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THE RIVER IS MUDDY

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The *REFORMATION* was spawned by a simple thesis nailed to a church door in Wittenberg, Germany. This act changed the course of history. The authority structure of the Church was drastically undermined. Luther's bold attack challenged the formal role of the priesthood. The exclusivity they had enjoyed gave way to the priesthood of the believers. Instead of the Pope being supreme, allegiance was given instead to the Word of God. As the Word was preached and people began to read the Scriptures for themselves, they understood that neither good works nor the Church could bestow God's unmerited favor. This favor came to fallen man by FAITH ALONE in the merits of Christ's death on the Cross.

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; [it is] the gift of God. Eph.2:8.

And the verse that transformed Martin Luther:

The just shall live by faith! (Rom. 1:17, Gal. 3: 11)

The Reformation radically redirected the church and thus brought about a social transformation that impacted the world.

The Second Reformation: There are a number of "teachers" in Charismatic circles who believe that Martin Luther brought great harm to the church by leaving Catholicism. Some declare that we are even now experiencing a "Second Reformation". There are those that believe the Second Reformation is "self-esteem", and others say it is the arrival of the newly "anointed" apostles and prophets or "*post-denominationalism*" (Restoration). Still others believe it is through Re-uniting with Roman Catholicism.

It is something far greater in scope and dimension. The "visionaries" for our times are world-changers with a carefully laid diabolical plot. Matthew Fox, a New Age ex-Catholic priest, has longed for many years to see a "religious renewal" and "awakening" in our times. He was quite happy when a lady approached him after a service and said that he was the Martin Luther of today. For him, "religious renewal" is of the "deep and mystical kind". He says that:

*the twentieth century, beginning with the ecumenical movement. In the early part of this century; has been striving to make religion whole again. We live today in a time of post - denominational religion ". **The Coming of the Cosmic Christ, The Healing of Mother Earth and the Birth of a Global Renaissance**, Matthew Fox, Harper & Row, Publishers, San Francisco.*

Once again, society is on the verge of a social transformation and the catalyst for change is the church. What common denominator could unify so many factions other than "global spirituality"? If the vision for worldwide celebration of Jesus' 2000th birthday is to succeed, then there must be a unifying force in place at the dawn of the New Millennium.

The Plan to set up a global religion with its' Messiah was in the making and detailed by Alice Bailey in her New Age writings early in this century. The Plan was in motion and well on course by the early 1980's. However, two books came out that threw the spotlight on the works of darkness. First, *HIDDEN DANGERS OF THE RAINBOW* by Constance Cumbey followed later by *SEDUCTION OF CHRISTIANITY* by Dave Hunt and T. A. McMahon. Facts that were exposed in these books were not understood or accepted by many. As a result these authors were maligned unmercifully, instead of being presented with reasonable arguments.

A true disciple of Christ would check out what had been written, like a Berean. Many ministers refused to read the books and some even held public book burnings! Incredible you may say. Not really. Keep in mind, there was and is A Plan.

It is very important at this juncture to remember that God always meets the individual when he calls upon the Name of the Lord in true repentance. God is faithful to His Word. If you trust in Him, He will never disappoint you. The subject I am now addressing has nothing to do with the individual's walk and testimony before God. Rather, it is an overview of the "Charismata" and the direction the Church is being led corporately.

. . . the Charismatic movement is probably the single most political movement in America today. . . is a barometer of deep changes in the American psyche that are threatening to topple the existing order. THE EMERGING ORDER, Rifting, Jeremy, G. P. Putnam's Sons. 1979.

The River Starts to Flow: Shortly after the publication of *THE SEDUCTION OF CHRISTIANITY*, there was a scramble amongst the Charismatics to unite. Much was written about all streams coming together to form a mighty river. Pacts were made not to "criticize" one another. For that reason, no matter how bizarre some teaching may become, one will never hear it questioned. In fact, if one questions any teaching, that person is immediately pegged as "having a wrong spirit". Truth will always stand any test.

In the light of all that has transpired, doctrine has become evil. Doctrine divides and the worse sin today is the SIN OF DIVISION. Strange that Jesus said:

Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay: but rather division. Luke 12:51. (Emphasis added)

That scripture precedes verse 56 which gives a strong warning:

Ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky and of the earth; but how is it that ye do not discern this time?

Many are not discerning the times as they have forsaken sound doctrine in favor of experiences that give them a spiritual "high" in which they believe they are having an "intimate" relationship with Jesus.

. . . Charismatics do not put as much stress on the abstract doctrines of the Bible. While they accept the Bible as the authoritative Word of God, they believe that the revealed word, as communicated to the apostles and Biblical writers, is also potentially available throughout history. . . many of the younger evangelicals share the Charismatics' belief that God speaks just as authoritatively through the Holy Spirit as the written word of the scriptures. This new emphasis on ongoing Divine revelation and outward observable manifestations of the presence of the Holy Spirit has brought together Christians who otherwise might never have come together. . . .

The Charismatics emphasis on continual revelation (the kind that is potentially available to every person) makes Christian faith much more vibrant, immediate and real for its adherents. Instead of relying solely on the revealed Word of God as written down nearly 2000 years ago for a people of an ancient culture, the Charismatics can feel that their lives and their history are just as important to God today. (Ibid)

Amazing that New Ager Jeremy Rifkin could perceive in the late 70's the Charismatic movement deviating from the Word of God in favor of ongoing revelation. This ongoing revelation has brought about a new paradigm that is now affecting Evangelicals and Charismatics alike as they have been flowing together for over the past 20 years.

The River Begins to Cloud: A river forms from many divergent streams, all joining together at various different points. No matter how many of these streams are pure, the influence of muddied streams will cloud the river.

The present "river" came out of the Charismatic movement also. Rodney Howard Browne's laughing experiences were "anointed" by Kenneth Copeland and Benny Hinn. With these "streams" giving Rodney their blessing and credibility, it wasn't long and he was "imparting" the laughing phenomenon throughout the country, and the world.

Toronto Airport Church became involved in this phenomenon through a Vineyard pastor from St. Louis (Randy Clark). He attended a Rodney Howard-Browne meeting and took the "blessing" to Toronto. What is now spreading through the churches is a direct result from Toronto - no matter how hard that connection is denied by some, it is acknowledged emphatically by others. According to the CHARISMA, November, 1996:

The renewal movement continues to spread with more than a little help from cyberspace. With the growing popularity of the Internet, the hub of renewal news has shifted from Canada to the global information superhighway.

There is an Internet forum that spreads renewal news. This forum processes 60,000 messages daily!

Add to that the hundreds of renewal sites on the World Wide Web, and the opportunity for growth increases dramatically. The New Wine site alone lists two dozen links to other renewal web sites, and even more links to home pages of churches associated with the renewal. (Ibid).

CHARISMA magazine, Sept. 1996 further demonstrates this by announcing that they are holding their first conference for everyone in the family during the Thanksgiving week-end. The theme would be "Flowing Together Through the Spirit." Speakers include the leaders from the Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship and Brownsville Assembly in Pensacola, Florida.

The dynamic is in place for the transference of a powerful force that many are claiming is the "Power of God".

Speaking of the "River of Renewal":

Many have likened this move of God to the life-giving river described in Ezekiel 47, which trickles from the threshold of the temple, then expands and deepens as it cuts a swath through the barren desert toward the Dead Sea. (Ibid)

The river spoken of in Ezekiel 47, Zechariah 14 and Revelation 22 is not to be viewed as a symbolic river. This river is an actual river proceeding *out* of the throne of God and of the Lamb. This is in the New Jerusalem during the Day of the Lord. This can not be the River that the renewal folk are talking about. Jesus said:

If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.

He that believeth on me, as the scriptures hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. John 7:37, 38.

If there is any renewal today, it will come from the same source from whence it has come for 2000 years, The Fountainhead. Come to me and drink. He has and always will satisfy the thirsting soul. Does not the book of Isaiah call:

Ho, everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money,. come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Is. 55:1

The gospel remains unchanged. Jesus will meet those who come to Him. He is a God who always honors His immutable Word. When people testify that they have fresh fire in their lives and ministries, we rejoice with them. When they declare that they are more hungry for His Word, for prayer, and for reaching the lost - how our hearts are warmed. When holiness is portrayed in the congregants' walk and testimony - what a light to the dark world!

There are real problems when certain techniques must be used in order to "connect" to a "river" that is flowing through at a "new level" today. Throughout many churches Vineyard music is being used to bring people to a place where they "experience" God. Testimony upon testimony is used to authenticate the veracity of the "move". The ministry of the Word is minimized. Emphasis continues to be placed on impartation, soaking prayer and carpet time. (See Discernment Newsletter, Vol. 6, No.6 and Vol. 7, No.1 for a detailed discussion of these terms)

It is very important to have strong and Godly leadership who exercise discernment. Scripture guidelines must never be forgotten.

The Muddy Stream of Gnosticism:

The following article on the Laughing Revival made this observation about the current revival of gnosticism:

*Toward the end of the apostolic era and the beginning of the second century, a heresy developed in Christianity called Gnosticism. Its title came from the Greek word **gnosis** [knowledge]. The Gnostics claimed extra biblical revelation and were inordinately fascinated with the unseen world and hierarchies of angels. You were not spiritual unless you bought into their so-called secret knowledge, their mapping of the world of principalities and powers. Paul warned against those who foisted onto the body of Christ such secret knowledge which had no basis in apostolic doctrine. (Colossians 2: 18, 19)*

We must be on guard regarding the reemergence of a new Gnosticism in the church today which leads people beyond the sure foundation of Scripture into the orbit of persuasive personalities who promote and sell their own ideas and experiences. They do not obey the apostolic injunction to 'preach the Word' (2 Timothy 4:2), preferring instead to pawn off on the body of Christ - for an offering or for notoriety - their new, heretofore secret spiritual elixir.

Further, we must be on guard lest this Gnostic emphasis, a twin to new age Eastern mysticism, subtly invades Christian worship. Such an emphasis seeks to bring the seeker into an altered state of consciousness wherein rationality is suspended, and the worshiper floats inert in the divine om, the yoga state of mental void. ENRICHMENT: The Laughing Revival, George Wood, Winter, 1996.

Without a doubt, we are seeing a resurgence of gnosticism. One aspect that keeps on emerging in the present river is exactly what George Wood wrote about in respect to the early gnostics. There is hunger for the "unknown".

The Muddy Stream of Gnostic "Spiritual Warfare": This teaching is growing in impetus. The new "anointing", instead of discerning heresy, is giving it credence and acceptability in circles that formerly took a firm stand on the Word of God. In other words, the walls have crumbled!

Whole assemblies are becoming "spiritual warriors", breaking the alleged strongholds of the enemy to the North, South, East and West. People literally face each ~ taking dominion over the territory. Bravely they are attempting to conquer Satan.

Other forms of this Gnostic warfare include "remitting the sins of nations", "spiritual mapping", "tearing down strongholds" and "identification repentance".

It is being taught that there are different levels of spiritual warfare. *Ground Level* warfare involves casting out of demons - including demon-possessed Christians. This teaching has entered the mainstream of Christianity through teachers like Neil Anderson, Charles Kraft, Tom White and others. Its premise is that Christians can be demonized. It does not matter that there is no precedent in scripture. Going by the "trustworthy" Charismatic plumb line for truth:

Our personal experience has led us to believe that Christians can be invaded by demons

We have arrived at a consensus that this is true from many others who have ministered in the area of deliverance. CONFRONTING THE POWERS, C. Peter Wagner, Published by Regal Boob, 1996.

(Note: A group of people enter into a "community dialogue" using the manipulative dialectic or consensus process birthed by German philosopher Georg Hegel and embraced by Karl Marx. It could never be determined if Hegel was "right" or "left" in his thinking. This strategy is effectively used for blending beliefs and achieves the goal of "harmonizing" all religions. Therefore, there is no place for questioning, i.e. all the leadership are participating, so it must be right.)

The next level is *Occult-level spiritual warfare*. According to C. Peter Wagner, this type of warfare:

. . . deals with demonic forces released through activities related to Satanism, witchcraft, Freemasonry, Eastern religions, New Age, shamanism, astrology and many other forms of structural occultism. . . the demonic powers at work in such cases are significantly different from those operating on the ground level. (Ibid).

The final level of warfare according to Wagner is *Strategic level spiritual warfare*. This type of warfare:

.describes confrontation with high ranking principalities and powers such as Paul writes about in Ephesians 6:12. These enemy forces are frequently called "territorial spirits" because they attempt to keep large numbers of humans networked through cities, nations, neighborhoods, people groups, religious allegiance, industries or any other form of human society in spiritual captivity. This level of warfare, also called 'cosmic-level spiritual warfare' . . .

Where does this teaching come from? The last place to look is the Bible. To invent supernatural beings, whether they be angels or demons, requires some imagination but not too much ingenuity. We find all of this type of lore coming from early Cabalists (Jewish mysticism), Greek mythology, Zoroastrianism, legends and not least, the Gnostics.

In the same book, the question is asked about the "animistic paradigm". C. Peter Wagner acknowledges that he would accept William A. Smalley's definition of animism which is hereby defined:

Animism is the belief in personalized supernatural power. As such it contrasts with impersonal power (mana and related phenomena). Its manifestations range from one God as the only spirit being, through orthodox forms of the great monotheistic religions (including angels, demons, souls of the dead, and other forms of spirits), to innumerable ghosts, ancestor spirits, spirits in natural objects and other phenomena characteristic of many primitive' religions. (Ibid)

Pastor John Goodwin in his article observed the same teaching in his association with John Wimber (who worked closely with C. Peter Wagner at Fuller Theological Seminary).

By the "spiritually unknown, "Wimber is referring to what he calls the "Excluded Middle," a layer of "reality" which is not part of the western world view. In his Signs and Wonders and Church Growth Syllabus, the "Excluded Middle" is described by the following:

Supernatural Forces On This Earth:

includes

- ◆ *spirits, ghosts, ancestors, demons*
- ◆ *earthly gods and goddesses who live within trees, rivers, hills, villages*
- ◆ *supernatural forces: maya, planetary influences, evil eyes, power of magic, sorcery, witchcraft - Holy Spirit, angels, demons, Signs and Wonders, gifts of the Spirit*

Aside from the Holy Spirit, gifts of the Spirit, and angels, Satan, demons, other creatures which Christians already have in their 'world view' from Scripture, this list presents demonic entities that no Christian should deal with. Scripture makes us aware of the reality of demons, without "paradigm shifts" or ., altered worldviews " and also gives strong warning to have nothing to do with them. There can be no purpose in suggesting that Christians need to incorporate these things in their allegedly "limited" world view other than opening them up to experience for the sake of experience or to gain control as "guides" through this, for most Christians, foreign and dangerous territory. Anyone who has been regenerated by the Spirit of God knows these things and knows that they are from the dark side, Satan and his minions. There is no need to pursue these because we are prohibited from doing so in the Word. TESTING THE FRUIT OF THE VINEYARD. Pastor John Goodwin. Solid Rook Christian Fellowship, San Jose, CA

On these unscriptural premises, Prayer Tracks have been established to mobilize world evangelization. It is being taught that great power will be released when spiritual warfare prayer is exercised. Four exercises have been set up:

1. Praise Marches - Marches for Jesus.
2. Prayer Walking - Gather in small groups and walk the streets of the neighborhood.

3. Prayer Journeys - Travel to areas that were targeted through spiritual mapping to pray God's Kingdom to come in fullness.

4. Prayer Expeditions - Teams travel from one geographical point to another to pull down strongholds in that area.

Airplanes are even hired to fly over cities to take dominion of the air-waves and the conquering Church believes she is the great end-time Joel's Army putting Satan in his place.

What is wrong with all of this? What is going to happen when the Church becomes involved in pinpointing the Strongman, learning the biblical names of evil spirits, knowing what Buddhist curse is on our Viet Nam soldiers, etc.? The church will become helpless. Millions of dollars will go down a black hole and the light of the glorious gospel will grow dim. Paganism will get the upper hand as identificational repentance gains precedence in "redeeming the cultures" and thus "taking the world for Christ." But sadly, not the Jesus of the Scripture.

Another Jesus? Since 1989, Discernment Ministries has been sounding the alarm about something coming that will be so irresistible that even the elect could be deceived.

A true revival will glorify the Jesus of the Scriptures. We can not separate Jesus from His Word. Out of true revival, the Word will be preached as never before. A deep hunger for the Word of God will consume those being touched by the Spirit of God.

However, there is another Jesus. This Jesus is called the "Cosmic Christ". Read carefully what a leading New Age priest, Matthew Fox, says in his book entitled, THE COMING OF THE COSMIC CHRIST, Matthew Fox, Harper & Row.

Deep ecumenical possibilities emerge when we shift from the quest for the historical Jesus to the quest for the Cosmic Christ. This shift requires making mysticism central to our faith once again. What the human race needs today is mystical solidarity. We need to pray together in deep and ancient mystical ways.

For this mystical solidarity to happen, some confession of sin is in order. Jesus wisely advised that if one is offering a gift at the altar and realizes one's brother or sister has something against one then one should leave the gift at the altar and be reconciled first (Matt. 5:24). Reconciliation is in order today at the level of religions themselves. It is time that Western, white, European Christianity apologized publicly to the native peoples of America, Africa, Asia and Europe and asked for forgiveness. With this reconciliation, we might gather at our altars with power once again. .confession is good for the soul, including the soul of a people. Today we need public confessions from entire traditions, not just from individuals. With the forgiveness and letting go that is sure to come from such confession, deep ecumenism will be free to happen.

Today we can respond to the challenge deep ecumenism poses. Does the fact that the Christ became incarnate in Jesus exclude the Christ's becoming incarnate in Jesus exclude the Christ's becoming incarnate in others – Lao-tzu or Buddha or Moses or Sarah or Sojourner Truth or Gandhi or me or you?

Deep ecumenism is the very matrix in which the Cosmic Christ is nourished and comes to birth.

Mysticism is:

- *Integral to this awakening*
- *Basic to this global renaissance*
- *Represents the depth of religious traditions the world*
- *Christians do not know their own mystical experience.*

The Mud Thickens. Those in England that had experienced the Toronto Blessing have now moved on to new levels. In a recent meeting these "words" were given:

"We must release the Celtic Spirit"

"The Celts are our aboriginal apostles"

"The Celts hold the key to what we want to see in the Cosmic Christ. This shift requires making mysticism next generation"

"The Celts had many open visions of angels"

"The Celts had a wonderful holistic view of life"

"To them creation was good, but had been infected by evil spirits and so they often cleansed pagan sites and used them for their worship – they were familiar with spiritual warfare and territorial spirits." Taken from a talk given by Roger Ellis, Restoration leader within Terry Virgo's "Pioneer" network. AFTER THE RAIN conference, March 7-10, 1996. [England].

Kevin Prosch gives this expression:

. . . there are many voices and many ways to speak. Many things in the earth speak and God is continually speaking to us. But we've got ears to hear the sounds he has placed in the earth. A new freedom is being found for indigenous peoples to express their praise and worship to God with their own ethnicity. Perhaps it should not surprise us that the Holy Spirit is helping us to use forms from other cultures which are more in touch with the rhythms of the earth. Why should we not declare the greatness of our King to the enemy with a Maori haka? (Some thoughts on Prophetic Symbolism and Prophetic Actions in the Current Move of the Holy Spirit as Seen in Revelation Meetings, by Chris Seaton, 1995).

Again, from *CONFRONTING THE POWERS*, C. Peter Wagner seems to deal with this also:

It seems to me that in contemporary non-Christian animism we find a mixture of truth, spiritual deception and many stages in between. I think it would be wise not to reject all

forms of animism or all Indo-European mythology on an assumption that anything those systems or similar non-Christian system affirm have absolutely no validity.

. . . it seems more reasonable to assume that each tradition might reflect some trite (aspects of reality, but have varying degrees of distortion.

. . . It is important also to recognize that spiritual insight, which receives information directly from the spirit world, is not an exclusive faculty of those who have been born again. Spiritual discernment certainly constitutes at least some dimension of the image of God in which all human beings, Christian or non-Christian, have been created. If this is correct, then human beings, whether Indo-Europeans, Melanesians, Amerindians or whatever they may be, can and often do possess valid information about the spirit world. . . .

Folks, it is time to put on the whole armor of God to stand in this day. Do not be swayed by every wind of doctrine. There is a dryness in the land - a famine, in fact - and that is for the Word of God.

Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord: Amos 8: 11.



**Is this really how we want Him? No longer King of Kings and Lord of Lords,
but...just another guest at the table?**