

Eric Barger's Notes for UTT broadcast 4/27/2013

Merriam Webster says that Postmodernism is *“a theory that involves a radical reappraisal of modern assumptions about culture, identity, history, or language.”*

In postmodernism nothing is absolute and everything is up for consideration.

- Postmodernism could not have invaded the Church if its leaders and congregations were willing to test everything by Scripture. In fact, as I constantly point out, issues such as Spiritual Formation, Contemplative mysticism, Labyrinths, relativism - all of which amount to nothing less than New Age thinking - would **NOT** be happening if the Church had their Bible's open and were resolute in insisting that their leaders stayed true to the Scriptures. Besides the unbiblical, even occultic experiential practices perhaps the worst result of the "trust nothing" philosophy of the Postmoderns is the systematic denial of the central doctrines of Christianity as churches, denominations and individuals have chosen to reject absolute truth in exchange for what can only be described as a counterfeit, look alike, Christianity-like religion devoid of the doctrines, context and core of what has guided believers for twenty centuries.

- Mark my words about where this is leading us. As time moves those of us who have refused to allow mere experience or quasi-intellectual religion to overrule absolute truth, Bible believers are going to be more marginalized and attempts to discredit us are going to grow. **We are eventually going to be called “cultists” by others who claim to be “evangelicals.”**

Questioning the postmodern transformation away from biblical Christianity is not tolerated by people with the mindset that insists we tolerate everything. **Interesting isn't it?**

The Fellowship of Grace Brethren Churches has more than **3300 Churches worldwide.**

Some past history why we're concerned...

Christy Hill is the (now) Professor of Spiritual Formation at Grace Seminary. This resulted in John Haller, a Grace Seminary board member whose father was once the Grace Brethren moderator, to write a letter to the Seminary board warning of the dangers and unbiblical nature of Spiritual Formation and the accompanying Contemplative mindset.

But this appears to be just one incident among many. The more I have researched and dug the more troubled I get. There are undoubtedly good, godly people with a biblical worldview inside of the denomination. Many probably know *something* is amiss but may not understand exactly what it is or what forces are at work.

A Grace Brethren sponsored conference will take place this Summer in Atlanta, GA. "Vision 2020 South" is featuring sessions on: **Various nuances of Social Justice, etc., and field trips to not one but three Hindu Temples, a Tibetan Buddhist monastery and spiritual center, and a Muslim mosque.**

Hosted by missions organization: Encompass World Partners (formerly Grace Brethren International Missions (GBIM))
<http://www.encompassworld.org/>

Conference Website: <http://www.vision2020south.com/>

Vision 2020 South Conference Includes:

Expand Your Religious Worldview IQ (Hinduism) - Saturday

Facilitated by [Encompass World Partners](#): The sights and sounds of Hinduism. Have you ever tried to study Hinduism using a textbook on world religions? It can be quite confusing. Through this lab you will learn some basics by visiting three Hindu temples and talking to devotees. The first is the BAPS Mandir of Atlanta, the largest of 70 in the U.S. within the BAPS tradition. (www.atlanta.baps.org). The other two will be smaller temples located in largest indoor Indian shopping center in the U.S. (www.amsglobalmall.com). You will walk into India without a plane ride! This lab will be co-hosted by Emmanuel Shanmugum, a missionary from India to the Hindus in Atlanta. Through this lab you will experience the reality of Isaiah 40:18-21! You don't want to miss it!

Expand Your Religious Worldview IQ (Islam) - Monday

Facilitated by [Encompass World Partners](#): The sights and sounds of Islam. This lab will visit the Al-Farooq Mosque, the largest of the fifty-nine in greater Atlanta and one of 2,000 in the U.S. Through this lab you will gain a new understanding of the religion of Islam. You will learn how to engage Muslims, you'll gain a heart and knowledge for reaching Muslims for Jesus, and you'll become more solid in your own biblical worldview. It's one thing to try to wade through a world religion textbook, it's quite another to talk to a Muslim in person. During your time at the mosque, you will have an opportunity to interact through a time of questions and answers. You don't want to miss it!

Expand Your Religious Worldview IQ (Buddhism) - Tuesday

Facilitated by [Encompass World Partners](#): The sights and sounds of Buddhism. During this lab you will travel to "Little Tibet" in the Heart of Atlanta and into the unreached world of Buddhism. We will visit the Drepung Loseling Monastery and Center for Tibetan Buddhist Studies, Practice & Culture (www.drepung.org). This monastery is academically affiliated with Emory University in order to provide theoretical knowledge and practical training in Tibetan Buddhist

scholarly traditions for Western students, scholars and the general public. It's one thing to read the statistics about the number of adherents in a world religion, it's quite another to engage them personally. You don't want to miss it!

By far the most troubling activity this summer looks to be the Learning Lab led by Jon Stallsmith and Erin Burchik: (Eric heard and met both in Seattle April 12-13, 2013)

Jesus and the Quran - Monday and Tuesday

Facilitated by [Encompass World Partners](#): Becoming conversant about faith with Muslim people has its roots in the model of Jesus and his early followers. Building friendships, studying the Bible and the Qur'an together, and asking God to help us answer the all-important question: "Who is Jesus and what does He have to do with entering the Kingdom of God?" We hope to equip participants to have these kinds of conversation in a fruitful, honoring way. We focus on three major topics: (1) The Kingdom of God in the Bible, (2) Our identity within the Kingdom, and (3) Islam and the Kingdom. Although historically the relationship between Christians and Muslims has often highlighted the differences between our faiths, we are confident that through prayer and patient study both can come to a robust understanding of Jesus. This two-day lab will happen on Monday (7/29) and Tuesday (7/30) and will be presented by [Jon Stallsmith](#) and [Erin Burchik](#).

<http://www.vision2020south.com/conference/seminars>

SECOND SEGMENT of PROGRAM

- John Haller clip (11:36 min)

Discuss “Jesus and the Quran”

- This summer at the **Grace Brethren Fellowship Conference “Vision 2020”** there will be a two day workshop called **“Jesus and the Quran”** and it was doing the research on the Vision 2020 conference being held next July in Atlanta that I discovered that this same seminar was being presented at First Free Methodist Church near Seattle Pacific University in Seattle last weekend. **“Jesus and the Quran” is actually a product of a group from a Grace Brethren Church outside Atlanta, Georgia.**

Just some of the elements of “Jesus and the Quran.”

Other than the fact that their **Theology, Bibliology, Christology, Soteriology, and Eschatology** was off and frankly dangerous, I couldn't see any problems!

- First, the entire premise was that **Allah=Jehovah and Jesus=Isa.**

- **They spent the first evening disarming the opposition and running down apologetics...** three hours of pure fluff....it was loaded with Emergent and Postmodern buzzwords and phrases. With that said, if I only heard the JAQ leader, **Jon Stallsmith's**, timeline, I'd declare him a believer... But he then gave me many reasons to doubt that.

- **Islam, Judaism and Christianity have basic agreement up to Genesis 16.**

However, it is there that Islam claims that A'bram actually took Ishmael up the mountain and not Isaac. The JAQ facilitator had a very interesting interpretation of what the Bible records God stated to Hagar, Sarah's handmaiden. Eric: Read the Gen 16 passage. “Wild Man”... ***They said it was a good thing!***

- **They gave attendees all a Quran** translated by **Maulana Khan** - a version of the Quran that is vastly different than every other English translation to get specific passages to say what they want it to say (Sura 4:171).

I asked one of the leaders why they chose it: Answer: because this version actually says Jesus died. They might as well have said: “because it says what substantiates out views.”

I also pointed out to her that ‘Allah is not Jehovah’ and ‘Isa isn’t Jesus’ and she adamantly insisted “there is only one God.” I Cor 8:5 says different.

I also pointed her to II Corinthians 11:3-4 and I got a blank stare back.

- One of my board members (from Take A Stand! Ministries), Steve Malmquist, asked why they would use the Quran when the Bible is where we arrive at truth. One of the JAQ leaders told him in that “it’s hard to justify that to the Muslim.” **He then proceeded to recite a story from the heretical Gospel of Thomas.**

- They told of how years ago they had **abandoned using apologetics and actual evangelism** using polemics because they were being attacked...Paul was attacked too, wasn't he? Instead, they advocated the erroneous notions taught by **Insider Movement** advocates and sold Carl Medearis’ book “Muslims, Christians, and Jesus.”

- **I ask them if the Quran was “inspired.”** They said “No” and then proceeded to tell the audience that the Quran could help us have expanded understanding about Jesus!

- **Each of the different speakers of JAQ told story after story** Friday evening and from 9am until 5:30pm on Saturday attempting to prove how much God used them in order to prove His acceptance of them...Postmoderns tell story after story **without presenting the actual biblical gospel.**

One reoccurring theme during the conference was a peculiar, may I say unbiblical line of thinking about the “**Kingdom of God,**” who enters it and how that is attained.

- **Kingdom Circles** were used throughout the training in conjunction with the “Kingdom of God” teaching.

For listeners who don't understand Kingdom Circles, I'm posting to www.ericbarger.com a terrific article from our friends at Biblical Missiology.

Kingdom Circles are a visual aid to bring people into a syncretistic mindset.

Nowhere in scripture do we see the Kingdom of God described as intersecting or moving in and out of common ground with any other religion. **Colossians 1:13-14** says that for the Believer, God has rescued us from the power, dominion - actually from the kingdom of darkness, and brought us or translated us into the kingdom of the Son of God. *There are only two kingdoms and no place does Scripture indicate a place where they intersect.*

II Corinthians. 4:4 factually proclaims that Satan is the "god of this world." A person is either in that Kingdom or he has been delivered through Christ Jesus and been made righteous through His shed blood to become a member of the Kingdom of God.

No people groups or religion automatically take part in the Kingdom of God. In fact, no person is a member of God's Kingdom without first embracing the one-and-only authentic Jesus Christ. In **Matthew 12:30** Jesus said "A man who is not with me is against me." He made it clear.

If the Church accepts the concept of “Jesus and the Quran” then why not seminars like “**Jesus and the Book of Mormon**” or “**Jesus and the Jehovah’s Witnesses**” ???

Was this seminar, 'Jesus and the Quran', overtly demonic or meant to maliciously mislead?"

Eric: Malicious No. But is was useful to the enemy of our souls.

However, the overt is far easier to recognize. It's when error is packaged in Christian language, presented by people we either thought we could trust or actually once trusted them and presented in a building where we never dreamed error would be allowed to reside that It's much harder to discern. Plus, our emotions and ties with people, family and friends are at play, plus the whole realm of submitting to spiritual authority comes into consideration.

This is why we have the many warnings in Scripture, in the New Testament that we do. **Paul clearly warned Timothy of the day we are experiencing. Paul emphatically warned the Thessalonians about the great "falling away" from truth – an abandonment of authentic Christianity for counterfeit versions. He also warned the Ephesian elders in Acts 20.**

Actually, I am reminded of a Tweet I sent out last week which was a quote from the great Canadian preacher, **Harry Ironside**, who incidentally, came to Christ at a Dwight L. Moody crusade and when on to eventually pastor the Moody Church in Chicago. **Ironside said:**

"Truth mixed with error is equivalent to all error, except that it is more innocent looking and, therefore, more dangerous." - H.A. Ironside

Close:

Eric: Jan, my first recollection of hearing the Gospel presented was in a Grace Brethren Church in my home town in 1967. This is painful for me to watch happen.

So often these days I listen to preaching or seminars, even Sunday morning messages and I am constantly aware now that often **the problem isn't what's being said but rather what is being omitted.**

The average church goer is far too willing to accept entertainment instead of worship and personal wit, charm and funny or heart warming stories instead of a message that presents the unadulterated gospel. (Example: Carl Medearis at First Free Methodist Church in Seattle in 2012 – the same church who hosted “Jesus and the Quran.”)

This is the Postmodern way and its leading people away from the Bible.