
DISCERNMENT NEWSLETTER

“...how is it that ye do not discern this time?” Luke 12:56

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The “Work Crew” of the Church— the ministry of discernment

By Barbara Wilhelm

On today’s stage ministries engaged in biblical discernment are often beleaguered and harassed as being critical and judgmental. Yet the Bible holds the ministry of discernment to be one of the finest tools in establishing and maintaining biblical purity. This is born out in Bruce L. Shelley’s *Church History in Plain Language*. Notice his progression of thought from theology through heresy to orthodoxy:

Theology is rational thought about God. It is not identical with religion. Religion is our belief in God and our effort to live by that belief. Theology is the attempt to give a rational explanation of our belief; it is thinking about religion.

When we err in our thinking, we call it heresy or bad theology. *Heresy is not necessarily bad religion, but like all wrong thinking it may lead to bad religion.* Heretics, in fact, served the church in an unintended way. Their pioneering attempts to state the truth forced the church to shape “good theology”—a systematic statement of biblical revelation.

Good theology we call orthodox. Church history shows us that Christian theology is not primarily a philosophical system invented by men in the quiet of an academic study. *Doctrines were hammered out by men who were on the **work crew** of the church. Every plank in the platform of orthodoxy was laid because some heresy had arisen that threatened to change the nature of Christianity and to destroy its central faith.* (pp. 47-48, bold added)

By not allowing error to go unchallenged, discernment ministries are merely following in the paths of biblical history. The books of Galatians, Colossians, 1 John, and Jude were written expressly to challenge false teaching. That this was considered essential to the life of the church is stated in the epistles:

“But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction.” 2 Peter 2:1 (NKJV)

Heresy is a doctrine contrary to the established faith. Something that is destructive cannot be taken lightly. If the Bible says that something is destructive, we cannot treat it lightly or ignore it.

In Galatians 1:6-12 Paul functions in a discernment ministry capacity by presenting the truth of the Word of God, and by stating the fatal consequences of choosing to believe otherwise. Paul is not stating a simple difference of opinion. He is aware of the actual anathema—condemnation—that results in believing another gospel. In addition, to gain a full picture of a discernment ministry it is needful to realize that this is the same Paul who was so deeply grieved in 2Cor 11:2-4 over the Lord’s “*chaste virgin*” who is in danger of being seduced by “*another Jesus, another Spirit, another Gospel.*” Discernment cares; it grieves over the church. Speaking the truth in love are words that are engraved on the hearts of true discerners.

There can be only one standard of truth used, one tool of discernment. As Shelley wrote:

If Christianity was orthodox, the Bible made it so, for the constant test of any teaching was, what do the Scriptures say?

When referring to the words and books of the Old and New Testament, it is noteworthy that the terms are in the singular Scripture not scriptures, The Book not books. This is to show the unity of the thoughts within. The word for the special place these books occupy in Christianity is canon. The term from the Greek language originally meant a measuring rod or a ruler. It was a standard for judging something straight. (pp. 57-58)

The prophet Amos compared the Bible to a plumbline (Amos 7:7). Having actually helped my husband construct a house, I know what the results are if you don't start building true to the plumbline. Even a one-degree deviation may seem insignificant initially, but eventually it makes a huge difference. In time that house will lean off its foundation and could even collapse.

God-ordained discernment ministries exist simply to keep the plumbline intact. Those of us in the ministry of discernment, who labor so diligently and research so intensively, are actually the “work crew” of the church described by Shelley. When we see error we

immediately consult Scripture to see if the teaching conforms to the Canon, to the plumbline. We try to correct the bad theology as soon as possible so that it doesn't escalate into bad religion—thus damaging someone's relationship with God.

Our motives should always be pure—love for God and for His people while at the same time upholding the integrity of the Bible. Jesus is called the Word of God. When arguments are presented contrary to the Bible we are not called to engage a mere philosophical discussion or debate. The Bible is more than that. It carries God's words and His truth. Thus we seek to be good Bereans:

Now the Berean Jews were of more noble character than those in Thessalonica, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true. Acts 17:11 (NIV)

Report from Zimbabwe

By Charlotte Stucki

When David Livingstone died of malaria in Africa his friends removed his heart and buried it under a tree in what is now Zambia. His body was lovingly carried to the coast and shipped to England. It arrived a year later and he was buried in Westminster Abby. When I heard the story, I quickly understood why. Africa has a way of gripping the heart, perhaps unlike any other continent. I cannot explain the exact reason. For me, aside from the created beauty of places like Victoria Falls, Matopos, Great Zimbabwe, the real beauty shines in the faces of the people who have discovered and believed the grace of God revealed in the Gospel of His Son.

This was my third visit to Zimbabwe in the past two years. This time I was accompanied by my husband Fritz and our fourteen year-old grandson. I knew that they both would love the country and would be greatly loved and welcomed in return. After a long flight and a bit of a hassle at customs, we were warmly greeted by Pastors Tham, Peter McKenzie and his son Joshua, and Mpoko. We managed to get clearance for the seven large bags of "goodies" that we were bringing for the churches.

It was a new and precious experience to spend three weeks in the home of the McKenzies, two dear servants of God who have laid down their lives for the sake of the Gospel. In spite of assurances that we did

not need or want to be waited on, they insisted on treating us like royalty and demonstrating the spirit of Jesus Who said, "Let him who is greatest be servant of all."



Fritz & Charlotte Stucki at the IFCB Conference in September in southern California

Our schedule was full as we had requested. Our first assignment was ministry at a "mother's conference." This is a quarterly gathering of several churches, hosted by the women who have labored to raise money for the churches during the prior months. Each group of ladies, representing their particular assembly, entered the sanctuary with a little dancing to present their offering. It was good to join them and be free before the Lord... even as a grandma! Fritz and I both ministered the Word during that conference and it was well received. As always, our confession is as Paul's was, "For we preach not ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake." Each meeting lasted four to five hours in a hot non-air conditioned building. But neither time nor discomfort is an issue in Zimbabwe!

During the following weeks, Fritz had the joy of teaching at the Theological College for three evenings. He covered a section of the module on Homiletics that the students are working on. His focus was "The Preacher." Fritz was very blessed and impressed by the excellent and thorough curriculum content that brother

Anton Bosch has produced. The College is developing well and there are many reports of the fruit that is already being borne as men and women become grounded in the solid Truth of God's Word. The students were encouraged by the personal ministry of an on-site teacher.

While he was at the College, I was scheduled to minister in one of the local assemblies, Mahatshula. There we gathered for three evenings, much of the time in darkness while the sun set. The humble building had no light except for a small lantern on the pulpit so I could see to read the Scriptures. The hunger and receptivity of the people made our long journey more than worthwhile. I echo Paul's words when he wrote, *"To me is this grace given that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of God's grace."*

One of the highlights of our trip was a Sunday visit to one of the rural churches, Mbizigway. We bounced along the dusty, rough roads south of Bulawayo to reach this remote area where there is a solid and strong church. It is the church that grew from the seed of the death of sixteen missionaries who were brutally murdered in the mid-'80's by rogue dissidents. It was very sobering to walk amidst the ruins of the buildings where they had labored, seeking to bring the Gospel of reconciliation between God and men, and men and men. Pastor Peter had lived there prior to the massacre so it is always very poignant for him to return. It was bittersweet for me to think of the needless murders of men, women and children and the destruction of a productive farm and the death of a vision. But on the other hand, the biblical reality of the *"building not made with hands, eternal in the heavens"* and the *"temple made of living stones"* was very obvious. Nothing that men or demons can do will ever prevail against that Church of the Living God.

There are many other wonderful memories of contacts and interactions with individuals, believers and non-believers. The precious pastors and their families were a continual inspiration. They love and labor and feed their flocks, barely existing as far as material things go. Over and over we were reminded that truly, *"God has chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom that He has promised."*

At Victoria Falls we shared the Gospel at length with our tour guide with the expectation and hope that we will one day meet her in heaven. We toured a rural **public** school where the sign on the gate said, "We

believe in God" and the children sang songs about Jesus, their Savior. We boarded a **public** bus in which the steward began and ended the journey with prayer in Jesus' name. We were able to bless many individuals with gifts to meet some of their material needs... a stove here, a refrigerator there, some tires for a vehicle, funds to finish the toilets for a church, etc. There is nothing more joyful in life than to be blessed in order to bless. To give because we have been given so much.

Yes, Africa and Zimbabwe in particular, is very much in our hearts or vice versa, our hearts are there. We will return if God permits. If not, we increasingly look forward to that wonderful day when we are Home with that Church, washed in the blood of the Lamb, redeemed from every kindred, tribe, tongue and nation. Until then, may all of our hearts be aflame with the passion to do what Jesus said, *"Go into all the world (whatever our world may be) and make disciples... teaching them to observe all that He has commanded."*

Bibles At Last!!!

An e-mail from Tham Dube, Zimbabwe, 12/6/13

I just wanted to confirm that the Bibles are finally with us here at last! Everything has been paid and clearances made and the container was delivered to us on Tuesday. We immediately went into a frenzy of unpacking all the boxes and Wednesday was for opening up the boxes to identify the Bibles as they are in high demand across all the churches. Yesterday was a hive of activity of members trying to sort out the distribution to all assemblies that were invading the offices in desperate need for Bibles.

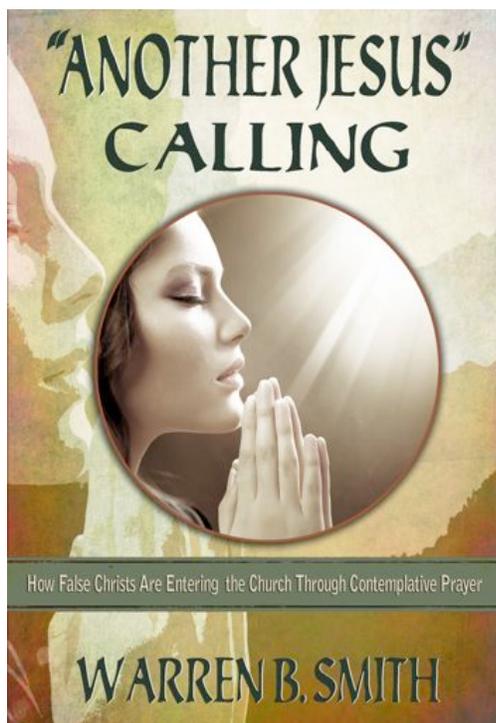
So far we have 2,500 already booked by various assemblies countrywide with Mutare in Manicaland having sent their representative this morning. We will send you the schedules of our distributions and the photos that accompanied the process.

Above all words can not explain our deep heartfelt gratitude for this immense gift that has blessed the work of the Lord so much. We are really overwhelmed by this commitment which you displayed in mobilising all these resources for us and the Bible School. We continue to pray for your vision in this ministry to expand and be more effective through us to reach out to souls across Zimbabwe and beyond. We pray that those who receive these Bibles may get more in terms of the anointing in the spirit in which this giving has been done.

The sorting out of other reading materials will be done next week so as to give the team at the office a bit of a breather after this hectic week.

The whole process and its challenges have been a great learning process which will enable us to handle more donations with much ease. We have even established better working relations with the authorities here in Zim. We now have our registration documents in place for all similar transactions. Praise the Lord.

Once more this is not adequate to express our big thank you to all who participated.



"Another Jesus" Calling
Which Jesus is Calling on You?

A book review of **"Another Jesus" Calling**, Warren B. Smith (Lighthouse Trails, 2013)

By Sarah H. Leslie

During the hippie era there was a rising interest in spirituality, especially influenced by the Beatles and their adventures in India with mind-altering meditation and drugs. It was a time of the Vietnam War and this gentle-sounding meditative spirituality promised goodwill and harmony on earth. As young people we were told that if we could hear what the spiritual world was trying to

tell us, listen quietly and meditate, we could tap into this same blissful message. By submerging our selves into an altered state of ethereal bliss we could find our path in life, and continue our spiritual journey to wholeness. Personal peace was a sure gateway to global peace we were promised.

My spiritual journey began in 1968 with automatic writing, based on a method taught by spiritualist Ruth Montgomery.[1] I would sit with pen in hand with a blank sheet of paper and meditate, calling on the voices of the spiritual world to come and speak to me. I was very earnest about this and wanted a soothing word that would portend my future. Night after night I would sit and expectantly wait.[2] Montgomery said that this automatic writing was a way for the spirit world to communicate important messages. What is automatic writing?

Scripts produced without the control of the conscious self. It is the most common form of mediumship... one of the most valuable spiritual gifts as... it opens up a direct channel for obtaining teaching from the Beyond.[3]

Over the next few years I would try other similar meditative practices in order to transcend the spiritual emptiness in my life. I was looking for a comforting word of hope for my future, and a glimmer of peace for a world that loomed on the horizon, dark and scary. And for awhile there was a light. It was beckoning and intoxicating, and it produced powerful feelings of peace and love. I basked in its radiance for many days. But one day abruptly it came to an end when a cascading series of bad things happened in my life. What had happened? I had done everything right! But when that light withdrew I was immediately thrown into a terrifying darkness.

I desperately kept trying to re-discover that bright light but it was ever elusive. One day a fellow high school student, listening to me talk of my spiritual search, taught me how to do a centering prayer. His version came straight out of an occult handbook. He read aloud the steps. The book said to envision myself going down, down, down into myself to a deeper level of meditation than I had previously experienced. And then at the very depth of this "center" I was to call out "enter" to invite a more potent spirituality in.[4]

Fast-forward to the early 1980s. I was a fairly new believer in Jesus Christ. We were attending a charismatic church that held an ongoing prayer vigil. Off to the side of the sanctuary was a prayer chapel where we were encouraged to dedicate an hour each week. I happily settled on an early Saturday morning time for prayer. The first time I entered the cool, quiet, dimly lit chapel, I felt an overwhelming sense of peace and serenity. The woman who was finishing up her prayer time slowly lifted her head and rose to greet me with a loving embrace. As I took her place in the short pew, she placed a spiral notebook in front of me. It was filled with page after page of messages from God. She explained that everyone who went into the chapel was to sit still, and wait, and listen to "the Lord" speak to us. We were then to record what he said. I scanned the messages and they all seemed encouraging, edifying, consoling and promising. Many paragraphs were filled with uplifting phrases that sounded biblical.

Recognizing this technique, I was a bit startled. I asked her nervously, "Isn't this the same as automatic writing?" "Not at all!" she rushed to assure me. She said that as a new believer I could practice this same meditative art, but this time it would be the Holy Spirit who would talk to me - talk *through* me - and that in this way He would speak words to others in the church. Since she was an older woman in the Lord and seemed to have much faith, I took her word for it and sat down to meditate and listen to Jesus. Pretty soon words came into my mind. They were shocking! The message I heard was not encouraging at all! It didn't match anything else anyone had written down. Instead the message I received was pure Scripture: "*Repent!*" it said over and over again, based on various verses from Scripture about repentance.

I struggled with what to do. Should I tear up what I had just recorded? But I noticed that it was Scripture, so I finally decided to just leave it there on the page. I walked out of the chapel into the chilly morning air a bit disconcerted. What had just happened? Hadn't I prayed and asked Jesus for a message? Why didn't my message match the other beautiful and positive words that were on the pages of that notebook? I wondered if anyone else in the church ever got such "negative" messages. I wondered if the message was real. Was Jesus really

calling the people in the church to repent? *Was* there indeed *sin* in people's lives?

All week long I was troubled. Maybe it had just been a word meant for me. I examined my own life over and over again and repented of every single thing that I could think to confess. I went back the following Saturday morning and expectantly awaited again. This time when I closed my eyes to pray, I heard a new word. It said: "*Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?*" These were verses from Isaiah 58:6-7. Again I was upset. Why were the words I received so different from the others? The church had just embarked on a fasting program and great victory in Jesus had been promised. Many hoped that "strongholds" in their life would be "broken" so that they could finally become wealthy. Nobody was talking about giving to the poor. They were only "believing" to get rich themselves. Was *this* why this verse came to my mind? I hesitantly wrote it down in the book.

For the next few months I went back to the prayer chapel every Saturday morning where I consistently heard similar messages based on Bible verses that spoke about the need to repent. I was becoming very confused. One day soon after this another older woman in the church phoned me. She was becoming quite concerned. Dave Hunt and T.A. McMahon had just issued their groundbreaking book *The Seduction of Christianity* and she recognized that our church was getting involved with all sorts of spiritual practices that Hunt was warning about. Then one Sunday morning service the assistant minister asked us to close our eyes and envision Jesus taking us on a journey to new see spiritual insights and hear new words. Guided imagery. Visualization. Centering. The same sorts of things I had done as a hippie. Only now we were being told that it was okay because it was "Jesus" leading us.

This church's leaders soon began to formally teach that in order to contact Jesus we needed to learn to practice these meditative arts. We were told that

some members were reaching a higher, more elite form of spirituality by approaching Jesus through these methods. But what about our simple humble prayers and supplications? What about His shed blood on the Cross? The new way to reach Jesus was through our own spiritual journeys and these mystical endeavors. It promised an easier way. Nobody had to change anything about their lives, or repent of any of their evil deeds. The Gospel of Redemption was missing from these teachings. And I noticed that it was all very selfish. "Centering" always seems to result in self-centeredness.

Shortly after this episode, a group of us left the church.^[5] We formed a Bible study, and like the Bereans we began to study the Word to learn more about what had just happened to us. We also read Constance Cumbey's *The Hidden Dangers of the Rainbow* and all the new books that Dave Hunt was writing. Our Bible study would last for over fifteen years.

Fast-forward to the early 1990s. I continued researching the New Age movement, especially to understand more clearly the type of eastern mysticism that I had become entangled in as a teenager. One day I received a phone call from a man identifying himself as Warren Smith. He said he had been put in touch with me by a mutual friend. Warren told me that he was a former New Ager who had been born again. He had just spent the past few years of his life traveling the country to spread the word about a book he wrote, his testimony called *The Light That Was Dark*.^[6] I immediately understood his book title - I had also experienced the *light* that turned out to be *dark*!

Warren told me that he was becoming concerned. Almost unbelievably he was seeing these same New Age practices coming into the church. I shared a few of my prior experiences with him. We had much in common, including our mutual fears that leaders in the evangelical church were starting to take the old familiar (to us) New Age mystical concepts and dress them up in new theological garb. These leaders were promising deeper levels of *new* spiritual truths by performing these same *old* mystical methods. Warren and I both knew it to be a spiritual fraud. We worried it would only lead people into darkness and deception.

During the next few decades I would dedicate

much time to research these New Age practices as they were coming into the church. In 2002 my husband and I helped Warren Smith publish *Reinventing Jesus Christ: The New Gospel*. In this book Smith explained how New Age leaders were hearing a voice that claimed to be either "Jesus" or "God." This voice, as it was channeled through these New Age leaders, sounded just like automatic writing! Authors such as Neale Donald Walsch, Helen Schucman and Barbara Marx Hubbard published the channeled writings of their "God" and their "Jesus." He was giving a different gospel message, one that promised peace and prosperity on earth. Smith summarized these new teachings:

The "new gospel" teaches that when humanity collectively accepts and experiences itself as being a *part* of Christ and a *part* of God, we not only save ourselves, we save our world. The "Christ" of the "new gospel" warns that the hour is late. *Peace* must come. He will help. He has a plan. *But everyone must play their part*.^[7]

When we were new believers both Warren and I never dreamed that these same old teachings would come into the evangelical church world and be believed! But they did. And they came in via the same old mystical methods we had once learned from the occult.

Fast-forward to the present. Warren Smith has just published a new book **"Another Jesus" Calling: How False Christs Are Entering the Church Through Contemplative Prayer** (Lighthouse Trails, 2013). In this book Smith analyzes the "God" of *God Calling* (2005) and the "Jesus" of Sarah Young's book *Jesus Calling*. Both this "God" and this "Jesus" have remarkably similar messages. Both deliver messages nearly identical to that of the New Age false "Christ." Both are *calling* believers to engage in a new (old) spirituality. The "God" of *God Calling* and the "Jesus" of *Jesus Calling* both *call* upon people by delivering new words. Their words were transmitted, written down, and then published. The same method!

Millions of people have now read these popular books *God Calling* and *Jesus Calling*. Both books purport to be the voice of the Lord speaking meaningful new messages to us today. The dictated words, channeled through the authors, are uplifting messages promising peace and contentment,

affluence and harmony. In fact, the words of the "Jesus" of Sarah Young's *Jesus Calling: Enjoying Peace in His Presence* are promising a closer intimacy and more elite spiritual walk. Smith observes:

The word "Presence" is found more than 365 times in *Jesus Calling*. The term is also commonly used in the New Age/New Spirituality. And in both *God Calling* and *Jesus Calling*, "Jesus" states that experiencing his presence will unlock secret teachings, new revelations, and future things to come." [8]

Why do Christians believe they should to practice the "presence" of Jesus? Because it promises them increased intimacy with God, thus bypassing the Cross. It does seem to fill a spiritual void and/or an emotional need. And it is an easy device. Under these new teachings believers no longer need to trouble themselves about confessing besetting sins in their lives. Instead this new voice of "Jesus" speaks rosy promises of guidance and transformation, even wealth and power. This "Jesus" even promises co-creative power, the ability to transform the world by our meditative attitudes. By concentrating on the words "*be still*" believers learn that *we* can even *become* God.

Smith's critiques all of this in a brief well-laid-out 174-page book. This is Warren Smith at his best - his easy folksy style renders hard concepts accessible and understandable. Each chapter is very brief and to the point. Smith raises **Ten Concerns** about the original book *God Calling*, which entered the Christian world in 2005, and **Twenty Concerns** about Sarah Young's *Jesus Calling*, which has more recently taken the evangelical world by storm. Is Jesus indeed speaking a new word to us today? Or is this the voice of "another Jesus" who is *calling* upon the world to laugh at the future? [9] Smith's analyses are insightful.

Sarah Young's "Jesus" encourages believers to gain more spirituality through creative visualization. This "Jesus" flatters her readers with florid speeches such as "Let My gold-tinged Love wash over you and soak into the depths of your being" [10] and "When your Joy in Me meet My Joy in you, there are fireworks of heavenly ecstasy." [11] This same passionate "Jesus" is rapidly gaining traction elsewhere in the evangelical world. He offers spiritual experiences that are addictive and

mind-altering, but not based on the truth taught in God's Word the Bible. He promises intimacy without repentance, spirituality without salvation, and communion without regeneration. Nevertheless many believe these new words. Why?

Double Check Yourself. Many readers will have questions and qualms when they first encounter Warren Smith's book. If you have already read *God Calling* or *Jesus Calling*, you may be persuaded that you have seen the light, that you are soaking in the presence of Jesus, that you are gleaned new words and gaining great intimacy with the Lord. You may even feel that you are on a marvelous light-filled spiritual path that is ever-winding deeper into the mysteries of God. You may be experiencing all sorts of uplifting and marvelous things. But is this true? Or is it a mirage?

Stop before you go any further on this spiritual journey. You need to find out where this journey originated and where it is headed. Read Smith's book and "contemplate" the simple questions that he raises. Are you sure you are hearing the right Jesus? Are you certain you are following the biblical Jesus? Maybe you should double-check. There is a lot at stake.

Warren Smith reminds his readers:

The presence that came calling on Sarah Young is extending an invitation to the readers of *Jesus Calling* to experience his presence as well--an invitation that is depicted in the book cover's *inviting hand*. Keep in mind that another invitation is also taking place. If we choose to sit "with pen in hand" waiting to hear "more" than God's inspired Holy Word, we, too, have an *inviting hand*. But what presence are we actually inviting into our lives?

If one becomes dependent on a subjective presence rather than the objective Holy Bible, deception is inevitable. [12]

*"For false Christs and false prophets shall rise,
and shall shew signs and wonders,
to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect."
(Mark 13:22)*

To order this book call (903) 567-6423

To read the endnotes, see the Herescope blog post: <http://herescope.blogspot.com/2013/11/another-jesus-calling.html>.