

The New Age Propensities of Bethel Church's Bill Johnson

"At that time I could not find a single Christian leader who shared a similar interest in finding out if there were truths hidden in the New Age. Now we are beginning to hear more and more revelation that is in line with what New Agers have been saying all along and we are hearing more and more teaching about Christians "taking back truths" from the New Age that really belong to citizens of the Kingdom of God." [1]—Ellyn Davis, co-author, *The Physics of Heaven*

In Redding, California, Bethel Church has become one of the largest evangelical churches in North America. Many people from around the world travel to Redding to attend the Bethel School of Supernatural Ministry, and C. Peter Wagner ("founder" of the New Apostolic Reformation movement) has called Bethel's senior pastor, Bill Johnson, an "apostle." Given that title with claims on the church website that Bethel has a "global impact as a revival resource and equipping centre,"[2] it is expedient and responsible to examine Johnson and determine if he is indeed an apostle sent from God to the body of Christ. *The Physics of Heaven*, a recent book Bill Johnson contributed to, and his personal assistant co-authored, reveals a very different picture than that of the apostles described in the Bible. It appears that rather than an apostle of God, Bill Johnson may be poised to serve as the vehicle that carries the New Age and quantum spirituality deep into the Body of Christ. Being drawn to New Age ideas is not something new to Bethel's leader. In a 2006 book titled *Dreaming with God*, Johnson writes, when referring to a practice associated with the New Age:

Many prominent pastors and conference speakers add fuel to the fire of fear by assuming that because the New Age promotes it, its origins must be from the devil. I find that form of

reasoning weak at best. If we follow that line of thought we will continue to give the devil the tools that God has given us for success in life and ministry. [3] (emphasis added)

Stop and think about what is being said here: “the tools that God has given us” somehow ended up in the New Age? How did that happen? And which tools is he talking about? Why would a professing Christian say something like this? New Age teaching is in total opposition to the Word of God. To suggest that New Age practices are really just hijacked Christian truths is utterly absurd.

Research analyst Ray Yungen explains the basis of New Age thought:

Everything that exists, seen or unseen, is made up of energy—tiny particles of vibrating energy, atoms, molecules, protons, etc. All is energy. That energy, they believe, is God, and therefore, all is God. They believe that since we are all part of this “God-energy,” then we, too, are God. God is not seen as a Being that dwells in heaven, but as the universe itself. [4]

Bill Johnson and Bethel Church exert significant influence in the body of Christ. And whatever path Bethel and its leaders travel is the path on which many will follow. We need to pay attention to what is happening here, using discernment and godly wisdom. While Bill Johnson’s approach to prayer and worship and the extreme emphasis placed on signs and wonders has concerned many, it is the 2012 book titled *The Physics of Heaven* (in which Johnson is one of eleven contributors) that indicates the real direction Johnson and Bethel are heading. In addition to Johnson’s own contribution to the book (one full chapter), his personal assistant, Judy Franklin, is a co-author; and the foreword of *The Physics of Heaven* is written by Kris Vallotton, Senior Associate leader at Bethel. Vallotton lauds the contributors as “seers.” [5] Banning Liebscher, Director of Bethel’s Jesus Culture, adds his

praise.[6] Bill Johnson's wife, Beni Johnson, also has a chapter in the book. With all that, *The Physics of Heaven* undeniably has the approval of Bethel's leaders. So what does *The Physics of Heaven* reveal?

The Next Move of God?

Ellyn Davis, one of the authors of *The Physics of Heaven*, says this:

[The contributors of the book] all agree that the next move of God will cause a shift at the deepest level of who we are—perhaps the very “vibrational level” that the New Age movement has been exploring. They also all agree that there are precious truths hidden in the New Age that belong to us as Christians and need to be extracted from the worthless. [7]

Contributor Jonathan Welton adds:

I have found throughout Scripture at least 75 examples of things that the New Age has counterfeited, such as having a spirit guide, trances, meditation, auras, power objects, clairvoyance, clairaudience, and more. These actually belong to the church, but they have been stolen and cleverly repackaged. [8]

Welton believes:

We need to begin to use [New Age] counterfeits as signposts. Every time a counterfeit shows up, take it as the Lord presenting you with an opportunity to reclaim . . . the Church's stolen property.[9]

This is like taking a bottle with a “Poison!” warning on it and re-labeling it, “Honey.” Contemplative prayer, which is essentially Eastern/New Age meditation disguised with Christian terminology, entered the church in just this manner.

Co-author Ellyn Davis asserts:

It wasn't that I wanted to become a New Ager, I just wanted to find out if maybe they had uncovered some truths the church hadn't. [10]

Davis then attempts to justify her position by claiming much of what she found "embodied biblical principles" and "could be backed up by Scripture." [11]

In contrast to such a mindset, Scripture exhorts us:

And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. (Ephesians 5:11)

Compare Davis' desire to sample New Age wisdom with the resolve of the newly saved Christians in Acts 19: These saints separated themselves from the occult; they did not peruse their occultic literature one last time in case there were some "truths" there. The unholy books were gathered and set on fire:

Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together and thousand pieces of silver. (Acts 19:19)

The action taken by these bold new believers caused the Gospel to spread.

So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed. (Acts 19:20)

Lacking basic discernment about involvement with the New Age, co-author Davis, the Bethel Redding contingent, and the other contributors have rendered a great disservice to the Body of Christ. The Bethel contributors, in particular, can potentially do the most damage because of their popularity and high visibility.

Bill Johnson's view of Scripture may give us a clue as to how he ended up being attracted to extra-biblical leanings. According to Johnson:

Those who feel safe because of their intellectual grasp of Scriptures enjoy a false sense of security. None of us has a

full grasp of Scripture, but we all have the Holy Spirit. He is our common denominator who will always lead us into truth. But to follow Him, we must be willing to follow off the map—to go beyond what we know.[12]

This is dangerous thinking. The Bible is our map. To go “beyond what we know” is to go beyond the parameters of Scripture.

How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth! Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way. Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path. (Psalm 119:103-105)

The Physics of Heaven, whether intentionally or unintentionally, serves to illustrate how the false church will form—or, more accurately, how it is forming. New Age practices will increasingly be welcomed into the Body of Christ. These practices will be presented as redeemed or Christian in origin. The church will be subverted—turned toward Eastern/New Age/Quantum mysticism. Language, terms, and trappings may even remain essentially “Christian”—but acceptance of the biblical Christ will diminish.

A Bridge to the New Age?

Bill Johnson has an interesting teaching about Christ that can be seen as a bridge between the two belief systems—New Age and biblical Christianity.

Johnson believes in a teaching called kenosis, an unorthodox heretical belief that the Incarnate Christ laid aside His divine attributes and walked the earth as a completely limited, human man. [13] According to Johnson, Christ “performed miracles, wonders, and signs, as a man in right relationship to God . . . not as God. If He performed miracles because He was God, then they would be unobtainable for us. But if He did them as a man, I am responsible to pursue His lifestyle. Recapturing this simple truth changes everything.”

[14]

In other words, Bill Johnson believes the miracles Jesus performed came about because He, as a man, and only as a man, had access to the power of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, Johnson teaches that Christians should be capable of wondrous feats of healing and miracles due to our own relationship with the Holy Spirit.

Thus Johnson's kenosis doctrine serves to reduce the biblical Christ and elevate man. As one apologist points out:

Jesus is no longer unique, but only a special enlightened one who could lead the way to many such enlightened ones in the future. Thus we have a New Age Christ. [15]

Kenosis comes from a faulty understanding of Philippians 2:7. It is proven false by the simple fact that Christ not only created the universe, but He holds it together. If Christ had given up His divine power and attributes and had operated only as a man until Resurrection, all creation would have come apart! (Colossians 1:17). Furthermore, when Jesus said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am" (John 8:58), He was making an emphatic statement to a claim to be both God and man—present tense!

A Second Pentecost and Quantum Vibrations

Bill Johnson further believes that select, end-times Christians will be endowed with great power to work miracles, healings, signs, and wonders. These super-powered Christians—the Elijah generation—will supposedly bring about an unprecedented revival. Johnson states:

[A] generation is now forming . . . that will walk in an anointing that has never been known by mankind before, including the disciples. [16]

In 2014, Johnson attended the Empowered 21 Conference, a

gathering of Christians who are certain a “Second Pentecost” is coming by 2033. [17] Through the influence of Bethel Church, the “apostles” of the New Apostolic Reformation, and others, a large portion of the church now believes there is a coming supernatural end-time event, an outpouring of great power.

This presumed event is not the rapture. As *The Physics of Heaven* co-author and Johnson’s personal assistant Judy Franklin states:

The greatest error we could ever commit is to think that this world is going to get so bad that He will snatch us out quickly before we all die. [18]

This is not . . . showing the world how powerful we are because God has given us His power. [19]

Most in this camp are dominionists. Their understanding is that Adam and Eve lost dominion of the earth to Satan, the resurrected Christ appointed the Church to take it back, and Christ either cannot or will not return until the Church has accomplished its task. If you have never found this theology in the Bible, it is because it is not there.

Dr. Orrel Steinkamp states:

This dominion mentality is conceived as a gigantic end-time revival that will sweep the whole earth in its wake. . . . An elite company of overcomers from out of the larger church will subdue all things and will be so endued with supernatural power that the first church apostles will be envious of the latter day apostles. [20]

Quantum Sounds?

In light of this, consider how *The Physics of Heaven* describes what God is supposedly going to bring about. A theme of the book is that God may somehow bestow incredible power on

believers through vibrations/sounds/frequencies/energies, with “sound” mentioned a number of times throughout the book:

This book is just a precursor to the revelation that God is going to give us when He releases a new, transforming sound. [21]

We’re talking about 10 times the power that was released at Pentecost.[22]

The sound God desires to release will chase religion from the church and bring truth. [23]

[We] suspect God is up to something new—something that will transform us at the deepest level of who we are and will be ushered in by a new form of “sound” or “vibration.” [24]

This coming new sound . . . can change DNA so we are genetically growing up. Your genetics are the same as His was. Our genetics came out of the Father in our spirit. We are becoming like an instrument being tuned, where our genetics are getting aligned with the Father’s genetics, in harmony with Him. [25]

What if there really are “good vibrations” that God has imbedded into everything He created and we just need to be open to experiencing them? [26]

[W]e became interested in such weird and wonderful phenomena as energy, frequencies, vibrations, and quantum physics. [27]

What *The Physics of Heaven* is doing is turning God into more of a cosmic quantum force that permeates everything rather than a Creator who is separate from His creation as described in the Bible (e.g., Romans 1:25; Isaiah 42:8; 46:9). New Agers frequently talk about sounds and vibrations as signs of this “god” force. Occult “prophetess” Alice Bailey says:

[T]here is a group of human beings, integrating now . . . upon whom is laid the burden of leading humanity. They are starting

movements that have in them the new vibration, they are saying things that are universal in their tone, they are enunciating principles that are cosmic. [28]

That the contributors believe those in the New Age may understand the manner in which an alleged “next move of God” might occur is chilling. Is it a coincidence that New Age leader Barbara Marx Hubbard also predicts a coming spiritual shift of great significance?

Hubbard forecasts the arrival of a “planetary Pentecost” that will mean “the divisions of the religions would be over.”[29] She explains:

We would each know that God is within us. . . . If all who feel we are connected to each other, to nature and to God join in a planetary Pentecost, we shall be transformed in this lifetime. I believe in the peaceful second Coming. [30]

The false “christ” who communicated with Hubbard for decades revealed this Planetary Pentecost will instantly transform most humans (but not Christians and others who do not believe God is in everyone) into a spiritually evolved race.

What if the “next move of God”[31] that *The Physics of Heaven* expects and the New Age “Planetary Pentecost” are the same event? Could it be that they are waiting for the same “christ” to perform this “vibrational” shift in humanity? Is this possible? Could this be the unholy deception we have been warned about in the Bible?

[I]f any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is the Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.

(Matthew 24:23-24)

Former New Age follower Warren B. Smith warned of this years ago:

Expecting only revival and the return of the true Christ, will the Church be deceived by the one who will come in the name of Christ and pretend to be Him? Caught unawares, will the Church mistake the counterfeit Christ's "Planetary Pentecost" for the great 'move of God' they had been told to expect?[32]

Bethel and Contemplative Prayer

Some may be asking, what would cause an evangelical church to become receptive to New Age ideas and concepts? For Johnson and Bethel, as with so many Christian leaders and churches today, contemplative prayer has played a significant role in "conditioning" the people at Bethel to head in the New Age direction. There is much irony in suggesting, "[E]very time a counterfeit shows up, take it as the Lord presenting you with an opportunity to reclaim . . . the Church's stolen property,"[33] since this is how contemplative prayer snaked its way into the body of Christ in the first place.

Contemplative adherents, such as Richard Foster, have convinced Christians that Eastern and New Age meditation are actually counterfeits of the real deal (i.e., contemplative prayer). Contemplative prayer is presented as an ancient Christian tradition.

Yet, contemplative prayer is not prayer at all. It is essentially Eastern/New Age meditation thinly coated with Christian terminology. The goal in contemplative prayer is to stop the thinking process and to enter what is known as the silence. This is accomplished by repeating a word or phrase over and over (or focusing on the breath) until the word loses its meaning and the mind becomes void.

In this void—this silence—many wonderful deceptions can occur: spirit guides, ascendant masters, oneness, bliss, false "christs." The deception that occurs through contemplative

prayer destroys doctrinal soundness and ultimately even faith.

In comparison, when we are truly “meditating” on God’s Word, the mind remains active, and we ponder upon or think about the Word of God. Never do we try to cease active thought in order to empty our mind or as Ray Yungen says putting our mind into “neutral” [34] so that God can supposedly fill it.

Where does Bethel stand with regard to contemplative prayer? There is ample evidence that Bethel has embraced it. For example, Bill Johnson’s wife, Beni, oversees Bethel’s prayer intercessors and Prayer House. In a book that Beni compiled, in a chapter she wrote on prayer titled, “Mystics, Mystical Experiences, and Contemplative Prayer” she says that the chapter is “dedicated to the mystics, the contemplatives, those now and those who have gone on before us.”[35]

Like all committed contemplatives, Beni believes, “When it comes to prayer and intercession, words are important but not necessary.”[36]

Practicing contemplative prayer changes how one understands spiritual things. Beni writes:

A thin place is where heaven and earth are close. It is easier to experience the spiritual realm in these places.[37]

As Roger Oakland explains in Faith Undone: the emerging church—a new reformation or an end-time deception, the term thin place “originated with Celtic spirituality (i.e., contemplative) and is in line with panentheism.”[38] Beni believes Ashland, Oregon, parts of Ireland, and the New Age stronghold of Sedona, Arizona are thin places. She claims:

In contemplative prayer, you discover that the atmosphere around you becomes thin to the point that there is no division between Heaven and earth.[39]

Consider the following description of meditation by Bill

Johnson:

Meditation has a quiet heart and a “directed” mind. Mulling a word over in our heart, with a pursuit that springs from the inquisitive child’s heart, is meditation.[40]

Ironically, just before the instruction about the repetitive use of a word (“Mulling a word over in our heart”), Johnson states:

Whereas religious cults teach people to empty their minds as the means of meditation, the Bible teaches us to fill our minds with God’s word.[41]

Johnson seemingly warns about emptying the mind and then directs how to accomplish that very thing! Contemplative prayer has also been taught in a classroom setting at Bethel.

Bonnie Johnson’s class, “The Secret Place,” was for “Instruction and activation in meditation and contemplative prayer” with emphasis on Catholic mystic Bernard of Clairvaux.[42] Her work, *Union With God: A Study of Mystics, Meditation, & Miracles*, is featured in Bethel’s online store.[43]

Bethel’s Alabaster Prayer House is open around the clock. According to the church website, “The Alabaster Prayer House and surrounding gardens are quiet and peaceful places to be in contemplative prayer and soaking.”[44] Its purpose is for “people to encounter the presence of God.”[45]

This Prayer House is not described as a place for Bible study, or for supplication or devotions. It is intended to facilitate contemplative prayer, and contemplative prayer has, in turn, facilitated entrance into the New Age.

A Quantum Transformation

No doubt, Ellyn Davis and Judy Franklin chose *The Physics of Heaven* to be the title of their book because of their

fascination with quantum physics and quantum mysticism. Davis notes:

Quantum Physics suggests that everything is “vibrations,”—fields of vibrating energy. However, quantum mysticism claims that even our thoughts and emotions give off vibrations or energies.[46]

Quantum spirituality or quantum mysticism is a spiritual interpretation, one might say, of quantum physics. New Age proponents embrace it because they feel it gives validity to their belief not only that all is interconnected energy, but that all is God. Thus we are all One. Everything is interconnected. Of course, if this were true, there would be no need for the Cross as a means of salvation for mankind.

Judy Franklin has come to believe that “if this world is actually going to be what it was created to be in the beginning, now that Jesus has redeemed everything we need to know what this power is, this ‘sea of quantum light’ that undergirds everything. And, more importantly, we need to know how to access it.”[47]

“If there weren’t some universal connectedness, why would God treat us as ‘all in Adam’ or ‘all in Christ?’” asks Ellyn Davis.[48]

But Warren Smith warns:

The New Age/New Spirituality is heralding quantum physics as a “scientific” basis for their contention that God is not only transcendent but also immanent—“in” everyone and everything.[49]

In, it says that God’s “voice [is] filling every atom in the universe.”[50] This is a kind of disguised view of panentheism and is what New Age teaches. For example, Matthew Fox, quoting Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, says that God is in “the tiniest atom.”[51] New Agers teach that through quantum spirituality,

man will realize his own divinity and will see that he embodies the "cosmic christ" (a christ-consciousness).

Annette Capps, daughter of the best-selling author and charismatic leader Charles Capps has been instrumental in introducing quantum spirituality to the church. In a booklet she wrote titled Quantum Faith, she states:

As I studied the theories of quantum physics, I was reminded of a prophecy given by my father . . . : "Some things which have required faith to believe will no longer require faith, for it will be proven to be scientific fact." [52]

The definition and understanding of "God" is changing for many. This has been gradual but now is accelerating to the point where Bethel Redding's movers and shakers (and others) are amenable to New Age "truths."

God is not in all people. The Bible tells us only those who know Christ have God within:

But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. (Romans 8:9)

God is not an impersonal energy force, and people are not "God" as part of this energy force. Quantum mysticism and the New Age are in total opposition to the Bible.

Whether Bill Johnson and other Bethel Redding leaders realize the ramifications of their actions or not, their participation in and approval of The Physics of Heaven begs the question: Does Bethel threaten to serve as a spearhead for synthesis of the sorcery-science of New Age/quantum mysticism into the Body of Christ?

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