection and redemption of the body.
20. Spiritualise the resurrection and redemption of the body.
21. Reject the personal coming of the anti-christ.
22. Look forward to the dawning of the New Age on earth, ushered in by a select group of Overcomers, the Sons of God.
23. Reject Orthodox Christianity.
24. Are always receiving "new deep truth" apart from Scripture.
25. Are essentially into "mysticism".
26. Believe in the attainment of perfection and immortality here on earth without a literal resurrection and Rapture.
27. Rejects redemption by the blood of Christ.
28. The spirit of man is the god-man.

These heresies project the following picture:

The New Wave "Mystery Babylon" (New Age Religion) riding on the back of orthodox Christianity fulfilling the age long dream of the "Church of Illumination" (Rosicrucian/Gnostic church) i.e., the uniting of the Church founded on "love" and "godhood" - Satan's fruit.

THE CHURCH OF ILLUMINATION has been steadily at work with the idea that ultimately the various churches would merge for the benefit of all religions as well as of all mankind.

THE CHURCH OF ILLUMINATION looks forward with confidence to a constantly increasing feeling of good will and religious tolerance among the various creeds, so that some day in the not too distant future the dream of unification can be realised and one all-embracing religion taught to all the peoples of all the earth. [The Church of Illumination by Rev. R. Swinburne Clymer, M.D., Quakertown, PA, USA.]

This is the vision the Church, for the most part, is accepting and upholding, above the Scriptures. This is the "elitism" that fundamentalists, charismatics, pentecostals and evangelicals are now opening to. This is the mysticism that enshrines the new age form of "elitism" in the Church.

The Heart of Elitism

The core of spiritual elitism lives in the psyche of man. Psyche, generally means mind, the invisible spirit part of man, life, soul, self, passions, feelings, desires, appetites, etc. There are a few theories as to what it means. However, it is quite safe to say, psyche is at the core of man's individuality, and personality, thoughts and feelings. Satan knows this and is why he is interested in the psyche and individuality of man.

When the "psyche" of man, through the subtle influence of Satan, assumes the role of a "god-man", the individual will very likely become spiritually and morally unnatural. Thoughts and ideas become abstract and esoteric in nature. Behaviour generally assumes one of two directions, "Legalism" or "Liberalism". Extremism, as well as "Elitism" usually characterises the god-man role. Sometimes, it is difficult to identify the psyche of an individual. But, given enough time it will eventually surface and be quite evident.

The teachings of the "New Age" as well as that of the apostate church, for the most part, are designed to magnify and glorify the psyche of man, hence the present obsession with "self-esteem", "self-potential" and "self-indulgence" within many churches.

Any gospel centred on self-glorification (self-esteem) will in a matter of time pervert the psyche and give rise to an unnatural individual. How is this so? Scripture clearly indicates that at the heart of man dwells unrighteousness, the springboard for all sin and evil doing. Scripture says that even our righteousness is as filthy rags. Scripture calls man to faith in Christ and repentance toward God. The self-glorification (self-esteem, psychology-friendly) gospel declares man to be essentially good (essence is god-like) and calls him to self-realisation of this good(god)ness. Instead of casting our failure, frailties and sin at the foot of the Cross, and allowing Jesus Christ to live His life in us, we permit "godhood" to dwell in our unregenerate spirit. As this thinking courses to its extremist conclusion, we're right back to Eden and the lie of Satan "ye shall be as gods".

It was in view of this happening in the Church in the last days that the Apostle Paul sternly warned the Church against *seducing spirits and doctrines of devils*. (1 Tim. 4:1).

The unnatural individual is identified in the Scripture as: one who *changes the truth of God into a lie . . . worshipping the creature more than the Creator . . . changes the glory of God into the image . . . made like to corruptible things* and has pleasure in what is unnatural. When these psyche characteristics appear it means the individual is under wrong influences or demonic control.

Having individuality is perfectly natural, in fact it is a God-given faculty and certainly deserves recognition, nurturing and a place in our thinking and relations. However, when individuality is used to build a case in support of

man's potential superiority over the Word of God, the Creator, the Deity of Christ, righteousness and the Cross of Calvary - "spiritual abuse" is in focus.

This brings us to the heart of elitism. Ever since the fall of man, individuality has thrived on self-esteem, egoism, introversion and selfish exploits, to the point that the Creator, the Scriptures, and the Cross of Christ have suffered abuse. Experience has proven over and over again that when self is deified or glorified in any way, shape or form, the Gospel of Christ (in its unadulterated form) becomes a sore offence. When individuality steps or tries to step beyond the natural as defined by Scripture, an abstract world emerges, generally characterised by sensualism, mysticism, Gnosticism and elitism. (Romans 1:18-32). Unnaturalism is an escape from reality. The unnatural individual's justification for how he feels and believes hinges on - "I am a god".

Unfortunately the deified psyche philosophy has and is permeating the whole of society with no exception to the Church, affecting millions of members who sit Sunday after Sunday listening to another gospel. Self is pre-eminent in the Gnostic gospel. Instead of the truth sought in God's Word and insight into what is right or wrong in the laws of God, "self" is sought. The current self-centred "elitist" religion denies the deity of Christ as the only true God; denies the vicarious atonement, the glory and wisdom of the cross and the efficacy of the blood of the cross. Whoever accepts or includes Gnostic thought in their preaching renders the cross of Christ of no effect and could inadvertently become an enemy of the cross.

For true Christians there is only one pre-eminent concept and that is the Gospel of the glory of the Cross where self and the world died. At the Cross the devil was soundly defeated.

But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. (Gal. 6:14)

The Glory of His Cross

Oh, the glory of His Cross I see!

By works the glory I hoped to gain,

In experience and self I sought in vain.

Ego, pride and vanity reigned o'er me,

Blinding me to Calvary.

But now by grace, through faith,

I, the glory see.

Oh, the glory of His Cross I see!

In my quest how I strove to see.

Wretched was the nature of my soul;

As, if it were dragged to Sheol.

Then through Christ the Crucified,

I beheld the glorified,

as the Spirit bade me, see!

Oh, the glory of the Cross I see!

Which no spark of self ere gave me.

Though time in meditation spent

Nothing could God's glory represent,

Save the Cross of Calvary.

Oh, the glory of the Cross I see!

Oh, the glory of the Cross I see!

There provision for sin was made,

Sin and shame was borne away

and debt to sin in full was paid.

Through Christ redemption came

To all who see and call His name.

Oh, the glory of the Cross I see!

Travers van der Merwe

Chapter 7: Spirituality

Much of the error we are witnessing today is coming along in just enough orthodox garb to make it seem acceptable. As long as the terminology seems to sound right, many are afraid to warn others of the inherent errors that are abounding in the midst of the Church. We do have to be very cautious and realise that many purporting these "strange doctrines" are sincere and feel that they have entered new depths of spirituality. They are caught up in their experiencing of "new revelation" and are eager to share their knowledge with others.

We all have different ways of measuring spirituality. It is probably because of this we are so disappointed when someone we consider "spiritual" fails. It seems to be normal to get our eyes on man. However, there is an area where man is exalted to such a degree that his feet are no longer clay.

The "Gnostic" sense of spirituality is derived from an inner gnosis (experiential mystic knowledge) that goes beyond reason, logic and most of all, the Holy Scriptures. For many, spirituality is perceived intuitively or psychically, as opposed to Biblical faith, i.e., simply believing and obeying the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Spirituality experienced mystically is thought to be a witness of an inner union with God, the basis of which is self-consciousness which means it is no longer a matter of reason, faith and grace. An inner self-conscious feeling of holiness seems to be of primary importance. To arrive at a high spiritual level, all objective consciousness of the external world must be lost. The Persons of the Trinity, the Holy Scriptures, doctrine and morality becomes irrelevant. The ideal sought after is a higher consciousness of union with the divine inner self called the "Christos". When this union is experienced, a sense of spiritual worthiness as well as a feeling of being a "Son of God" equal with Jesus Christ is felt. This subjective experience is seen as a baptism into the Christhood and a knowledge of one's own worthiness.

A danger of "Gnostic spirituality" is that it creates an attention to self that supersedes the worthiness of the Word and the need for faith. False prophets have actually been heard to say that their spiritual experiences have been so great that they have no need of faith. They boast to having a deep communion with the Holy Spirit, the depth of which is equivalent to the extent of their feelings. How they feel and perceive their spirituality determines the measure of their communion with God. The "Christian Gnostic", especially the current false prophets, have a problem accepting the Holy Scriptures as God's only sure link between the Church and the Holy Spirit. The present day Gnostic theosophical concepts will, as always, remain in conflict with the Holy Spirit and the Bible standard of spirituality.

Gnostics believe that either a passive or an emotional subjectivity is at the core of true spirituality. It has been described as "A passionate subjectivity". Church history reveals that this form of spirituality or anything that resembles it, invariably leads to spiritual dualism (two extreme opposites) namely "asceticism" or "libertinism".

The ascetic believes that the love of the body (philosomatia) is a hateful evil, and he who cherishes the body and lusts after the flesh lives in erotic error, remains wandering in the darkness, and suffers the things of death. The libertine on the other hand takes great care of the body, tends it night and day, washes and anoints himself, feasts on strengthening foods to make his body strong, so that he can devote himself to fornication, and be able to render its fruits whenever required. [Gnosticism, Its History and Influence, Benjamin Walter, The Borgo Press, pp 126]

It is significant to note in the history of Christianity through to the current time, that wherever and whenever Christianity subsides into a form of mysticism "Christianity" assumes a path of one of the aforementioned extremes. It is this element of Gnostic mysticism that causes cultish extremism to arise. The fact that "gnosis is not concerned with a moral life, but with mystical enlightenment and freedom from the bondage of creation" [Gnosticism, Its History and Influence, Benjamin Walker, the Borgo Press pp 126] makes it a theosophy, free to flow in any spiritual direction it chooses. The essence of the gnosis spirituality lies in its mystic knowledge, not only of the "deep things of God", but also of the "deep things of Satan".

"It comes by divine grace through the revelation of the Saviour", says Benjamin Walker, but then he exposes the error of his thought as he adds, "Whoever achieves gnosis, says the Gospel of Phillip, becomes no longer Christian, but Christ". [Gnosticism, Its History and Influence, Benjamin Walker, The Borgo Press, pp. 101]. This is typical of much of modern preaching.

The Spiritual Paradigm Shift

Christian Gnostic authors have observed the following:

In Christianity, there is a great deal of mystical thinking which goes on almost unnoticed in the most conservative parts of the Church . . . Another kind of Christian spirituality if not exactly mysticism, is the Charismatic movement which has seen a revival in recent years. But a more general Christian hunger for mystical experience has expressed itself in the proliferation of Christian groups for spirituality. Christianity is rapidly adding to its repertoire for the laity such enterprises as silent retreats, ecumenical meditation groups, and practices combine Buddhist and yogic

techniques with Christian prayer and meditation. In doing this it is undoubtedly going to make up some of the deficit, the congregations it has lost through a lack of direct religious experience for the parishioners. The remainder of the deficit will be further reduced when Christianity adjusts itself to the science-fiction culture. But despite these relatively superficial desiderata, Christianity is bound to have a vital part to play in the mission of mysticism as here conceived. [The Mission of Mysticism by Richard Kirby, pp.114-115, SPCK London]

Theosophical concepts of the new birth and spirituality are fast becoming very much part of the Christian thinking. Many forms of spirituality experienced and expressed are Gnostic in nature and pseudo in character.

The doctrine, "the just shall live by faith" for which the great reformers paid an enormous price, some with their own lives, is now under the New Age influence and is being discarded in exchange for a form of spirituality justified by self gnosis. The impact of New Age Gnostic thought has subtly changed the Biblical meaning of faith to a modern Gnostic version which in reality is a recall of the "Dark Ages" of mysticism and superstition. The Church is on a spiritual path of mysticism which by all accounts is cultish. It is only a matter of time and it will fall to demonic forces - the worst apostasy hell can afford. Already the attitude of the Church toward sin, repentance, morality and God has changed to such an extent that one wonders why they bother to use the Bible. For instance: "Sin - the transgression of the law" has now come to mean a maladjustment or merely a psychological disorder.

True repentance, which is an admission of guilt, confession of sin, forsaking of sin and surrendering to God, now has come to mean simply a change of attitude toward God. Morality and keeping the commandments of God has become irrelevant. God, the first Person of the Godhead has become localised within the physical frame of man, who is now co-substance with God.

Out of New Age spiritual concepts, demonic schools of thought and practices are bound to arise. This warped form of spirituality is taking over the churches, dividing Christian families and causing strife on an unprecedented scale. Christian Gnostic forms of spirituality are manifest in one or more of the following ways:

- A show of humility with deep piety characterised by mysticism. *Having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof (2 Tim. 3:5).*
- Spirituality is structured around subjective experiences with little regard for the Scriptures.
- Superior knowledge, new discoveries and new revelations are a sign of spiritual depth and maturity.
- Spirituality is centred on a subjective Christ-consciousness rather

than on faith in the person, Jesus Christ.
Continually seeking for a deepening spiritual experience rather than a deepening faith in God's Word.
Spiritualising the Word of God rather than taking the literal meaning of the Word.
Spirituality is measured by experiences.
Look to an inner voice (gnosis) for divine direction.
Love feelings and self, more than God.
Look inward for solutions.
Spirituality is sought in success, achievement and works.
"Have faith in yourself" and "The way to know God is feel Him", is thought to be the true mark of spirituality.

A Fine Line

Sometimes the line dividing the Christian from the Gnostic is so fine that it is hardly visible. The only way for a Christian to safely discern Gnosticism is in the light of the Holy Scriptures.

A "Christian Gnostic" is easily identified by his show of piety and especially by his air of humility. The more mystic he appears or sounds, the more spiritual he feels. He takes great pleasure in believing he has attained to a high spiritual level and sees himself as being a member of a special breed of people. Sometimes it is called "The Manifest Sons of God", "The Melchizedek Order" or "The New Breed". His spiritual inspiration comes from a mystic source sometimes described as a "still small voice" purported to be the voice of the Holy Spirit. Confidence in the "still small voice" takes precedence over the Scriptures. The written Scriptures are used only in so far as they seem to support particular convictions and concepts. The whole motive behind the "Christian Gnostic" is to make himself and others believe HE is a GOD. In fact, his ultimate dream is to prove to the world that he has power and is a god with limitless potential.

Why Such an Outcry?

The question may be asked, "Why such an outcry against shades of Gnostic thought in the Gospel presentation? Doesn't the adage, 'unity in diversity' apply in this case? Shouldn't we as Christians show tolerance towards Christians who don't quite believe as we do? Is it not true that within Christianity there should be room for diversity of thought and belief? After all is said and done, is not love the unifying bond over the doctrines that often prove so divisive? The answer to these questions is two-fold. Yes, within Christianity

there is ample room for diversity and tolerance. However, there are limits to creative diversity. When a concept, a teaching or an action in the name of Christianity exceeds the basic tenets of faith, or is utterly different from the "faith which was once delivered to the saints", it becomes a contradiction of Christianity. When that level of contradiction is reached, the church, as well as the advocates of the Word of God, must aggressively contend for the faith. The defence of the "most holy faith" is one of the greatest functions of the Church, without which the Church loses the truth that distinguishes her from error. EXCEPT THE CHURCH EARNESTLY CONTENDS FOR THE FAITH, SHE FORFEITS HER RIGHT TO BE THE VEHICLE OF GOD'S TRUTH.

Repudiation Necessary

The worst moments in the history of Israel came when Israel was seduced by false prophets to follow after gods of their own making. It was for this very reason that Jesus rebuked the Pharisees as the enemies of God. Jesus warned His disciples against the religion of the Pharisees. "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees" (which is hypocrisy). The Pharisees claimed to embody the essence of the faith, Jesus called them "hypocrites".

Teachings and practices that are wholly different from the Gospel of Jesus Christ must be opposed, even if they come from within the Body of Christ. Gnosticism plagued the early church. In fact, some of the Pauline and Johannean epistles were written to address the Gnosticism that was edging its way into the Gospel of Christ. In the writings of the early Church Fathers, Gnosticism was addressed and condemned in the strongest terms. It was on account of Gnosticism that the early church found it necessary to draft the "Apostolic Creed" and form the "Canonicity of Scripture". A study of Church History will show that within the church there has always been the temptation to accommodate Gnostic thought. As in the past, and more so now, it poses a persistent danger to the biblical faith.

Gnosis and Magic

According to the great Jewish philosopher, Martin Buber, the perpetual enemy of faith in the true God is not atheism (the claim that there is no God), but rather Gnosticism (the claim that God is known). At another point Buber wrote:

The two spiritual powers of gnosis and magic, masquerading under the cloak of religion, threaten more than any other powers the insight into the

religious reality . . . the tribes of Jacob could only become Israel by disentangling themselves from both gnosis and magic . . . [Against the Protestant Gnostics, Philip J. Lee, Oxford University Press, 1987]

New Age Threat

A "New Age" writer around 1917 wrote the following:

. . . the church movement, like all else, is but a temporary expedient and serves but a transient resting place for the evolving life. Eventually, there will appear the Church Universal, and its definite outlines will appear towards the close of this century . . . This Church will be nurtured into activity by the Christ and His disciples when the outpouring of the Christ principle, the TRUE second Coming has been accomplished . . . The Christian church in its many branches can serve as a nucleus through which world illumination may be accomplished . . . the church as a teaching factor should take the great basic doctrines and (shattering the old forms in which they are expressed and held) show their true and inner spiritual significance. The prime work of the church is to teach, and teach ceaselessly, preserving the outer appearance in order to reach the many who are accustomed to church usages. Teachers must be trained; Bible knowledge must be spread; the sacraments must be mystically interpreted, and the power of the church to heal must be demonstrated. [The Externalisation of the Hierarchy, Alice Bailey]

According to Alice Bailey, the Church is being used as merely a part of an overall plan to bring in world peace, world domination and to set up the "Kingdom on earth". In the church there are "disciples of the Great Ones" (Gnostic or New Age apostles) to be found. They are steadily gathering momentum and before long they will enter upon their designated task.

When it is observed how far the "New Wave" is taking us from the absolutes of the literal Word of God, it would not be surprising to find before long the Church and the New Age merging into ONE FORCE.

Note of Caution

Ever since the inception of the Church, Gnosticism has been the arch enemy. Now, in these last days, it is proving to be one of the most formidable threats to the Church, to the Christian faith and to the written Word of God.

Because a Christian ignorantly happens to hold to some Gnostic views does not necessarily mean he is a Gnostic or that he is not a Christian. However, it does mean he is in serious error and, in certain respects, alien to the simplicity of the Gospel of Jesus. Gnostic views conflict with the sound doctrines of the Bible and for that reason always influence a Christian against the written Word of God.

Chapter 8: The Exaltation of Man

According to the "Christian Gnostic", Scripture is basically concerned with the theology of man. To his way of thinking, man is the centre of attraction on Earth. He believes that God's supreme purpose on Earth is to glorify man by exalting "the Christ" in every man. Therefore, man is to be revered and hallowed. When Christ appears in man, this is supposedly the consummation and manifestation of God's glory. The conclusion drawn is that man is essentially divine, equal to Jesus Christ and is ascending to the very authority and dominion of God Himself.

When this thinking takes over, Scriptures which are normally considered to refer to the person of Jesus Christ are instead applied to the "Corporate Body of Christ", or Manifest Sons of God equal to Jesus Christ. The prophecies that speak of the glorious personal revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ from heaven now apply to the creature (man) taking dominion. The creature instead of the Creator receives honour, glory and worship. *Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen (Romans 1:25).*

The "Christian Gnostic" has no desire to see the glory of God in the PERSON of Jesus Christ as foretold by the prophets of old. Their prayer is to be exalted into an EXPERIENCE that will centre all of God's glory on them. While the true Church looks forward to the personal glorious appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ, the "Christian Gnostics" are preoccupied with their narcissistic (excessive love or admiration of oneself) theology. Their lives are a hive of activity as they join forces to restore the church and take dominion with a view to establish the ultimate divine glory of man.

"To man be the glory great things he hath done."

Knowing God

The "Gnostic" teaches that knowing God and His Presence is experienced in a mystic or intuitive sense rather than through faith in the person Jesus Christ according to the Holy Scriptures. The Gnostic builds his faith on subjective experiences, whereas the true Christian builds his faith on the written Word of God, the only God-given premise of the true faith.

As in the eastern religions, the perception of God is sought subjectively rather than in God Himself and the written Word. There is a desire to know God through feelings, mystic thoughts, voices, visions and dreams. A "sense" of the "presence of God" is believed on as long as spiritual experiences last. When these experiences subside or cease, spiritual fervour wears down to rise again when a spurt of vain and endless fantasy starts a new "spiritual" cycle. Gnostic prophets are known to have a form of godliness based on a spiritual roller coaster experience. Their philosophy of known God depends on touching God experientially. Faith is produced subjectively through experiences and then turned inward on self until a feeling of "knowing God" or "possessing God" comes about. The Word of God and the commandments are not believed on as the final voice of God, or as the only source by which He is known. One of the characteristics of a false prophet, albeit sometimes hard to detect, is the lack of love toward the commandments of God. (1 John 4:6; John 3:23, 24; John 14:15). Warning: If a prophet tries to draw one to God either by mystic or subjective experiences without reference to the Scriptures as the only authentic way of knowing God, he is false and must be avoided! To impress the ignorant or naive Christians that they (the Gnostic prophets) have profound knowledge and a deep spirituality, it is not uncommon to see them manifest certain quirks thought to be spiritual traits.

By the spiritualising of the Scriptures they eloquently express fantastic ideas to reveal how deep they "feel" and "think" about God. It is appropriate to say that spiritual experiences are not necessarily wrong. However, if they conflict with the Holy Scriptures, draw a believer away from the Word of God or substitute the Word of God, as do the Gnostic experiences, they are devilish.

"Gnostic" prophets subtly send out a message that their insight of God exceeds that of the written Word of God. They appear as if they know something about God that others need to search for through them. It is as if they have the keys which unlock the secrets of divine life.

Christians are told to look inward to find God. The danger in this pagan belief makes Christians open to input from the supernatural realm beyond God's written Word. Claiming to know God in any way other than through the Gospel of Jesus Christ is religious

speculation. History proves it leads to doctrines of devils. God in His wisdom gave man the Bible. Through this precious Book he can come to know God without man's religious wisdom. Anything short of the Scriptures stops short of the redemptive knowledge of God. All the sought-after experiences to know God on a deeper level lead to both carnal and demonic activities.

How do you know God? The answer is so simple. You know Him through His Written Word! The Holy Spirit leads and teaches in no other way!

A Deep Relationship

The Gnostic teaches: Through a Gnostic "new-birth" a man becomes a Son of God, i.e., a god, and as such has an experiential relationship with God and access to deeper knowledge of God. That the "Gnostic new birth" is the start of a divine journey into the deep, is how they describe it. It by-passes the Cross of the Lord Jesus Christ and The Word.

The Gnostic believes that he is the Son of God, filled with the Spirit and therefore has a God-given right to the knowledge of God stored in himself. By simply turning his thoughts inward to the spirit, he receives revelation knowledge. When he meditates, he empties his mind with little or no reference to the Scriptures. In meditation he is always expecting a mystic revelation or a personal experience. To his mind, the reality of the new birth, as well as real spiritual depth, lies in a subjective experience. Without a passive or emotional experience, he has a real problem receiving the knowledge of the Scriptures. He cannot rest with the written revelation of the Bible. He prefers a deeper and better revelation that comes through inward thoughts of the spirit.

Chapter 9: False Prophets

The ministry of a "Gnostic prophet" is always characterised by mystic experiences said to be of God, with the focus on self. It is difficult for him to exercise a ministry within the confines of Scriptural revelations. The Gnostic Revelator has a freedom to minister whatever he likes, whether or not it is Scriptural. As we hear their words we shake our heads in bewilderment and disbelief wondering how it is possible to get away with such statements as

. . . we had the odour of incense fill a meeting for about fifteen minutes. It was so intense that you couldn't help but smell it. I mean, it was not one of those instances where you 'think you get a whiff,' but He gave it as a witness that He was receiving

the intercession from these people - the prayers and their intercession. He had said He would come with a sign: that we would smell the incense. It came so powerfully faith was hardly needed. [Fullness, The Unfolding of a Prophet, Rick Joyner, p.13]

God can fill a place with sweet smelling incense. Nothing is impossible with God. However, the presumption to say that faith was hardly needed shows that these "new" dimensions are indeed in "another realm". A realm of deception. The Bible says, *Without faith it is IMPOSSIBLE to please God*. Nevertheless, this prophet and others like him are applauded and their messages carried in leading Christian periodicals.

Quite a number of Gnostic ministers are masquerading as true prophets of God and assuming to have a special anointing and relationship with the Spirit. Their ministries are widely recognised, respected and feared. Personal prophecies and prediction of future events are given with some measure of accuracy. They get people to believe they have great power with God and that in them dwells a quality that makes them "god-like". Control of minds and lives is gained by their feigning spirituality and assuming a "god-like" authority. To gain power, twisting Scriptures and abusing authority is of no consequence. One cruel method used is to instill fear in the hearts of those who dare to criticise or question their ministries by making harsh judgments against them. Sometimes those judgments even contain a death threat! They definitely are not prophets of the Word, nor can they be, because they put no confidence in the Written Word and its judgments.

The New Breed of arrogant apostles and prophets are known to usurp and abuse judgment over God's people. They are reported to make the Church pass under what they call the "Shepherd's Rod" of judgment. It is another divisive technique to control God's people. They say the "Shepherd Rod" is the judgment seat of Christ on the Earth by which the so-called prophets judge the Church. The idea is borrowed from Old Testament Scripture where reference is made to "The Shepherd's Rod" and "Judgments". However, the way the test is applied to the church is false. It cries out against the true interpretation of God's precious Word. This is one of the bizarre directions that Gnosticism is taking the church. The following unedited quote from one of the so-called "fallen" national prophets speaks for itself:

So when he [the prophet] went under that Shepherd Rod, we saw more people leave here than we saw anointed. They were rejected from leadership 'cause they had flaws in them. See that which is going to be holy unto the Lord must not have any flaw in it . . . It's all in Scripture. When you go under it He just turns you upside down and He looks every place on your body. And if you be found all right, He marks you to be sacrificed as a living, holy sacrifice unto Him. One out of ten is marked totally unto the Lord. That's a Shepherd Rod . . . He evaluates everyone that knows the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour . . . when I went under at this time He said, 'There's a couple of things that's still wrong in you. There's going to be a seven month delay in your anointing.' [The Shepherd's Rod, Bob Jones tape from Grace Ministries, October 1989]

The Bible warned against false prophets

There were FALSE PROPHETS also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers AMONG YOU. (2 Peter 2:1).

Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to SEDUCING SPIRITS, and DOCTRINES OF DEVILS (1 Timothy 4:1).

For I know this, that after my departing shall GRIEVOUS WOLVES enter in among you, not sparing the flock. (Acts 20:29).

Many false prophets

Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord HAVE WE NOT PROPHESED IN THY NAME? and in thy name cast out devils and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me (Matthew 7:22,23)

We must challenge the false prophets

(Ezekiel 13)

Son of man, PROPHECY AGAINST THE PROPHETS . . . that prophesy out of their own hearts, Hear ye the word of the Lord. (v.3)

Woe unto the foolish prophets that follow their own spirit and have seen nothing . . . Mine hand shall be upon the prophets that see vanity, and that divine lies; they shall not be in the assembly of my people . . . (v.9)

Set thy face against the daughters of thy people, which prophesy out of their own heart; and prophesy thou against them . . . (v.17)

Therefore ye shall see no more vanity, nor divine divinations; for I will deliver my people out of your hand; and ye shall know that I am the Lord. (v.23)

Jeremiah 23

Jeremiah speaks for the Lord:

In the latter days ye shall consider it perfectly. I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran; I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied . . . (vv 20,21)

I have heard what the prophets said, that prophesy lies in my name, saying, I have dreamed, I have dreamed . . . (v.25)

Behold, I am against them the prophets, saith the Lord, that use their tongues, and say, HE SAITH. Behold I am against them that prophesy false dreams, saith the Lord, and DO TELL THEM . . . 'YE HAVE PERVERTED THE WORDS OF THE LIVING GOD.' (vv 31,32,36)

The inspiration and test of a prophet

A false prophet usually draws his inspiration from intuition, imagination and psychic thoughts. Sometimes the inspiration comes from Apocryphal or Gnostic writings. Unlike the musicians, artists and writers who take inspiration from natural innate qualities (not to be confused with the inspiration of God), the false prophet derives inspiration from demonic sources or a corrupt nature. It is a gross error to attribute God's inspiration to a subjective experience (be it passive or emotional) or to writings outside of Holy Scripture. Divine authority or inspiration does not emanate from (a) the natural or unnatural, (b) the higher self or lower self, (c) the conscious or unconscious. It comes from the infallible Word of God. "The Word" remains God's eternal inspiration. God-given inspiration must have as its source the Word of God. The inspiration of the Holy Spirit comes through the Holy Scriptures - "The Sword of the Spirit". The true message and inspiration of a prophet of God is always undergirded with, "Thus saith the Lord", for "it is written".

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: (2 Tim. 3:16).

Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. (2 Peter 1:20,21)

Some of the so-called "prophets" promoted by national Christian magazines and the broadcasting media are being acclaimed Prophets of God. They cite their extraordinary gifts to foretell events, reveal situations, perform signs and wonders and blameless lives as proof of their God-ordained prophetic ministries. Because these prophets claim to have heard angels singing, smell the odour of incense fill a meeting and see the wind of the Spirit blow so that they could see people's hair blowing, many have taken it to mean God has approved their ministries with signs and wonders, and that God is speaking a message and trying to say something to the church. Another practice seen by many church leaders as a sign of a "true" modern prophet is his ability to allegorise current events and thereby determine what God is specifically saying to the church today. This new trend is both demonic and a delusion to seduce people away from God and His Word.

The prophets' wave of signs and wonders

There will also be some new wonders coming to the church. We had some of these just recently, where Bob Jones and I [Rick Joyner] heard angels singing twice in a meeting. This didn't even take any faith, it was so loud and so clear; it was like the choir singing.

Another time we had the odour of incense fill a meeting for about fifteen minutes. It was so intense that you couldn't help but smell it. It mean, it was not one of those instances where you 'think you get a whiff', but He gave it as a witness that He was receiving the intercession from these people - the prayers and their intercession. He had said He would come with a sign; that we would smell the incense. It came so powerfully faith was hardly needed.

And we saw the wind of the Spirit blow so hard at a meeting you could see people's hair blowing!

So He is coming a whole lot more dramatically. As one brother said, 'This hardly takes any faith, it is so obvious.' But when He comes in ways like that, it is always to give a message. He is not just trying to tickle our curiosity or our interest in supernatural things, He is trying to say something to us.

For example, the sign of being slain in the Spirit is to get us to totally rest in Him. And the miracle of leg lengthenings that went through the body for so many years defined our imbalanced stand upon the two legs of grace and truth. There needed to be a readjustment in the body. [Fullness, Jan-Feb 1990, The Unfolding of a Prophet, Rick Joyner, page 13]

From the above quotes two messages come clear and loud: (a) The Church hardly needs the Holy Scriptures to perfect a man of God and thoroughly furnish him unto good works, (b) Christians hardly need faith in this new day and age.

The position taken by the prophets as well as by their followers is that a prophet must not be judged by what he says, but rather by his fruit. In other words, what a prophet says doesn't really matter. This position is both incomprehensible and satanic to say the least. What if the prophet denies that Jesus is come in the flesh (His incarnation at birth)? What if he does not speak according to God's written Word? Does that qualify him as a false prophet or a true prophet? God's answer is clearly written, "He is Anti-Christ!" Notwithstanding the ostensibly godly life of a prophet, or the signs and wonders wrought by him, the Word of God sternly warns that when the hearts of people are influenced away from God and His written Word to the voice of another god, he is a false prophet in the sight of God.

By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous. (1 John 5:2 & 3)

In Deuteronomy the situation is viewed in a very serious light.

If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, And the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which though hast not known, and let us serve them; Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the Lord your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. Ye shall walk after the Lord your God, and fear him, and keep his commandments, and obey his voice, and ye shall serve him, and cleave unto him. And that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams, shall be put to death; because he hath spoken to turn you away from the Lord your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed you out of the house of bondage, to thrust thee out of the way which the Lord thy God commanded thee to walk in. So shalt thou put the evil away from the midst of thee. (Deuteronomy 13:1-5).

The apostles of light

For such are FALSE APOSTLES, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness. (2 Corinthians 11:13)

Judge false prophets

Unto the church at Ephesus write: . . . how has tried them that SAY THEY ARE APOSTLES and are not, and has found them liars. (Revelation 2:2).

Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many FALSE PROPHETS are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of anti-christ whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world. Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. (1 John 4:1-3).

True apostolic and prophetic ministry

There are those in the church who have true apostolic and prophetic ministry. This has always been recognised, although seldom have they been credentialed as such. When a person claims to be a prophet:

- **If they ignore or are ignorant of Bible prophecy I am CONCERNED.**
- **IF THEY SAY BIBLE PROPHECY IS UNIMPORTANT and SUBSTITUTE their own revelations for guidance in the churches, I am SUSPICIOUS.**
- **If they REJECT prophetic concepts of the Bible (ridicule the rapture, millennium, etc.) then it would seem POSSIBLE that the individual is a FALSE PROPHET.**
[David Lewis, David Lewis Ministries, Springfield, MO]

False prophets have a subtle way of catching sincere ignorant Christians in the web of their religious thoughts about God. They use the same ploy Satan used on Eve in the garden of Eden - the BIG LIE, "Ye shall be as gods". The essence of their appeal, although ostensibly to glorify Christ, is always self-centred. The gist of their Gnostic-spirited ministries contains the following New Wave seed thoughts plaguing the church:

Some of the suggestions made to the believer by deceiving spirits at this time may be: (i) 'You are a special instrument for God', working to feed self-love; (ii) 'You are more advanced than others', working to blind the soul to sober knowledge of itself; (iii) 'You are different from others', working to make him think he needs special dealing by God; (iv) 'You must take a separate path', a suggestion made to feed the independent spirit; (v) 'You must give up your occupation, and live by faith', aiming at causing the believer to launch out on false guidance, which may result in the ruin of his home, and sometimes the work for God in which he is engaged. [War on the Saints, Jessie Penn-Lewis, The Christian Literature Crusade, 1977, p.73]

God help the church to expose these false prophets before innocent souls and good Christian assemblies of God's people are further caught in the web of deception of the beguiling foe.

Assurance of Salvation

With reference to man's redemption, the Gnostic maintains the Holy Scriptures are not God's total revelation. He contends that real redemption can only be fully known through an inner gnosis (self-knowledge) experienced in the self-consciousness of a man. The real knowledge that matters in redemption comes from within. Reason, faith, grace and God's blood covenant (free gift) is not sufficient to save without some form of an inner illumination. The experience is seen as a first installment to a great manifestation of the divine in self. This is basically their concept of salvation.

The inner revelation knowledge of redemption assures a "Christian Gnostic" of the following: A Christian (a) is a little god, (b) is a Manifest Son of God on a par with Christ, (c) is a member of the Melchizedek order, i.e. a priest after the order of Jesus Christ, and (d) is a member of the elite (Aryan) breed of people. In essence, the Christian Gnostic is saying, "God is in you, discover him and you will experience His Presence and know you are saved" and that you, too, are a little god. Basically, this Gnostic concept is rapidly possessing a great part of Christian thinking and preaching.

According to the contents of much preaching today, salvation is perceived in terms of a subjective experience. This is stressed to such an extent that a significant number of Christians have come to think that the real knowledge of salvation lies in a personal, spiritual experience, instead of in the sole authority of God's Written Word. For precisely this reason, many Christians are being subjected to Gnostic thought. Multitudes are leaving "sound doctrine" and "sound mind" for experiential knowledge of present day Gnosticism.

Chapter 10: Neo-Gnosticism

Truth is absolute! That is why Jesus could say, "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life." His words give understanding to the simple. Those who perish are those who do not have love for the truth. When the love for the truth is absent, . . . *God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie.* The delusion is interpreted in the text as "straying from orthodoxy".

The orthodox position on truth, or "sound doctrine" is being slowly undermined by a desire to build an earthly political kingdom, self-centred ministries and marketing the anointing. As a third generation Pentecostal, it is sad to see the inroads the New Age is making amongst our own ranks. Sadder still, Shepherds are too busy hooking up to the latest fad to realise that in the process they are selling the truth. Proverbs 23:23 tells us to *Buy the truth and sell it not . . . God's truth is to be valued above thousands in gold and silver. (Psalm 119.72)*

Today people are so "experience" oriented and so busy looking for a "new anointing" and "new thrills" that they are willing candidates for just about anything!

An evangelist from South Africa (Rodney Howard-Browne) is drawing huge crowds because of an unusual phenomenon. People roll on the floor and howl with hilarious laughter. Upon watching a videotape of several services, it was amazing to note how the laughter broke out, cackling and derisive, during the reading of the Word of God. The overtones of the comments of those laughing were sexual and very carnal (i.e. comparing their "experience" with that of those drinking alcohol in very graphic terms). Amid all the hilarity they were trying to find a Scriptural basis.

It is very interesting to note that New Age writers refer to laughter as being "healing", "therapeutic" and "a way to break down reserves".

Solomon (a king to whom God granted wisdom) also speaks of laughter in Ecclesiastes:

I said of laughter, It is mad: and of mirth, what doeth it? (2:2)

Sorrow is better than laughter; for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better . . . but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth. (7:3,4)

For as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the fool: this also is vanity! (7:6)

It was heart-rending to note pastors, leaders of the sheep, falling for this absolute deception! Listening to the bedlam was like hearing all the demons let loose from their abode.

There isn't time to worry about being labelled "critical", "judgmental", or "touching God's anointed." This is the blind leading the blind! First it was "falling out" that was the anointing. Everyone swoons and falls and believes that they have a "new anointing". Now it is taking leave of one's senses as they roll on the floor thinking the "anointing" is being drunk! What on earth is next? It will have to be a good one. Will it be levitating? Rodney Howard-Browne needs to be strongly rebuked and taught the Word of God!

What has put so many of the NEW ANOINTERS beyond the Word of God? In Acts 18:24-28 there was Jew names Apollos who was very fervent, an eloquent man and MIGHTY in Scriptures! He spoke very diligently the things of the Lord - but his DOCTRINE WAS NOT RIGHT! Obviously this was very important because when Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him aside and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly! Today Aquila and Priscilla would be called heresy hunters. Yes, they were! Praise God! They loved the Word of God! They were jealous with a Godly jealousy for truth! As a result Apollos left Ephesus and mightily convinced the Jews from the Scriptures! The truth is powerful! It convinces the soul of righteousness and true standing before God.

Gnostic Thought and Practices

When a high value is placed on personal experiences or revelations, Scriptures are then unscrupulously twisted and misquoted. We find those who believe the feelings of a congregation must be hyped up in order to "feel" the Presence of the Lord or else the church is thought to be "dead". Instead of music being used to worship and glorify God, it is used as a means of "connecting" or "feeling" the Presence of God. If the "location" (or a feeling within) of God is not aroused and sensed, the Spirit is said to be either absent or bound. To counter this passive situation, worship is intensified, the devil is "bound" and certain forms of excitement are encouraged until "God's Presence" is "felt". Many times music is used as the conduit for the "feeling". A popular slogan to advertise a certain music company is: "Feel the Presence of the Lord". The church has been taken down this primrose path for so long that they equate the Presence of God with a certain feeling that they obtain by doing certain things. The "goose bumps" or the "warm fuzzies" or tears of comfort, is their way of "knowing" that God is present. So what this thinking boils down to is simply: "To know God's Presence you must feel Him." In actuality this is pure Gnosticism.

If knowing God is contingent on feeling, then Gnosticism and pantheism have a place in Christian thinking.

Pantheism (from two Greek words meaning 'all is God') is that system of thought which identifies God with the universe. Trees and stones, birds and animals, land and water, reptiles and man - all are declared part of God, and God lives and expresses Himself through these substances and forces as the soul expresses itself through the body. [Knowing the Doctrines of the Bible by Myer Pearlman, Gospel Publishing House, Springfield, MO, pp. 53]

Gnosticism is linked with pantheism in that it supports and overlaps the idea of the soul (self) harmonizing with nature and the universe as the means of perceiving God. The common tie between Gnosticism and pantheism is that both purport to find "God" in creation. Gnosticism finds "God" within man - relating to the feelings and pantheism finds "God" in creation as a whole. The two blend in that both worship and serve the creature more than the Creator. The Gnostic god is localised in a subjective experience, a soulish feeling of being in union with creation and God. It rejects the relationship with the Creator based on faith in His written Word - regardless of feeling. A very tough pill for experience-driven Christians to swallow.

True Worship vs Gnostic Worship

Worship is an integral part of the Christian faith. Sometimes feelings of ecstasy are experienced. The Presence of God is rightly acknowledged by true worship. However, when emotional feelings become the doctrine of God's Presence, then God has been reduced to a "gnosis" form of Presence. For many, the doctrine of "knowing the Presence of God" is sought in a subjective experience. An emotional experience, especially a repetitive one during a worship service, if not kept in proper perspective or check, can lead to an altered state of consciousness in which the capacity for rational reasoning is greatly reduced. At this point the congregation is open to delusion and can be easily led astray. In many charismatic groups an altered state of mind is explained as "getting into the Spirit" or as a manifestation of the presence of God. Uncontrolled spiritual feelings transcend sound scriptural rationalism and give rise to the doctrine of "the Presence of God" built on an experience.

The Serious Gnostic Deception

A very serious practice which gives deceiving spirits the opportunity for deception, is the notion that God is localised in them (consciously) or around them (consciously). The desire on the part of some is to "feel" the presence of God through prayer, worship or otherwise as evidence of His presence. They are disappointed if they leave a service and don't think that they have "felt" God. They will run from church to church looking for this "feeling".

Sensing the presence of God is revered. We do "enjoy our religion". God has made us emotional creatures. However, when experience becomes the evidence of our relationship with God, it is then dangerous and could prove spiritually counterproductive. "The just shall live by faith" is still the only principal the righteous live by and relate to God.

Some believers so live inwardly in communion, worship and vision, that they become spiritually introverted, and cramped and narrowed in their outlook. As a result, their spiritual capacity and mental powers become dwarfed and powerless. Others become victims to the "inner voice". They go about declaring, "God told me this, God told me that". Many times very impractical decisions come as a result of that which is thought to be God speaking.

. . . Turning inwards to a subjective location of God as indwelling, speaking, communing and guiding, in a MATERIALISTIC OR CONSCIOUS SENSE, is open to gravest danger; for upon this thought and belief, sedulously cultivated by the powers of darkness, the most serious deceptions of deceiving spirits have taken place. [War on the Saints, by Jesse Penn-Lewis, The Christian Literature Crusade, 1977]

"New Age" thought with its strong emphasis on the supernatural, feelings and paganism is so preponderate in today's society that it is no wonder the present generation of Christians are becoming more and more Gnostic in thought.

The Gnostic Approach to the Bible

The Gnostic believes it is wrong to use only the Bible to interpret the Bible. Besides the Bible they believe there are additional inspired manuscripts and books on a par with the Bible and hearing the Voice of God apart from the Scriptures. A Rosicrucian writer neatly puts it:

In order to obtain a satisfactory comprehension of Bible teachings, it is essential to give careful consideration to its symbolic, allegorical and mystic elements. The student and interpreter must learn to consult the vast library of Legend, symbol and myth as faithfully and as accurately as he would resort to a Lexicon of Hebrew and Greek terms and radicals. These elements - symbolic, allegorical and mystic . . . are skillful devices for concealing yet half-revealing the deepest truth. [The Sons of God: A Foreshadowing of the Coming World of the Messenger of the New Age, R. Swinburne Clymer. The Philosophical Pub.Co., Quakerstown, PA, 1923]

Preaching today is filled with allegory. Symbolism has replaced substance and in the modern day "prophetic" movement it is revelation apart from the Scriptures. A pamphlet advertising a newsletter ("Streams of Shiloh", John Paul Jackson) gives some topics that will be discussed in the future such as:

The Prophet and the Gift. The manner in which revelation comes is of vital importance. The role that dreams, visions, trances, impressions, visitations, translations, and transportations play will be discussed.

Pick up any New Age magazine and what is it full of? Dreams, visions, trances, impressions, visitations, translations and transportations! Yet the "prophetic" enjoys cloaking their delusion (departure from orthodoxy) in such ethereal terms as: "Intimacy with Christ" and "renew the body of Christ."

It is no wonder that the Word warns us all, *the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears (2 Tim. 4:4).*

John Paul Jackson goes on to say:

Interpretive skills need to be developed in order to communicate what is meant by revelation. The meanings of colours, numbers, types and symbols, as well as personal symbols will be studied. Ways to enhance interpretive skills will be covered . . .

Heavy duty occult activity sanctioned and encouraged! Numerology, auras, symbology, astrology, out-of-body experiences, trances given prominence. At the expense of what? The Word of God! Rather than training believers in the fear and admonition of the Lord, develop "revelatory" skills. You might even end up thinking you are David Koresh.

There is a concentrated effort, especially in psychology, to bring about a blending of ancient wisdom and modern techniques. Shamanism is being reintroduced in an unprecedented manner to the modern society. One of the ancient practices is Huna (a Hawaiian esoteric philosophy.) This philosophy teaches that we are to be able to

develop intuition, work with our dreams, make shamanic journeys and vision quests, raise our personal energy profile . . . dialogue with the spirits of nature for two-way teaching and healing, and work with visible and invisible energy patterns to influence the past, present and future. Journeying through other dimensions, we gather information, explore the unknown and the mysterious, and release our powerful creativity. [Omega, Summer 1993, p.76]

We cannot separate Christ from His Word. He is the Word *and the word became flesh and dwelt among us.* We can not know Christ apart from His Word. John 5:39, *Search the Scripture; for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me.*

There will never be any revelation apart from the word of God. Revelatory gifts apart from Scripture take the soul into fables, myths and Gnosticism.

For the Scriptures to be properly understood, the Gnostic holds that they need to be interpreted symbolically, spiritually or allegorically. The literal interpretation is thought to be presumptuous and unspiritual. Most of the theological controversy

dividing the church stems from the rejection of the literal interpretation of the Bible. In the 2nd and 3rd century the church came to prefer the allegorical interpretation to the literal. It was this change that opened the church to Gnosticism. No wonder Gnosticism is so deeply entrenched in Christian theology. As long as the allegorical method of interpretation is used, Gnosticism will continue to have influence on Christian thinking.

It is quite common to find Christians interpreting the Bible allegorically. In fact, most of the preaching behind the pulpit today is allegorical. The literal method is steadily being phased out in preference for the spiritualising/allegorical method. Generally, Christians are so accustomed to subjecting their ears to allegorical preaching they automatically make good candidates for Gnosticism. It comes as no surprise why this new wave of Gnosticism is flooding the church and why the Gnostic prophets have a hold on the Christians.

A Note of Warning to the Churches

The church that strays from the literal method of interpretation and fails to use Scripture to interpret Scripture is in danger of being absorbed into Gnosticism or mysticism. The church that slides into the Gnostic school of thought will inadvertently depart from the authority of Scripture and become a law unto itself. Most of the new and weird teachings can be traced to the allegorical method of interpretation. The only way for the fundamental and evangelical churches to guard against this Gnostic method is to stand firm on the literal method of interpretation, i.e., on the literal meaning of all Scripture.

The Internal Deity/Authority

The Gnostic believes that the real spiritual birth comes from a consciousness of the divine spirit dwelling in every man. Through this experience the presence of the "Spirit" is perceived, the "knowledge" of God is learned and spiritual maturity is reached. Their reference point is not the Scriptures although sometimes they misapply Scripture in their support. Their reference is an internalised experience, based on the idea that "God" dwells in every man and knowing this is the start of spiritual life and maturity to godhood. On the authority of this concept they build their spiritual lives. It is from this viewpoint they emphasise "holiness", "intimacy with God", etc.

This form of Gnosticism is often detected in teachings and preaching. With the modern emphasis on the Holy Spirit, Christians are conditioned into thinking, sometimes unwittingly, that the Scriptures are insufficient to be a total effective authority. Therefore, they feel the Scriptures should be supplemented and substituted by some internal authority such as feeling, experience, conscience, intuition, inner voice, etc. The ever increasing problem with this form of authority is that it is being rated above the Scriptures in the name of the Holy Spirit.

Christians are encouraged to give greater heed to their self-conscious internal authority over their faith in the voice of the Word.

When a Voice, be it conscience, intuition or a subjective impression replaces the authority of the Scriptures and takes precedence over "God's Word", then it is cultic. Cults have always sought divine authority in man, while Christians seek divine authority in God's Word. The cults, like many modern Christians, place the inner voice above all else. They teach that the real guiding Voice or Light comes from within. The emphasis and substance of their religion hinges on an inner voice or experience which they claim is the light of God. For example, consider the following statement by R. Swinburne Clymer, a Rosicrucian:

This light, to a lesser or greater degree, is in all men. It is that which the Philosophers and Initiates of all ages have called the Divine Spark, the voice of conscience, which, to the degree of its growth and development, speaks unto all men. He who possesses but a little of this light and wisely uses it, shall perceive (develop) a greater light and this process shall continue until he has all light necessary for his Immortalisation . . . The voice of conscience speaks to all men more or less clearly unless it has been totally destroyed through continued acts of evil. It is essential that man should listen for and heed this voice which is his light. If he does this, then gradually the light that leads the way - the Voice - will become strong and ultimately always will be with him . . . This is the light that is in man and is the Voice that must be obeyed . . . The light, which is the LIFE, leads to the CHRISTOS. He who follows the light assuredly follows the CHRIST, the MANISIS, and with each good deed, kindly act, loving thought and compassionate service, the CHRIST child in the manger (the body) grows stronger, until at last manhood is attained and man has become (glorified) the Son of God. [The Sons of God by R. Swinburne Clymer, The Philosophical Publishing Company, Quakerstown, Pennsylvania. (Emphasis theirs)]

Any authority apart from Scripture will lead to apostasy. When the voice of Scripture is quenched in favour of a personal internal authority, disaster follows. History readily proves this:

During the Middle Ages, the Church of Rome concentrated in itself through its episcopacy all the authority of tradition, bishops, councils and anything else that held sway over the mind of the church. This movement culminated in the degree of Papal Infallibility of 1870, which holds that 'the Roman Pontiff, when he speaks ex cathedra, has that infallibility with which the Divine Redeemer endowed his church, in defining a doctrine of faith or morals'. [Unger's Bible Handbook by Merrill F. Unger, Moody Press, Chicago, p.6]

As a result of a Gnostic emphasis on the internal authority of man as a substitute for the authority of the Scriptures, the church has and is being inundated with popes - "apostles and prophets" - exercising ministries centred on self, each being a law unto himself. The Gnostic "popes" interpret their internal authority to represent the presence of the Holy Spirit and divine inspiration. Here is where error, such as the New Age and satanism starts. Unfortunately many well meaning Christians at the expense of God's written Word have faith in an internal authority. Unknowingly they are grieving the Holy Spirit and could experience a strong delusion from Satan. Nationally acclaimed so-called prophets and apostles, are

notorious for their claims to having internal authority and knowledge on a par with Scripture.

One of the prophets gave a word to a pastor and his wife regarding their personal affairs. As a result they resigned their pastorate and heeded the word of the prophet to move to another city. When questioned, "How did you know it was God's direction?" The answer came back, "Oh, I felt it, I just knew it was God. The prophet told me things no one could ever know." The questioner persisted, "But how did you know it was God? What was your reference point?" The conversation couldn't get beyond the point of internal feelings. Shortly afterwards it was learned by the questioner that the prophet involved exercised an unscriptural ministry, sometimes prophesying the most bizarre thoughts and concepts to be imagined. His outrageous prophecies have been well documented. However, the point being made here is that the couple followed their own intuitive or internal dictates without regard whether or not the situation they were getting themselves into lined up with the Scriptures. Had they only turned to the authority of the Word, they would have found the prophet as well as the church in which he ministers in gross error. Unfortunately, they preferred to stay with their internal thoughts and feelings instead of with the authority of the Word.

The Hidden Voice

In the following quote, a typical "Christian Gnostic" position can be detected.

We felt all unworthy and overwhelmed by the wonder of it, (the wonder being they could hear directly from God without Scripture) and could hardly realise that 'we' were being taught, trained and encouraged day by day by Him Personally, when millions of souls, far worthier, had to be content with guidance from the Bible, sermons, their churches, books and other source. [God Calling by Two Listeners]

In essence, the above quote is a Gnostic testimony because the source of their knowledge is attributed to a personal subjective experience believed to be the voice of God. Their experience sets them apart as spiritual elitists. There is enough leaven in this short quote to trigger off a whole new doctrine in favour of Gnosticism.

According to the new Gnostic emphasis, spiritual maturity comes from being attuned to the inner voice of the Holy Spirit. Unless the Spirit is subjectively heard in one form or another on an ongoing basis, mature spirituality has not been reached. In other words, spiritual maturity comes from hearing God beyond the sacred page (Scripture).

Christians that insist on the Holy Scriptures as their only most trusted source of spiritual knowledge are considered to be into idolatry and bondage. Because Christians faithfully reverence the Holy Scriptures as the VOICE of GOD, they are accused of worshipping a book and of over-reverencing the Bible. The following quotes are typical examples:

Most of the people in this faction have gotten themselves in bondage to the written Word of God and seem to be bent on dragging everyone else into prison with them. They have let their respect for the scriptures run overboard and plunge into idolatry. [Restoration, James Robison, James Robison Evangelistic Association, Fort Worth, TX]

We see it today in people's reverence of the Bible. I remember the day I stood in the pulpit and played the role of the iconoclast. I was decrying 'bibliolatry' - worship of the Bible. I wanted to call people to the God of the Bible for many had made the Bible a god . . . So I took an old Bible and began ripping the pages out of it, throwing it to the floor to demonstrate it was only a book - not a sacred idol. Some of the people were shocked, offended and infuriated. I had pulled down their idol. [Jamie Buckingham Ministries Today, Buckingham Report, Jan/Feb 1989, p.19]

Any Christian in his right mind will not worship a book, binding, pages or ink. But he certainly will utterly reverence God's inspired Holy Scriptures. It is impossible to over-reverence the written Word just as it is impossible to over-reverence God to the point of making Him an idol - absurd! Even God shows utter reverence for His Word when He says, . . . *for thou has magnified thy Word above all thy name (Psalm 138:2)*

The Peril of the Gnostic Voice

The "Christian Gnostic" religion is a mystical form of godliness experienced intuitively and all too often is construed to represent the Presence or Voice of the Holy Spirit. The peril of this concept relegates the inspiration of the Scriptures to a subordinate position to personal "inspiration" or to "private interpretation" of Scripture.

It is quite commonplace to read or hear messages sometimes by popular preachers saying, "Hear from God". This emphasis is ostensibly to improve a Christian's quality of life. The problem with this well-sounding phrase is that it invariably disregards the written Word of God and gives self preference over the Word of God. Christians hooked on "hear from God" without regard to Holy Scripture are not only open to serious error, but also disposed to strong delusions. This could lead to a self-centred "cult like" religion at the expense of God's precious written Word.

If a man truly hears from God, he will reverence and honour the written Word of God more than ever and over everything else. Many Christians are into a form of Gnosticism dangerous to themselves and to others. They have a real problem distinguishing the voice of God from their own thoughts, feelings and imagination. The reason is they don't align their minds with the written Word of God. Many have never learned to understand their experiences in the light of Holy Scriptures. How can anyone know God's voice or will apart from Scripture and how can anyone know the truth of God if he allegorises the Scripture or takes a text out of context in support of his own ideas, thoughts and wishes? Any other

way of assuming to know God's voice apart from Scripture is perilous. However God chooses to minister to His children will always confirm and accord with Holy Scripture.

The Gnostic school of thought subtly divides the ministry of the Holy Spirit from the Holy Scriptures. This position demises the Scriptures and pits the church against God's final voice of authority. The switch of emphasis to the Holy Spirit at the expense of the Scriptures is seen by some as a NEW THING God is doing in the believer and the world. This is a strong delusion.

The Still Small Voice

Because God at one point in time chose to speak to Elijah the prophet through a still small voice, and at another time to Balaam the prophet through an ass, it no way obliges God to repeat the performance in our day and age. It would be wrong on the part of a Christian to turn inward to self in the hope of hearing a still small voice, just as it would be to go to an ass out in the country in the hope of hearing God speak.

The "still small voice" concept is such an obsession in certain segments of the church it is no surprise that bizarre messages and presumptuous judgments and decisions are made in the name of the Lord. The concept has sown more confusion in the church than any other presumption. If only Christians would learn to line up their thoughts and intuitions with Scriptures, we would have more of the Spirit and less of the flesh.

God's Sovereign Voice to the Church

God in His sovereignty gave man the Holy Scriptures. All we need to know about God, redemption, holiness, eternal life and ourselves is recorded in the written Word of God. The Holy Spirit provided the Scriptures so that by the preaching of the Gospel of Christ the world might come to know the Lord Jesus Christ. By the preaching of the Gospel of Christ according to the written Word, the Holy Spirit speaks to sinners and saints alike. Holy Scriptures remain the final Voice of God - whether the world believes it or not. The Holy Spirit uses the written Word of God to save, sustain and mature the believer. Any other source used to determine spiritual growth other than the Scriptures is false. It is wrong for a man to presume he knows the mind of God if it is not according to the Scriptures. To do so is to be grossly presumptuous. God is Sovereign. He will speak whenever He chooses and in whatever manner He wills. But, if and when He speaks, it will be a Sovereign Act. God's sovereignty is not negotiable. It cannot be monopolised or manipulated by our wishes, thoughts, prayers, cries, meditations or even by our communion with Him. It is impossible for man to control God's sovereignty. When God speaks or acts, He never contradicts His written Word.

Christianity vs Gnosticism

The Christian does not look inward for his redemption. He looks UPWARD to God who is seated in heaven far above principalities and powers. His redemption was bought and brought nigh by the blood of Jesus Christ. The Christian's approach to God is by faith in Christ's complete work of redemption at the cross. Redemption is not an experience, it is God's salvation bought by the precious blood of the Lamb - and is a free gift.

Christians know they are saved, not by any experience they might have had along the way but because they believe on the Lord Jesus Christ according to the Scriptures. Even their faith from the heart is the witness of the Holy Spirit and their redemption. Sometimes Christians have great spiritual experiences, but refuse to glory in the flesh. Their glory is only in the Lord.

The only premise the Christian builds his life on is not by "self-consciousness", but by the written Word of God. The only God the Christian knows and desires to know is the God of the HOLY WRITTEN WORD. The god of the imagination and the god of self was resoundly crushed and defeated at Calvary some two thousand years ago.

The Christian's affections and thoughts are not turned inward, but rather upward toward heaven from whence they expect the personal and glorious appearing of the Lord of Lords and the King of Kings. For at the sound of the trumpet and the voice of the archangel, the saints in Christ, both the living and the dead, shall put on immortality, incorruption and see Jesus Christ face to face and be like Him. Amen!