

Be careful what you buy in Christian bookstores

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By **Marsha West**

It's understandable that free-market conservatives are deeply troubled that Barack Obama has taken the reins of power. Already we see America moving even closer to socialism than before. But to me what's even more troubling than what's going on in Washington D.C. is the clear and present danger in Christendom. Let me spell out the problem as I see it:

A-p-o-s-t-a-s-y.

Dictionary.com defines apostasy as "A total desertion of or departure from one's religion, principles, party, cause, etc."

For hundreds of years orthodox Christianity has held that the Bible is the Word of God, inspired by the Holy Spirit, by supernatural power, and that every word in it is true. (2 Tim 3:16) Thus, Scripture has the power, or right, to command how people of faith live their lives. Then theological liberalism rears its ugly head and attempts to undermine established truths. The theological liberal pretends to be a Christian ("progressive Christian" is preferable) as he or she blatantly and unapologetically undermines the Divine authority of the scriptures in matters of faith and life. As a result of the onslaught of liberal influences, the Church is in dire straits!

False teachers and charlatans persist solely because Christians have become biblically illiterate. Many believers think studying the Bible is so dull and boring that they can't be bothered anymore. So they're ripe for the picking. And this is not the exception but the rule!

If it's true that the Bible is God's Word, shouldn't what He says matter to those who believe in Him? Evidently not because many people who say they "love the Lord" have no clue what's in the Bible — and clearly they don't care to find out!

A number of professed Christians ignore what was written by the apostles and others who sat under Christ's teaching and put their trust in human opinions and unreliable sources. More on this in a moment.

If God did *not* reveal Himself through the prophets and those who penned the Old and New Testaments, and the Bible is simply a collection of fascinating morality tales, myths and fables, what source are people to draw from in their quest to know the one true God?

Let's say the Gospels were made up, as the unbeliever claims, how, then, will the person who has given his or her life to Christ know anything at all about Him? Moreover, if the Bible is merely a book of fables, when Jesus was tested by the devil, why did He quote from Deuteronomy 6:6, 6:13, 8:3 and 10:20? Because the Word of God is the source of power against the enemies of God! Even the Son of God wielded the "sword of the spirit, which is the word of God" against the evil one! "It is written, 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God'" (Mat. 4:4). The words that proceed out of the mouth of God are in the Bible! God's word is the bread of life! It is nourishment for the soul! You can't fight evil forces without arming yourself for battle! The way you do that is explained [here](http://www.emailbrigade.com/84.html)

Make no mistake. Rulers of darkness are the driving force behind theological liberalism. Paul warned, "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Eph. 6:12). These counterfeit Christians are relentless in their plan to deconstruct historical, orthodox Christianity. They want to mold Christianity into a one size fits all religion that appeals to everyone. To be successful they must refashion the Jesus of the Bible into a tolerant, all-inclusive Savior who condemns no one. Sound familiar?

Progressive Christians abhor the Bible's "oppressive morality." Not even God has the right to tell them how to live their lives, especially when it comes to free expression, or what the Bible deems deviant behavior. They're mantra is "God wants me to be happy, halleluiah!"

Books that put a positive spin on the cults, the occult, New Age spirituality, Eastern mysticism, homosexuals, lesbians, bisexuals transgenders, and what not are available through online Christian outlets as well as in walk-in stores. Here's a point to ponder: So-called Christian publishing houses are the largest suppliers of outright heresy. Oddly, Christian publishers and outlets are responsible (or should I say irresponsible) for much of the apostasy because they give false

teachers a platform for what simply equates to heresy!

Listen to what Peter Jones says in his article, "Evangelism Highjacked by Closet Theological Liberals":

"I write, so to speak, from the belly of this beast, attending the National Pastors' Conference, sponsored by Zondervan and Intervarsity Press, which is taking place in San Diego, February 9-14, 2009. It is amazing to see how these once faithful publishers of evangelical orthodoxy are now consistently and deliberately launching a massive but subtle attack against the "Fundamentals" for which Evangelicalism stood courageously against liberalism in the past."

A word of warning about Christian bookstores. Bibles are sold in every color, shape and size, in translations that are supposedly "accurate" "up-to-date" and "easy to read." If you don't know what you're buying, be careful! Many Bible translations are highly unorthodox, hence they're unfit for Christian consumption! Albert Mohler, President of Baptist Theological Seminary, cautions that the translation a person chooses is "what they will have in their minds and what they will hide in their hearts." Unorthodox material can lead ignorant souls into cults and apostate Christianity — and this is tragic!

Visit just about any Christian bookstore (CB) and you'll see display cases and shelves stocked with spiritual merchandise, including jewelry, figurines, framed pictures, greeting cards, calendars, posters, music — you name it they stock it. But what's disconcerting about these stores is that they also stock books that not only attack the [fundamentals of the faith](#), some of the books contain out and out heresy! Christian publishers and storeowners have a responsibility to examine the material they sell!

Let me provide a few examples of many that could be cited. So-called Christian publishing houses publish books that purport Word of Faith theology (prosperity gospel) that are distributed to Christian retailers. You ask, "What's wrong with the prosperity gospel?" Well for one thing, prosperity preachers hold to the decidedly unorthodox view of Scripture that faith is a *force*. Faith teachers say that faith is controlled through words and by uttering the right words, or the right formula, you can have what you want. Adherents call it making a "positive confession." Confess you're healthy and you can overcome disease. Confess you're a millionaire and it will happen. Just name it and claim it! That, my friends, is heresy.

One of the most popular prosperity preachers is Joel Osteen. If you're a fan of Joel's, please don't stop reading — just hear me out. I realize that it's hard to believe that Rev. Osteen would steer you wrong. But don't be fooled by his humble demeanor, his neatly coiffed hair and dazzling smile. Listen to what he says about faith in his best-selling book, "Your Best Life Now":

"You have to begin speaking words of faith over your life. Your words have enormous creative power. The moment you speak something out, you give birth to it. This is a spiritual principle, and it works whether what you're saying is good or bad, positive or negative." [1]

This so-called spiritual principle is "the law of attraction." New Age guru, Rhonda Byrnes, author of "The Secret" believes "you create your life through your thoughts." Joel believes the same thing! Those who choose to read his books, attend or watch his church service on TV are sitting under a false teacher!

Joel Osteen is not alone. The Rev. T. D. Jakes is a spiritual advisor to President Obama. He has been labeled a "black Billy Graham." Yet Rev. Jakes teaches something Billy never taught:

"Jesus was a rich man. He had to have been, in order to have supported his disciples and their families during his ministry." [2]

Funny, but the Bible tells us that Jesus "had nowhere to lay His head."

John Avanzini also believes Jesus was rich:

"...Jesus lived in great prosperity..." [3]

Trend-setting Jesus wore designer clothes:

"Why do you need to know that" asks Avanzini. "Because until you know that Jesus was prosperous, you won't be either. You may have His kindness, you may have His gentleness, you may have all His other attributes, but you'll never have His prosperity."

Televangelist Benny Hinn is "sick and tired of hearing about streets of gold." He says he doesn't need gold in heaven: (My comments are in brackets)

"I gotta have it now. [Rev. Greedy is worth millions.] I mean, when I get to glory, all my bills will be paid, brother. I won't

have bills in glory. I gotta have it here. [So send him your hard earned money!] You say, 'Well, Benny Hinn, isn't it wonderful to have streets of gold in heaven?' Well, of course, but if I hear the thing one more time of how it will be and how it was, I'm gonna kick somebody." [Hopefully Benny did not follow through on his threat.] [4]

In her book "The Most Important Decision You Will Ever Make" Joyce Meyer writes this heresy:

"During that time He [Jesus] entered hell, where you and I deserved to go (legally) because of our sin. He paid the price there. ...no plan was too extreme. ... Jesus said on the cross and in hell." she continues.... God rose up from His throne and said to demon powers tormenting the sinless Son of God, 'Let Him go.' Then the resurrection power of Almighty God went through hell and filled Jesus. ...He was resurrected from the dead — the first born-again man. [5]

Admittedly some of Joyce's teaching is biblical, however her teaching on the Atonement, which is a central doctrine of the faith, is heretical. Why would Jesus Christ, who is God, need to be born again in hell? The Bible clearly teaches that it is mere mortals who must be **born again!** The cross is where Jesus' atoning work for mankind was completed! In John 19:30 Jesus said: "It is finished...and gave up the ghost." That His work was finished is also evidenced in Paul's words in Col. 1:20: "And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven."

What Joyce Meyer teaches is clearly Word of Faith theology.

This is just a taste of prosperity teaching. You can listen to these men and women 'til the cows come home and you will not hear one of them utter that followers of Jesus Christ are to deny themselves and take up their cross. Jesus said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Mat. 16:24). But that's just Jesus.

Here is a partial list of other word-faith apostates:

Kenneth Hagin, Charles Capps, Oral Roberts, Kenneth and Gloria Copeland, Paul and Jan Crouch, John Hagee, Rod Parsley, Todd Bentley, Paula White, Fred Price, Jerry Savelle, Robert Tilton, Marilyn Hickey, Morris Cerullo, Miles Munroe, Jesse Duplantis, Steve Munsey, Ken Clement and Ed Young. (For more on word-faith teachers follow the link at the end of this column)

Frankly, I'm surprised Oprah Winfrey's book club recommendations aren't displayed in CB windows. Whatever Oprah recommends becomes an overnight best-seller and rakes in mega bucks. In fact, hordes of "Christians" run right out and buy Oprah's book club picks. A few years ago she pushed Neal Donald Walsh's blasphemous "Conversations With God" on her show and the book sold millions and made Walsh a household name! Last year Oprah promoted the New Age Bible, "A Course in Miracles," a "self-study spiritual thought system that teaches the way to Universal Love through Forgiveness." (For more on ACIM follow the link at the end of this column)

My point is that if Christian booksellers think nothing of prominently displaying alleged miracle worker Benny Hinn's books, then it would be perfectly appropriate to offer "A Course in Miracles."

I would be remiss if I failed to mention William P. Young's mega-selling book "The Shack." Like ACIM, some church groups use it as a "Bible" study. But is "The Shack" based on sound biblical principles? I hate to be the bearer of bad tidings but the answer is a resounding No!

In "The Shack" Young presents a new understanding of the Christian faith under the guise of fiction. Here's how Pastor Gary Gilley of Southern View Chapel sums up Young's book in his online book review:

"The Shack, while occasionally getting things right is, in the end, a dangerous piece of fiction. It undermines Scripture and the church, presents at best a mutilated gospel, misrepresents the biblical teachings concerning the Godhead and offers a New Age understanding of God and the universe. This is not a great novel to explain tragedy and pain. It is a misleading work which will confuse many and lead others astray." [6]

Gilley's not alone in his analysis of "The Shack." There are a whole host of pastors and scholars who have written articles to express their concerns about it. Some Christian radio hosts have devoted entire broadcasts to the book. And the consensus is that it must not be looked at as "a novel to be enjoyed." In his May 26, 2008 radio broadcast Albert Mohler warned his listeners that the book is "deeply subversive," "scripturally incorrect" and contains "undiluted heresy." (Listen here http://www.albertmohler.com/radio_show.php?cdate=2008-05-26)

Now, if the anti-Shack folks are right in their assessment of the book's contents, wouldn't it be prudent for CBs that choose to sell the controversial book to at least post a disclaimer?

A disclaimer should also be posted next to books by **Emerging/Emergent Church** (ECM) proponents as these men and women have been roundly criticized for their unorthodox views. The Christian Post reported:

"The Emerging Church movement is seeking to revitalise the faith but may end up severing Christ's church from the Word of God, says one Reformed Presbyterian pastor and theologian.

"If churches embracing the principle of Sola Scriptura (by Scripture alone) fail to understand and address the concerns voiced in the Emerging Church conversation, we may lose an entire generation of professing believers," says the Rev Rutledge Etheridge, an adjunct professor of systematic theology at the Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary (RPTS) in Pittsburgh and pastor of Providence Reformed Presbyterian Church.

"According to Etheridge, the Emerging Church movement — known for flexible methodology and efforts to be culturally relevant — seeks to glean the good from Christianity's past while painting a fresh picture of the faith today. Those familiar with the movement say its members seek to live their faith in what they believe to be a "postmodern" society, while its leaders are often critical of traditional evangelical churches and often place high value on good works or social activism."
[7]

To put it plainly, ECM is not the Christianity of the New Testament. The leaders in the "conversation" denigrate the Word of God. Moreover, they do not preach the true Gospel of Jesus Christ. There is but one gospel and Paul clearly lays it out in 1 Cor. 15:

"Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain" (1 Cor. 15:1,2).

Many ECM leaders are wolves with razor sharp canines masquerading as harmless lambs. Beware! "For Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light" (2 Cor. 14).

[Lighthouse Trails Research](#) has a plethora of information on ECM. I found the following quotes on LTR's website:

*"I stopped reading from the approved evangelical reading list and began to distance myself from the evangelical agenda. I discovered new authors and new voices at the bookstore-Thomas Merton, Henri Nouwen and St. Teresa of Avila. The more I read, the more intrigued I became. Contemplative spirituality seemed to open up a **whole new way** for me to understand and experience God. I was deeply moved by works like The Cloud of Unknowing, The Dark Night of the Soul and the Early Writings of the Desert Fathers." — Spencer Burke, [The Ooze](#)*

"Some of the values of the emerging church are an emphasis on emotions, global outlook, a rise in the use of arts, and a rise in mysticism and spirituality." — Josh Reich

ECM does not hold to the authority of Scripture, hence they are careless in their handling of it. They're all about political liberalism with a social gospel, pluralism, and universalism. As I pointed out in my article, "Emergent Church Spreading Spiritual Cancer":

"The movement...is emerging away from orthodox Christianity, spreading its spiritual cancer throughout the globe. ECM change agents have made inroads into evangelicalism, big time. What they preach is a counterfeit social gospel. They say they bring a "message of peace." Their hope is to make Christianity more palatable to the world. Sounds altruistic, doesn't it? But don't believe it! In order to accomplish their lofty goal, the shifters must first repackage the Church." [8]

Here's a partial list of prominent voices in ECM:

N.T. Wright, John Howard Yoder, Stanley Hauerwas, Ryan Bolger, Wilbert Shenk, Brian McLaren, Rob Bell, Tony Jones, Doug Pagitt, Erwin McManus, Dan Kimball, Scot McKnight, Elizabeth O'Connor, Nancey Murphy, Leonard Sweet, Richard Foster, Dallas Willard, Donald Miller and Phyllis Tickle.

Certainly some Christian bookstore employees are sincere Christians. To them I say: Defending the faith is a duty! Jude urges Christians to "earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 1:3). Apostasy is rampant in the contemporary church. Selling heretical books that lead people away from Christ only contributes to the problem.

Jude also warns against false teachers and leaders who undermine the faith:

"For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ" (Jude 1:4).

What I've covered here is only the tip of the iceberg. There's so much more to be said about all the garbage sold by so-called Christian publishing companies and bookstores. My desire is not to condemn them; only to bring to light some disturbing trends and to expose a few apostates.

NOTES:

- [1] Hank Speaks Out — Archives: The Secret/Word of Faith Movement/ Christianity in Crisis: 21st Century
- [2] John Avanzini, "Was Jesus Poor?" — Believer's Voice of Victory, Jan. 1996, p. 8
- [3] Kaylois Henry, "Bishop Jakes Is Ready. Are You?" — The Dallas Observer magazine, June 20-26, 1996, p. 22
- [4] Benny Hinn, Praise the Lord broadcast, Nov. 8th 1990 — Audiotape
- [5] The Most Important Decision You Will Ever Make — By Joyce Meyer, 1991 edition, p. 35-36
- [6] The Shack Book Review — By Gary Gilley
- [7] Emerging Church movement threatens church foundation, says pastor — By Eric Young, Christian Post
- [8] "Emergent Church Spreading Spiritual Cancer" — By Marsha West

<http://www.renewamerica.us/columns/mwest/090319>