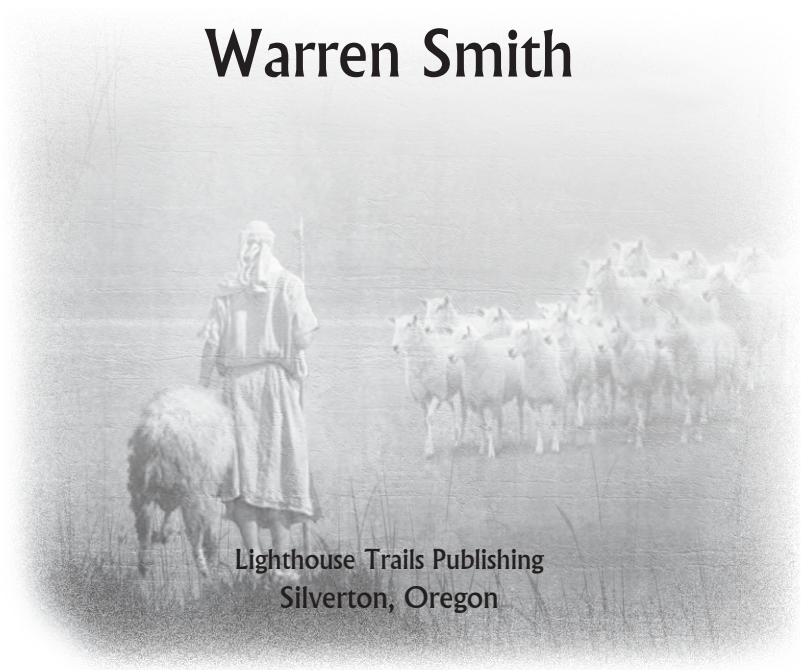


A *"Wonderful"* Deception

The Further New Age Implications
of the Emerging Purpose Driven Movement

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A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land; The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?

—Jeremiah 5:30-31

Preface

We are admonished in Scripture to speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15). We are also told to “reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine” (2 Timothy 4:2). Hopefully, it is in this light that I convey my concerns regarding Rick Warren and his Purpose Driven movement.

I would not be writing this book if Rick Warren were just another neighborhood preacher. But when a pastor sells thirty million books, is the founder of a 162-nation network, has trained over “400,000 ministers and priests” throughout the world¹ and presents his movement as the “Intel chip” for and the “Windows system” of the 21st century church,² it becomes imperative to search the Scriptures to see if what he is teaching is really so (Acts 17:11). We are not to blindly follow spiritual leaders just because they are in a position of leadership and power. We must be true to Scripture and to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

By the mid 1990s, the church was led to believe that the New Age had peaked and was no longer a serious threat. In reality, New Age teachings were spreading exponentially in almost every conceivable way. Many of us who were formerly in the New Age

could see this clearly. The New Age had become mainstream and was already in the process of reinventing itself as the “New Spirituality.”

Today, this New Age/New Spirituality is the spiritual foundation for an emerging “new worldview” that if adopted by the world—and the church—could usher in a false world peace that in actuality will be no *real* peace at all. It will be a deceptive New Age peace for a deceptive New Age. It will be everything that the true Jesus Christ warned would come in His name.

In 2002, I authored *Reinventing Jesus Christ: The New Gospel*. In that book, I explain how the New Age is much more deceptive and all-encompassing than what is being presented to the church by today’s church leaders. In a chapter titled “The Silent Church,” I describe how the church seems to be walking into a spiritual trap. I ask why Christian leaders aren’t warning believers about the New Age/New Spirituality, which is working its way into the church. Rick Warren’s best-selling book, *The Purpose Driven Life* gave me my answer: The reason Christian leaders aren’t taking the New Age more seriously is because figures, like Warren, are not *ringing out* a warning and are themselves being influenced and deceived by the New Age.

A whole new wave of church leaders is overtaking the church. But rather than declaring “all the counsel of God” and warning about spiritual deception, the focus of these leaders is almost entirely on the culture and on fulfilling “God’s Dream”—a concept that Robert Schuller has been popularizing for over thirty-five years. “God’s Dream” is an unbiblical concept that is being embraced by countless numbers of Christian and New Age leaders alike.

I have been warning about New Age teachings since the day of my conversion in 1984. It has never been my intention or desire to critique men who present themselves as Christian leaders. However, as the church has become more and more intersected with the New Age, I am compelled by the Lord to speak up and warn against the very spirituality the Lord delivered me from. In Matthew 24:3-5, Jesus warns that spiritual deception will be the

predominant sign before His return. That deception is happening right now.

In Jeremiah 9:3, Jeremiah warns about those who are “not valiant for the truth.” Sadly, Rick Warren is a man who is not wholly valiant for the truth. For whatever reasons, he does not declare “all” the counsel of God (Acts 20:27) and he does not seriously reprove and expose the New Age/New Spirituality that is so clearly in our midst (Ephesians 5:13). It is a pastor’s job to protect the flock from heresy, and Rick Warren is not doing that. On the contrary, his worldwide movement has serious New Age implications.

It is important and very necessary to do good works. We *should* help the poor, feed the hungry, and care for the sick, the widows, and the orphans. But we cannot, and we must not, water down or change the teachings of the Bible in the process.

I have done my best to describe some of the further New Age implications of the emerging Purpose Driven movement. I now present these concerns to you.

Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee
understanding in all things. (2 Timothy 2:7)

Warren Smith
April 2009

Introduction

The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be;
and that which is done is that which shall be done:
and there is no new thing under the sun.

— Ecclesiastes 1:9

I was still writing this book, *A “Wonderful” Deception*, when Rick Warren’s public relations firm announced that the Purpose Driven pastor was forming an “extensive” publishing partnership with Reader’s Digest Association, Inc.¹ I had already completed several chapters that describe how New Age sympathizers Norman Vincent Peale and Robert H. Schuller inspired and helped to create the Church Growth movement—a movement that subtly and not so subtly evolved from Peale’s “Positive thinking” to Schuller’s “Possibility thinking” to Rick Warren’s “Purpose Driven” thinking.

Thus, I was not surprised when I discovered that DeWitt Wallace, the late founder and longtime Executive Director of Reader’s Digest Association Inc., was “a good friend” of Norman Vincent Peale² and that *Reader’s Digest* magazine had faithfully published Peale’s articles for nearly forty years—from the late 1940s to the late 1980s.³ Therefore it seemed almost fitting that Reader’s Digest Association was now going to publish Rick Warren’s new *Purpose Driven Connection* magazine.

When I first heard about Rick Warren’s partnership with Reader’s Digest, my mind immediately flashed back through the years to a personal memory. In 1967, after graduating from the University of Pennsylvania, and in the midst of the Vietnam War,

I found myself in Army basic training at Fort Dix, New Jersey. When I finished my basic training, chances were high that I would be shipped off to Vietnam. But instead of receiving orders for Vietnam, I was assigned to the White House in Washington DC. To my amazement, I would be living in my own apartment and working directly for the President of the United States.

After obtaining a top-security clearance, I began my new assignment with the White House Communications Agency. The agency was responsible for providing communications support to the President and Vice President wherever they traveled or happened to be. While many of my more technically-skilled colleagues traveled with the President and Vice-President around the country and abroad, my less technical supply job usually kept me bound to the DC area. In fact, during my entire two years with the White House Communications Agency, there was only one time that I ever made an outside trip with the President. Forty years ago, I was part of the White House advance team that prepared the way for President Richard Nixon's visit to his friend DeWitt Wallace of *Reader's Digest* magazine.⁴

The world is fond of saying that "there is a reason for everything" and that "what goes around comes around." I don't really know what to say about that presidential visit I took to the heart of *Reader's Digest* country so many years ago. But I remember the New York Hudson Valley hamlet that DeWitt Wallace and *Reader's Digest* called home like it was yesterday. What irony that the only trip I took on behalf of the President of the United States was to the founder and Executive Director of *Reader's Digest*. And how fitting that the same Readers Digest Association Inc. that formerly published the writings and teachings of Robert Schuller's mentor Norman Vincent Peale has begun publishing the writings and teachings of Rick Warren.⁵

Rick Warren describes himself as a "change agent,"⁶ but the more he appears to change things the more things seem to remain the same. *Reader's Digest* successfully promoted Norman Vincent Peale's books and articles and kept Peale's ministry in

the world’s limelight for nearly four decades. What worked for Peale then will surely work for Rick Warren now.

As I will later describe in this book, Norman Vincent Peale’s strong New Age sympathies came to my attention after *Deceived on Purpose* was published in 2004. Shortly thereafter, I would learn of Peale’s New Age influence on Robert Schuller and its subsequent impact on the Church Growth movement that includes Rick Warren today.

However, before we look at some of the further New Age implications of the emerging Purpose Driven movement, let us first review some of the original New Age implications described in *Deceived on Purpose*.