

RELIGIOUS DECEPTION

Delusion in
Churches and
Theological
Seminaries

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

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Scripture quotations are from the King James Version of the Holy Bible. Only the very archaic terms were substituted, between brackets, with correlating terms from the New King James Version. All pronouns referring to the Godhead are capitalised.

Edited by Bernard Reeves.

A serious warning

Since the earliest times most Christian churches showed a lamentable inability to distinguish between the truth of God's Word and false presentations of it:

“I marvel that ye are so soon removed from Him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed” (Gal. 1:6-8).

The congregation in Corinth suffered from the same lack of discernment and spiritual insight:

“For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present *you as* a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent [deceived] Eve through his [craftiness], so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he that cometh preacheth **another Jesus**, whom we have not preached, or *if* ye receive **another spirit**, which ye have not received, or **another gospel**, which ye have not accepted, [you put up with it well]... For such *are* false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ... for Satan himself [transforms himself] into an angel of light” (2 Cor. 11:2-4, 13-14).

From the quoted sections it is evident that there are three things that are falsified by the enemy of our souls to deceive Christians and cause them to go astray. These perversions are: ✪ **another Jesus**; ✪ **another spirit**; and ✪ **another gospel**.

Satan's strategy to attack, misrepresent and pervert the Christian religion has been continued unabated throughout the entire church dispensation. It is our duty to

uncover and reject the particular forms of deception that are characteristic of the time in which we live.

ANOTHER JESUS

The following are some of the most common ways in which the image, person and work of the Lord Jesus are distorted in order to introduce a counterfeit Jesus who is powerless and consequently unable to save the souls of lost sinners:

Jesus the human teacher

In many sects such as the Jehovah's Witnesses, and also in non-Christian religions such as Islam, the deity of Jesus is denied. He is merely portrayed as a prophet and human teacher, while explicitly denying that He is the Son of God.

“Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is Antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father” (1 Jn. 2:22-23).

The antichristian denial of the deity of Jesus Christ is sadly also gaining ground in many 'Christian' churches today. There is an increasing theological tendency to deny the miraculous conception and virgin birth of the Lord Jesus, thereby rendering Him an ordinary human being. A strong movement has been built around the deceptive idea that the **historical Jesus** (the so-called **real Jesus**) is to be clearly distinguished from the **mythic Jesus** or **cultic Jesus** who is allegedly worshipped in the Christian Church.

A very shocking fact about the present campaign against Jesus Christ of the Bible is that many of the leading theologians in university faculties of theology are actively supporting it by questioning biblical views about Jesus as the Messiah and Son of God. In the process of 'discovering' the *historical* Jesus they are stripping the *preached* Jesus of his deity in an effort to reconcile the two images of him.

One of these groups of academics is the Jesus Seminar that was established in 1985 in the USA. Many South African theologians are following suit. The University of South Africa's Institute for Theology and Religion produced a book to this effect in 1997, titled *Images of Jesus*.

If Jesus was not God the Son, He would not have had a perfect life to sacrifice for the salvation of a fallen race of people. In the first Adam we all died spiritually by inheriting his sinful nature. A dying world needs a *second Adam* who is a perfect God-man to re-introduce God's divine nature to us, which is His sinless, eternal life (1 Cor. 15:22, 45; Rom. 5:14-18). Jesus is this Man who is at the same time the Son of man, the Son of God, and God Himself. To deny His Godhead by depicting Him only as a prophet, or human teacher, is to rob the world of its only Saviour.

Jesus the example

In the preaching of many of the formalistic and spiritually dead churches of our time, reference is often only made to the life of Jesus as an example that should be followed by His disciples. Christian virtues are propagated without the Christ who alone can enable us to realise the new life through an experience of re-birth. In moralistic messages of this nature, no emphasis is placed upon the cross of Jesus and His blood that was shed for sinners. People are only exhorted to love their neighbours and live morally good lives.

One of the results of this type of preaching is that Jesus becomes so unreal to people that they only have a vague perception of Him in their minds. They serve Him through mental consent but spiritually He is not a reality to them because they have not yet become new people who received Christ in their lives through faith. Although they talk about God and the Lord Jesus, they do not know Him personally and only very imperfectly and inadequately

follow His example by serving an 'image' of Him.

Jesus the giver of gifts

Many people worship Jesus mainly for the sake of certain benefits that they can derive from their association with Him. He must heal them and bless them by providing for all their material needs. They see Jesus as the One who restores to human beings the exalted position that they had before the Fall. They must regain their dominion over creation, wield great powers and even become gods in their own right.

Such people also end up serving 'another Jesus'. They do not identify with the crucified Christ, and they reject persecution, disease and suffering as the consequences of a weak faith. Through visualisation and positive thinking they create their own reality in which they become masters of their own destiny. By relying on various powers in their life, they do not put their trust in the crucified Christ to sustain them through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus had a large following when He healed the sick and performed many other signs and wonders. However, the majority of His opportunist and sensation-seeking followers deserted Him when He emphasised union with His body that was to be broken, and His blood that was to be shed for sinners, as the only basis for true fellowship with Him. To many of the opportunists, this was a hard saying: "From that *time* many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him" (Jn. 6:66; see also v. 53-65).

Many people configure their own popular Jesus whom they are following. They are offended if somebody indicates to them the spiritual risks of building their faith on a Jesus who is confined to signs and wonders, rather than the Crucified One who suffered and died that we may be forgiven and live new lives unto God.

Jesus the political liberator

In the Third World a Jesus is often proclaimed who is a freedom fighter and one who associates with the oppressed. He has come to set the political captives free and to uplift them on the socio-economic level of their existence. This Jesus is only involved with the secular affairs of people. He does not liberate them from sin, but from impeding political, social, and economic conditions. He blesses them in their struggle against the oppressors without denouncing their immoral behaviour or fixing the attention on their spiritual struggle against the enemy of their souls.

Jesus the sinner

The Jesus who is depicted in many of the Hollywood films is a sinner like any other fallen person who is controlled by his sinful passions. This blasphemous presentation of Jesus is the theme of films such as *Jesus Christ Superstar*, *The last temptation of Christ*, and *Jesus of Montreal*. In the last-mentioned film the counterfeit 'Jesus' stays with other young people in a flat in Montreal where they live licentious lives and also overindulge in liquor.

There are no limits to the evil imaginations of people who distort the image and person of Jesus under the influence of Satan. Jesus is even depicted as a homosexual by some of them. On a painting that was exhibited in Bishop Tutu's cathedral in Cape Town, Jesus is portrayed as an Aids victim who is full of sores. All these things are part of the age old campaign against Jesus by His many adversaries. In Biblical times He was also branded as a sinner and drinker who associated with immoral people:

“Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of [tax-collectors] and sinners” (Mt. 11:19; see also Jn. 9:16, 24).

The true Jesus whom we worship, is without sin. He is

“holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens” (Heb. 7:26; see also. 4:15). Do not profane and mock the holy name of God and His only begotten Son: “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatever a man soweth, that shall he also reap” (Gal. 6:7).

The cosmic Jesus

The intensified campaign of falsifying the name, character, and work of Jesus is aimed at preparing the way for the great end-time counterfeit Christ, the Antichrist. Jesus Himself warned us against the deception of the masses that will be perpetrated in His name:

“Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in My name, saying, **I am the Christ**; and shall deceive many” (Mt. 24:4-5).

The New Age Movement promotes a Jesus who is the personification of the messianic expectations of all the religions in the world. To the Christians he is **the Christ**, to the Jews **the Messiah**, to the Hindus **Krishna**, to the Muslims the **Imam Mahdi**, and to the Buddhists **Maitreya Buddha**. He is, therefore, the cosmic Christ, or universal Christ, of all faiths and as such the head of a spiritual hierarchy that supersedes and unites all religions on earth.

In the concluding chapter of the book *Images of Jesus*, a theologian of the University of South Africa, Mr. G.A. van den Heever, makes a strong plea for a multi-religious consideration of the position and role of Jesus. In this chapter, *Jesus in the world religions*, he says: “If it is true that the ‘construction’ of Jesus in early Christianity is similar to that of Buddha, Zoroaster and Krishna, then one needs to give an answer to the question of what possible gain there could be in a comparative venture such as this... It should encourage Christians, Jews, Buddhists, and Hindus towards a healthier, more tolerant interchange on the cultural and

religious front. However much we like to believe in our own uniqueness, we drink from the same wells.”

The Antichrist will manifest all the evil characteristics that are typical of the various falsifications of Jesus. He will be the “man of sin... the son of perdition... whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in those who perish” (2 Thes. 2:3, 9-10).

In his book *Searching for the Real Jesus* (1996) Dr. Douglas Groothuis clearly refutes the agnostic speculation by modern theologians:

“Jesus is not an ambiguous ink blot upon which we project our pet theories, hopes, or fears. He is a living reality who can be mastered by no one, since He is the Master of the universe. He challenges every counterfeit with His genuineness, every distortion with His veracity... The cross remains a fact of history, and the gospel continues to be the only means of setting people free. (Jn. 8:31-32)”

To be able to identify all the distortions of the counterfeit Jesus, the true Jesus must be known, served and worshipped with an undivided heart. We must grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

ANOTHER SPIRIT

The motivating force behind the widespread propagation of **another Jesus** is **another spirit** which comes directly from the devil and deceives people to bring them under the power of delusion. Because of this very real danger we are warned not to naively believe every spirit that works through preachers and prophets in churches, but to test the spirits:

“Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets have gone out into the world... [we] know the Spirit of truth and the spirit

of error” (1 Jn. 4:1, 6).

The spirit of error is intent on deceiving the people with sensational signs and wonders. It is the same spirit that will work through the Antichrist, “whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness” (2 Thes. 2:9-12).

The spirit of error is actively engaged in preparing the world on the coming of the cosmic Christ with his miracle working powers. His second in charge, the false prophet, will be able to wield equally astonishing powers:

“And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, and deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by *the means* of those miracles which he had power to do...” (Rev. 13:12-14).

As we approach this time of great deception, many false prophets are appearing on the scene to deceive people with their [occult] supernatural powers. The Lord Jesus clearly warned us against the great spiritual danger of their actions:

“And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many... [they] shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that if *it were* possible, they shall deceive the very elect” (Mt. 24:11, 24).

The New Age Movement and its associated false religions is at present focusing attention on the discovery and

use of miracle working psychic powers of self-healing and the promotion of supernatural manifestations. Even in many Christian meetings strange phenomena are the order of the day, e.g. *falling* (or *slaying*) *in the spirit*. Various manifestations such as laughing in the spirit, prophesying in the spirit, and dancing in the spirit emerge from this experience. In this way, the work of the Holy Spirit is imitated and many people blindly accept these phenomena without testing the spirits that are at work.

Most of the *Word of Faith* preachers create strong expectations of powerful manifestations of the Holy Spirit. However, there is no scriptural basis for the signs that allegedly occur at their meetings. Apart from the signs already mentioned, one of the more recent phenomena is gold-dust that falls on people's hands, arms or on their hair, while some claim that their teeth fillings turned into gold during meetings. One of the explanations given for this phenomenon is that Jesus is sweeping the golden streets of the new Jerusalem in preparation for our arrival there. But since there is a crack in the foundation of this city, the gold-dust falls through and onto His followers on earth. A biblical comment on this 'sign' is that we are not sanctified by gold-dust, by the precious blood of the Lamb!

Another modern fad in this movement is the so-called "New Wine" meetings where people experience typical symptoms of drunkenness. It coincides with falling and laughing in the spirit, and with the making of a wide range of animal sounds. A very well-known song which is sung by most of these groups is the following:

Now I laugh like an idiot and bark like a dog,
If I don't sober up, I'll likely hop like a frog!
And I'll crow like a rooster 'til the break of day,
'Cause the Holy Ghost is moving, and I can't stay away!

Now I roar like a lioness who's on the prowl,
I laugh and I shake, maybe hoot like an owl!

Since God's holy river started bubbling up in me,
It spills outside, and it's setting me free!

So I'll crunch and I'll dip and I'll dance round and round,
'Cause the pew was fine, but it's more fun on the ground!
So, I'll jump like a pogo stick, then fall on the floor,
'Cause the Holy Ghost is moving, and I just want more!

CHORUS:

Now I'm just a party animal grazing at God's trough,
I'm a Jesus junkie, and I can't get enough!
I'm an alcoholic for that great New Wine,
'Cause the Holy Ghost is pouring, and I'm drinking all the time!

The express purpose of deceiving spirits is to destroy the faith of believers and to overshadow and control them with the power of deception:

“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils” (1 Tim. 4:1).

To be able to clearly distinguish between the *Holy Spirit* and *another spirit* that imitates the Holy Spirit, the following comparison may be helpful:

THE HOLY SPIRIT	ANOTHER SPIRIT
The Holy Spirit does not speak of Himself but reminds us of the words of Jesus and makes Him a reality in our lives.	The presence, power and gifts of this spirit are an overwhelming reality while Jesus is subtly moved to the background.
He convicts you of your sin so that you may understand the real causes of your problems.	He instils nice and relaxed feelings in you so that you may be able to forget your problems.
He convinces you of God's	He convinces you through gifts

<p>righteousness as revealed through the perfect life and atonement of the Lord Jesus on the cross.</p>	<p>and also supernatural experiences such as <i>falling in the spirit</i> that God is with you.</p>
<p>He convicts you in your spirit and reveals the condition of your heart and life to you in the way in which God sees it.</p>	<p>He uses people to instil ideas and suggestions in you that are supposedly from God, but are in effect not from Him.</p>
<p>He speaks to you through the Word of God which is spirit and life, and reveals eternal truths to you. The Bible, as the Word of God, becomes more precious to you as you grow in grace.</p>	<p>He uses prophets as human mediators to convey messages to you about what God wants you to do. He also specialises in extra-biblical revelations of God through dreams and visions.</p>
<p>He is primarily working on the level of your spirit to quicken your spirit in a quiet way that you may awake spiritually to hear the calling of God and put your trust in Him for salvation.</p>	<p>He manifests his presence by way of sensual experiences such as thrills of joy, shivers on your body, a tingling on your skin, or a power that causes you to levitate or to be pushed down on the floor.</p>
<p>He leads you to the cross of Jesus where your burdens are lifted and where you are cleansed from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit.</p>	<p>He removes guilt complexes in his own right, without specific reference to the cross, and surrounds you with light and joy. You are ever dependent upon him.</p>
<p>If you act upon the Spirit's conviction of sin and on the basis of Christ's work of grace to settle your case with God, the Spirit regenerates you into a</p>	<p>He causes physical experiences to make you think you are born again, but he does not regenerate your heart. He only manipulates your feelings and creates</p>

<p>new person who is reconciled to God.</p>	<p>false impressions in your heart.</p>
<p>He keeps on convicting you of sin that you may be cleansed by the blood of the Lamb, live a holy life, walk in the light of God's presence, and be very sensitive to sin and deception.</p>	<p>He does not convict of sin, and has no problems to live with lies, deceit, distorted versions of the truth, and fornication. He gives to people the false hope that they are saved and will go to heaven.</p>
<p>He can easily be grieved by unfaithful Christians who deliberately yield to the lust of the flesh. He will convict you of these sins that you may confess and forsake them, and recommit yourself to the Lord.</p>	<p>He is not concerned about your sins. He will ignore it and instead make you feel guilty about things that are not sins. If you are a fundamental believer he will charge you of being critical of other believers and devoid of love.</p>
<p>He leads you to search your heart, confess and abandon all evil, and to trust God for a pure heart. Cleansing by the blood of the Lamb and being filled with the Holy Spirit is God's way to enable us to a life of victory.</p>	<p>He guides you through a process of inner healing to a spiritual reprogramming of your life in which the scars of the past, and even from before your birth, are put right by self-healing, positive confession en hypnotic regression.</p>
<p>He makes you conscious of the Lord Jesus Christ who is the only One who can guide your life. The Holy Spirit is also the Spirit of Christ who makes Him a reality in your life.</p>	<p>He makes you conscious of himself and induces you to only plead to him in your prayers. You are primarily guided and empowered by him. He is a greater reality in your life than Jesus.</p>
<p>When He fills somebody, that person becomes holy, humble,</p>	<p>He gives a person an entirely new self-image which borders on</p>

<p>and prepared to serve the Lord. He is available to God and gets involved with evangelisation by reaching the lost world for Jesus Christ. He never exalts himself, but lives and gives sacrificially for the cause of the gospel.</p>	<p>pride and arrogance. Such a person's main purpose in life is a quest for new and more powerful spiritual gifts, and the attending of services where signs, miracles, and new revelations regularly occur. Others are invited to these meetings.</p>
<p>The presence of the Holy Spirit can clearly be discerned where He is working and Jesus Christ is exalted. It occurs on a spiritual level and induces people to humble and submit themselves to the Lord. The peace and joy of the Lord fills their hearts.</p>	<p>A foreign spirit gives a show of power to influence people and create the impression that they are in the presence of the Lord. Because people want to experience this power in their lives, they readily open themselves up to it. Without it they feel empty.</p>
<p>He teaches you to pray. He helps our infirmities and intercedes for us. He gives us enlightened eyes of the mind that we may understand the things of God, and be able to pray intelligently. He helps us to gird up the loins of our mind and to be alert, sober and vigilant.</p>	<p>He teaches people to meditate. They switch over to their 'right-brain' to have mystical experiences and to hear obscure voices. They empty their minds and withdraw themselves from reality to descend to the deeper levels of their subconscious mind which is 'the world of the spirit'.</p>
<p>He controls the emotions and decisions of believers by enabling and empowering their regenerated heart and spirit. The centre of a person's control changes from his self-centred mind to his quickened spirit.</p>	<p>The emotions of people are manipulated by a foreign spirit and they act like hypnotised captives. They would laugh, cry, roar, bleat, howl or bark without knowing why they do it. The spirit of delusion gains authority over them.</p>

<p>He guides you through the Bible and through your conscience that warns you when you do something wrong. He gives you insight to know the will of God and the power to do it.</p>	<p>He commands you and demands certain actions through prophecies uttered by other people. Driven by the fear of disobedience to God's will [not by inner conviction] you obey these commanding voices.</p>
<p>You are commanded to lead people to Christ where they can obtain mercy and the forgiveness of all their sins. It does not matter by which evil forces they are bound, Jesus is the Saviour of their souls and He is able to completely set them free from their bondage. Through the blood of the Lamb the hearts of sinners are cleansed and the power of the devil broken. They do not need human mediators to declare them sanctified by virtue of the miracles.</p>	<p>You are abused to invite other people to meetings where the false revival occurs. There they can obtain healing, experience miracles, become drunk in the spirit and be sanctified by gold-dust – not by the blood of the Lamb. You become critical, and even hostile, towards all people who are negatively inclined to this modern revival movement. You do not realise that you are actually deceived through the blinding of your mind and the manipulation of your emotions and senses.</p>
<p>The Spirit of the Lord Jesus is the One who guides you. You are faithful to Him and make yourself available to Him.</p>	<p>The leader of your worship group [or church] becomes a cult leader who prescribes your decisions and actions. You must obey him.</p>
<p>Spiritual gifts are given to you to increase your usefulness in the service of the Lord. Through the power of the Holy Spirit you can be a witness for</p>	<p>You receive gifts such as prophesying, self-healing, warm [healing] hands and clairvoyance. Gold-dust may also fall on people, or their teeth fillings may</p>

<p>Jesus and also minister to one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.</p>	<p>turn into gold. Gifts of this nature are derived from foreign spirits and are consequently false and occult.</p>
<p>The Holy Spirit makes you a servant of Christ, a soldier of the cross and a stranger in a world that lies in the sway of the Evil One. The authority for your actions is vested in God. After the coming of Jesus you will reign with Him in His kingdom.</p>	<p>He declares you a king who already has dominion on earth, and who can claim and demand anything he likes. You do not have to suffer poverty, disease, or other afflictions, and can change anything through positive confession. You are in command.</p>

The great concern of the Bible about the danger of deception is the lack of spiritual discernment among many members of Christian churches. Because of their ignorance they are naively undiscerning when dangerous, counterfeit practices are offered to them as something good that allegedly comes from God: *“if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received... ye might well bear with him”* (2 Cor. 11:4). Such people are personally to be blamed for the deception to which they have fallen prey.

ANOTHER GOSPEL

For obvious reasons, the proclaiming of *another Jesus* under the motivation of *another spirit* can only be done within the theological framework of *another gospel*. Satan has a large number of preachers at his disposal to deceive the masses into believing false teachings:

“For such *are* false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore *it is* no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness” (2 Cor. 11:13-15).

Paul says: "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away *their* ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (2 Tim. 4:3-4). Many of these wolves in sheep's clothing are spreading their lies and false doctrines from the pulpits of Christian churches. The following are examples of the *other gospel* that they proclaim:

Dead formalism

A gospel in which the significance of the cross of Jesus, His blood that was shed for the atoning of sins, as well as the need to be born again, are not clearly emphasised as the central issues of the good news of salvation, ends up in dead formalism. It becomes *another gospel* from which true believers are commanded to withdraw themselves. Paul says that these *unsaved and self-proclaimed Christians* only have "a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: **from such turn away**" (2 Tim. 3:5).

In churches of this nature only an imaginary Jesus is confessed. They accept Jesus Christ merely as the figure-head of Christianity without pursuing a personal encounter or a personal relationship with Him. They remain spiritually dead because there is no evidence in their lives that they know Jesus Christ as Saviour. Their religion consists of numerous sacraments, rituals, confessions of faith, and codes of moral conduct which are traditions of men:

"This people honoureth Me with *their* lips, but their heart is far from Me. [But] in vain do they worship Me, teaching *for* doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men... Making the Word of God of no effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered" (Mk. 7:6-13).

Kingdom now gospel

In the *kingdom now* theology it is not accepted as a given that we are strangers and pilgrims in a world that lies in the sway of the Evil One, that we are servants of the Lord and soldiers of the cross, and that we should pass through many trials and tribulations into the kingdom of God. The kingdom now proponents are not willing to wait for a future dispensation of the kingdom, but maintain that we are kings who should reign in the kingdom of God here and now. We must reclaim our lost position of dominion over the creation, fearlessly wield the power of God to subdue Satan and his hordes, and never manifest a weak faith by being overcome by afflictions such as poverty and disease.

There are a number of close associates to the kingdom now theology, e.g.:

- + **Prosperity gospel.** According to this view, Christians must be spiritually and materially prosperous and live like kings.
- + **Reconstructionism.** These people aim to obtain power and reform the entire social and political order in the world in accordance with Christian principles.
- + **Signs and wonders.** Believers should do astounding miracles by healing the sick and promoting sensational manifestations of the Holy Spirit. In this way they should manifest their supremacy as kings who rule in association with the King of kings.

What will the Lord Jesus say to the self-proclaimed Christians who did a lot of sensational things in His name, but who actually served *another Jesus*?

“Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name, and in Thy name have cast out devils, and in Thy name done many wonderful works? And then I will [declare] to them, I never knew you: depart from Me, ye that work iniquity” (Mt. 7:22-23).

Liberation theology

A very popular gospel during the time of the political liberation of the Third World was the liberation theology. It was aimed at the attaining of political independence from colonial regimes, the promotion of social justice, and economic equality. In most cases violence was justified from the Bible as one of the means used by God to liberate His people from slavery and oppressive governments. As this gospel became more radicalised, it developed into the theology of the revolution. At no time did this gospel have any spiritual depth as it was never focused on the spiritual liberation of people from the powers of darkness. Although it came to the assistance of societies in their secular liberation struggle, it left them spiritually in the dark, still heading for hell.

The interfaith gospel

One of the most rapidly expanding false gospels in the world today is the interfaith gospel of spiritual reconciliation. It is based on the idea of universalism – that all religions worship the same God, and can therefore take hands. The Interfaith Movement and the Ecumenical Movement are based on this idea, and they are now actively pursuing the ideal of establishing global religious structures for the unifying of humankind on a spiritual level. They maintain that the emerging mystical brotherhood of the members of all faiths holds the key to global peace and reconciliation.

As the various religions of the world move closer to each other it is obvious that ecumenical Christianity makes self-destructing sacrifices to reconcile itself to the non-Christian world. Many theologians have adulterated the Christian faith to such an extent that its doctrinal basis has been ruined beyond recognition. In the emerging African theology, Christianity is freely mingled with ancestor worship and witchcraft. On an international level, Buddhism,

Hinduism, and Islam are also drawn into this false brotherhood.

The Bible calls the end-time union of the false religions “Mystery, Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth” (Rev. 17:5). She is recognised and carried by the Antichrist because of her usefulness to him. It is very obvious that the Interfaith Movement of false religions prepares the world for the coming of the false Christ who will rule the world for seven years.

A universal messiah of all faiths cannot possibly appear on the scene and be commonly recognised before the interfaith gospel has gained general acceptance in the world. The closer we move to this point, the more imminent is the appearing of the “man of sin... whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and lying wonders” (2 Thes. 2:3, 9). False prophets pave the way for his coming:

“But...there shall be false teachers among you who [secretly] shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways” (2 Pet. 2:1-2).

In the remaining part of this booklet we will review the abandoning basic Christian tenets to make room for the religious deception discussed thus far. The proliferating of false teachings in the Ecumenical Movement is also considered. The answer to this great falling away is a Spirit-worked revival and reformation movement back to the living God and the pureness of the biblical gospel of salvation.

THE ABANDONING OF CHRISTIAN TENETS

Demonically inspired attacks are made by false prophets on various Christian denominations in an effort to overthrow the basic tenets on which they are founded. The approach that they follow is not always the same as it is

determined by the perceived weaknesses that they regard most vulnerable for exploitation. The following are the five targets that are most commonly attacked. As the one bastion falls after another, a particular church – or denomination – in course of time becomes spiritually completely adulterated and uprooted from its original foundation.

1. The spiritualising of biblical statements

The credibility of the Bible is undermined by applying the principle of allegorising or spiritualising in interpreting it. This practice is also known as replacement theology, and results from refuting the literal meaning of many of the key statements in the Bible, and arbitrarily replacing them with other meanings. In this way Israel becomes the church, the 144 000 saved Israelites of the tribulation period are identified as the Christians of the entire church dispensation, the thousand year millennial rule of Christ, as well as the seven year tribulation period, are equated with the present church dispensation, prophecies about the coming of a personal, end-time Antichrist are spiritualised as an impersonal force or system that prevailed throughout the centuries, the battle of Armageddon is only seen as a spiritual battle against the saints of all ages, Babylon is regarded as a reference to Rome or the United States of America, etc.

The search for hidden, esoteric meanings in the Bible leads people away from its basic message. Our approach should be to read and understand the Bible like children would do it: “When the plain sense of the Word makes common sense, then seek no other sense.”

Apart from the literal statements, there are indeed also symbols in the Bible; but these symbols mostly have literal antitypes which are clearly explained in the Bible: the Lamb refers to Jesus Christ, the beast with the seven heads to a literal, personal, Antichrist, the dragon with the seven heads to Satan, the mother of harlots to the end-

time alliance of false religions, etc.

It is obvious that people who deny the literal, fundamental meaning of the Bible, have no real message to proclaim. They cannot preach life-changing sermons and, least of all, can they bring inspiring messages on the second coming of Christ. Since they do not believe in the restoration of Israel, the rapture, the tribulation and the appearing of a personal Antichrist, what is left to tell people about the end-times?

2. Rejection of justification through faith

In churches where the basic meaning of the Word of God has become obscured through wrong interpretations, the doctrine of salvation through faith is soon disregarded and replaced by baptismal regeneration. Millions of people build their lives on this false foundation. They cling to the deceptive idea that the baptism and confirmation ceremonies in a church ensure their salvation. After being ritualised, they take it for granted that they have entered into an eternal covenant with God. They argue that through baptism they have been born again and are now heading for heaven. The Bible teaches that religious activities that are not preceded or followed by a genuine commitment of faith are of no avail:

“For to us was the gospel preached, as well as to them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard *it*” (Heb. 4:2).

We must turn to the Lord in faith, confess our sins and receive Him as our Lord and Saviour (1 Jn. 1:8-9; Jn. 1:12).

3. Rejection of the doctrine of sanctification

It is obvious that if the first work of grace [justification] is substituted with baptism which paves the way to nominal Christianity in which a person only has a form of godliness, the second work of grace [sanctification] will be substituted

with a life of humanly motivated good works. A person who is not truly born again will never know the blessing of being filled with the Holy Spirit to be able to work for the Lord and to prevail against the attacks of the devil.

Nominal believers are highly vulnerable to physical and sensual experiences which are generated by false prophets as so-called manifestations of the Holy Spirit, and therefore as a counterfeit form of holiness. These deceptive manifestations include the Toronto-Brownsville-Pensacola phenomena of falling and laughing in the spirit, being drunk in the spirit at “New Vinos” meetings, and also the widespread imitation of animal movements and sounds.

4. Rejection of the Bible as God’s Word

One of the basic tenets of Christianity is the belief in the Bible as the divinely inspired and infallible Word of God. However, this foundation of the faith is also rejected in nominal churches and humanistic theological seminaries where the life-changing effects of its promises and doctrines are not experienced as a living reality. The result is that the Bible has become an endangered Book in churches and faculties of theology where its integrity as the verbally inspired Word of God should have been defended!

Since the church reformation, views about the Bible as the inerrant Word of God were maintained by evangelical believers. However, during the past century the perceptions of modern, humanistic theologians and their followers have changed as indicated below.

 Originally the Bible was regarded as **The Word of God**, and the historical literal method of interpretation was used. The church reformers held this view. They believed that the Bible is the Word of God that was written by individual believers under the direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit. God revealed Himself through His Word.

 After that, the Bible was regarded as **God's Word in human language**. This view gave rise to the historical critical method of interpretation ('higher criticism'). It is based on the premise that the Bible consists of religious writings by limited, fallible men. Their manuscripts were often revised and extended and only contain certain insights into the faith of their time.

 Presently, the Bible is regarded as **Words about God** that should be interpreted as any other literature. In the modern science of literature the emphasis has shifted from the author to the text, and eventually to the reader. It resulted in describing the Bible as a compilation of myths and stories with a moral application. The stories can be deconstructed and interpreted in various ways.

5. Rejection of the divinity of Jesus

The most basic tenet of Christianity is the belief in Jesus as the Son of God who was miraculously conceived by the Holy Spirit, born from a virgin as a sinless human being to be the Lamb of God who atoned for our sins through His crucifixion. He rose from the dead and ascended to heaven where He intercedes for us as God the Son who acts and exists in unity with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. Because of this special bond between the members of the Godhead we worship a Triune God.

The very nature of the God that we worship is rejected by an increasing number of modern, apostate theologians and pastors. The historical Jesus is maliciously depicted as a mortal and even as a sinful man, thus stripping Him of His sinlessness and divinity. In this way, Christianity loses its uniqueness and is reduced to the level of all the humanly conceptualised religions of the world, where it becomes part of the "family of world religions."

THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

One of the major tools in the hands of Satan to adulterate, infiltrate and unify Christian churches world-wide, is the World Council of Churches (WCC). This body was formed in 1948 in Amsterdam in the Netherlands, and its credo is ***One church for one world***. Right from the onset it was obvious that the WCC did not only have Christian unity in mind, but rather a world-wide alliance of religions. The following actions and decisions are proof of this statement:

- In 1961 the WCC had its third session in New Dehli in India. The theme of the conference was: *Jesus Christ, the light of the world*. This was not a reference to the biblical Christ, but to the cosmic Christ of all faiths. In terms of this perception, Hindus and Buddhists are viewed as *anonymous Christians* on the basis of the general grace. It is argued that God reconciled all people on earth to Himself through Jesus Christ. According to the WCC some people do not know that they have been reconciled to God but are nevertheless on their way to heaven. (See *Towards a one world religion?* by Dr. Peter Beyerhaus).
- At its 1968 conference in Uppsala, Sweden, the vision of the WCC extended beyond the unification of the church since their ultimate goal was formulated as *a united humanity in a new international order*. People from all races, cultures, and religions were to be merged into a new world order. To actively promote this idea the WCC instituted two programs of action. The first one is the well known *Program to Combat Racism* by which violence was theologically condoned and millions of dollars paid to liberation movements to assist them in bringing about the downfall of oppressive governments by military means. The second one is the *Program of Dialogue with People of other Living Faiths*. Since its institution in 1970 the term 'Christian' was substituted

with 'believer', and the members of the non-Christian religions henceforth addressed as 'fellow believers', based on the premise that we all worship the same God. In 1973, the Bangkok conference of this program was opened by the president of the World Buddhist Society. In her prayer she called on the gods of all religions to save mankind.

- The 1975 Nairobi conference of the WCC expressed itself in favour of the more intimate unification of humanity. One of the closed sessions on spirituality was attended by Protestant, Roman Catholic, Orthodox, and Pentecostal Christians, as well as Hindus, Buddhists and an atheist. Their agenda was obviously humanistic!
- At the 1983 conference in Vancouver, Canada, explicit recognition was given to the traditional religion of the Red Indians. A totem pole was erected in honour of all their tribal spirits. In the conference it was recommended that the different religions should take hands to promote peace on earth. In accordance with this proposal, inter-faith dialogue was conducted in Seoul in 1990 in preparation of the next general session of the WCC. Representatives of various religions participated.
- The 1991 conference at Canberra in Australia resolved that an active process of reconciliation should now be set in motion by the Christian religion. Justice and peace should be pursued in all walks of life. It was emphasised that this should be an interfaith action as it is beyond the capacity of a single religion to bring about peace in our troubled world. At this conference, recognition was again given to the traditional tribal religion of the host country. Witchdoctors of the Australian Aborigines made a ritual fire with wet gum-tree leaves, from which thick clouds of smoke arose. The 4000 representatives to the conference were

requested to walk through the smoke in order to obtain the blessing of the ancestral spirits. Some of the representatives said that this was a very wonderful experience as the presence of the Holy Spirit could also be sensed in the smoke. This blasphemous statement of mentioning the Holy Spirit on an equal level with ancestral spirits, was further elaborated upon in the conference. A Korean theologian stated that all missionary work is redundant and should be discontinued as God is present in all cultures and in all religions. Missionaries do not have to introduce Him where He already is. The WCC maintains that God does not only reveal Himself to the world through the Christian religion, but through all the religions on earth.

The WCC has served its deceptive ecumenical objective to associate Christianity with the non-Christian religions. It now stands in the way of the greater unity that it promoted with Roman Catholicism and the other world religions. From now on the initiative in ecumenical relations will be taken by bodies such as the Parliament of the World's Religions and the United Religions Initiative.

REFORMATION TODAY

Fortunately there is still light shining in the darkness. One of the evangelical Christian organisations that strongly express themselves against the spiritual deception and falling away of our time, is Christians for Truth (CFT) International of the Kwasizabantu Mission. In March 1996 they held the seventh Kwasizabantu Ministers' Conference that was attended by 1000 ministers and Christian leaders from 14 countries, representing more than 50 denominations. A document titled *Reformation Today – 95 theses on the situation of the church and society in the Year of Luther, 1996* was accepted.

This document was published 450 years after the death of Martin Luther. The following is a selection from

the 95 theses that are aimed at a modern-day reformation and revival in deceived, lukewarm and backslidden churches:

Call to repentance

- ◆ If our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, says: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Mt. 4:17), He wants the whole life of the believer to be one of repentance.
- ◆ If there is true repentance it leads to the individual and the church hating sin and departing from both it and wrong behaviour.
- ◆ God promises the repentant forgiveness and a new beginning (2 Chron. 7:13-14).

The present situation of society

- ◆ People today indulge in sins such as godlessness, pride, lovelessness, occultism, abortion, immorality, adultery, homosexuality, drug abuse, lies, greed and robbery (Ex. 20:2-17; Rom. 1:18-31; 1 Cor. 6: 9; Gal. 5:19-21).
- ◆ Certain sins were always committed, but today many of them are openly tolerated and even put on a pedestal: “[*They*] not only do the same, but have pleasure in those that do them” (Rom. 1:32).
- ◆ In many countries laws that forbade blasphemy, pornography, abortion, euthanasia, homosexuality, drug abuse and the like, have been slackened or annulled.
- ◆ A society that tolerates or even openly encourages such activities that the Holy Scripture says are “sin” or “abominable” in God’s eyes, digs its own grave. It is ready for judgement.
- ◆ Many nations today are in a similar situation to the Roman empire before its downfall. The internal cause of its downfall was widespread moral decay.

- ◆ It is only a question of time before the national and social systems that reject God's commandments today, will collapse.

The failure of the church

- ◆ In this situation, the churches locally and world-wide should take their commission seriously to be "light" and "salt" and to oppose these developments (Mt. 5:13-16; Rom. 12:2; Eph. 5:11).
- ◆ If they do not do this, they stand under God's judgement concerning the unfaithful watchman (Ezek. 3:18).
- ◆ A church that has lost its sense of direction cannot give individuals any direction.

The abandoning of the Bible

- ◆ The loss of direction began with the abandoning of the Bible which is the foundation of all faith and knowledge.
- ◆ Rightly did Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf pray: "If Your Word is invalid, on what should faith be based upon? I'm not concerned about a thousand worlds but about Your Word."
- ◆ The Reformation defines the church as "a creation of the Word of God". It ceases to be a church if it abandons the Word of God.
- ◆ If the Word of God is abandoned, then no one should be surprised at the consequences: the disintegration of Biblical teaching and Biblical life-styles.

Disintegration of Biblical teaching about God

- ◆ The disintegration of Biblical teaching begins with a lack of understanding of God. In contradiction to the clear witness of the Bible, many 'theologians' deny or misinterpret the meaning of the Trinity. They deny or misinterpret God's omnipotence, holiness, and

righteousness.

- ◆ Many ‘theologians’ today declare that Jesus Christ was only a man, a social revolutionary, a preacher of peace, a liberator or something similar, but not God. They say that He was not born of a virgin or raised bodily from the dead, did not ascend to heaven and will not come again bodily in power and majesty. They also say that His death on the cross could not redeem us from our sins.
- ◆ Contrary to what many modern ‘theologians’ are saying Jesus Christ is not an ordinary man, nor was He created by God. He is true man and true God at the same time, the eternal Son of God. This means that He is God Himself in the second Person of the Trinity. “He that hath the Son hath life; *and* he that hath not the Son of God hath not life” (1 Jn. 5:12; see also 1 Jn. 2:22 & 4:2-3).

Disintegration of Biblical teaching about sin and redemption

- ◆ Where the Biblical teaching of Christ is absent, any Biblical teaching on sin and redemption becomes meaningless because a “powerless” Christ cannot redeem us from sin, death, and the devil.
- ◆ The salvation of sin is found in no one else than Jesus Christ. “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). This is as valid today as it was when it was written.

Invasion of the church by evil spirits

- ◆ The more a church conforms to the spirit of the times [current trends], the greater the danger that the Spirit of God will be driven [depart] from its centre and evil spirits will come in through the back door.

- ◆ These evil spirits rule in the ideologies and religions of this world (Eph. 6:12).
- ◆ If it is declared that these evil spirits are identical to the Spirit of God, it shows the great darkness of our times (cf. Rom. 1:19-23). The Bible says that “the things which the [nations] sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God” (1 Cor. 10:20).
- ◆ If at interfaith ‘prayer-meetings’ there are entreaties to the ‘spirit of Assisi’ (referring to the ‘prayer of peace of the religions’ in Assisi), then those leading the meetings should pay attention to the first Commandment which is foundational to Christianity: “I *am* the LORD thy God... Thou shalt have no other gods before Me” (Ex. 20:2-3).

The secularisation of the church

- ◆ Many people, including politicians, wait for a clear word from the church based upon the Bible.
- ◆ The more ‘up-to-date’ and ‘open-minded’ a church desires to be, the greater the danger that it will forget the specific message that it owes to a largely atheistic and unstable society.
- ◆ A church that conforms to the current political thinking cannot positively influence the world but will be drawn away by the world. The church decays through secularisation and becomes useless.
- ◆ The only way out is to repent, to listen anew to the Word of God which is given to us in the form of the Bible, and to declare it to the world in word and deed.

Degeneration and judgement

- ◆ The fact that the church today does not have the power and clarity for Biblically anchored manifestations of teaching and life-styles is already a judgement of God (1 Pet. 4:17). It results in the falling away from saving

faith in the end-times (Mt. 24:12; 2 Thes. 2:3).

- ◆ A church that increasingly becomes a harlot, becomes more and more like the world, mingling heathen gods with the God of the Bible. It seeks material wealth, power and worldly acknowledgement. It pays little attention to God's commandment and to salvation through Jesus Christ. It causes great distress to the true believers.
- ◆ Nevertheless, believers are called to be steadfast in their faith, to love and to hope. They are also called upon to pray for their enemies, for those who slander and persecute them, so that even they can come to repentance.
- ◆ Above all else, believers are called upon to remain loyal to their Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, and to resist all tendencies of conforming to worldliness. They should call as many people as possible to become disciples of the Lord Jesus (Mt. 28:19).

Church discipline

- ◆ Many problems in theology and in the spiritual standards of churches are caused by the fact that in most cases church discipline is no longer practised. Church discipline includes the punishment or excommunication of persons who publicly introduce unbiblical teachings and life-styles to the church (1 Cor. 5; 2 Jn. v. 9-11).

The Great Commission

- ◆ The Great Commission will continue until Jesus comes again in power and majesty (Mt. 24:14). Mission work (in the sense of leading unbelievers to Christ) is the positive answer of the believer to the many temptations aimed at distracting him from a life of obedience to Christ.

- ◆ The church is called to create more opportunities for missionary church growth than what has been achieved until now.
- ◆ Mission work is the life of the church. If a church has no desire to take the Great Commission seriously, then individual Bible-believing Christians are called to do this mission work. They are called to establish or support Bible-believing mission organisations.
- ◆ New churches might be established through Bible-based mission agencies to eventually replace those churches that have fallen away from the Christian faith.

Looking ahead

- ◆ The current developments in the church and society are foretold in the Bible. They mark the period when Satan's Antichrist will be revealed and accepted as world leader.
- ◆ Jesus Christ will return in power and majesty. He will overthrow and destroy the Lawless One (2 Thes. 2:8).
- ◆ Because no one knows when Jesus will come again, we must work while it is still day.
- ◆ We are working for Jesus Christ and the establishing of His church in thankfulness for His sacrifice on the cross. We do it in love for Him, knowing that in Him is victory.
- ◆ "Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are His, and: Let everyone that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity" (2 Tim. 2:19). Amen.