

The New Age and the Word of Faith

There is a tendency among good Christians to carefully guard their speech and “bad confessions” and to even police the rest of us, correcting our negative speech. It is the belief that speaking about sickness or bad experiences catch us in a web of consequence creating more sickness or preventing our healing or deliverance from the evil. The 'bad confession’ is a staple of the “Word” of Faith movement where words become the impetus of faith in action.

This essay will examine that idea in light of Scripture and in a couple of 19th and early 20th century New Age texts with similar ideas.

First, *Faith* is not *The Force*. Faith is trusting in a loving God and leaving outcomes in his care and keeping. Faith is knowing that whatever transpires, good or bad, God will cause to work together to our good (Romans 8.28 NAS). Faith was never meant to be the means of a big escape. Nowhere are we promised worldly ease, perfect health, and prosperity (in modern terms) as a return for our pledge of faith. Faith is not a manipulation. The Bible is not a spell book.

Hebrews chapter 11 is the quintessence of Faith. Its examples include many who experienced miracles but also includes those who suffered indescribably. The early Christian church was birthed out of martyrdom. Believers who refused to deny Jesus suffered heinous tortures: burned at the stake, skinned alive, and other fates too terrible to mention. Was there not yet a revelation of the power of words?

Thus, the “bad confession” may be based not only on an incorrect dividing of some Scriptures but also on a failure to look at whole Word and a stunning failure to look at reality.

One of the primary Scriptures that this fallacy rests on is misread. Romans chapter four speaks of the Faith of Abraham, the Father of Faith, who believed God for his own personal righteousness, just as we are to do. **We believe, hence we are righteous, saved** (*See Paul to the Philippian jailer (Acts. 16.31)*). But the next verse is misinterpreted.

(As it is written, I have made you [*Abraham*] a father of many nations”) in the presence of Him who he [*Abraham*] believed—God, who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did” (17).

Who gives life to the dead? God, not “him who believed.” The Faith movement says that we can also call *things into being*. But the text clearly says it is **God** who is able to do this. Kenneth Copeland has a saying “**we are little gods**” (Psalm 82.6; John 10.34).

He misconstrues Jesus' reply to the Pharisees who accuse him of blasphemy. In this passage Jesus tells the Pharisees “that it is written in your law that men are called gods” to whom the Word came (John 10.34). Jesus explains that the phrase is a reference to the special status of the Jews who were first to covenant with God and to receive Scripture from him. Not to be construed as granting us the creative force and powers of God.

The Word of Faith twists, “God in us” and Jesus' words, “ye are gods” with the notion that if we are “little gods” we should be able to call into being those things that don't exist. And, conversely, to deny those things that *are* and make them go away. Such ideas are not new. In fact they are a natural

outgrowth of New Age (Eastern) religion that became popular in the 19th and 20th century.

The nineteenth century was a hot bed of *new thought* and a time when Eastern belief systems worked their way West. Two authors that I am intimately familiar with are Howard Percival and Mary Baker Eddy. Many of their false ideas are standard fare in Word of Faith circles.

Whether or not Word of Faith teachers have ever heard of Percival or Mary Baker Eddy is irrelevant. Whether or not they were direct contributors in a direct line is not important. The deception is Satan's and he can infect with alacrity sound doctrine and inject his ideas into any wind of doctrine with a twist here and a twist there. In fact, an Evangelical Reformed Fellowship blog post describes the Word of Faith as a blend of Christianity and Christian Science.

I grew up in a home where two philosophies ruled at odds with each other: my Mother's Christian Science and my Father's Rosicrucian beliefs. Rosicrucianism has its roots in ancient Babylonian cults as well as in Eastern religions. Now its ideas are simply absorbed into the cult of New Age which at the time of my youth was not yet a buzz word. Percival's Thinking and Destiny as well as Mary Baker Eddy's works were familiar texts to me and I can vouch that their mind sciences are similar to precepts taught in the Word of Faith movement.

To demonstrate my thesis, I cite Percival's central idea from from Thinking and Destiny which is the epitome of Eastern philosophy now expressed under the ever-widening umbrella of The New Age.

Percival argues that a person (doer) works out his own destiny. That our thoughts, words, actions create a continuous process of sowing and harvesting, not only in this lifetime but in reincarnated lives to come:

“Each self . . . makes its own law as destiny by what it thinks and does. These laws create the conditions by which a person lives and also creates future destinies as the triune being goes through countless reincarnations to balance the effects of his thinking and words”.

Percival thinks that Christianity, as it has come down to us, does not show what Jesus originally intended. Percival says that heaven, hell, Jesus, the Kingdom of God are symbols:

“The very evident purpose of The Gospels is to teach the understanding and living of an inner life, an interior life which would regenerate the human body and thereby conquer death, restoring the physical body to eternal life, the state from which it is said to have fallen.”

Percival's goal, the same as the Yogi, was to control his body and discipline his desires and feelings to arrive at a higher state of consciousness until he is eventually freed of and no longer dependent on nature, matter, and the five senses.

“Thoughts are real things whereby man creates his potentials, his health. They are the building blocks of matter which can change the face of nature.”

Our bodies, according to Percival, are literally the result of our thinking and speaking. Percival thinks it is unreasonable that the physical body of man must die. But with the perfection that comes with controlling thoughts, words, and actions, ***one can overcome nature, and death*** by the **highest revelation** of “God in us, the hope of Glory.”

Notice his Scripture reference. Clearly, his understanding of *God in us* gives us similar power to the

God of the universe and puts us on an equal footing. Percival's "God in us" makes us equal to the God of Scripture if our spiritual evolution and regeneration are accomplished.

And, consistent with New Age teaching, all regeneration is accomplished by our efforts, not by being *in the vine*. It is a philosophy of sweat and works, methods, and esoteric teachings.

An advocate of similar thought is Earl Paulk of the *Manifest Sons of God*. His primary idea is that God is **manifest** when He is fully **revealed** in us. We, then, as sons of gods can "**manifest**" the same ability Jesus did in his resurrected body as he moved through walls, appeared and disappeared. The Scripture *Manifest Sons* stand on is 1st John chapter three verses 2-3 :

Beloved, now are we the sons of god, and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

(3) and everyone who has this hope in Him, purifies himself, just as he is pure." NKJV

Notice the play on the word "appear." This text is actually a reference to the appearing of Jesus in the heavens and the changing of our mortal bodies into our resurrected bodies. *The Manifest sons of God*, however, believe that when he "appears" in our hearts, this power is fully realized, if we only knew it, and thus we need the guidance of such gurus as Paulk and others to show us the way.

This movement also is known as *The Latter Rain* with proponents such as Bill Hammon, Rick Joyner, Ern Baxter, Francis Frangipane, and Bill Britton. Anytime there is a formula, a method, a teacher to lead us into deeper understandings, guess what? We are in the New Age box of formulaic prescriptions and bondages. Our success becomes dependent on our efforts, not God. We try to learn from the prescriptions of those apostolic gurus who have gone before. Our desire to hear from God, to be free of sickness and poverty and troubles creates a big market for the guru. The more we try to apply formulas, the more we try to manipulate outcomes, the finer the line between following God and sorcery. God will not share his glory with anyone. Nothing in the Christian life can be obtained through our efforts.

E.W. Kenyon is a Father of the positive confession or (Word of Faith) movement within Pentecostalism. Again, his doctrine involved the intrinsic power of faith and words. A well known expression of Kenyon is "My confession gives me possession." Kenyon was exposed to many new thought philosophies as a student of Emerson College of Oratory.

One such influence was Phineas Quimby.

Quimby was a 19th century stage mesmerizer for 15 years before he acquired fame as a healer. His success with healing others, even at a distance, sealed his reputation.

One of his famous patients was Mary Baker Eddy who based her book: Science and Health and the Keys to the Scriptures on Quimby's ideas. Eddy says that matter does not exist, all ailments are in the mind and one must denounce *mortal mind*. Eddy and Quimby both say that evil is merely an incorrect state of mind. I remember a phrase my Mother used when I would complain of being teased or hurt. "That's just nothing pretending to be something." Or, another favorite, "That's *mortal mind* talking." I was not given the benefit of her saying *that person was very mean to you and he should not have behaved that way*. Instead it was all a mistake of my thinking.

Just what were Quimby's ideas and how did they find their way into Kenyon's and Eddy's works? Quimby believed that "disease is not self-existent, nor created by God, but that it is purely the

invention of man. Yet it is so firmly established in our belief, and substantiated by so much wisdom that its existence as an independent entity is never questioned”(qtd. from New Hampshire Free P. 1860).

Another article quotes Quimby as saying: “Every theory admitting evil as an element cannot annihilate it. If disease is ever driven out of existence, it must be by a theory and practice entirely at variance with what we now put our trust in” Portland Advertiser. Feb. 1860. Quimby says that “disease is the invention of man. It is caused by a disturbance of the mind—which is spiritual matter[or substance] and therefore originates there.”

Quimby said to a patient after he diagnosed her by reading her mind (a counterfeit spirit at work?), “I suppose it would be pretty hard to convince you that you had no disease independent of your mind.”

. . . . patients with a wrong idea, namely-that they have some disease. This makes them nervous and creates in their minds a disease that otherwise would never been thought of.” He urges them never to consult a quack; “you not only lose your money, but your health”
The Truth is the Cure. Qtd in The Quimby Manuscripts.

Quimby also blamed doctors and scientists for creating disease by their medical descriptions.

How closely aligned is Kenyon with Quimby and Percival? How has the demonic found its way into powerful Bible believers like Paulk, Joyner, Hagin, Copeland and others who have conflated such thinking with Scripture.

Kenyon says:

“A wrong confession hinders the Spirit's work in your body. A neutral confession is unbelief. It is just as bad as a negative confession. It is the positive, clear cut confession that *wins*. I know in whom I have believed. I know that no word from God is void of power or fulfillment.” Your faith is the product of the recreated spirit. When you were Born Again, you received *the nature of the Father God*. That nature grows in you with your acting on the Word, and your confession of the Father's perfect dominion in your body causes your spirit to grow in grace and ability. Your confession either honors the Father or Satan . . . either gives Satan or the Word dominance in your life” (The Hidden Man).

Though Quimby had an incorrect interpretation of the Bible believing that Jesus was just an ordinary man whose scientific truths about healing had been lost by institutions of Christianity, Kenyon was fully rooted and grounded in correct doctrine, from his Methodist training and beyond. And one can feel the force and power of the previous words. But how strongly rooted in Scriptural truth is the “positive confession?” Are Kenyon's ideas dependent on man's efforts or the Spirit's power? What does he mean by “wins?”

It is important to examine some scriptures on which Kenyon and other Word of Faith believers hang their hats.

“As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.” Proverbs 23.7.

At first blush this seems to support Percival, Quimby, Eddy. A look at the context differs. A man eats with a selfish man because he desires his delicacies and elevated status. The selfish man thinks in his heart that he is superior to the man delighted to be in his presence, but his heart is not in his words, “eat, drink.” In reality he despises this man and looks down at him.

The Living Bible, 70's ed. paraphrases it this way:

Don't associate with evil men, don't long for their favor and gifts. Their kindness is a trick. They want to use you for a pawn.

So, the correct interpretation is that the evil man's thoughts are who he is, not his outward expression.

Another standard of the Word of Faith is: “**Death and Life is in the power of the tongue.**” Prov.18.21.

Does this refer to a creative force equal to God's? I rather think that the tongue reveals what is in our hearts. And if our hearts are evil, we can hurt and destroy others.

Jesus says,

“The good man brings good things out of the good stored in his heart. The evil man brings evil things out of the evil that is in our hearts.” Matt.12.24,

Does the tongue have a creative force, that by speaking life, you create a healthier body and by avoiding speaking bad things about yourself (the bad confession) you can stay healthier?) I don't think that is the thrust of Jesus' words.

It is true that men will have to give an account for every *idle* word spoken on the day of judgment (Matt.12.36). However, a tongue under control is a mark of the Spirit's power, and His work in us. Apart from accepting Jesus' atonement we will be judged by our words (Matt.12.3). And our confessing Him as Lord (Rom. 10.9-10) uses the tongue to speak eternal life (Prov. 18.21). **Because we confessed with our lips the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus, we have escaped death and hell. Life and death in the power of the tongue.**

A stickler Scripture that seems to argue against my position is the incident where Jesus curses the fig tree (a real tree, not a symbol) and then tells the disciples :

For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be cast into the sea, and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith.” Mark 11.23

There is no parsing these difficult words of Jesus. He is speaking of a real mountain and a real fig tree. How does this Scripture fit into the theme of this essay? Jesus cursing the tree resulted in its death. If spoken words have such power and he urges us to speak likewise, is my viewpoint destroyed? This verse taken at face value seems to contradict my point of view. (the cursing of the fig tree also has symbolic significance without bearing on the point being made here).

Jesus goal was to make disciples not just decision makers. They were to go where he would go and say and do what he would do. They would receive a transfer of His authority (explained in the chapter of the Centurion's Servant). They were to make disciples out of all men. He knew that disciples must be able to exercise His authority in difficult situations. They, like Jesus, would need to be under the direction of the Holy Spirit. If under the Spirit's leading and gifting, nothing would be impossible.

In John chapter 12 verse 49, Jesus says that He can do nothing except under the direction of the Father. And if we dwell in the same vine, nourished by the vine, likewise our directives will come from the Father and the Holy Spirit. Then miracles can happen. We are to be filled with the Holy Ghost and prepared to exercise His gifts of the Spirit under the control of the Spirit at the Spirit's request.

Sorcery is doing things in the flesh. Miracles happen when we follow the Spirit.

Again, I must say that the Bible is not a spell book. It is not “if you try this, then this will happen.” It defines a relationship that is so tight that one can speak and act under God's directive.

A good example is that of Peter walking on water. He said, “Lord, if you bid me come.” And Jesus said, “come” and he was able to walk on water. When he began to think of his inability, he sank. It is only when Jesus bids “come” do this, pronounce healing, cast out the demon, that the impossible becomes possible.

It is not the purpose of this paper to argue against miracles, giftings, and the work of the Spirit, but rather to point out that the New Age deception is everywhere. It puts the emphasis on **us** rather than on **God**, on our control, our spirituality, our abilities. In many respects, Word of Faith teachers have correct doctrine.

But, in practice, the Word people take full responsibility for the outcomes of their speech and prayers. They do not fail to drum others for their “bad confessions” or lack of faith, or they may accuse: “Did you pray about that? Putting the fault of a happenstance fully on the unfortunate slob who didn't function according to formula. But they also have strange inconsistencies. They may practice not speaking about illness, especially if hidden, but break all the rules for a broken leg, a pair of glasses, or obesity. I haven't seen the practice exercised much in these instances. *I speak to these eyes, 20 20 vision. I command this body to lose weight.* If wearing a cast, most have no problem discussing the event of the break. Usually seeking treatment without a qualm. Nor hesitate in getting a pair of glasses or surgery for cataracts.

The following example is a case in point:

A local Word of Faith preacher prayed about the new roof he needed for his church. After prayers and fasting he chose a local contractor. However, the roofing project turned out to be a disaster and had to be redone by another contractor. The pastor reproached himself and mournfully complained, “How did I miss it? I prayed, I thought I had God's leading on the project.” He took fully the responsibility for the bad roof believing that it was His lack of power of prayer, His lack of faith that caused the project to be a failure. Outcomes are typically the end view of the Word of Faith theology. *

Now let us compare this to the apostle Paul. Acts 27 describes Paul's journey to Rome on a grain ship. The journey was filled with difficulty, bad winds and tempests. But he never says, “I missed it. I should never have sailed. I didn't pray enough.”

In fact he does hear from the Holy Spirit that they are to put into port in Crete; his advice is ignored and the ship sails into even more danger. But Paul comforts them saying, “you will not lose any man.” He urges them to stay with the ship even after they toss all food cargo into the sea. Finally the ship breaks apart and they swim for shore at Malta. If Paul was a good Word of Faith man, would he have been put into such difficulty? Many days at sea? Perils of shipwreck, life threatened?

No, the shipwreck is a perfect illustration that we cannot control events, but that God in his wisdom uses evil for good. And Paul's shipwreck was Malta's good. Its history is one of the oldest Christian communities in the world. What began as a great evil ended in a wonderful apostolic event.

The Word of Faith is interested in personal outcomes. The apostle of God is used for God's greater good. For Paul, there were only two options: Ashamed of the gospel, thus denying the faith; Or by

faith, allowing the gospel run its dynamic course through his life, with all the resultant personal suffering. A trifle compared to the glory won for God's kingdom.

Or, if Paul were a good Word of Faith guy, he never would have recounted to us his sufferings. Talking about them, makes them worse? Right? Look at 2 Cor. 11.

From the Jews, five times I received forty stripes minus one.
Three times I was beaten with rods;
Once I was stoned;
three times I was shipwrecked' a night and a day I have been in the deep.
In journeys often, in perils of waters,
in perils of robbers,
in perils of my own countrymen,
in perils of the Gentiles;
in the wilderness;
in perils in the sea;
in perils among false brethren;
in weariness; in toil;
in sleeplessness often;
in hunger and thirst, in fastings often;
in cold and in nakedness.

In 1 Corinthians Chapter 4 Paul says that the life of an apostle is a life despised by men; he is poorly clothed, beaten, and defamed, being made the filth of this world. Many Scriptures attest that that suffering was inherent to his apostolic ministry (2 Cor.7-15, Col.1.24-25, Acts 9.15-16; 20-23). And, finally, he followed the command of Jesus, “Take up your cross, and follow me”

To us, Paul says,

“The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,
And if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ if indeed we we suffer with him that we may also be glorified together” (Romans 8.16).

Hebrews chapter 11 is that great pantheon of Faith. Some heroes of faith experienced miracles. Other heroes of faith suffered in the extreme, “but they obtained a good testimony through faith”.

Even though they “had trials of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains, and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented – of whom the world was not worthy . . .and all of these having obtained a good testimony through faith . . .” (Hebrews 11.36-39).

And finally, at his end, Paul took up his cross and followed Jesus to his death where he was beheaded on the same day that other great apostle Peter was nailed upside down on a cross for the cause of Messiah Jesus.

Works Consulted

Percival, Harold, W. Thinking and Destiny. Kindle Ed.

The Quimby Manuscripts. Kindle Ed.

Kenyon E.W. The Hidden Man. Kindle Ed.

By **Mary Pinkney Parnell** January 20th 2018
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* This paper is birthed from a conversation with Sarah and David Ehlers who shared their personal traumas and reasons for leaving the Word of Faith movement. I would also welcome reader responses. Please send to ellen.gulbranson@yandex.com

My purpose in writing is to fight against the Gnostic heresies which have crept into the Church since the second century and into Judaism as early as the Assyrian Captivity.

For for further study watch Paul Beck: **Plato, the Colossian Heresy, and the Rise of Amillennialism**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KfZla9G98dQ>