

Apostles of the Absurd

Prophets of the Preposterous

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If someone you loved dearly was engaged in behavior that was destructive to himself and others around him, your love would compel you to have an intervention, even if the person didn't like it.

I've been a life-long charismatic believer. I am thankful for my heritage, my tribe, if you will. However, as the years have rolled by my heart has broken as I have watched that heritage drift further and further into self-destructive thinking and practices: intoxicating Gnosticism.

Even the term "charismatic" has been so polluted in popular understanding that I wish there was an alternative to use.

In my tribe of the family of God, it has reached the point that if anyone shows any passion for a disciplined commitment to the accurate handling of Scripture, that person will be called a legalist, a dogmatist, narrow, judgmental, too doctrinal, hopelessly left-brained, not open to the Spirit, too "Word-focused," "a spiritual sheriff," "old-order," and other charming labels.

The attitude saturates popular-level social media. I deal with it frequently in interactions with individuals. Theology is considered a problem, a nuisance to be gotten rid of—a "limiting restraint" on the Spirit of God; man-made chains to be broken in order to free us into the liberty of God's Spirit (I have actually had "leaders" tell me that). News flash: the Word and the Spirit are NOT in competition for primacy!

I believe in a broad bandwidth of "orthodoxy". I have titles in my library by Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox, and Syrian/Coptic authors. I have been blessed by them. I am not looking for conformity of thought to my way of thinking on every blessed point of biblical minutiae. God forbid! What a boring world that would be! I don't even believe everything I believe! I certainly don't expect others to!

I don't believe that doctrine/teaching is the beginning and end-all of life in Christ. I understand that "theology" is not the river of life. I understand that being a dead, dry, "theologian" is not a compliment. However, the other extreme is also true! Having little or no biblical discipline is not a compliment! If the river of our spirituality has no banks, if the highway of our journey has no guardrails, we should

not be surprised if we end up drowned or in the ditch. **My tribe is drowning in the ditch.**

Lest you think I am fussing about minor points of doctrine, here are some real examples of the scale of this problem in my tribe. These are samples from my little corner of the world. You do the extrapolation. You estimate the tens of thousands affected by what I share here:

I once saw a very well known “apostle,” a leader of a world-wide “network,” a member of the International Coalition of Apostles (ICA), get up in front of an adoring throng of gullible young people and say: “I know that what I am about to say is not what the Scriptures mean from the passage I will be using, but the Spirit has told me to teach . . .” He proceeded to mock disciplined exegesis, scholarship, and theologians and went on to fill the notebooks and minds of those impressionable young people with pure fantasy mush from his supposed “prophetic-apostolic revelation.” This man heads a world-wide network/association.

Another person from the ICA that I knew personally taught that theology gets in the way of the anointing and we need to get rid of it. (I was in the meeting where he shared that). He said that what we needed was more anointing, not more scholars. I have since come to realize that it was his deep insecurity talking.

Another member of the ICA, the head of a large international organization, with a strong emphasis on “father-son” teaching, spiritual covering, submission to the set-man, etc., was on the platform at a conference when one of his young “sons/acolytes” got up in the meeting, began extolling this man’s lofty virtues, and “exceptional anointing.” The young man suggested that the spiritual father was so anointed that the folks should be baptized into the name of this “apostle.” Nothing was done or said in the meeting about this. Whether something was said or done behind the scenes I do not know. I sure hope so. But since it was a public incidence, it should have been corrected in public, for the benefit of the public in attendance at the time.

I had another so-called apostle tell me that he never studies the Scriptures prior to preaching. He said that too much study gets in the way of the “flow of revelation.” Then, semi-chagrined, he said that he just hopes after he is done that he can find something in the Scriptures to back up what he just taught. He was not trying to be funny. He was serious. This man also oversaw a worldwide network/association.

I once had a conversation with another apostle, going over the Scriptures with him. He didn’t like what I was bringing, but admitted it was correct and said: “When **you** have a large and successful ministry like I do, then I will consider changing what I teach, until then I am going to keep on doing what I am doing.”

I had a conversation with an apostolic-evangelist who was bashing theology and said that too much emphasis on “doctrine” gets in the

way of the revelation of the “cosmic-Christ” in each of us.

I was in a meeting where a “prophet” worked the crowd and preached for 90 minutes without ever mentioning Jesus or the Scriptures. What he presented was full-on, new age, astral projection, portals, frequencies, and vibrations. He openly and publicly mocked those who would question him. Here’s the kicker: He was invited to stay for weeks as a headliner for “revival meetings” because he was so “anointed.” It was doubly sad as the crowd was made up largely of young and impressionable new converts who were swallowing everything this “prophet” had to say. I was so grieved in this meeting I got up and left and cried and prayed in the parking lot, where I met two others doing the same. But three out of 300+ in attendance is not very encouraging.

I was in another meeting at a church overseen by a young apostolic-pastor where the youth in this church were being instructed by their youth-leader in techniques of astral projection. He was teaching them how, as a group, to leave their bodies (en masse), go into astral planes, talk to the dead, and come back and give “testimonies” of their conversation with dead people. This church thought they were having “revival” among their young people. These young people were paraded on Sunday morning with their testimony of talking to Martin Luther, Abraham Lincoln, and more. Of course the leadership could pull up some obscure Old Testament proof text, poorly exegeted, to “justify” what they were doing. “Necromancy for Jesus.” There’s a winner for you.

I once had a conversation with an elder’s wife, pointing to something Jesus said in the Scriptures—red-letter stuff—that she didn’t want to face. Her stunning response was: “I don’t believe that; my Jesus is not like that.” The essence of idolatry is to make up one’s own god in the “chambers of our imagery” as Ezekiel calls it. She was a “wonderful person.” Well, wonderful people believe, say, do, and teach stupid things all the time.

Friends, these stories I have recounted here are 100% true, and I wish I could say they are all I have. They are not. I could go on and on.

It would be easy to overlook this matter if spiritual novices were the source of the problem—babes who didn’t know any better. That’s not the case. I hear and see these sorts of things on a regular basis coming from so-called apostles, prophets, and other leaders and influencers with high profile media and multinational ministries.

It has reached the point that being thought or considered “prophetic” and having a “successful ministry” apparently means teaching or believing anything you want, with utter disregard for a disciplined posture before the Scriptures.

Cook up your own fantasy typology? Doesn’t matter.

Teach “doctrine” from your dreams and visions? Doesn’t matter.

Misrepresent God with a twisted scripture? Doesn't matter.
Disregard scriptural context? Doesn't matter.
Disregard language disciplines? Doesn't matter.
Disregard original culture or intent? Doesn't matter.

We are in deep trouble. The whole family is sick. The family I love is diseased. The womb that birthed me is defiled.

“Steve, this is so negative, there are lots of wonderful people (apostles and prophets) who are not like this. Why don't you focus on that?”

Thinking that way is like watching a pedophile violate a young girl in the bushes, and doing nothing about it because “lots of married people have God-sanctioned sex, there is good sex too, you know, why don't you focus on that?”

I don't focus on that because tens of thousands of innocents are being violated in the spiritual bushes of the kingdom!

The fact that the good exists is IRRELEVANT to the dysfunction that damages.

Genuinely well people don't need a physician. Unfortunately, everyone of these instances I have recounted was with someone who was considered “anointed”, “wonderful”, “sincere”, “humble”, “Spirit-filled”, overall decent chap, with adoring followers who thought they were well!

What is the remedy?

Stop the nonsense. Develop some courage. Stand up to these authority figures. Say something. Stop supporting these folks with your time, talents, and treasure. Don't be complicit in their ways. Quit making excuses for them. Stop being blinded by financial and numeric success. Abandon Christian celebrity-ism. Don't allow yourself to be bullied or intimidated into silence by them. Ask embarrassing questions. Tell the emperor he has no clothes on.

Return . . . home . . . to Christ and Him crucified. We will always find a welcome there.

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