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# DISCERNMENT NEWSLETTER

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

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## Too Superstitious

*Malcolm Harris (South Africa)*

On a recent visit to the North West African country of Ghana, David and Jewel Grewe and I were struck by the ‘Christian’ flavor of many of the business names that we encountered throughout the country. In a country where employment is scarce and necessity has spawned thousands of entrepreneurs in the streets of every city and town, one can’t miss the *apparently* God honoring business names like: **By His Grace Taxi Service, Great is the Lord Clothing, God is # 1 Shoes, Trust in Jesus Builders** and we even saw a **Coke for Christ’ Billboard!**



A superficial observation of these signs suggests that the majority of Ghanaians are saved; but while it is true to say that Ghana is very open to the Gospel and there are many wonderful born again believers in the country, the Christian business names conceal one of Africa’s greatest bondages! Our knowledgeable and perceptive guide, Brother Paa, who is a local minister in Accra, a dedicated Bible believing Christian and also a University Lecturer, informed us that the majority of ‘Christian’ business names were used to ward off the ancestral spirits and to free their businesses from interference from deceased ancestors.

This problem is not peculiar to Ghana, but is common throughout Africa. In South Africa many long standing born again Christians give their dead a Christian burial, but also slaughter a goat at the funeral in the hope of appeasing both God and the ancestors.

While considering these things, Paul’s words come to mind, “Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. “ (Acts 17:22)

The ancestral superstition that has the African continent in its grip is of great concern to Christian Leaders and Pastors in Ghana and was raised as a subject in the recent IFCB (International Fellowship of Christian Believers) Conference held in Kumasi, Ghana. Some Pastors exercise various forms of ‘deliverance’ in the name of Jesus or by the blood of Jesus as a way of ridding believers of the ancestral curse. This erroneous method of dealing with the problem plays into the hands of the devil, in that it is based on the unbiblical presupposition that either these ancestral spirits are able to interfere with the living, or that the believer with the ancestral problem is demon possessed.

Paul’s observation of the Athenians is clearly a fitting observation of the majority of Africans, both saved and unsaved, they are TOO SUPERSTITIOUS! It should be noted that Paul did not exercise any form of ‘deliverance’ over the Athenians, he simply told them the truth for it is the TRUTH that will make us free.

**And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. (John 8:32)**

**If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed. (John 8:36)**

Africa needs to be told the truth about (1) ancestral influences and (2) the truth that genuine Christians can’t be demon possessed and this truth will make them free from the greatest tool of the Devil..... their own superstition!

### **The truth about ancestors that have died**

The greatest authority on the subject of life after death is the Lord Jesus Himself. Jesus deals with this complicated and baffling human subject in a very simple but supernaturally profound way by giving us the account of the death of a rich man and a beggar named Lazarus. (Luke 16:19-31). In this account the Lord unfolds factual information about life after death

that demolishes all of men's speculations that vary from reincarnation to soul sleep to annihilation. Jesus tells us that although the unsaved rich man, who had died, was desperate to communicate with his five living brothers to warn them about the torment of Sheol, there was no way for him to do this. Even his suggestion that Lazarus be sent back was turned down by Abraham, saying that they have the Bible (the Law and Prophets) let them be warned by the Scriptures.

The truth about the dead is that they CANNOT communicate nor have any influence over the living.

In many circles, not only in Africa, there is the practice of speaking to the dead and supposedly also hearing from the dead. This form of communicating with the departed is given a deceptive credibility by odd references to facts that only the deceased person would know about the living. Also the sighting of ghosts and strange inexplicable noises at night all help to build the deception that the dead are trying to communicate with us. This phenomenon known as *necromancy* is dealt with very sternly in the Old Testament. *And the soul that turneth after such as have familiar spirits, and after wizards, to go a whoring after them, I will even set my face against that soul, and will cut him off from among his people.* (Leviticus 20:6)

It is to be noted that anyone in the Scriptures who had anything to do with communicating with the dead, had a 'familiar spirit'. A familiar spirit is of course a demon and all such had to be killed in the Old Testament because they were an abomination to God. Anyone today who claims to be able to communicate with the dead is not of God and they have a familiar spirit (demon) who helps them with facts about the dead that deceive the bereaved living into thinking that they are hearing from their dead loved one. The ghosts and noises are all orchestrated by demons to deceive, because we know from the teaching of Jesus that the unsaved dead are in Sheol and cannot communicate with us and the saved dead are in Paradise. Paradise was in the heart of the earth separated from Sheol by a great gulf, until Jesus paid the redemptive price for the Old Testament saints on the cross, at which point He took them to Heaven. (Eph 4:8-10) Paul tells us, *We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.* (2 Corinthians 5:8). Christians who die in this New Testament era go immediately into the presence of the

Lord and will return with Him at the Resurrection. (1 Thessalonians 4:14)

### **The truth about Christians being demon possessed**

The idea that a Christian who has the Spirit of Christ dwelling in them and whose body is the Temple of the Holy Spirit can be demon possessed, stems from the erroneous concept of 'Dualism'. Dualism teaches that the forces of good and evil are equal (sometimes depicted by the Eastern 'Ying Yang' sign), where good is the kingdom with God in charge and evil is the equal and opposite kingdom with the Devil in charge.

Nothing could be further from the truth! From a human perspective the Bible teaches that the Devil is a Prince Angel and has been given certain powers by God which he exercises for evil. For this reason we are not to speak lightly of Lucifer, as we are taught by Jude:

*Likewise also these filthy dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities. Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee.* (Jude 1:8-9)

However, from God's perspective, the Devil is merely a created angel that has been judged already and will be cast into the Lake of Fire in due course. The Devil is NO THREAT to God whatsoever! Reading the Book of Job will put the relationship between God and the Devil into clear Biblical perspective for any true believer.

It is not possible for a fallen angel (the Devil) to take hold of the Spirit of Christ in a believer, cast Him out and then take possession of that believer. Nor is it possible for a demon and Jesus Christ or the Holy Spirit to co-exist in a believer's soul, spirit or body! .... *for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?* (2 Corinthians 6:14)

The Bible does however teach that we can give place to the Devil in our lives, by yielding to temptation. We can also allow strongholds and 'high things that exalt themselves against the knowledge of God', also vain imaginations to exit in our minds and thereby be brought into bondage by the Devil. The ancestral

superstition is a very powerful example of this bondage or 'oppression' by the Devil.

Paul in dealing with this kind of bondage does not advocate that we exercise some form of deliverance over a believer who is in bondage, but he tells Timothy to INSTRUCT *those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth;* And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will. (2 Timothy 2:25,26)

The truth about the Devil is that he was defeated by a 'man' hanging upon a cross and we are told to: *Submit ourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from us.* (James 4:7)

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is the power of God unto salvation. Jesus defeated the Devil at the cross and made a show of principalities and powers, triumphing over them. At salvation, where true repentance and turning from ancestral worship and every other sinful practice is evident, the new creature in Christ is delivered from every bondage of the devil and is free to walk in newness of life as a saint.

Deliverance in the name of Jesus is only necessary, where an unsaved person is demon possessed and wants to be set free. Salvation should follow deliverance, otherwise the person could end up in a worse state.

*When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation.* (Matthew 12:43-45)

**Thank God for Jesus who is THE TRUTH!**

***And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. (John 8:32)***

## **Back "Up" From "Down Under"**

*Jewel Grewe*

Losing a day on the trip to Australia was a *bit* unnerving. Jetlag was a *bit* overwhelming. However, visiting Australia was a high light in my ministry. Why have I waited so long? It didn't take long to feel at home. My airport "chauffer", Peta Leembruggen did a marvelous job in instantly making me welcome. On first glance, it hardly seemed that it was a different country. There was Starbucks, Target, Kmart, Kentucky Fried Chicken, McDonalds and other obvious American influences. However, upon arrival at the conference center on the "Gold Coast" with the Pacific Ocean gently washing against the shoreline, I knew I was not in Indiana.

The conference was under the auspices of Christian Witness Ministries (CWM) with the gracious Rev. & Mrs. Philip Powell as host & hostess. It was a joy to see the folk gathered from Australia and New Zealand to enjoy the Word of the Lord and glory in His Presence. Every trip in Australia involves great distances, so needless to say, it took effort by the attendees to be present. Yet, the fellowship was precious.

Sadly, one can travel the earth today and find the same deceptions that are rampant in the U.S. finding their way to the far corners. If the "apostate" church was as good at getting the Gospel out as they are the "counterfeit", we would be indeed seeing "revival". Sadly, the Gospel of salvation which is based on the preaching of the Cross of Christ and His Work on Calvary is replaced by prosperity, entertainment, manifestations, superstars, good works, etc. Yes, the list could go on. Instead of looking for the soon return of our Lord and Savior, the apostate church is seeking to build the Kingdom here on the earth in the "name" of Jesus. They give the lip service, but their hearts are far from God. Yet, they use vain repetitions in their many prayers and fastings and believe they are "spiritual" – in fact a level above everyone else. But where is true repentance?

CWM was formed as a response to the direction the Assemblies of God of Australia chose. The Assemblies of God had their *distinctives* just as the Evangelicals had theirs. Somehow, with the arrival of the "superstars" of Christendom, those *distinctives*

have blurred and the Evangelical church has taken on a different form.

**Hillsong - Australia.** A magazine that I picked up at the conference had an article about the Hillsong Conference in 2006. Among the speakers at that conference was Rick Warren and Bill Hybels. The article brought out some interesting thoughts.

*The music.....is an outflow of emotion, of a simple heart-felt desire to connect with God, to honor God, to feel God. They want God, and they want to please him, and they feel that the music helps them do both. And so music becomes central to the Christian life, and to church life.*

*There's a paradox at the heart of all this. It seems to be all about the Spirit lifting us up to the heart of God as we sing our praises to him – a supernatural connection with the divine – and yet it's also very manufactured. An enormous amount of planning, preparation, rehearsal and hard work goes into the whole operation. Darlene stressed how much dedication and diligence went into preparing worship that was truly honoring to God.*

*Not to mention the technology – the billiard-table-sized sound desks, the banks of computer monitors, the mics, the loudspeakers, the sophisticated lighting, the smoke machine, the video screens, the crane-mounted cameras sweeping the audience. The Hillsong “worship experience” throughout the week was a massive production, an artifact of incredible human ingenuity and skill.*

*And yet it was also an act of mysticism. It was predicated on a rejection of rational, mechanistic approaches to God – as if we simply read his words in a book and automatically come to know him. The music was meant to be the language of the heart that lifts us to immediate experience of God.*

*When Cindy Cruse-Ratcliff- the worship leader from Lakewood Church in Houston, Texas – led one of the worship times, Darlene stepped forward to express her thanks. “These guys have led us into the presence of God in such a magnificent way this morning. Let's just praise him now. And tell him how much we love him.” And she proceeded to pray a long and emotional prayer about obstacles in people's lives, and how she sensed a Spirit of overcoming in this place this day that would lead us to freedom, and on in the same vein for five minutes or so, the music behind her words all the time, swelling and fading, swelling and fading. To us, it all seemed to transparently staged and emotionally manipulative. But were they conscious of this? Or*

*were they so used to doing things this way that it just seemed natural.?*

There are very interesting points to ponder from the quote from this article. Music is subjective and plays upon the emotions. It is powerful and in many churches is promoted even above the preaching of the Word. The conclusions about the ‘core gospel content’ from the same article are what cause the greatest concern. Nathan Walter had been working on a project with others and at a seminar he outlined the results of his research about the nature of the “Hillsong Gospel” – which we can related to many of the upcoming “new” churches in America.

*Walter started with the assumption that ‘core gospel content’ must at the very least include some basic truths about:*

- . **sin** – that we are rebels against our holy, creator God, and deserve nothing but his wrath and condemnation;*
- . **Jesus** – that he is God's perfect obedient Son, who died as a penal substitute for our sins, and rose victorious and vindicated as Lord and Christ;*
- . **our response** – that in the gospel God calls on us to turn from sin in repentance, to put our faith entirely in Jesus for the forgiveness of sins, and to wait for his return, when he will judge the living and the dead, and bring salvation and eternal life to those who have put their trust in him.*

After thorough research, which included visiting the Hillsong church on several occasions, Walter arrived at some unsettling conclusions.

*. when sin is spoken about, which is not often, it is usually in terms of immorality in the world or else negative thinking and attitudes that destroy God's purpose in our lives and limit our potential; there is no concept that we are under God's wrath or condemnation because of our personal rebellion against him, or that there is a connection between sin, death and judgment.*

*. it is asserted that Jesus is God's perfect Son and even that he died ‘for us’ or ‘in our place’, but what this means is not explained; not a single example was found expounding Jesus' death as taking the penalty for sin on our behalf so that we might avoid God's wrath on judgment day; instead, Jesus' death and resurrection is usually quoted either as an example (of overcoming difficulty and living with purpose), or*

*explained as the source of healing and empowerment for living an abundant and healthy life.*

*. our response to the Christian message focuses heavily on the power of choice God has given us, on the need to change mental attitudes and thought patterns so as to live in the blessing God has for us, and on the biblical 'law of cause and effect' – that if we obey Bible principles we will succeed and flourish in life, as God intended.*

A summary of the findings:

*In their understanding of humanity and sin, Hillsong distorts the diagnosis: it's not so much that we're sinful rebels against God our creator, and therefore objects of his righteous anger and judgment, under the sentence of death; it's more that we have allowed all kinds of bad choices and negative thinking to get in the way of reaching the purpose and potential God has in store for us.*

*This means that although Hillsong still believes in and proclaims the historical events of Jesus' death and resurrection, they understand these events differently. They do not proclaim Jesus' death as a substitutionary atonement, turning aside God's wrath so that I can receive forgiveness and be saved on the day of judgment – rather, Jesus' death and resurrection function as an undefined entry point into the life of blessing that God has for us, and serve as an example of what a fully devoted life in tune with God's purposes looks like (effectively a 'moral influence' view of the atonement).*

*And because they have twisted both the problem and the solution in Christ out of shape, their account of how we should respond to the gospel is also badly flawed. It's not about clinging to Christ in faith for forgiveness of sins, and pursuing holiness through the work of the Spirit – it's about choosing to change how you think, and obeying the Bible's principles, so that you can move into a period of success and flourishing in every area of life. (Quotes taken from the BRIEFING, Issue 340, Matthias Media, Kingsford NSW (e-mail: sales@matthiasmedia.com.au)*

Because of the “global society”, the church in Australia is experiencing the same deceptions that are plaguing the U.S. However, it was wonderful to visit the various areas and find that there are still those who are faithfully following the Lamb *withersoever* He goeth. They are willing to pay the price for the sake of the glorious Gospel. Let us remain faithful to Him who has called us out of darkness into His GLORIOUS LIGHT!

### **A Rotten Apple?**

*Mary Diane Valentine, PhD*

Thank you for your archived newsletters. These have been very helpful in discerning my own deceptions. Of course, I am concerned about others but I am cleaning up my own house.

In January 2003 I attended a meeting where James Goll was preaching and selling his teaching tapes. I did not know very much about him or the group he associated with. Charismatic Christian seemed okay to me. It was at this meeting I was asking God to show me discerning of spirits. This request has since led me through a maze of overlapping tunnels into the darkness of my own deceptions about some Christian teachings I had embraced. I didn't know it at the time but that prayer would bring me into a light I hadn't seen for many years.

As I questioned different spiritual happenings and teachings I had previously accepted, I aggravated a number of my Christian buddies, prayer partners for many years. These relationships had sustained me in times of struggle but also held me captive to false assumptions about the charismatic life. I lost a friend over the "gold dust." She had this phenomenon and wanted me to accept this as something from the Lord. I hadn't really known anyone who had this and at first thought it was all right. I studied the Scriptures and could not rationalize this to be God's work even though it sounded so good. To my knowledge, she still has this manifestation although I sent her the biblical rationale for why this could not be God's way. It's been a cool relationship since. I aggravated a whole audience of *Charisma* devotees when I wrote a letter about the *Narnia* films and how I argued these to be from the dark side. *Charisma* disagreed. Well, I didn't know those people so that wasn't so bad. But I lost others along the way as well.

I don't want to go over each situation of a deception revealed in this although I will mention the spirit of Jezebel. I'd heard these teachings for many years and it's another popular latter rain thing. I don't know exactly how it fits into their theological paradigm, but when I did a word study, I found no spirit of Jezebel, only behaviors. These are behaviors no Christian should desire and we should be observant if others are behaving like Jezebel. It came to me that as charismatics or Pentecostals, we should be careful what we call a spirit otherwise we will find ourselves in wrong teaching, what I later learned as the Gnostic Christian area. The search for the spirit of Jezebel and finding none helped me continue questioning. I had

cast aside the generational curse thing and the binding and loosing formulas in prior years along with other skewed interpretations of Scripture. The process has been several years in the making.

It's been since this last August that the veil on Gnosticism has really lifted. Yes, I had seen quite a bit and knew the spiritual harlotry I had been involved in but something else was not clear. That is how I found your site – I did a search on Google about spiritual warfare.

Before searching out the validity of warfare teachings, I was in a situation of trying to discover why things were not happening in my life. I reasoned it was because I was in warfare, that I was not getting my prayers answered. My spiritual friends prayed and agreed. We went into warfare for months with many manifestations and confirmations I might add.

Thinking can drive us into deception, but also lead us out. I had several nagging questions that kept coming to me. Why didn't Paul or Peter have to pray this way to get things to happen? Why is it now we learn of this? Why aren't people having victory if this really works?

When I started pursuing answers, it's so obvious to me now. I had been living in the wrong paradigms here. These were Gnostic ones but I hadn't understood what the Gnostic teachings were really about. I had been duped by the Gnostic paradigmatic world I was choosing to be in. Of course, I couldn't see the difference then. I had on the Gnostic glasses and viewed the Gnostic Christian teachings as "the norm." In communication theory this is called cognitive dissonance, meaning any information that contradicts what you already know or believe becomes discarded because you don't want to be in dissonance or inner conflict with yourself. Because I was experiencing cognitive dissonance, I was not able to see how deep into the Gnosticism belief system I had gone. Although I was wearing a milder prescription of Gnostic glasses since I had seen some of the deceptive teachings, I hadn't come totally away from the Gnostic Christians. When I got the revelation about the spiritual warfare teaching errors, the Gnostic glasses fell off entirely. I no longer experienced any cognitive dissonance in studying the deceptions surrounding this popular teaching on spiritual warfare. I no longer sense oppression like I did before and it's such a relief to know I am not going to have to be under a condemnation over the warfare routine. And it is a routine, much like the formulas of the word-faith movement.

Your archived newsletters have helped me understand the subtleties in these false teachings. Although I had thought I had gotten rid of extra biblical teachings with regard to the Third Wave, Latter Rain group, I realized this was part of that whole rotten apple I had been eating. I still had the apple in hand when I believed I was to participate in the spiritual warfare regimen. I am reading through your archived newsletters. I have checked out other sources as well to confirm what I now see so clearly.

In closing, I offer these thoughts. My sense of the problems I had stemmed from two sources. One was a lack of a good foundation to rightly discern the gifts of the Spirit along with the Word of God and the other was my indomitable pride. I liked being puffed up with the idea that I was called for something very special. I had received many prophecies about my position in the Body of Christ. I like position; I was in the elite group. I like being elite; that was my pride showing off. I wanted to be spiritual and with the spiritual ones. More pride. I wanted insider knowledge on what God was doing. I wanted to be anointed and that was pride. I sure believed I could conquer any foe out there because God was on my side. And I wanted my own way with God. All this comes to my desire for power and I see that now. My weakness of pride was a pull, like the force of gravity, toward the Gnostic Christians. These teachings fed my weakness and desire to be elite, have power and be "in the know." None of that sounds like a humble servant, nor was I.

To me, knowing the weakness of how I got there is equally important to understanding the false teachings. If I had not experienced the weakness problem, I doubt I would have taken one bite of the rotten apple – the latter rain teachings. For me, it's been more than finding out truth but repenting of my pride and all the things involved in it. And I'm not afraid of saying that publicly.

In my diet of rotten apple teachings, I did not feed myself enough truth from the word of God. I ate lies, which fed my pride and not my soul. 1 Peter 4:14 gives me biblical authority over the false Gnostic teachings. *"If you are reproached for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the spirit of glory and of God rests upon you."* I now know I don't have to go seeking the glory because it rests on me. That itself speaks volumes to my soul. Very simply, the appeal of the truths of God in the Scripture is much more comforting and freeing than any peel on that rotten apple.