

An Approaching Crisis

I find myself beyond appalled and deeply concerned about a  trend I have seen developing in the body of Christ for several years now. I believe this trend is propelling us toward a crisis in the charismatic Christian world that may well derail and destroy revival before it can take firm root.

It seems that in the quest to become more and more supernatural many have increasingly wandered away from the plumb line of solid Christian doctrine and responsible, accurate interpretation of the Scriptures. The resultant weirdness flowing from key leaders in various places is leading many followers into what can only be called heresy.

Some prominent teachers in the renewal movement now espouse “open theism,” which posits that God does not know the future—the end from the beginning. It then builds on that premise to diminish the revelation of the omniscience and absolute power of our God that Scripture so clearly articulates.

Another teaching gaining ground among us is the idea that once we have come to Jesus we need never repent again because we are no longer sinners. What about Paul’s statement concerning sinners, for instance, among whom he identified himself in present tense as “foremost of all” (1 Tim. 1:15)? I think some people need to do a thorough study of New Testament exhortations that call us to repent.

The problem stretches from the heretical to the silly. I recently returned from a ministry trip to New Zealand where one prominent leader has been teaching that we can unleash our spirituality by taking monoatomic gold pills. Why? Because Adam was made of monoatomic gold! *What?*

Another teacher here in the U.S. teaches that God didn’t part the Red Sea—Moses did! Where is our discernment? Recently I’ve

heard it taught that it would be OK to pierce the ear in the lobe but not at the top because the top is the “ear gate” and you might hinder your ability to hear God. Where is there any real foundation for this in God’s Word?

I am aware of one Christian leader who has devised a method of Christian divination, claiming that in doing so he has redeemed something for Christian use that the enemy stole. What happened to the biblical injunction against engaging in that kind of activity and the penalties for doing it?

I’m just scratching the surface here with a few representative examples. Where is the justification for any of this when held up to the light of solid exegesis of God’s Word? And if you don’t know what exegesis is, take some time to look it up and learn to understand how to read the Bible accurately for it actually says.

It’s time for us to stop interpreting the Bible through the filter of our personal revelations and personal experiences and learn to interpret our personal revelations and personal experiences by the Bible.

A year and a half ago my friend Fred Wright, founding coordinator of Partners in Harvest, and I were discussing the state of the prophetic movement and the plethora of bad prophecy being spoken by leading prophetic voices. He said, “If something isn’t done soon, the prophetic movement is over in five years.” He’s right. We’ve been focused on being supernatural and getting the next “word” at the expense of intimacy with the One for whom we would speak.

Too often we’ve failed to sift our own emotions from the true prophetic word flowing from the heart of God. As a result we end up prophesying words from our own imaginations and desires. Many have been doing what Jeremiah cried out against, “Therefore behold, I am against the prophets ... who steal My words from each other” (Jer. 23:30).

Here's how it works: We hear prophecies from one another that excite our emotions in both positive and negative ways. Then in our flesh we build on what has excited us, failing to differentiate between personal feelings and the voice of God, until the words we speak go well beyond the truth of God's heart. Skewed and extreme statements either raise false expectations of great things or feed excessive fear and dread—not the truth!

Please know that I am a dyed-in-the-wool “river” person. I cherish the move of the Spirit. I love it when God makes a sovereign “mess” of a meeting and people fall, laugh, cry and shake. I love good prophetic ministry. People receive miraculous healing in my church regularly. We've heard audible angel song in some of our meetings. I am by no means a revival critic, but I have been given a prophetic voice and I must use it to sound the alarm when God calls me to do so.

These things I call attention to are just a representative sampling of the utter nonsense growing in renewal circles these days and being passed off as revelation by a number of key leaders. Those who have attempted to stand against this pollution of the stream have sometimes been vilified and accused of creating division or squelching the Spirit. They would be in good company where creating division is concerned. Jeremiah! Micaiah! Paul! Jesus Himself!

For my part, I believe (prophetically) that the great apostasy prophesied in Scripture has begun, but that it has taken root in unexpected places, where personal revelation is presented as fact and where leaders twist Scripture to make it appear to support propositions based on grains of truth driven to extremes that render them false. Heresies and spiritual silliness result.

A saying the Lord has given me of late is, “If you focus on being supernatural you'll end up in shipwreck, but if you focus on being intimate with the Father you'll end up being

supernatural.” Doesn’t that sound like Jesus?

In too many places the hunger has shifted from longing to be one with Jesus—and with our Father through Him—to a focus on seeking supernatural experiences. This is a form of idolatry. Or we long for the next great spiritual revelation and forget that the most foundational revelation of all is the Father’s heart of love and the invitation given us to grow up to be like Him in every aspect of our character.

This calls for a renewed emphasis on the cross (where we die with Christ), the blood that cleanses us from sin, and the resurrection that gives us new life. Paul said—and with good reason, “For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified” (1 Cor. 2:2).

And did we forget that the word “canon” with reference to the Scripture means the “fence” beyond which we cannot go—that we can neither add to nor detract from it? In too many places the focus has shifted and we’re about to find ourselves impaled on hidden reefs of destruction.

About the author: Loren Sandford is the founder and senior pastor of New Song Fellowship in Denver, Colo. He is a songwriter, recording artist and worship leader, as well as the author of several books, including *Understanding Prophetic People*, *The Prophetic Church* and his latest, *Renewal for the Wounded Warrior*, which are available with other resources on the church’s website.