

Volume 5, Number 2 March/April 1994

HERESY HUNTING vs. DISCERNMENT by Jewel van der Merwe

Much is being said and written about Heresy Hunters. It is almost as if they are a new breed of animal no one has ever heard of before. Consider the large numbers of Christians who are accepting, as scriptural, all they are being taught. These people believe they should do just about anything for the sake of unity among the brethren. When warned about and shown clear scriptural evidence of the dangers of unbiblical doctrine, they vindictively turn on the one who exposes the danger and aggressively accuse that person of being a "Heresy Hunter". Rather than examining the evidence for themselves they turn to the opinion of "popular" Christianity for the final assessment. Too often judgments are impaired when a prominent minister writes a forward to a book, thus establishing the false notion that it must be valid.

Many scholars are also riding the fence for the sake of unity, obscuring the lines between truth and heresy so much that even some who espouse the Word of God can no longer rightly divide. Let the scholar occupy a slot on prime time Christian T.V. and many people will accept whatever they hear because it seemingly has the approval of the Christian T. V. station. It becomes like a vicious circle and in the meantime, ignorance abounds and it is open season on the so-called "Heresy Hunters".

Unfortunately, there are those who take a fiendish delight in exposing personal shortcomings in the brethren and fill pages with their foibles. This is all done in the name of "investigative journalism", with the premises "the people have the right to know". Many of these investigators feel they are doing God a favor. When a ministry comes sadly crashing down from their efforts, they rub their hands together and nod the all-knowing "I told you so!" This unsavory condition within the Body of Christ has tainted the palate of Christians, so

much so that they no longer distinguish between character assassination and contending for the faith.

Some feel Heresy Hunters are those who point out obvious doctrinal errors and write books to warn about these errors. If the ones who write these books are wrong, then those whose teachings and beliefs have been discussed in the books should be willing to refute these writings, stand for what they have taught and give a reason for the hope that is within them. Without doubt, the truth will ultimately stand unashamedly.

Others, in their desire for scriptural purity, pull the belt tighter and tighter until it is just me and thee and sometimes I have my doubts about thee! In this approach it can seem like a Pharisaical attitude is adopted. However, it is not any more fair to call honest critics "accusers of the brethren", "pharisees" or "having a Jezebel spirit" than it is to call a person with genuine scripture concerns a Heresy Hunter. On occasion, when writing specifically to a ministry expressing carefully laid out concerns, I am amazed at the content of the replies that come back (if they do). Instead of addressing the concerns, invariably the responses will be: (a) "you have a wrong spirit"; (b) "when you have a church as large as mine, then you have the right to speak to me"; or (c) "you are being divisive".

God pity those pastors and leaders whose main objective is the growth of their organizations! These people are afraid of controversy because it may "rock their boat". Let us not be afraid to be "boat rockers" if the Bible is challenged. A comfortable salary, new Cadillac and a lovely parsonage is not payment enough in lieu of the eternal crown that is laid up for those who truly love Him and His truth. Unless we are willing to take up our cross and follow Christ, we are not worthy to be His disciples. Are we following the way of the pagans who build for this life? Where is our call? What is the cry of our hearts? Wasn't Paul the most divisive and controversial apostle? Yes, and because of it, he was beaten with rods, stoned and left as dead. Further indignities were rained upon him when he was chained, left in a dungeon and barely escaped with his life. Yet it was his type that "turned the world upside down". Paul even dared to "name names" as he spoke of the critical need for rightly dividing The Word of Truth: *"And their word will eat as doth a canker; of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus, who concerning the truth have erred..."* II Tim. 2:17-18.

Among the critics there are those who disclaim all Charismatics and Pentecostals. Unfortunately the Charismatics and Pentecostals have made themselves vulnerable to the Heresy Hunters because they have sent caution to the wind and embraced everything that has come down the spiritual tubes. As Pentecostal believers we should be able to maintain our position from the Word of God. What we believe in is either scriptural or it is not. Even if we have "fantastic experiences", they must be assessed according to the whole counsel of God, and even then we dare not formulate a doctrine on these experiences.

At the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) fifty-second annual meeting¹ changes of historic proportions were discussed.

"...many delegates and attendees remained preoccupied at the March meeting with the provocative challenge laid down by theologian David Wells of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. Wells, addressing about 750 leaders, said the evangelical movement was at risk of losing its 'soul' as a result of being swept up into the

'marketing ethos' of American culture... Wells said churches are inappropriately adopting their message to the felt needs of Americans, who respond to the church like consumers. He said, 'Churches are doing what Pepsi has done, what Madonna has done.' He called for evangelicals to adopt a 'vivid other worldliness', to recover the 'lost Word of God' and the 'holiness of God'. He concluded, 'Despite our prosperity, we have less to offer. That is the irony of our success.'" **CHRISTIANITY TODAY, April 4, 1994, page 87.**

Jesus has called us to be His disciples. A true disciple of Christ is a believer who has learned to follow the teachings of Christ. It is someone who has DISCERNMENT! DISCERNMENT distinguishes right from wrong. A disciple can distinguish this difference from his study of the Word of God! A discerning disciple will be faithful to the Word. When he is faithful to the Word he will be willing to expose discrepancies and discredit false teaching! If Martin Luther had maintained a view of "unity at any cost", all would have gone on worshipping the Virgin and bowing down to images and relics. Yet, there are now those in Charismatic circles today who have said that the greatest mistake Martin Luther made was to leave Mother Rome! They are so delighted that we are now finding our way back!

The Word of God tells us to "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth." (II Tim. 2: 15). This word "dividing" means to dissect and to make a straight cut. Nothing is more powerful than the Word of God which reproves, corrects, gives us instruction and prepares us for the work God has called us to do.

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." (II Tim. 3: 16-17).

As we grow in Christ, we grow in wisdom and understanding as His word takes root within our hearts. Through this process a mature Christian becomes a "discerning" Christian.

"For everyone that useth milk is unskillful in the Word of righteousness for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to those that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised [trained] to DISCERN both good and evil." (Heb. 5: 13-14).

We are not to be as "children tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the tricks of men and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive, but speaking the truth in love, may grow up, into him in all things which is the head, even Christ. (Eph. 4:14-15). If we are partakers of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, we know the truth and the knowledge of the truth sets us free. What a wonder! We can know God! As we grow in grace, we grow in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Yes, the Word of God admonishes us to be DISCERNERS!

"And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgement [DISCERNMENT]; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ;..." (Phil. 1:9-10).

We are living in ominous days where the word "spiritual" is taking on strange overtones. It is actually in vogue to be "spiritual" today. We have a "spiritual" president who can say all the right words. Psychics have their own infomercials and advertisements on television. The air-waves are filled with events that cross between the supernatural and unusual. The face of Christ appears on barns, bathtubs and even on a courtroom pillar. Angels abound! Shops can't keep up with the demand for the latest angel ornament. Picking up the *NEW AGE JOURNAL* recently, the first article that leaped off the page was on "ministering angels". Christians also speak and write on angels and tell people to expect to see an angel. Fundamental Christians tell about picking up a hitchhiker who rides with them for awhile then suddenly disappears. How are we to discern when subjective experiences formulate the basis on which right or wrong is now judged?

In New Age circles there is much talk among adherents about the return of "the Christ". According to them "the Christ" [whom they call Lord Maitreya] has appeared to quite a number of people [even fundamentalist Christians] as a hitchhiker and even to orthodox Christian gatherings. They believe he will be doing this more and more in the near future. In one article they even contemplated that he might appear before 35,000 people at a Reinhard Bonnke meeting in England. They feel that if he does this, perhaps the media will pick it up and people will readily accept the final manifestation! Their dream is that one of his appearances would be televised world wide! Even as I write this, it seems so bizarre, yet there are many people around the world who are awaiting this appearance. If this scenario comes to pass, my heart sinks as I think of those whose walk with God is based on subjective experience and not the scripture. Will they not know the difference? If they see an apparition suddenly come into their meeting bathed in white light, will they believe they are seeing Christ?

In the light of the fact that the Word of God warns that in the last days there will be signs and wonders, and gives a warning that even the very elect could be deceived, how do we discern if a manifestation is of God or not?

If you see Christ here on the earth and your feet are on the ground, you are not seeing the Jesus of the scriptures! The Word of God tells us that Jesus who disappeared in a great cloud will return in like manner! He will descend from heaven with a shout. . and the dead in Christ will rise first. . then we which are alive will rise - yes, the RAPTURE is a reality!

The days we are living in are so critical that before you accept a message today from anyone - test the spirits. (I John 4:1-6).

We are now witnessing a prophetic fulfillment in every sphere in Christianity. The Holy Scriptures clearly indicate that the spiritual scene of the last days will not be one of great spiritual "revival", but rather one of almost universal apostasy, of spiritual deception so subtle that the very elect, if that were possible, will be deceived. Christianity will virtually fade from the public scene. *"When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on earth?"* Luke 18.8. Perversions within and without the Church will be of such magnitude that it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for this generation.

Prophetic "words" must be checked out with Scripture. If a word is prophesied for a particular day and it does not come to pass, it has been given by a false prophet.

The teaching on the soon return of Christ, the RAPTURE, is giving way to promoting a time of great revival with hospitals being emptied and people falling on their faces on the streets because of the "glory". God in His sovereignty can pour out a mighty revival at any time - we do not limit Him. At the epicenter of any genuine move of the Holy Spirit there will be repentance and a return to the God of the Scriptures! However today religious leaders have been holding meetings with known New Agers to explore ways the Evangelicals and the New Agers can join hands to cooperate to bring their mutual goals to pass. In throwing out THE RAPTURE, they find they have many mutual goals. Both want to take dominion of the earth and restore the earth! Both want to bring in peace and unity. We can not afford to allow the pure Word of God to be mingled with contemporary thought.

The New Age (contemporary) way of thinking has a "religious" basis and it is called Theosophy. "Theosophy" is a synthesis of religion, philosophy, and science. It is an attempt to bring together for mutual enrichment the best thinking of the Eastern and Western worlds.

"The name 'theosophy' was first used in Alexandria in the 3rd century A.D., in connection with the teachings of the Greek mysteries concerning God. Based on its Greek derivation, the word refers to the divine wisdom as it unfolds in the human spirit, not a set of beliefs superimposed upon man. This wisdom is considered to underlie the teachings of all religions. The concepts of Theosophy have appeared in the philosophical systems of China, India, and Egypt, and in the works of the Gnostics, Neoplatonists, and Cabalists, or medieval Jewish mystics.

Theosophy denies that the human spirit can ultimately be lost, because it is intrinsically eternal and indestructible. Through successive reembodyments in physical form, with accompanying emotional, mental, and psychic responses to experience, the spirit attains mastery over its vehicles and man reaches the expression of his godhood.

Three goals of Theosophy:

1. Form a Universal brotherhood of humanity without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste, color.
2. Encourage study of comparative religion, philosophy, and science.
3. To investigate unexplained laws of nature and the powers latent in man. Complete freedom of individual search and belief." Encyclopedia Americana International Edition. 1987, Grolier Inc. Vol. 26.

New Age heresy and its experiential religion (theosophy) is becoming more and more entrenched in Christian theology. It has been slowly corrupting the absolute concepts of the Christian faith. It undermines faith in the Word of God and it changes the literal interpretation of the Bible to virtually a symbolic script. This symbolism allows one to interpret the Bible however he chooses. Allegorical preaching has become the order of the day. The progression beyond allegorical preaching gives rise to soulish or sensory experiences. Use of mime, drama, dance and puppets can arouse within the hearts of the congregation an increasing desire for soulish experiences. Left unchecked, the pastor and congregation are subtly drawn into a spiritual arena filled with strange manifestations, i.e. levitating, hysteria (laughter) and contempt for the Written Word.

"The glue binding most New Age devotees is one of common mystical experiences. 'Experiential religion' is considered vital within the movement. A substantial

proportion of those within the movement strongly believe in psychic phenomena and say they do so because of "direct experiences." Constance Cumbey, THE HIDDEN DANGERS OF THE RAINBOW, Huntington House, p. 54

Scripture intimates that in the last days experiential religion coupled with selfish desire on the part of Christians, will produce a breed of professional preachers or theologians that will especially pander to carnal lusts (soulish experiences). Damnable heresies based on myth (mystical experiences) will cause many to wander off following the strange piper. They will... *"turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables."* II Timothy 4:4.

Professional preachers become heretics of the first order in response to carnal Christians wanting to experiment with pleasure and mystic ideas, and are taking full advantage of the trend. They use every conceivable modern technique and idea dressed in theological terms to give their listeners the self-centered experience they crave. This is done to control the hearers' purse and mind. This trend is causing Christianity to play right into the hands of the enemy. The Church is suffering violence as liberal theologians wrest the Holy Scriptures, subtract and add to it and reject its inerrancy and infallibility in support of their anti-Christ views. In the process they prostitute the Christian faith to New Age paganistic influence.

"Neo-orthodox and liberal wings of Protestantism deny final authority to scripture as inerrant and infallible, substituting some internal authority such as feeling, conscience, experience, 'Christ speaking through the Holy Spirit, etc.'" Ungers Bible Hand Book, by Meril F. Unger, Moody Press 1969. page 6

Yes, the very Word of God is being used as a tool to draw Christians into a mystical frame of mind, away from a literal spiritual mind based on the literal meaning of the Word of God. There has been a departure from the true method of Bible interpretation. We must take the Bible literally whenever it is at all possible.

When the allegorical method of interpretation is used major heresies develop. Within Charismatic/Pentecostal circles three major heresies are taking shape. These are (1) the denial of the deity of Christ; (2) the deification of Satan; and (3) the deification of man. These are but a revival of old heresies and unfortunately there are too many similarities to not pay attention. Some of the old heresies were:

1. Arianism This error denied the deity of Christ. The council of Nicea in the fourth century was called mainly to refute this error. Athanasius boldly defended the truth that Jesus was both fully God and full man. There are those today teaching that no where in the Bible does it say that Jesus was God while He walked on the earth. They believe that Jesus emptied Himself totally of his deity and walked the earth only as a man.

2. Montanism. We know this today as "Kingdom Now" theology. The basis of this is the belief that the Kingdom of God can be fully realized by the church prior to the return of Christ. The frightening part of this teaching is that they believe evil will be subdued by a victorious church. So when a well-known television personality promotes the prophecy of "evil being ripped off the earth" in June, 1994 and then makes the comment that it may be that Christians will be the ones that rise up and will rip the evil from the earth, it is clear what teaching is coming through.

There are many forms of this teaching and the most common today is the Manifest Sons of God teaching. Unfortunately this is the bandwagon that so many of the new prophets are riding as they declare fantastic revival, signs and wonders and supernatural events.

3. Gnosticism. The gnostics claim a "special" knowledge known only to the "elect" or to the "chosen". They interpret scripture by special revelation. So again it is not what the Scripture literally says that is important, but rather what is received by "revelation knowledge".

[Excerpts taken from PROPHECY TODAY. For full article order Documentation Packet for March! April 1994]

We are seeing a resurgence today of two forms of Gnosticism. On one hand we have the New Age which is ferociously reviving the pagan form and it has entered into the Church and is seducing Christians through "triumphalism". Both of these movements, unfortunately, are shaping the Church. One is working feverishly in the liberal churches and the other in the more fundamental conservative churches. They both have a single desire which is to welcome a world ruler who promises peace and unity to all-except those who resist.

New groups and coalitions are springing up across the land beckoning to prepare for a bright new future in the coming millennium of global bliss!

Impossible you say. My pastor would never be part of a New Age plan to join together to usher in the new millennium. He may be part of that plan and not even know it.

The WORLD GOODWILL NEWSLETTER which is published in New York, Switzerland and England is quite specific in its aims and purposes.

"The goodwill vision stems from a fundamental belief in human divinity and in our capacity to redesign our thought and action by drawing upon the source of love, will and wisdom which lies within us. It is these inner potencies which are being evoked by millions of people all over the globe as they search for meaning and deliberately foster integrity and the spirit of service in their daily life. . . . this vision is the inner foundation of a new and better world, a foundation of love expressed in human thought, word and deed."

The newsletter is New Age. Different organizations mentioned are: THE PHILIPPINES THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY PEACE LIBRARY AND RESEARCH CENTER which is dedicated to the pursuit of global peace. The approach is two-pronged. "First as a quest for individual peace and second as an effort to bring about inner transformation amongst large numbers of people". This Center establishes Peace Clubs in schools and communities etc., EARTHACTION NETWORK (a new international network of over 600 partner Organizations from 94 countries) which enables organizations from around the world to mobilize public pressure simultaneously on global environment, development and peace issues, and INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION PEACE THROUGH CULTURE which is a recently formed international network of organizations. This Association organized an International Congress, Towards Spiritual Concord which was attended by a wide range of international spiritual and religious groups as well as representatives from the fields of science, politics and economics. They found a common basis for future co-operation in the formula that 'God,

Universe and Cosmos' are synonymous concepts. There are national societies in Russia, Germany, Japan, South Africa, Austria, Italy, France, the USA, Bulgaria, Slovakia, Poland, India and Nepal. This year they will be holding the First World Congress for Holistic Medicine. They will explore a synthesis of Eastern and Western knowledge based on the unity of Spirit, Soul and Body.

There were a number of other groups mentioned, but the most surprising was The Bi-millennial Global Interaction Network (BEGIN), AD 2000. It describes this group as a "group of concerned world citizens who circulate information and ideas on celebrating the year 2000 as a planetary jubilee with an agenda of hope." They produce Report which can be obtained by writing: BEGIN. AD 2000 Global Service Office, P.O. Box 1777, Colorado Springs, CO 80901-1777. The Executive Director is Jay E. Gary. In a letter to WORLD GOODWILL he wrote, "One common project we are developing is an 'International Year of Thanksgiving' in 2000, especially through the United Nations. Dr. Robert Muller has given leadership to this proposal."

Who is Dr. Robert Muller? He is the former under-secretary of the United Nations, whose spiritual tutors include former Buddhist U. N. leader U Thant, former occult Masonic leader Foster Bailey, and Alice Bailey, his wife who channels the Tibetan Master Djwhal Kuhl. The WORLD GOODWILL NEWSLETTER is published by Lucis (formerly Lucifer) Press, which was founded by Foster and Alice Bailey. He has been on the forefront of establishing New Age practices in every area of society for many years.

Now the important question. Who is Jay Gary? Though few would recognize his name, he has become a forceful leader in today's vast and vital effort to evangelize the world for Christ by year 2000. From 1978 to 1982, he "developed the Perspectives Study Program, a nationwide lay mission study effort, which now touches more than 5000 students a year." (THE COUNTDOWN HAS BEGUN Rockville, VA; AD1000 Global Service Office, 1989). He has worked as a research consultant to the Worldwide Student NetWork Campus Crusade for Christ's year 2000 program to reach college students around the world. He was coordinating the AD 2000 Global Service office in Colorado Springs and he calls himself a "Congress Planner with the Lausanne Movement. " He has authored THE COUNTDOWN HAS BEGUN which documents his Biblical beliefs and working relationships with many respected Christian leaders and organizations involved with world evangelization. His credentials seem beyond reproach.

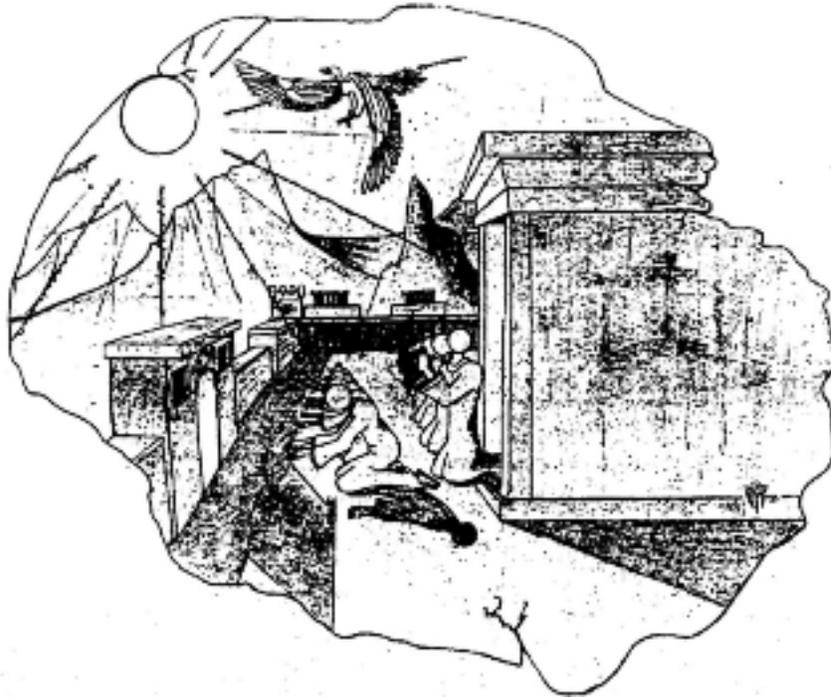
Why then would he join forces with Robert Muller? He apparently does not DISCERN the danger inherent in an alliance and joint celebration with occult world leaders. On the first page of his Bimillennial Research Report (March/April 1992), he gives an uncritical endorsement of Robert Muller and announced the coming "World Parliament of Religions". His Report closes with a booklist and order form. The recommended books include Muller's THE BIRTH OF A GLOBAL CIVILIZATION, Isaac Asimov's THE MARCH OF THE MILLENNIA, and GLOBAL RESPONSIBILITY by Hans Kung, the German theologian responsible for drafting a global ethics statement at the recent Parliament of World Religions.

It is without a doubt that his endorsement of Muller and his global philosophy has opened some high-level Christian doors to the New Age global agenda. When Robert Muller talks about a "Spiritual Renaissance", he doesn't mean a Christian revival. He is referring to a unified global religion that will join all people and nations under the benevolent reign of

spiritually wise U.N. leaders. He envisions a world of spiritual beings evolving through reincarnation and fulfilling the law of karma. Along with Al Gore and other leaders who call themselves Christians, he bases his view of the future on Teilhard de Chardin's teaching about man's spiritual evolution toward an Omega point of perfect unity.

There are so many world-wide evangelization efforts that have been influenced by this particular thrust. For more information write for the Documentation Packet, March/April 1994.

The pivotal point of all of this is that when God's Word is twisted to fit contemporary values the boundaries become broadened beyond the Cross. Again we have the scene as depicted in Ezekiel:



And he brought me into the inner court of the LORD'S house, and, behold, at the door of the temple of the LORD, between the porch and the altar, were about five and twenty men, with their backs toward the temple of the LORD, and their faces toward the east; and they worshipped the sun toward the east. (Ezekiel 8:16)

The seductive call today is for a global spirituality in a new millennium of peace and unity. Even though everyone owns a Bible, the church today has become Bible illiterate. They have clamored for personal interpretations rather than take the Word of God literally so that their senses have become dulled and DISCERNMENT is gone. Instead the door has been opened to all kinds of *"deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons. II (I Timothy 4: 1).*

The church that is now being shaped will welcome a world ruler who prioritizes security and oneness to all! We are living in serious days and as never before let us remember the admonition of Christ... *"How is it that ye do not discern this time."* (Luke 12:56)

Prayer:

O Jesus, Word of God, only Begotten Son of the Father, Your righteousness covers me. Of myself I have no righteousness. Let your Holy Spirit fill me, teach me, direct me. Help me to help my brother. When I stumble, pick me up. Wash me with your blood and I will be whiter than snow.

Amen