

Modern Day Gnosticism

10 You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, 11 my persecutions and sufferings that happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra—which persecutions I endured; yet from them all the Lord rescued me. 12 Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, 13 while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. 14 But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it 15 and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. 16 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:10-17).

False teachers have existed since the formation of the Christian Faith. Throughout the history of the Church, we can see that these false teachings have crept into the faith through two chief means: the first is adding other philosophies and religions by syncretism through supposed hidden knowledge or a new revelation.

20 O Timothy, guard the deposit entrusted to you. Avoid the irreverent babble and contradictions of what is falsely called “knowledge,” 21 for by professing it some have swerved from the faith. Grace be with you (1 Timothy 6:20-21).

Amidst such deception, it is crucial to remember that Scripture, our unwavering anchor, is a secure and enduring foundation. By interpreting Scripture with Scripture itself, we can ensure that we remain firmly rooted in the truth, providing us with reassurance and confidence.

16 as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures (2 Peter 3:16).

This should be a stark warning to the Body of Christ regarding reading and teaching from the Bible. Thankfully, God’s complete revelation in the Bible we read today guards us against all error and falsehood. I will briefly explain the older heresy of Gnosticism and how the New Apostolic Reformation has some similarities to Gnosticism.

1. **Gnosticism:**

- **Definition:** Gnosticism was an ancient heretical movement that emphasized secret knowledge (gnosis) as a means of salvation. It often rejected the material world and held that only the spiritual realm was truly divine.
- **Scriptural Warnings:**
 - **1 Timothy 6:20:** “O Timothy, guard the deposit entrusted to you. Avoid the irreverent babble and contradictions of what is falsely called ‘knowledge’ (gnosis).”
 - This verse warns against false teachings that claim to offer special knowledge but are actually contrary to the true faith.

Gnosticism emerged as a collection of religious ideas and systems among Jewish and early Christian sects in the late 1st century AD¹. It emphasized personal spiritual knowledge (gnosis) above traditional teachings and religious authority. Gnostic cosmogony is often distinguished between a supreme, hidden God and a lesser divinity (sometimes associated with the biblical deity Yahweh) that is responsible for creating the material universe. Gnostics viewed material existence as flawed or evil, and salvation was believed to come through direct knowledge of the hidden divinity via mystical insight¹. Although the exact origin remains debated, it likely emerged in the late first or early second century². Later, The discovery of the Nag Hammadi library in 1945 provided valuable insights into Gnostic texts, revealing influences from Hellenistic Judaism, Zoroastrianism, and Platonism¹

The leaders of the NAR have fallen into modern-day Gnosticism, not in the sense that all material creation is evil, but in the sense that through the restoration of Apostles and Prophets, God is revealing secret knowledge to them that is even contrary to Scripture. A low view of the sufficiency of Scripture and the work of the Holy Spirit in the Body of Christ will and has caused such grievous errors to occur on behalf of the leaders of the NAR. Here is a definition of the NAR.

2. New Apostolic Reformation (NAR):

- **Definition:** The NAR is a modern movement within Protestant Christianity that emphasizes the restoration of apostolic and prophetic offices. It often promotes new revelations and signs and wonders. The NAR also claims that God's will is always to heal. The Apostles and Prophets of the NAR movement claim a restoration of the Five-Fold ministry of the Church.

Churches that desire to operate as Christ intended must have a government that includes all five offices. That belief is displayed on the website of Bethel Church, which states: "We embrace the biblical government of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers."⁶ And Bill Johnson called the five offices, working together, the "secret sauce" for the church to transform the world. Those churches that don't have apostles or prophets of their own often join an apostolic network or affiliate with a church like Bethel Church.¹

The Scripture passage that NAR false teachers use to justify the restoration of the Five-Fold ministry is Ephesians 4:9-13. We see in this passage the mention of the five offices of the Church, but where do we see in the NT that after the Apostles died and their official capacity ceased, these two offices of Apostle and Prophet would be restored in the last days? The answer, we don't. Earlier in Ephesians, the Church is built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, with Jesus Christ being the Cornerstone (Eph. 2:20).

Furthermore, in Revelation 21:14, the Apostles are numbered, with the number ending at twelve, specifically the twelve Apostles of the Lamb. This begs the question: Is there a need for more Apostles, and can you build upon a foundation without fault? Unless God somehow built the Church wrong in the first century of Christianity (1 Cor. 3:10; Acts 4:11; Heb. 3:3; 11:10).

Is it always God's will to heal? One of NAR's most controversial teachings is that it is always God's will to heal a person of sickness or disease. The goodness of God requires that it is always His will to

¹ Holly Pivec and R. Douglas Geivett, [*Counterfeit Kingdom: The Dangers of New Revelation, New Prophets, and New Age Practices in the Church*](#) (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing, 2022), 78–79.

heal. (This is one of the revelations God has supposedly given the church through today's "apostles" and "prophets.") 2

Another false teaching within the NAR is that it is always God's will to heal. The Scripture passages used to justify this are Luke 6:19 and Matt. 10:7-8; John 14:12. NAR claims through the command of Jesus and us being temples of the Holy Spirit that we are essentially Jesus, not merely a vessel. This sounds very close to "Christ consciousness," a New Age teaching prevalent in Sedona. That is because this is precisely what is being taught, and Bethel Church's teacher in spiritual formation acknowledges the open blending of New Age teachings into Christianity. Here are some quotes from "The Physics of Heaven" by Judy Franklin and Ellyn Davis to support my claims about the NAR and Bethel Church in Redding, California. The third quote has to do with the power of the zero-point field, which is another New Age teaching that these false teachers will misappropriate and twist Scripture with to put a Christian veneer on it. NAR teachers, rather than burn their books on magical arts, look for a way to synthesize them with Christianity (Acts 19:19).

This brings us to the most important point of this chapter. If there is a counterfeit, there is an authentic that we need to find and reclaim. Every time we see a masquerade, we need to look closely to properly discern what is being counterfeited, because a counterfeit is evidence that an authentic exists.³

I moved to Sedona fully prepared to discount everything I saw and heard as coming from a source other than the God I knew and loved. But, as a scientist, I was intrigued by what I found there. I saw healings and mystical experiences and revelations to rival anything I had seen or experienced in the church. I encountered an understanding of the natural world and how it interacted with the spiritual that I had sensed but had never been taught in any of my science classes. 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. The strange thing was, much of what I saw and heard embodied biblical principles and could be backed up by Scripture.⁴

I felt like there was more to those verses so I began earnestly seeking the Lord as to what they meant. He shared that, from the day of Pentecost until now, no child of God has ever fully realized the power that has been put within us. God has given us power to raise the dead and heal the sick and cast out demons and we've done that to a point, but...⁵

The emphasis in the NAR gospel is not on Jesus's sacrifice on behalf of sinful humanity but on the need to repent of our old ways and practices and have faith in Jesus' finished work on the Cross and subsequent Resurrection. Instead, it must be healed with many signs, wonders, and manifestations. The focus is changed from looking upon Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith (Heb. 12:2), to looking into ourselves to be little gods. This is Satanic/humanistic and appeals to the already corrupted sinful nature that

² Holly Pivec and R. Douglas Geivett, [*Counterfeit Kingdom: The Dangers of New Revelation, New Prophets, and New Age Practices in the Church*](#) (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing, 2022), 159–160.

³ Ellyn Davis with Franklin, [*The Physics of Heaven*](#) (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image, 2015).

⁴ Ellyn Davis with Franklin, [*The Physics of Heaven*](#) (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image, 2015).

⁵ Ellyn Davis with Franklin, [*The Physics of Heaven*](#) (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image, 2015).

every human has inherited from Adam from the fall. “You will be like God,” said Satan to Eve before the fall (Gen 3:5). This should be a warning from Scripture for anybody who would try to exalt humanity, just as Satan was tempting Eve with wisdom and twisting what God said. I could talk about the false teachings and practices of the NAR, but I would not have enough time in one message to touch upon all of them. So, how do we guard ourselves against false teachers/teachings? By not merely reading the Word of God but studying the truth and not trying to find truth in the counterfeit. In the next part of this message, I will show you the sufficiency, inerrancy, clarity, and necessity of Scripture, which is all we need.

1. **Transformation of Society:**

- The NAR places a strong emphasis on the “**kingdom of God**” and believes that Christians should seek to **transform society and culture** in every sphere of life (such as government, education, and the arts) through supernatural means.

2. **Spiritual Warfare:**

- The NAR believes in **spiritual warfare**, which involves engaging in prayer and other practices to defeat demonic forces believed to be active in the world.

3. **Dominion Theology:**

- Some NAR adherents believe in “**dominion theology**”, asserting that Christians should take dominion over the earth and its institutions in preparation for the return of Christ.

The Sufficiency of Scripture

We can define the sufficiency of Scripture as follows: *the sufficiency of Scripture means that Scripture contains all the words of God we need for salvation, for trusting him perfectly, and for obeying him perfectly.*

This definition emphasizes that it is in Scripture alone that we are to search for God’s words to us. It also reminds us that God considers what he has told us in the Bible to be enough for us and that we should rejoice in the great revelation he has given us and be content with it.⁶

- While it’s challenging to provide an exact number, scholars estimate that there are **hundreds of direct quotations** and **thousands of allusions and references** to the Old Testament in the New Testament.
- Do a word study on “Scriptures” and “it is written,” and you will notice that these two phrases occur 301 times in the NT when referring to the OT.
- **15** and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus (2 Timothy 3:15).
- **99** I have more understanding than all my teachers, for your testimonies are my meditation (Psalm 119:99).

⁶ Wayne Grudem, [*Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*](#), Second Edition. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2020), 152.

Scripture alone should guide our manner and practice of living as Christians. The Apostles referred to OT Scripture in the NT, and likewise, we should refer to the objective truth of Scripture to guide our lives as Christians. There is no need for newer revelation if we believe God has revealed everything necessary to His Church through His Word.

Inerrancy of Scripture

inerrancy: The idea that Scripture in the original manuscripts does not affirm anything that is contrary to fact.⁷

- **17** Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth (John 17:17).
- **13** But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth (2 Thessalonians 2:13).
- **28** And now, O Lord God, you are God, and your words are true, and you have promised this good thing to your servant (2 Samuel 7:28).
- **160** The sum of your word is truth, and every one of your righteous rules endures forever (Ps 119:160).

The inerrancy of God's Word should cause us to seek His counsel through His Word in matters pertaining to Godliness and the practice of our faith. Christians may and have found themselves in error when the practice of their faith is not rooted in the objective truthfulness and sufficiency of the Word of God contained only in the divinely inspired Holy Bible.

The Clarity of Scripture

We may define the clarity of Scripture as follows: *the clarity of Scripture means that the Bible is written in such a way that it is able to be understood, but right understanding requires time, effort, the use of ordinary means, a willingness to obey, and the help of the Holy Spirit; and our understanding will remain imperfect in this lifetime.*⁸

- **6** And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart.**7** You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise (Dt 6:6–7).
- **7** The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. (Ps 19:7).
- **130** The unfolding of your words gives light; it imparts understanding to the simple (Ps 119:130).
- **4** to give prudence to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the youth (Pr 1:4).

⁷ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, Second Edition. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2020), 1511.

⁸ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, Second Edition. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2020), 109.

The Clarity of Scripture should encourage the Church to read and study God's Word. We don't need to be wise necessarily because the Word of God makes the simple wise and shows that children can be taught the Word of God.

The Necessity of Scripture

The necessity of Scripture may be defined as follows: *the necessity of Scripture means that the Bible is necessary for knowing the gospel, for maintaining spiritual life, and for knowing God's will, but it is not necessary for knowing that God exists or for knowing something about God's character and moral laws.*⁹

- We have God's complete, divinely inspired Word to look into, which contains the Gospel and needs no new revelation. Amen. Scripture is of the utmost necessity for sanctifying the Church (John 17:17).

Title: New Revelation?

Scripture: 2 Timothy 3:10-17

Questions

1. What is the Gospel?
2. How was the Gospel message preached in the Book of Acts?
3. Does the Church need new revelation apart from the Word of God?
4. Does the Church need modern-day Apostles and Prophets?
5. What did the Apostles and early Church leaders appeal to for the practice of faith in the Church?
6. What is the definition of the sufficiency of Scripture?
7. What is the definition of the inerrancy of Scripture?
8. What is the definition of the clarity of Scripture?
9. What is the definition of the necessity of Scripture?
10. How do we recognize and guard ourselves against false teachers?

Benediction: 1 Timothy 6:20

⁹ Wayne Grudem, [*Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*](#), Second Edition. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2020), 137.