



Glenn Brown

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441 ½ Lark Drive

Grand Junction, Colorado 81504

telephone 970-434-1377

OOGAH, OOGAH!

You have seen those old Claxon horns with the big bulbs and when you squeeze the bulb they go, “OOGAH, OOGAH!” They are saying, “Watch out!” I just had one of those Claxon horn moments. I picked up and read a book by Ray Yungen, *A Time of Departing. How a universal spirituality is changing the face of Christianity*, and it tied together a lot of concerns that I have had for a long time. So I’m going to be quoting from him and from a number of different books and sources on the internet on the subject of the New Age movement. I hope it will be an “OOGAH” experience for you as well.

Back in the 1980’s the term *New Age movement* surfaced, and many conservative Christians became concerned and gave the subject a lot of attention. But within a decade or so the uproar subsided and most Christians forgot about what seemed so threatening a few years earlier. But this movement has not gone away. Like yeast in a pan of dough, it has quietly soaked into our culture so thoroughly that many Christians today are acclimated and accepting of what was called “Gnosticism” or “Eastern spirituality” in the early centuries of Christianity. In 1992 Sociologists at the University of California estimated that 12 million Americans could be considered active participants and another 30 million were avidly interested in New Age spirituality. By 2012, these numbers increased to an astounding 20 percent of Americans (40 million people) who embraced the New Age movement.

Deepak Chopra, a New Age guru popular with celebrities, has been Barnes and Noble’s top-selling author during several periods. New Age healing practices have proliferated. One method known as *Reiki* claims more than 500,000 practitioners in the United States alone. *Therapeutic Touch*, like Reiki, is based on the occult *chakra* system, which is from Hinduism.

The *Aquarian Age*, or *New Age*, is supposed to signify that the human race is now entering a golden age. The astrological *Age of Aquarius* is when we come to realize that *man is God*, or *God is within*, or God is the *all in all*. Historically this doctrine has been known as pantheism. New Age style meditation is commonly referred to as *the silence*. This is not silence as being in a quiet place but the silence of an empty mind that opens up the mystical faculties. The two most common methods used to induce this thoughtless state are *breathing* exercises, where attention is focused on the breath, and a *mantra*, which is a repeated word or phrase. If you have taken

classes on Yoga, you may remember the instructions you got on controlling your breathing, emptying your mind, centering, repeating a word or thought until your mind was a blank slate.

Since mantras are central to New Age meditation, it is important to understand a definition. The translation from Sanskrit is *man*, meaning to “think”, and *tra*, meaning “to be liberated from.” Thus, the word literally means *to escape from thought*. (By comparison, Jesus said that the great commandment was, “Love God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength.”)

“The silence” is not the final objective but only a means to an end. The end was described by English artist Vanora Goodhart after she embarked on the practice of Zen meditation. She recounted:

“A light began seeping through my closed eyelids, bright and gentle at first, but growing more and more intense....there was a great power and strength in this Light....I felt I was being drawn upwards in a wonderful rush of power that rose to a crescendo and bathed me through and through with glorious, burning, embracing Light.”

This is what New Age mysticism is all about – not just believing in some doctrine but rather a close personal contact with a powerful *Presence*. Meditation is the gateway to the “Light” and the “Presence.” This connection is referred to in New Age circles as: *awakening, transformation, enlightenment, self-realization, cosmic consciousness* and *super-consciousness*.

This is the question, my friends: Is that “Presence” the presence of the God of the Bible? Is that “Light” the Light of Christ, who said He was the Light of the world? The answer is an unequivocal No! In 2 Cor. 11:13, Paul warned the Corinthians that *there were false apostles among them, masquerading as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light.* “Wait, Glenn, are you implying that the *Presence* of the New Age movement is the devil.” No, no, I’m not implying it, I am stating that it is a fact. The devil or a familiar spirit; that is, a demon, is behind all of these manifestations. Those who are involved in any aspect of the New Age movement are being deceived and their souls are in danger.

The most terrible thing about this movement is that it has invaded the church, and many New Age teachings have become accepted and mixed in with the gospel. Many who have spoken out against this mixture have been labeled narrow-minded and fanatical.

(Next month I will share some things about the great apostle of the New Age movement, Oprah Winfrey, and her pervasive influence over millions of Christians, especially Christian women. You can do your own research by clicking on “The religion of Oprah Winfrey,” or “The New Age movement,” etc.)

TWINKLE, TWINKLE

How many stars are there? Astronomers say that there are more than 300 billion stars in our galaxy, the Milky Way, and that in the observable universe there are more than 100 billion galaxies. So that comes to at least a 1 with 21 zeroes, an unimaginable number. Our sun is a medium-sized star. Some stars are larger than the circumference of our entire solar system. Each star is a nuclear furnace.

Our planet is a tiny dot in this massive universe. It is comprised of a thin crust, a mantle of thick, rocky material; an outer core of liquid magma; and a solid inner core of iron and nickel.

The earth “just happens” to be at the precise distance from our star so that we neither fry nor freeze. (This is called the Baby Bear zone: it’s not too hot, it’s not too cold, it’s just right.)

Some scientists claim that all of this “just happened” by fortuitous circumstance. Or that perhaps our universe squeezed into existence through a “worm hole.” And that “life evolved” on our planet by happy chance. Or that aliens came here and planted life. These explanations defy rationality but are claimed by secular folks to be indisputable. You will note that none of these theories are provable but must be accepted by faith.

The Bible says that God created the universe out of nothing by His own will and imagination and for His own purposes. The God that did this is the God of the Bible, not the “god” you can contact by sitting in a lotus position, emptying your mind, breathing slowly, and chanting “Ummmmm” for an hour or two. The Bible also states that God (the Father) created all of this through His Son, Jesus Christ, who is the central point of history and the human race. See John 1:1-18, Colossians 1:15-20, Hebrews, chapter 1. This also is unprovable and must be accepted by faith.

If the claims of the secularists are true, then life has no purpose, humans have no more value than insects or vegetables, and our brief existence (we and our loved ones) will soon end, the universe itself will eventually end, with no trace or memory.

If the claims of the Bible are true, you and I are honored to be of inestimable worth to the Creator, life on the earth is a test, and the way we live matters enormously. Jesus said, *I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through Me.* (John 14:6)

DOES GOD REALLY TALK TO PEOPLE?

Back in the time when Oral Roberts was a controversial figure and much in the news, he was invited to appear on the Johnny Carson show. When Oral came out and sat down on the couch, Johnny said, in his

humorous way, "Well, Oral, I hear that God has been talking to you." Oral replied, "Yes, Johnny, and He has been talking to you, too."

There was an awkward silence. Johnny could not come up with a response. They went to a commercial.

The Bible reports that God speaks to people all the time, and He exhorts them to listen to Him: *They have ears but do not hear. Hear, you deaf, and look, you blind. Hear the word of the Lord, all you nations. They refuse to hear. Hear me, all of you, and understand. I called, and they would not hear. Today, when you hear His voice, don't harden your hearts. Let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.* (Etc., almost 1,000 times in the Old and New Testaments.)

Yes, God talks to us, speaks to us, whispers to us, calls to us. The question is, will we hear?

"THE WAY IN IS THE WAY ON"

(This is a book containing a small part of John Wimber's teachings released in 2006, shortly after he died. John was a musical genius, played 19 instruments, and just before he came to Christ he was becoming a big name in the music industry.)

"At the time I got saved I had produced two albums that were in the top ten for the U.S. I was being offered a lot of money in advance to do more albums. I had to say "No." I had to take all the stuff in my study and studio, put it in a truck, and take it out to the dump. God made it clear that I shouldn't even sell it to anybody. During this time my wife and I went eight weeks without a paycheck. I was offered several opportunities that came while we were receiving groceries on our doorstep and living without air conditioning in the middle of a hot summer. I couldn't believe it! When I worked for the devil I made money. Now that I was working for God I was left with nothing. After 15 weeks a nice man in our church offered me a terrible job as a warehouse worker. I had never punched a time clock or gotten dirty in any job I ever had. I would be sick just going into the building each morning. God never explained what He was doing to me, He just said, "Obey Me!" God didn't call me into the ministry until years later, after I had given Him everything.

I came to Christ because my life was falling apart and I needed forgiveness. The Christian life is a life of brokenness. We have to deal continually with sin and remember that He is righteous and therefore we are righteous. Our Father has lovingly planned our lives. No event or circumstance takes God by surprise. He is on our side and makes the best choices for us. That does not mean that we won't go through difficulty, but that we can trust God whatever happens.

Keep your focus on Jesus. God loves you, and you are precious to Him. Your efforts to please Him on the one hand don't satisfy Him, but on the other hand, they always please Him. The Father won't rest until you are just like His Son, but He enjoys every little effort you make to try and be like Him. Keep it up, and remember: He is easy to please but hard to satisfy.

Are you willing to always say "yes" to Jesus? Trust in God is fundamental to everything that I understand in the Christian life. It's the belief that God is good, gracious, kind, and favors us. All the Father wants is for us to put our hand in His hand and let him guide us through life. Sometimes we act like distrustful, rebellious children. We say, "No, no. You might make me do something I don't want to do. You might make me go somewhere I don't want to go, or be different than I want to be." I don't mean to be too harsh because I understand, but the truth is that God is generous, caring, and gracious toward us. He is worthy of our trust.

So many of us are going to have a surprise when we stand before God on our final day. We will have missed out on how good our Lord is, how kind, loving and gracious. We will discover that He had wanted to give us so much here and now but we couldn't receive it because we had fearful expectations. In Hannah Whitall Smith's book, *The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life*, she was talking with a physician who was having a lot of difficulty with doubts, unbelief, and fearfulness toward God. She said, "Doctor, if there were somebody in the hospital that was under your care, but he couldn't trust you so he would not take the medicine, the directions, and the treatment that you wanted to give, what would you do with that patient?" He said, "I couldn't do anything with a patient that didn't trust me." And Hannah said, "Well, that's the way it is with you and your God."

Wow! Imagine what God could do in and through us if we would just trust Him, abandoning ourselves to Him in each moment. People have said to me, "I can submit to things that come from God, but not to trials and testing that come from people." But God is allowing those things. You see, God is sovereign over every

circumstance of the believer's life. God is not the agent of trials, but He does allow them in our lives. The truth is, nearly everything in life comes through humans. Most of our trials are a result of somebody's failure, ignorance, carelessness, or sin...including our own. Then where is God's sovereignty? It's a mystery, but God works through everything in our life. God has chosen you and taken you on as His "pet project."

I've been asked, "If somebody does something mean and dreadful to me, is that the will of God?" Not exactly. These actions are initiated by people, or the enemy, but by the time they get to you, they changed into the will of God. Otherwise they would not have happened.

Trust and obey There is a little chorus I learned in my early days as a Christian – that is a key message for Christians: "Trust and obey, for there is no other way, to be happy in Jesus, than to trust and obey." Trust is a natural process of maturation. We let go of the control of our lives little by little as time goes by. How can we obey someone we don't trust? We can't and we don't. Trusting God is foundational to joyful obedience. Obedience is carried out after trusting Jesus implicitly. We joyfully serve Him, not out of some grim sense of duty, but because of the love affair we have with our Father through Jesus.

Sometimes we look at ourselves and think, "I'll never make it. I just can't do it." But it will not be by our doing but by our surrendering. *This is what the Sovereign Lord says: In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength, but you would have none of it.* (Isaiah 30:15) In essence, obedience can be defined as utter surrender to the one we trust. Take a potter, shaping moist clay on a spinning wheel: What does the clay have to do except stay put while the potter molds and makes it into the thing of beauty he desires? We must stay pliable and yield to the Potter's hand.

Once when I was sharing about the surrendered life, a young man asked me, "Do you mean you always obey?" I said, "Oh no, I don't always obey. But whenever I don't, I'm sorry, and I repent and go right back to obedience because that's what I believe we are called to do." He replied, "Do you get better at it?" I felt I could honestly answer him, "Yes, I have." As I look back now over 30 years, there are a lot of things that I no longer have an appetite for and that don't tempt me as they used to. Those desires are just gone. As someone said long ago, "Our relationship with God resides in the will alone." In other words, though our emotions play a significant part in the relationship we have with God, acting out our faith depends on the exertion of our will. Obedience is something we do because we commit our wills to be in alignment with God's purposes and directives. We must be willing to be corrected and molded as God chooses.

Mountain-style Obedience Paul wrote to the church at Rome: *Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship.* (Romans 12:1) I call this "mountain-style obedience; that is, lock, stock, and barrel surrender, no holds barred, everything given to God. When I was presented with this gospel, I went for it. Not only did I bow my head, bend my knee, cry and pray the prayer, but I also gave myself. I did not "invite Christ into my life" – this is a different posture than the one I am advocating. I gave myself to Jesus. Do you see the difference? This is my understanding of the proposition. I was to abandon the pursuit of my personal life.

That is what Paul meant by offering our bodies as "living sacrifices." Worship isn't only singing songs and expressing heartfelt thanks and praise to a worthy God. Nor is it simply giving God your tithes and offerings. Worship is the complete, wholehearted commitment of a being to another Being. You and me, unto Him. Whether you drive a truck or pull teeth for a living, you are all about Jesus!

The Art of Trusting Trust is letting go of our need to control outcomes, letting God be God. The internal conflict of choosing to trust God came home to me when a member of our church shared her story with me: "Two years ago I came to the realization that aborting three of my children when I was young was a sin. I went to God and repented. Part of that repentance included going through a program at the Anaheim Vineyard for women who have had abortions. My husband and I then realized that we really did want children. Last year we got pregnant twice and miscarried both babies. It was on October 3, 1995, that John Wimber told the congregation that he felt like the Lord wanted to heal barren women. When my husband and I went forward, the Lord asked me, "Do you trust me?" I thought back, "I lost two babies this year, Lord. I did what you told me to do. I repented and received healing, and now you want me to trust You?"

“No, I don’t trust You,” I had to admit. I can’t go through any more death; I just can’t do it.” I was in agony. He whispered back to me, “If you don’t trust Me, I can’t bless you.” At that moment, I realized I was at a crossroads and had to make a decision. I was tying God’s hands and He couldn’t do anything until I trusted Him. Still, I had to be honest. “I don’t trust you, God. I can’t make it up. Help me. I want to trust You. I want to learn to walk with you.” Two days later our doctor called and said he had found out why we kept losing our babies. A month later, we conceived. Baby Faith was born nine months later and full of life.” She went on to share that from that point in time when she decided to trust God with her life, that even in more challenging circumstances she had learned the art of trusting.

As I described earlier, when I came to Christ and prayed the prayer of faith, I ended my life and began a new life in Christ. Everything from day until now has been Jesus. I like to say, “Just color me Jesus.” It’s not about adding a little religion to my life. It’s about ending one phase of life in a very real sense. I cut off all considerations of my identity and past and gave myself totally over to Jesus Christ in every way that I knew how. I died to my “self” in 1963.

Trusting God is pivotal to this whole business of being a Christian. Without this understanding, I could not have faced heart attacks, cancer, treachery, and violence - - people threatening me with guns and bombs. These are just some of the things that have gone on in my life. These externals are on one side; on the other side lay my own frailty, failures, and weaknesses as a human being. Sometime these are more frightening than anything else I face on a daily basis.

What about you? Have you signed over your life to God? Is he entrusted with the processes and outcomes of your life? This is not primarily a theological discussion, but an active decision and habit of the heart. We must come to God knowing that He is who He claims to be: sovereign and loving.”

Glenn

e-mail address casabrn441@gmail.com

WEBSITE: www.glennbrownministries.com

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