

ON SOME MOVEMENTS and SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT

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- | [New Order of the Latter Rain](#)
- | [Salvation/Healing Movement](#)
- | [Shepherding Movement](#)
- | [Word of Faith](#)
- | [Course In Miracles](#)
- | [Betty Eadie](#)
- | [Dominion Theology](#)

WE ALL HAVE MOVEMENTS...

You may hear about these movements from time to time. None of them ever seem to go away, and each one influences the others at many different point on many different subjects through many different people.

New Order of Latter Rain Movement :

Originally a name used for what happened at Azusa Street. But in the 1940s and '50s, the title was taken by the New Order of the Latter Rain. It started in Canada by Canadian teacher George Hawtin, who was furious that the Pentecostal movement had lost much of its original fire. It spread mostly in Assemblies of God circles. It was full of End-Times fervor, believing that the Spirit was letting loose all of its powers because the end was very near (without predicting a date). Eventually, the Order began to claim that the power to transmit spiritual gifts had been given by the Spirit to certain authorized human beings, who thus became a new apostolic lineage. This struck most A/G pastors as being heretical, both because the movement's leadership had declared these powers for themselves, and because the gifts of the Spirit are understood by most of A/G to be sent out by the Spirit not by any person.

[to top](#)

Salvation-Healing Movement :

This refers to the work of William Branham, who had been given what by all accounts was a spectacular personal ministry of healing, and the work of several successors, such as Gordon Lindsay and Oral Roberts. The problem is that Branham and those who followed in his footsteps saw themselves to be great, thus taking the real attention off of Christ and onto themselves, their healings, and their empires. Branham also had a truckload of doctrinal quirks, which became more important to him as he got older. He held that those who were baptized under the name of the Trinity had to be rebaptized into Jesus' name alone. He saw himself as the angel mentioned in Revelations 3:14. He believed that, in God's power, a spiritual elite (who held to the teachings Branham was teaching) would come to rule, and mercilessly purge evil from the earth. On that matter, he was much like the New Order and Word of Faith.

[to top](#)

Shepherding Movement :

Led by Bob Mumford, Ern Baxter, Don Basham, Derek Prince, and Charles Simpson, they formed a tight-knit [leadership](#) group which held each other accountable, then had others revolving around them ('shepherds') who were assigned the task of holding others responsible for their beliefs and behavior, in very direct and sometimes crude ways. One was to pay close attention to one's shepherds, as they were people whose walk with God was such that God would even speak personal word to you through them. (The teachings of Chinese Christian writer Watchman Nee also had elements of this.) The chain of command went from the Christian person to local, sectional, and regional subshepherds to the five men listed above, in Fort Lauderdale. Such a structure virtually pleads to be abused, and indeed abuse became rampant, as many of the sub-shepherds set themselves up as authorities over the details of the followers' lives, and the followers were led into becoming unwilling to think and act for themselves. Their approach was strongest among non-denominational churches, but they had some influence on Lutheran and Catholic charismatics, as well as those in Churches of Christ.

This movement had New Wine magazine as its mouthpiece. Its influence was strongest in the late 1970s, but came under heavy attack by many

evangelicals, and then most publicly by Pat Robertson. The Fort Lauderdale 5 had officially broken up by 1986 due to differences in approach (they are still generally supportive of one another's work), and their influence was mostly gone by 1990. Most of them have altered their positions somewhat, even renouncing several of their most core beliefs about the way the church is to be structured. Derek Prince still has some supporters among the Pensacola revival folks.

[to top](#)

The Word of Faith Movement :

Kenneth Copeland, Ken Hagin, Ulf Ekman, and others are from this movement, which is a cross-breed of Pentecostalism with the New Thought movement that gave birth to Unity School and Christian Science. Their spiritual forefather was **E.W. Kenyon**. Their approach to prayer and to repentance puts the burden of actual fulfillment onto the person and not God. Pray with confident power, they say. Ask, and you will get, if you ask without any doubt.

They have a special teaching on what they called *rhema* : when a believer says something with a totally confident faith, it will happen; if it does not happen, well, that's proof of the presence of sinful doubt. It's based on the idea that there's a difference between the Greek words for 'word', *logos* and *rhema* . To them, *logos* is God's written word, *rhema* is God's spoken word. Then, the claim is made that our words can share in the same force as God's words that created the world (Gn 1). We can name it, and then claim it as ours. In fact, they treat words almost magically, as if the right words, trusted fully, are like pop-top cans of spiritual power. However, in the real Scripture and in Greek in general, there is very little difference between *rhema* and *logos* . In the Bible, the power of God's word wasn't in the words, but solely **in the divine Speaker** of those words. God can use our words powerfully at times, but it's a different sort of power, given by God solely for God's purposes, and has nothing at all to do with what we want or think we need or what we can 'name and claim'. The way Word of Faith preachers do it, so-called 'prayer' is just a fancy name for clicking a 'gimme button'.

The origin of the 'magic spell' comes from the same kind of trust in a word-borne power. The word 'spell' itself is just an ancient way of saying 'word' or 'phrase' -- hence 'spelling' and 'gospel'. A 'magic spell', when stripped of the

hokus-pocus hokum, is a set of words spoken ('cast' like a fishing net) over someone/something to exercise power over it. The same can be said of the 'power prayers' of the Word of Faith Movement. This teaching has crept back into the church through the leading figure of the Toronto Blessing, Rodney Howard-Browne. People want to believe it because of the false sense of empowerment it gives. But God uses other means to empower us, and leads us to be servants rather than power brokers.

One of the telltale problems with the Word of Faith approach is that it give people back the heavy burden of guilt that the gospel was sent to relieve, by turning something that is **not** sin into a sin. It feeds into the human tendency to blame the victim for the problem. Worse, it dumps the biggest burden onto tender Christians who are facing up to the struggle of daily living in faith, perhaps for the first time. It condemns them for struggling, even though a human being who honestly comes to grips with the Gospel can't help but struggle with it. When Jesus spoke on asking and receiving, He was speaking on self-amendment, the search for [holiness](#), and treating people as you would have yourself treated -- changing **yourself**, and then whatever the Spirit gives you is given so you can **give it away** to others' benefit. Jesus didn't spend much time directly criticizing doubt. He spoke more about the power of the presence of a [faith](#) even when it's as small as a mustard seed, perhaps because He knew full well how small our faith is when compared to our doubts. The fulfilment of [prayer](#) is up to God alone, and God will answer the prayer in the way that best works for the Kingdom, not in the way that best backs up some human's spiritual brag. God not only will not sit still for being mocked, God will not be treated like a marionette ! God doesn't do it to you; don't do it to God.

Some Word of Faith teachers seem to think that in the end, we will be God's peers, that we are incarnations of that peer of God we are becoming. This counters the Bible. The Scriptural witness is that we will be God's colleagues, family, friends, and teammates, because God will *give* us a kind of close relationship and likeness of character that can be described as some sense of unity or being 'like unto' God. But there is at all times in the Scriptural account a difference between us and God; no oneness of being or substance or mind, no equality of being or substance or mind. **We are us, God is God, God is in charge, and God has no peers** - period, forever. Furthermore, we are not an incarnation of anything. An [incarnation](#) is when a spirit goes

material. We are material spiritual beings - the body is a full, definitional part of who we are. It is God who 'incarnated' to be like us; we are already bodily beings. We do not exist as anything else.

[to top](#)

***A Course In Miracles* :**

This has been making its way around in charismatic circles for quite some time. It is a book which was written from what was shared by a college professor, **Helen Schuchman**, who claimed that the writings in the book come from a special combination of her experiences with miracles and some visions in which the Lord revealed (a la John in Revelation ch. 1) the secrets of what God's miracles are and how we are to live in them.

On the one hand, some of the stuff regarding one's frame of mind is helpful and useful to a point. It shows signs of understanding some of what goes on where the supernatural makes things happen in the natural ('material') world. For those who think there is some good in New Age material, you'll usually do a lot worse than reading *A Course In Miracles*.

On the other hand, there is a heavy dose of bad old-fashioned Gnosticism -- the idea that there is a special knowledge of things which, if you have it, give you an edge with God. It is not really a Trinitarian book; it is more like a 1 1/2-arian book, focusing on the Son with an unspoken part of the Son which is what we would call the Spirit. She is strongly dualistic, yet couches that duality of material vs. spiritual things in words that disguise the sharp edge of her approach. (In fact, you have to cut through a jungle of mystical language to get at anything she means.) The book also has no real roots in Scripture or, ultimately, real life; it kinda floats over such things. It has an odd sort of denial of struggle not all that unlike the Unity school of new-thought. Its claim of [authority](#), then, is rendered false by the different gospel it tells.

Betty Eadie

Much the same is true with the writings of former Mormon **Betty Eadie** in her books "Embraced By the Light" and "The Awakening Heart". The difference is that she is not a 'channel' of God or of the dead. Her claim is that she went extensively 'beyond death' herself, and relates her own experiences there. It's not all stupid -- in a few places in the books she actually put some hard

thought into it. She gives soothing words of comfort in the face of death, but the words don't ring true, they merely sound nice. Her approach and her teachings lack the earthy substance that is typical of the way the God of the Bible works. And the message is about what a person does for themselves and not of the grace given by God.

[to top](#)

"Manifest Sons of God" and Dominion Theology

Dominion theology is the belief that in the [end times](#) (which, of course, we are in or on the brink of), God will create special leaders who will overcome the world, destroy the enemies of Christ and attain power throughout the world, ushering in the Kingdom of God. Some of the leading Pentecostal preachers have elements of this idea in their preaching, and use terms that infer that such leaders will come from their own ranks.

One version of this vision speaks of the "manifest sons of God" (sometimes known as 'Joel's Army'), who will be armed with supernatural power, for the purpose of wresting control of the world from the hands of Satan's slaves. These people will already have their perfected new Kingdom-bodies, and thus they will be able to stride across the earth like gods. They will usher in the Kingdom, they will complete the Church and (a few say) perhaps even complete Jesus, who up until their success is a head without a Body. The main organized bodies of Christianity, so this theory goes, are controlled by the spirit of the Anti-Christ and thus will be among the first to be vanquished by the new order.

Do I really need to ask if this is a remaking of Revelations into the image of fascism? No matter how much we read in the Bible about how Christ and the early church were totally unconcerned with getting control and power over the world or the nation or even their villages, we can't get this conquest stuff out of our heads. No matter how much we're called to share the only key to spiritual power (the gospel), we want to believe there's insider stuff that matters. No matter how much Jesus and Paul speak of being servants, we keep getting drawn to the idea of being in the master class. No matter how much it is clear that God only sends real, flawed humans like us to lead the Church, we want to have superheroes and Übermensch.

It just isn't the way God operates, according to the Scriptures.

[to top](#)

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