



News and Current Events :: The False Gospel Of Inclusion

The False Gospel Of Inclusion - posted by PreachParsly (), on: 2006/3/8 9:31

The False Gospel Of Inclusion

TULSA, Okla. — Carlton Pearson has still got it. The dapper clothes. The voluminous vocabulary. The toothy smile.

AP

Carlton Pearson And, perhaps most important, Mr. Pearson still has an unshakable conviction in his controversial "gospel of inclusion" — the belief that everyone will go to heaven, regardless of his or her actions on earth. The high-profile pastor lost followers, his church building, money and prestige — especially among conservatives — after he started preaching a few years ago that the gates of heaven are open to everyone, even, theoretically, to Satan.

One prominent Pentecostal pastor, Clifford L. Frazier of St. Louis, summed up his reaction thusly: "He's crazy."

Unbowed by such rejection, Mr. Pearson maintains that he's on the leading edge of what will eventually become mainstream theology.

"Within the next five years, everyone will be preaching inclusion," he said after a recent service in borrowed space at an Episcopal church in Tulsa

A decade ago, Mr. Pearson was atop the evangelical heap. A pioneer among black televangelists — and a onetime protégé of Oral Roberts — he led Higher Dimensions Family Church of Tulsa, which had a multiracial membership of 5,000 — and weekly offerings of \$50,000.

Mr. Pearson's annual Azusa conferences, a powerful combination of music and ministry, drew as many as 20,000 people to Oral Roberts University. (He'd started his career in the 1970s as a member of Oral Roberts' World Action Singers.) The "Live at Azusa" recordings that grew out of the conferences became big sellers. Gospel artists from across the country pleaded to be part of them.

Also Online

Higher Dimensions: Carlton Pearson's official site

But things began to change in the late 1990s. Mr. Pearson, who was ordained in the conservative Church of God In Christ, the nation's largest black Pentecostal denomination, started preaching a doctrine seemingly foreign to everything he had previously learned and believed. (Another term for the doctrine that he calls "inclusion" is "universalism.")

In a 2000 interview with The Dallas Morning News, he said he no longer adhered to the "holiness or hell" credo that is a bedrock teaching of the Church of God In Christ and other black Pentecostal groups. He said he'd been having second thoughts for years about whether one needed to accept Jesus in order to be saved. He added that he could support abortion in "extreme situations" and that homosexuality should be "tolerated but not celebrated."

Three years later, in another interview with The News, he went further. He said it was reasonable to believe that Satan could go to heaven if he would simply repent and tell God, "I competed with you, but I was wrong. I'm sorry."

As he continued to preach this "gospel of inclusion," the attacks grew blistering. Membership in his church plummeted to a tenth of what it had been. The weekly collection fell, too. Top singers suddenly found excuses not to go to the Azusa Conference. Mr. Pearson's invitations to speak at other churches dropped. Pastors and other friends around the country abandoned him.

The most painful cuts, though, were those closest to home, in Tulsa. When Mr. Pearson ran for mayor in 2002, he finished third in a field of eight candidates, getting 13 percent of the votes. Officials at his beloved Oral Roberts University — where he attended but did not graduate — banned his church from picking up students on campus or using its facilities for Azusa. "I went from hero to zero in a little bit of time," he said.

"People don't follow preachers as much as they follow popularity. I always knew that. And as soon as I quit preaching what was popular, the people were gone. But I didn't expect them to leave so fast."

But now, the irrepressible Mr. Pearson believes the tide is turning in his favor. His old church building has been foreclosed upon, but Tulsa's most prominent Episcopal church, Trinity Episcopal, opened its doors to him and what remains of his congregation. Mr. Pearson holds services there on Sunday afternoons. He said Trinity doesn't charge him rent.

"We like him and we agree with what he's saying," said the Rev. Bill Wiseman, a Trinity minister. "He's welcome as long as he needs to be here."

Mr. Pearson, grateful for the warm reception at Trinity, said the Episcopalians are showing themselves to be true Christians. "We would have basically been a homeless church without them."

He said his membership is inching back up. Soon, he said, he may have to add a second service or move to larger quarters.

"When God says stay, you stay. That's why I'm here," said Julia Nowlin, a Higher Dimensions member since 1991.

She said she was unfazed by the criticisms of her pastor.

"He's the truth and I'm sticking to the truth because the truth will set you free."

Wes Reynolds, lead guitarist for Mr. Pearson's services, said he originally played for the preacher in the 1980s, then left to pursue interests in secular music. He returned to the church about a year ago.

"It's open arms here," the musician said. "There ain't no judgment if you don't believe the way someone else believes."

Mr. Pearson said he's been buoyed by what he considers positive national press coverage of his travails. He's been interviewed in recent weeks by National Geographic and Dateline NBC. His fall from grace has been chronicled in Christianity Today and National Catholic Reporter, and he absolutely gushed to members recently about a segment on National Public Radio's This American Life.

All the attention, he said, is stirring interest in his message and church. The Higher Dimensions Web site had nearly 30,000 hits the week the NPR story aired, he said.

Mr. Pearson said he bears no grudges against those who disagree with him. He said he numbers among his friends such prominent Dallas preachers as the Rev. Anthony Evans of Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship and Bishop T. D. Jakes of the Potter's House.

Mr. Pearson is often credited with helping Bishop Jakes' rise to prominence by inviting him to preach at an Azusa conference early in the early 1990s.

The Potter's House pastor acknowledges that help, but distances himself from Mr. Pearson's theology — though not from the man.

"I do not agree with Bishop Carlton Pearson's doctrinal beliefs," Bishop Jakes said by e-mail.

"Nevertheless, I still consider him a friend, even though it has been quite a while since I've spoken with him. Many ministries, mine included, benefited and were blessed by his earlier work."

Shayne Lee, a sociology professor at Tulane University, devoted almost a chapter of his biography, T.D. Jakes: America's New Preacher, to the role of Mr. Pearson.

"Pearson is one of the most significant African-American preachers of the 20th century," Dr. Lee said in an interview. "He and Fred Price have not received the kind of recognition that they should have. But that's changing."

Dr. Lee said Mr. Pearson served as a "bridge" between traditional black preachers and the contemporary "neo-Pentecostal" movement. That movement is highly visible on Christian television and in the megaconferences that Bishop Jakes and others sponsor.

"Teaching people how to have a postmodern, interdenominational conference, he really was a pioneer in that with Azusa," Dr. Lee said. "And getting African-Americans into this whole media age. Pearson was the first African-American to be on national Christian television."

But Dr. Lee said he thought the pastor would continue to meet with great resistance to his inclusive doctrine—especially among fellow black Pentecostals.

"Their theology is conservative to the core," Dr. Lee said. "Pearson may have underestimated how conservative that is.

"You can't take away hell just yet."

Mr. Pearson said if his teachings make him unpopular in some quarters, so be it.

"My ministry will be inclusive, not exclusive," he said. "I'm no longer preaching and living under that fear-based gospel.

"I've always had something to live for. This is the first time I've ever had something to die for."

Re: The False Gospel Of Inclusion - posted by MSeaman (), on: 2006/3/8 15:37

I am very concerned to hear that people will stay with this man even though he is apostate. This is one of the scariest doctrines out there. People will believe this lie and go to hell, expecting eternal life.

oh, Lord, let him come back into the Truth.

Re: The False Gospel Of Inclusion - posted by ginnyrose (), on: 2006/3/8 19:34

Whenever I read anything like this I always wonder why people even bother to be 'religious' if you are not going to adhere to orthodoxy. But I guess it is one way to make a living. On the other hand it is a tool the Enemy uses to deceive people...makes them feel comfortable...

ginnyrose

Re: The False Gospel Of Inclusion - posted by Xtian (), on: 2006/6/5 1:06

Quote:

-----"He's the truth and I'm sticking to the truth because the truth will set you free."

Strange... I thought Jesus was the truth.

John 14:6

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.

Problems occur when we substitute the real truth for a lie (someone besides Christ).

TC&GB,

Xtian

Re: - posted by IRONMAN (), on: 2006/6/6 4:09

bro Xtian

Quote:

-----Problems occur when we substitute the real truth for a lie (someone besides Christ).

coz then our minds don't like to retain thoughts of God, our foolish hearts darken and we're given over to a reprobate mind...

Lord help us!AMEN.

Re: - posted by enid, on: 2006/6/6 5:27

Sad but interesting post. It is obvious that satanic deception is at work in the hearts of so called 'Christian' leaders in these last days. It is rife! We just need to watch, as Jesus tells us in Mark 13. Watch that we do not fall for the same satanic deception. Let's stay in prayer and the word, and search the scriptures as the Bereans did. God bless.

Re: - posted by Scroggins (), on: 2006/6/6 12:17

Its so sad to think that some are not able to discern... If you do not discern you will surely find yourself burning in hell at the end of it all.

I am the **Way** and the **Truth** and the **Life**; **no one comes to the Father except by Me.**

Re: take the log out of our own eye - posted by roadsign (), on: 2006/6/6 13:57

Quote:

-----"My ministry will be inclusive, not exclusive," he said. "I'm no longer preaching and living under that fear-based gospel."

Mr. Pearson has a point. The church HAS been using the threat of hell to get people "saved". And so there are a lot of people who just went for the eternal assurance policy, but had no desire to be followers of Christ. They are not truly saved, as is evident in their lives.

I wonder what kind of past church life Mr. Pearson experienced. It seems like he is trying to escape what he views as a dead Gospel – a fear-based philosophy, a religion that uses pressure and threats to get people “saved”, and then keeps its adherents trapped in neurotic, timid, powerless lives. I wonder if that’s what he experienced. Sadly, it is not a rare malady in the church. It is prevalent.

Mr. Pearson failed to turn to the Lord to help him sort out his confused perceptions of the Gospel. Instead, he took matters into his own hand and swung too far the other way, viewing himself as a corrective force. He feels called to be the “messiah” and rescue all those trapped in the bondage of “suffocating” religion and lead them to the “land of freedom”.

There is no way this can last forever. Just wait, in time it will go the way of our dead liberal churches with declining enrollments.

Harsh denouncements by the conservative front merely prove him “right” – that we are “judgmental and unloving. There are better ways of responding.

We need to take accountability for our part in presenting a spiritually dead church to the world. We mustn’t be like the angry dad who harshly condemns his straying teen, but fails to take responsibility for his own parental failures.

I feel that the best way to deal with such dead religions is for each of us to present our lives to God and ask him to tran

form us by his Spirit, so that we will be a demonstration of God's Spirit within us. Otherwise, we have nothing better to offer.

Diane

Re: - posted by Compton (), on: 2006/6/6 17:24

Quote:

-----...trapped in neurotic, timid, powerless lives.

This reminds me of something I heard from a radio talk show host today. He said, that as a little boy growing up in the Catholic Church he would lay awake in the dark of night trembling in fear, wondering to himself, "Why is the devil always out to get us Catholics?" :eek:

MC ;-)

Re: - posted by ginnyrose (), on: 2006/6/6 22:28

Regardless what you think about Mr. Person, the following verses still stand: Romans 16: 17-19:

17: Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.

18: For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.

19: For your obedience is come abroad unto all men. I am glad therefore on your behalf: but yet I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil.

And this type of behavior is not new. Consider 2 Timothy 4:14-15: Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works:

15: Of whom be thou ware also; for he hath greatly withstood our words.

And finally, 2 Timothy 3: 1-14: 1: This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.

2: For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,

3: Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good,

4: Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;

5: Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.

6: For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts,

7: Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

8: Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith.

9: But they shall proceed no further: for their folly shall be manifest unto all men, as theirs also was.

10: But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience,

11: Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me.

12: Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.

13: But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.

14: But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them;

ginnyrose