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Contemporary Biblical Instruction for the Early 21st Century: A Ten-Year Plan for Endurance Ministries, Inc.

Jon P. Swanson

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CONTEMPORARY BIBLICAL INSTRUCTION FOR THE EARLY
21ST CENTURY: A TEN-YEAR PLAN FOR ENDURANCE MINISTRIES, INC.

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE DIVISION OF THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY PROGRAM
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DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

DEPARTMENT OF DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY

JON P. SWANSON

PORTLAND, OREGON

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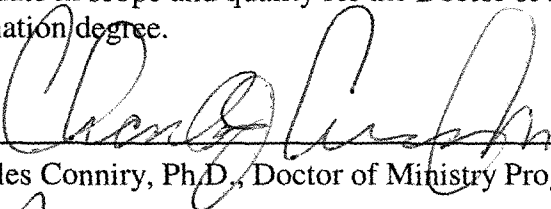
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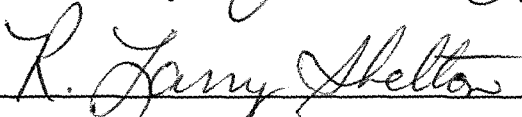
DISSERTATION ACCEPTANCE CERTIFICATE

**Title: CONTEMPORARY BIBLICAL INSTRUCTION FOR THE EARLY 21ST
CENTURY: A TEN-YEAR PLAN FOR ENDURANCE MINISTRIES, INC.**

**Presented by: Jon P. Swanson
April 15, 2002**

We, the undersigned, certify that we have read this dissertation and approve it as adequate in scope and quality for the Doctor of Ministry in Leadership and Spiritual Formation degree.


Charles Conniry, Ph.D., Doctor of Ministry Program Director


Larry Shelton, Th.D. Wesleyan Professor of Theology

To Jesus the Christ, LORD of glory

What think ye of Christ, is the test
To try both your state and your scheme;
You cannot be right in the rest
Unless you think rightly of Him.
As Jesus appears to your view,
And He is beloved or not,
So God is disposed to you –
And mercy or wrath is your lot.

Some take Him a creature to be –
A man, or an angel at most,
But they have not feelings like me,
Nor know themselves wretched and lost;
So guilty, so helpless am I,
I durst not confide in His blood,
Nor on His protection rely –
Unless I were sure He is God!

John Newton

CONTENTS

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS	vii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	viii
ABSTRACT	x
FOREWORD	xii
INTRODUCTION	1
SECTION I. EXPOSING ESCHATOLOGICAL DECEPTIONS OF OUR DAY	9
Chapter	
Historical Formation	
1. BIBLICAL MANDATES	12
2. <i>SACRED</i> CONSIDERATIONS	20
3. SECULAR CONSIDERATIONS	31
Contemporary Expressions	
4. SECULAR MOVEMENTS	37
5. <i>SACRED</i> MOVEMENTS	43
6. BIBLICAL MANDATES	55
SECTION II. IN RESPONSE – A PERSONAL THEOLOGY	60
7. THEOLOGICAL SPIRITUAL FORMATION – THE ORTHODOXY	64
8. PASSIONATE SPIRITUAL FORMATION – THE ORTHOPATHY	75
9. PRACTICAL SPIRITUAL FORMATION – THE ORTHOPRAXY	88

SECTION III. SOLVING ESCHATOLOGICAL DECEPTIONS OF OUR DAY	96
10. NEWSLETTERS	98
11. INTERNET SITES	108
12. PRESENTATIONS	120
CONCLUSION	132
APPENDICES	
A. ISSUES IN PHILOSOPHICAL THEOLOGY	137
B. EXAMPLES OF PRACTICAL THEOLOGY	145
C. CORRESPONDENCE IN SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY	165
GLOSSARY	175
BIBLIOGRAPHY	177

ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure	Page
1. Contemporary Options In Eschatology	66
2. Column View of Pertinent <i>Final-Trumpet</i> Passages	69
3. Chronological Presentation of Final-Trumpet Position	72
4. Contemporary Ministries – A Response	94

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Unto the glory of God ...

“Don’t praise yourself; let others do it!” Proverbs 27:2 (NLT)

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Thanks be to God for His many indescribable gifts, especially “... for his Son—a gift too wonderful for words!” II Corinthians 9:15 (NLT)

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this dissertation is to present a biblical, historical and personal theology on the theme of *eschatological deception* with the intent of serving the people of God in Jesus Christ through educational ministries that address this concern in a balanced, contemporary manner.

Given Christendom's universal epistemological allegiances, a biblical theology is first presented. The Word of God continues to be that blessed lamp unto our path. After a simple exegetical consideration of key pertinent passages that speak to this theme of deceit, a brief but sufficient historical sketch of specific end-time themes relating to deception will follow. Both secular and spiritual movements will be cited, including present examples of authority voices currently promoting biblically defined deceptions predicted to occur before the return of Jesus Christ.

Theological address is an existential endeavor. Putting to use recent insight so as to avoid neglect of a crucial portion of the whole, a *personal theology* is presented, including correct doctrine, appropriate passion and resolve to be of pragmatic good to our world. The inclusion of this more personal element has been given restored participation in the pursuit of truth as a result of the positive fruit of "Postmodernity."

This continues to be a good thing, especially when proper authority is given to the means God uses to speak to us concerning Himself and His ways.

The final section takes the commitment *to do*, a step further. Having firm biblical foundation articulating clear end-time deceptions, citing strong justification from recent history and present culture (that these very deceptions are present today), and confessing a personal theology affirming the above and zeal toward addressing this current affair, an action plan is surely warranted. A specific ten-year ministry plan emphasizing education about these concerns is then outlined, putting to use major vehicles through which the crucial information can be shared.

May our precious God most high—the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit—alone be glorified in this practical response to His revelation to us in these days prior to the glorious return of our Lord Jesus Christ. Even so, come Lord Jesus!

FOREWORD

Dr. Kenneth Gentry Jr. offers valuable insight as he concludes his contribution to the work, *The Great Tribulation: Past or Future?*

Biblical prophecy is abused by cults, distorted by liberal theologians, confused by well-meaning enthusiasts, and debated by astute evangelical scholars. Nevertheless, it remains an important feature of the revelation of God in Scripture. ... [N]umerous Scriptures must be brought to bear upon the subject. Consequently, the *integrity* and *coherence* of God's Word is on the line. Furthermore, biblical prophecy is a significant element for framing a Christian worldview. ... [O]ne's approach to prophecy will affect his outlook for the future and thereby impact his conduct in the present. As a result, the *relevance* and *utility* of God's Word is also on the line.¹

Amen. Practically speaking, one's eschatological view, if taken seriously, weighs heavily on the formation of one's *sitz im leben* (life situation) fed by the foundational paradigm held, toward both future perspective and present conduct. Affirming the same, Dr. Thomas Ice of the Pre-Trib Research Center serves to bring one clear example:

If large segments of prophecy have already been fulfilled, the future will be quite different than many believers expecting a future consummation suppose. The opposite is also true. You can imagine the surprise if certain events are

¹ Kenneth Gentry and Thomas Ice, *The Great Tribulation: Past or Future?* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1999), 197.

still future for one who believes that they are past. This would require a major adjustment in the thinking of many about the past, present, and future.²

This dissertation holds a non-Dispensational futurist viewpoint concerning eschatological events just prior to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. The pre-suppositions go deeper, though. Unlike Dr. Ice and Pre-Tribulationism, Endurance Ministries (for whom this dissertation is especially written) holds a Final-Trumpet Rapture position, believing Matthew 24:31, I Corinthians 15:51,52, I Thessalonians 4:16 and Revelation 11:15-18/14:14-16 to be addressing the one-time rapture event. This position is argued in theological texts – it is not a novice position.³

Chapter seven of this work also states the position for the purpose of showing viability and relevance, but it should be noted that it is not the purpose of this practical work to argue a theological position. The emphasis of this dissertation is not to state and defend this position but to simply address one major theme unfolding in the days prior to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ—deception (as addressed in chapters 1, 6). Currently, cultural affairs are hinting at the initial fulfilling of this very sign (chapters 2-5). From there this project seeks to propose some options as to how to best be about solving this contemporary problem.

As a result, the actual flow of thought of this practical work is quite simple.

1) The Bible clearly predicts major deceptions just prior to the return of Jesus Christ. This presents a clear definition of, when initially written in the first century, a future

² Ibid., 5.

³ See James O. Buswell's *A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion* (pp. 396-98, 450ff; Norman B. Harrison's *The End: Re-Thinking the Revelation* (pg. 118); and David V. Schilling's thesis, *The Rapture According to The Book of Revelation*.

problem. 2) Historical and contemporary indicators point to the unfolding of major deceptions today. This provides evidence that the problem of deception is a contemporary one. 3) The concern of deception is no longer a future prophecy but a present problem. As a result of accurate prophecy and current affairs, we have a current need: How do we address this problem of deception? 4) Endurance Ministries, to whom this problem/solution paper is addressed, seeks to acknowledge the problem and bring some possible corrections. Therefore, a ten-year ministry proposal is offered that helps educate those willing to learn about the problem, whereby biblical discernment is raised. Having introduced the problem and need for solution, it's time to press on. With the main intent articulated, the introduction begins with a story demonstrating the concern at hand.

INTRODUCTION

A Story

Mark shouted back, “But I was always told, ‘Once saved, always saved!’ If that’s really the case, I can do whatever, even take this mark that you’re calling ‘the mark of the beast.’ Come on Nanc! You know full well that we have to take it in order to continue existing given the present-day conditions. God is gracious and will understand our plight. Surely He wouldn’t reject His own simply because we took this simple mark. I’ll tell you what, Nancy, let’s strike a deal. Let’s take the mark and then use it to buy necessary food for the other Christians who aren’t willing to take it. This way we’re safe for sure! God will understand if we use this mark to provide for His people.” After a short delay on Nancy’s part, Mark sought her response. “Honey, I need your feedback.”

“Mark, I hear what you’re saying, but God has been very clear on this issue. Those who are truly His will not take this mark of the beast that is currently being forced on the world. I know you acknowledge the authority of God’s Word above the global ideas of some of the religious leaders of our day. Mark, I love you dearly, you know that, but you must listen to me for just a minute—please! While I strongly encourage you to read the entire chapters of Revelation 13 and 14 on your own after

we part ways in just a few minutes, let me quote some key verses now. Don't forget, these verses must be read in their context. Mark, would you promise me that you'll read these two chapters when you go home this afternoon and think seriously about what I'm trying to share with you?"

"Nanc, I know you love me, and yes, I promise to read them when I get home." His tears began flowing once again, as did hers.

"Oh my love, you don't know how much that means to me!" Nancy's voice was so gentle and kind, while at the same time serious and urgent. "While these verses that I want to share with you are few, they are very important, so please listen carefully." As Nancy read, Mark was impressed, for never before had she spoken with such passion. "... And he **deceives** those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived. He was granted *the means* to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed. He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark of the name of the beast, or the number of his name. (Revelation 13:14-17) ... Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, 'If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives *his* mark on his forehead or on his hand, he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.

And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever, and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name. (Revelation 14:9-11)”

“Mark, I’m floored by the accuracy of Scripture! You see what’s happening out there, I know you do. It’s not just the taking of the mark that we are commanded to avoid. It’s also understood that those who take the mark are aligning with this evil one. I know you also see this and like you, I also acknowledge that refusing to take this mark will clearly bring major consequences, possibly even our death, I don’t know. But don’t you see the exchange we’ll be making if we yield?! Let me share one last thing with you, then I have to run to catch an important meeting with Audrey.

“If God’s Word continues to unfold as precisely as it has so far, the fate of those ‘Christians-by-name’ who compromise and take the mark will be much more terrible than those of us who reject the mark and briefly suffer the wrath of antichrist.”

“Nanc, NO WAY! You’re out to lunch on this one,” Mark injected.

“Wait a minute,” Nancy replied. “Hear me out on this, babe, please! The Word of God clearly says that those who fall into this **deception** will not only incur the eternal judgment of God but will also suffer His wrath when He has it poured out at the bowl judgments! According to Daniel 12, the Gospels, and Revelation 16, this will be a terrible time!”

“But Nanc, we’ll also be here during that time if we decide to reject the mark and somehow manage to avoid the persecution of this world leader,” Mark responded.

“Mark, that’s **NOT** correct! The Bible says that God’s obedient people will never incur His wrath. As a result, we will be spared His terrible judgments that He

will pour out on the earth during the bowls of wrath. You can read about this very deliverance in Revelation 14 where Jesus Christ Himself comes and reaps His people from the earth in verses 14-16. Those gathered thereafter are gathered for something totally different—the wrath of God. But God’s people in Jesus Christ miss this second gathering, this wrath-gathering as a result of the rapture!”

“I’m not sure I’m following the chronology here Nanc,” Mark replied

“The Book of Revelation and the Gospels chronicle this event Mark—it’s awesome! Don’t you remember talking about this with me almost a year ago? The 11th and 14th chapters of Revelation emphatically state this very truth. At the final trumpet, which is mentioned in I Corinthians 15, Matthew 24:29-31, I Thessalonians 4, Revelation 11 and 14:14 and following, God will reap His people from the face of the earth. Shortly thereafter, the bowls of His wrath will be poured out upon those who have ‘the mark of the beast and those who worship his image.’ So, **NO**, Mark, we will not be around when this time of God’s wrath comes. It’s only those who yield to the **deception** of the wicked one who will be handed both the bowls of wrath and His eternal judgment. So you see, it’s not worth a temporary waiving of the antichrist’s wrath against us! Remember, it’s those who endure to the end who will be saved. The patience of the saints of God in Jesus Christ is to keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus!

“O.K. O.K. O.K.” was Mark’s hasty comeback. After a moment, though, he responded with more composure. “N a n c, you’ve given me a lot to think over tonight. It really seems that there’s no way in the world you’d ever think twice about receiving this mark. Am I right? Am I hearing you correctly?”

“That’s right, my love.” With that Mark held her tight for what seemed like hours. He was taken back by her extended gesture of verbal care for him. Oh what depth of passion and sincere belief, Mark thought. Gently taking his face in the palms of her hands, they exchanged an emotional kiss and said good-bye.

Four hours later, Nancy was arrested. She had already accepted the possibility of this scenario even prior to her meeting with Mark that evening—this one who had become her love for the past eleven years. Given the Word’s emphasis on deception and specifically Matthew 24:10, she wanted to be one who demonstrated the opposite of that which was prophesied in the last phrase of the verse. She wanted to love Mark even though it was a possibility that he would turn out to be one of many who fulfilled what is predicted in the middle portion of that very verse. She grieved over what seemed to be a confirmation that he was one of those offended by a stand for the true Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. *It was dark*, but not for Nancy. In great and subtle duplicity, the deceiver managed, once again, to lead another astray. “And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another.” (Matthew 24:10) Then, after the initial wave of deception (Matthew 24:4), another round is determined. “Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many.” (Matthew 24:11; cf. v. 24)

A Theme

Mark was deceived. The Word of God clearly states that deception will be great in the days preceding the glorious return of Jesus Christ. It is this theme of deception that this project will consider in further depth. After an introductory look into biblical, historical and contemporary materials, a ten-year ministry plan (toward education concerning these and other deceptions) will follow a section on the personal

perspective of the ministry director of Endurance Ministries, Inc., the ministry for which this plan is intended. But before outlining the contents of this work, a concise and simple flow of thought behind this dissertation will help clarify where we are heading.

The Bible predicts rampant deceit just prior to the return of Jesus Christ. We have clear revelation concerning the problem that will exist prior to Jesus Christ's return. Recent history and current-day indicators point to the unfolding of this very biblical theme. We have clear evidence concerning the present fulfillment of end-time deceptions. As a result, we have a problem: contemporary deceptions that have been clearly defined by a very accurate prophetic source, the sixty-six books of the Bible. The problem is a present one. Because this work is an action plan of an incorporated ministry, a ministry plan that seeks to address this very problem, the director's perspective (including doctrine, passion, and commitment toward action) plays a very influential role in the way Endurance Ministries, Inc. responds to this concern. Due to this dynamic, his personal theology is briefly considered. Finally, in light of the context above, an actual ten-year ministry plan that emphasizes education so as to further expose these deceptions is presented.

An Outline

Herein is the outline. The Bible clearly teaches that many deceptions will occur during the days prior to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ—stated here once again for the sake of emphasizing the context at hand. Chapters one and six are devoted to the biblical material addressing this concern of *deception*. All-out deceptions do not just happen upon the world scene from nothing. There has to have

been some earlier enabling groundwork to further foster the current climate to accommodate these deceptions. Chapters two and three highlight some moments in both secular and religious history that contribute to this environment. Chapters four and five cite current affairs as further examples of present-day deception. As a result of these things, two important truisms emerge: 1) trustworthy revelation has been communicated concerning the problem of deception before the return of Jesus Christ, and 2) the recent past and contemporary culture contain specific examples directly related to these prophetic pronouncements.

In other words, given the authoritative address from the Word of God concerning end-time deception, and given the degree that recent history and current trends are promoting some of these very lies, we have a problem: deceptions. And let's not forget the nature of deception—most often those in that state do not realize the duplicity into which they have fallen. Yes, deceptions are rampant today.

In response, are there those in God's kingdom who would rise to the need of the hour and sound the alarm? Are there any with passion enough to risk the Jeremiah-like ministry, even if it means the possibility of their own credibility being ruined? Jeremiah was not well-liked by many in his day, yet he obeyed God's call upon his life even though they countered his messages with words and actions driven by contempt. Needed: passionate cultural watchers who care enough to sound the trumpet, so to speak. But this heralding must be based on true foundations. Zeal itself is not sufficient in and of itself. After citing foundational aspects of biblical, historical and contemporary theology as warrants in support of our present deception problem (chapters 1-6), chapters seven through nine go on to disclose the personal convictions

convictions behind the one leading Endurance Ministries. Upon sound biblical doctrine (chapter 7) and strong devotion to the cause (chapter 8), obedience to the doing of the work of this ministry (chapter 9) serves to conclude this section emphasizing personal theology.

But if there is no plan, even though great passion is present for the cause, the vision perishes. Therefore, chapters ten through twelve define the initial ten-year educational emphasis of Endurance Ministries. Chapter ten outlines three newsletters pertinent to the three branches of ministry sponsored by Endurance Ministries. Chapter eleven introduces ten web sites that will be developed through 2002 for publication by the beginning of the ten-year plan (the “Ten-Year Plan” being from 2003 – 2012). The final pragmatic response to the problem of deception and the need for biblical education concerning this very phenomena is outlined in chapter twelve—seminar, workshop, class, sermon, conference, etc. presentations which bring a more personal touch to this teaching ministry.

SECTION I

EXPOSING ESCHATOLOGICAL DECEPTIONS OF OUR DAY

I remember when I was in high school. Although I grew up in a home of faith, I didn't have much interest in spiritual truths. As I ventured into college and began receiving a strong dose of evolutionary propaganda, I can still remember feeling somewhat confused about my Christian roots and the doctrine of origins as stated in the book of Genesis in contrast to the view presented in my social science courses. What I was hearing in no uncertain terms was that the biblical story of origins was a myth—simply religious fiction that did not contain historical content. I intentionally use the term “propaganda” due to the passionate way in which two instructors, in particular, went about this indoctrination.

Early into the training process I was introduced to a creation ministry that highlighted some of the scientific evidences for biblical creation. At the same time, common-sense questions were raised concerning how in the world natural evolution could supply the necessary things to bring about all that we see today. I felt, since I was in the midst of the education process, that I needed to give fair hearing to both sides. As a result, I ordered some books authored by Dr. A.E. Wilder Smith (a European chemist with three earned doctorates). Those materials, in addition to

others, opened my eyes to the great deception that was taking place concerning origins.

Since that time I have more than concluded that the Darwinian myth is actually one of our contemporary fables of great order. Even evolutionary scientists make these types of bold claims, statements that cost them dearly in their scientific career. One example, then I must make the tie to deceptions. Soren Luvtrop, another European scientist who believes in evolution of another form, writes in *Darwinism: The Refutation of a Myth*, the following:

I suppose that nobody will deny that it is a great misfortune if an entire branch of science becomes addicted to a false theory. But this is what has happened in biology: for a long time now people discuss evolutionary problems in a peculiar 'Darwinian' vocabulary—'adaption,' 'selection,' 'natural selection,' etc.—thereby believing that they contribute to the *explanation* of natural events. They do not, and the sooner this is discovered, the sooner we shall be able to make real progress in our understanding of evolution. **I believe that one day the Darwinian myth will be ranked the greatest deceit in the history of science.**"
(pg. 422 – emphasis mine)

What does this have to do with deception? Did you catch the term "deceit"? Did you discern that he's talking about a contemporary dogma currently embraced by the majority of scientists today? Years before I first discovered this book, I was amazed to find out how poorly justified, scientifically, evolutionary theory (the view that purports to be a complete "hydrogen-to-man" theory of origins, not the simple genetic flexibility in gene pools) actually was. Through this education, I was able to expose a terribly consequential lie that held great impact on general worldview formation. I remain saddened by the believing and non-believing communities'

failure to acknowledge these scientific facts. Is it because of lack of education?

In part, yes.

The same concern presently drives the interests of Endurance Ministries.

There exists in present culture, many deceptions today. Evolutionary theory is now being used to encourage a trans-physical evolutionary jump into the spiritual. Barry Walter's book, *Conscious Evolution: Personal and Planetary Transformation* is one of thousands of books that can be cited in support of this movement. But there are many other deceptions out there in mainstream culture today, not simply the evolutionary one. More examples will be considered in chapters two through five. Suffice it to say at this juncture, we need additional voices that will get this important information out to the general public whereby they can make a well-informed decision concerning these eternally consequential presentries.

Having generally stated the purpose of this paper and having presented a simple outline of this work in the introduction, it's time to further develop section one. Recent history and current cultural mandates clearly contain indications of deception. But how can this be claimed without having identified a clear source that indicates or defines these deceptions? There must be some primary source relied upon to bring illumination. A standard, criteria, plum line or information source must be identified, and correctly so. The Word of God, the Bible, has much to say concerning this major eschatological theme: deception. It's time to press on in the journey. What does the Word of God actually say concerning end-time deception? Let's take a look.

CHAPTER 1

BIBLICAL MANDATES

That we are in the times of the end is clear. Since many of the New Testament writers communicated such in their day (Peter in Acts 2:14-21; Paul in I Cor. 10:11; John in I John 2:18 & Rev. 1:1; James in Jms. 5:7,8; and ?? in Heb. 1:1-4), how much more so should this be acknowledged in ours, almost two thousand years later? This also raises the question of ongoing delay. As some have appropriately asked, if a two-thousand year period has transpired since the first century, what prevents an additional (long) period of time to take place before the return of Jesus Christ?—Good question and one that should be kept in mind. The biblical counsel, as demonstrated in the passages highlighted in this chapter, directs its readers to be ready at all times in light of the signs of the times. Given the content that follows, the above question is not rejected, simply seen in light of the context of our day—there are many signs directing God’s people to watch. Here, in this first chapter, a few of the pertinent passages with the emphasis on observation of the historical texts are considered. An emphasis on the interpretation of the texts—a biblical theology—will unfold in chapter six.

Many of these biblical writers went on to detail specific character trends, contemporary movements and global conditions in the days prior to the coming of

Jesus Christ. One reoccurring theme that is repeated in practically every major New Testament passage dealing with *end times* is that of warning concerning false teachers, deceiving spirits and false christs. These instruments are tied to a common theme, deception. Because Scripture is the foundational criteria or authority whereby end-time concerns are informed, a primary, allowing-the-texts-to-say-what-they-do approach is taken in this chapter. With that in mind, what do key passages say concerning the times of the end?

Before venturing into the New Testament, a brief look at a major Old Testament prophetic book will serve to introduce the theme that deception plays in the days prior to the Lord Jesus' return. The book of Daniel has long been a *controversial* book. If written in the 6th century, B.C. (for which there is much internal and external evidence), it is clearly a prophetic book speaking of events yet future. If written later, it still remains a book that addresses end-time themes. Either date does not take away from the content of "latter times." Among the eschatological events contained in this book can be found a final global empire, the warning of a man of intrigue, the making of war against the saints, and the glorious victory of the Son of Man, to name but a few. Themes unfolding during these events are wonderfully developed through the book.

Themes:

Daniel 1,3	Obedience to God when other demand otherwise brings blessing
Daniel 2	When we reveal God's truths, we are to give glory to the One worthy
Daniel 4	God's future will be realized; All will give glory to the worthy One
Daniel 5	Disobedience brings destruction; God's judgments will come to pass
Daniel 6	Obedience to God will bring mankind's offense but God's deliverance
Daniel 7	Global empires come and go but God's kingdom endures forever
Daniel 8	Event: Vision of the Media/Persia and Greek empires

Daniel 9	Prayer continues to play a major role; the 70-weeks prophecy
Daniel 10	The messenger from heaven
Daniel 11	Kings of the North and South in conflict
Daniel 12	The conclusion of humanity's history

Because the theme of deception by major authorities occurs during the unfolding during these events and because the theme of deception is the emphasis of this paper, it is appropriate to ask if Daniel ever specifically takes up this theme. Two fascinating passages exist specifically addressing deception—Daniel 8:25 and 11:23, both pertaining to the one who comes on the world scene in the last days (contexts 8:23-26 and 11:20-45 speak to the end-time setting).

Through his cunning he shall cause deceit to prosper under his rule;
And he shall exalt *himself* in his heart. He shall destroy many in *their*
prosperity. (Daniel 8:25; NKJV)

This of-the-latter-times (vs. 23) king will destroy the mighty and holy people. One characteristic of this powerful leader is his cunning deceit, through which he will destroy many.

And after the league *is made* with him, he shall act deceitfully, for he shall come up and become strong with a small *number of* people.
(Daniel 11:23; NKJV)

It is clear that this deceptive, end-time ruler will foster deceit. In dialogue with the king of the South, both “kings’ hearts shall be bent on evil, and they shall speak lies at the same table.” (vs. 27)

Just what these deceptions are is not clearly articulated. The New Testament brings a further description of both general and specific deceptions. We begin in the

book of Matthew where Jesus specifically takes up pressing-to-His-disciples' end-time questions. The selected verses below touch upon the theme of this work—deception.

Jesus told them, “Don’t let anyone mislead you. For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am Messiah.’ They will lead many astray. ... Then if anyone tells you, ‘Look, here is the Messiah,’ or ‘There he is,’ don’t pay any attention. For false messiahs and false prophets will rise up and perform great miraculous signs and wonders so as to deceive, if possible, even God’s chosen ones. See, I have warned you.

So if someone tells you, ‘Look, the Messiah is out in the desert,’ Don’t bother to go and look. Or, ‘Look, he is hiding here,’ don’t believe it! For as the lightning lights up the entire sky, so it will be when the Son of Man comes. Mt. 24:4,5,23-27 – NLT (cf. Mk. 13; Luke 21)

Although I Thessalonians chapters four and five is a crucial eschatological passage, it does not emphasize the theme of deception. II Thessalonians is quite a different matter.

Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers, not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report or letter supposed to have come from us, saying that the day of the Lord has already come. Don’t let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshipped, so that he sets himself up in God’s temple, proclaiming himself to be God.

Don’t you remember that when I was with you I used to tell you these things? And now you know what is holding him back, so that he may be revealed at the proper time. For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming. The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refuse to love the truth and so be saved. For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness. II Thessalonians 2:1-12 (NIV)

I Timothy 4 goes on to give very specific indications of deception, so much so that apostasy occurs.

But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons.
I Timothy 4:1 (NASB-ue)

Chapters three and four of II Timothy do not specifically set the context as unfolding in the end times, but the passage does refer to a time yet future. Note the theme of deception in these two chapters.

But evil men and imposters will proceed *from bad* to worse, deceiving and being deceived. You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned *them*, and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work. ... For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but *wanting* to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance with their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths.
II Timothy 3:13-17; 4:3,4 (NASB-ue)

I find it interesting that the appeal to the Scriptures being from God is found in the middle of a passage that addresses deception, myth and truth—wise unto salvation. In a similar manner, I Peter also places the importance of the Word of God in a context that included concern of malice and deceit (see I Peter 1:3ff). False prophets and teachers who bring in destructive heresies are also predicted in Peter's second letter.

But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, *and* bring on themselves swift

destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber. (II Peter 2:1-3; NKJV)

The deception is of such magnitude that, even amidst many signs, they scoff at the idea of the return of Jesus Christ. Given the soon-coming theme that is tied to this context, duplicity is once again at work blinding those who make such statements.

... knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their lusts, and saying, “Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as *they were* from the beginning of creation.” (II Peter 3:3,4; NKJV)

Much has been written about *the last hour* of I John 2. Yet, the sign especially tied to this last hour is clearly stated. Before commenting on the details of this content in chapter six, a simple observation of the text is appropriate.

Dear children, the last hour is here. You have heard that the Antichrist is coming, and already many such antichrists have appeared. From this we know that the end of the world has come. These people left our churches because they never really belonged with us; otherwise they would have stayed with us. But you are not like that, for the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and all of you know the truth. So I am writing to you not because you don't know the truth but because you know the difference between truth and falsehood. And who is the great liar? The one who says that Jesus is not the Christ. Such people are antichrists, for they have denied the Father and the Son. Anyone who denies the Son doesn't have the Father either. But anyone who confesses the Son has the Father also. (I John 2:18-23; NLT)

Chapter four of the same book states yet additional concerns concerning the evil of deception. The test mentioned in this chapter is appropriate today—to be used until the time when deception will be forever put away following the placing of the

great deceiver in the lake of fire (Rev. 20).

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the *spirit* of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world.

You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. They are of the World. Therefore they speak *as* of the world, and the world hears them. We are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

(I John 4:1-6; NKJV)

The theme of deception is also addressed in the Book of Revelation. A couple passages will be quoted here to simply demonstrate such to be the case.

Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb and he spoke as a dragon. He exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence. And he make the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose fatal wound was healed. He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down out of heaven to the earth in the presence of men. And he deceives those who dwell on the earth because of the signs which it was given him to perform in the presence of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who had the wound of the sword and has come to life.

(Revelation 13:11-14; NASB-ue)

What a contrast Revelation 14:5 brings concerning those who follow the Lamb wherever He goes: “And no lie (“deceit” – NKJV) was found in their mouth.”

God is a God of truth. As so often shown, God’s great enemy is devoted to the opposite while at the same time often offering a cheap substitute for the many beauties of God. Deception is the act or practice of misleading. This quality is

antithetical to honesty, truth, integrity, and many related themes deemed so precious in God who alone exists with these in perfection.

CHAPTER 2

SACRED CONSIDERATIONS

The Bible is not the only historical source that informs about end-time deception. A simple look through the pages of *sacred* history this past century-and-a-half provides, not a standard whereby deceptions are defined but actually serves to present early expressions of growing deception. One clarification before proceeding: this work does not go into historical considerations prior to the mid-19th century because it is dealing with end-time concerns—months, years and decades prior to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. A sufficient-to-show-early-movements’ history is given, seeking to stay within the context of the scope of this dissertation.

I go to an early “historical” source (i.e., Scripture) in the first chapter but do so for revelational purposes concerning particular movements, descriptions of deception, etc., of the days under consideration. God’s revelation, while a historical source, is relied upon to speak accurately about the future. There is a presupposition here, one that has been written about in hundreds of works and need not be further developed in this work: the reliability of the prophetic content in the Bible. The scope of this work is different, but the evidence in support for biblical credibility is clear. Many, if not all readers, are familiar with this position and share this well-evidenced tenet.

In this chapter, a look at early seeds planted by some influential mediums will be considered. Although this past century-and-a-half is history, it was a period of time that has been characterized as one bringing great change. These far-reaching, consequential cultural adjustments have come as a result of groups and individuals seeking global transition into a new era that seeks to see biblical truths laid to rest. The following have contributed to major deceptions currently being propagated. While the selection from which to choose is vast, the groups selected are either directly tied to *Christendom* by name or use and/or claim Christian terminology extensively. In these examples of distortion, deception masquerades as light.

The Doctrine of *Mormonism* and the Changeability of God

In *The Articles of Faith of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints*, Joseph Smith writes, “We believe the Bible to be the word of God as far as it is translated correctly; we also believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God.”⁴ In the authoritative commentary, *A Study of The Articles of Faith* (which contains the subtitle: *Being a Consideration of the Principal Doctrines of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*), the following principle doctrine is emphasized:

We believe in a God who is Himself progressive, whose majesty is intelligence; whose perfection consists in eternal advancement—a Being who has attained His exalted state by a path which now His children are permitted to follow, whose glory it is their heritage to share. In spite of the opposition of the sects, in the face of direct charge of blasphemy, the Church proclaims the eternal truth: “*As man is, God once was; as God is, man may be.*”⁵

⁴ Joseph Smith, *Doctrines & Covenants; Pearl of Great Price* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1921, 1948), 67.

⁵ James Talmage, *A Study of the Articles of Faith* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1975), 430.

In direct contradiction to this current position of the church, the Bible and their own Book of Mormon (deemed even more authoritative than the Bible due to its being a more recent revelation from God, they say) emphatically state that God is eternal (e.g., Mormon 9:9-11 in the *Book of Mormon*). Why is this particular doctrine of God emphasized as opposed to other contradictory statements within their own material? The concept of an evolving god is foreign to the Bible, yet, “in the face of direct charges of blasphemy, the Church proclaims the eternal truth: “*As man is, God once was; as God is, man may be.*” This early creed continues to be the position of the Mormon church today.

This concept of a progressive god allows contemporary Mormon theologians to accept (their) God’s inability, at the present time, to overcome evil. In a recent Evangelical Theological Society regional meeting where theological papers were being read, a Mormon theologian from Brigham Young argued just that during the question and answer period that followed the reading of his paper on the progressive nature of (their) God. In short, according to their view, God is not able or powerful enough to forever quench evil at this time.

This inadequacy of God has many consequences beyond God’s omnipotence. Omniscience is also questioned. It is a similar denial of God’s omniscience that is also currently being debated in evangelical circles through the *Openness of God* theory. According to this view (a view with similar tenets to the earlier expression seen in Mormon theology), God’s omniscience does not apply to biblical prophecies due to God’s delegating to mankind the freedom of choice, which indirectly states God’s omniscience is limited—an oxymoron. If this idea is true, the end-time

pronouncements as to what will actually take place prior to the return of Christ are only conditional. If, on the other hand, the idea that God is not all-knowing (especially in light of the theme of knowledge concerning end-time deception) is false, the predictions in chapter one are accurate forecasts of what will indeed eventually take place. Once again, this opens another question that cannot be fully addressed here. While books on this subject continue to be written, the timeless revelation God the Father has given concerning Himself speaks authoritatively on this subject. In summary of other passages, Psalm 90:2c reads, “From everlasting to everlasting, You are God.” (NKJV)

The idea of the progressive nature of God is rejected—actually believed to be another deception of our day that contributes to the questioning of what has been revealed for His people’s preparedness for the return of His dear Son. The revealed Word of God is the crucial criteria that sets this standard of measurement.

Early Mormon doctrine provided one of many examples concerning past efforts to redefine the God of the Bible. The following examples emphasize additional historical examples of how some address the doctrine of Christology. Once again, this doctrine is clearly stated to be one major deception in the days prior to the return of Jesus Christ.

Hindu Doctrine and a Prophet to the West

Paramahansa Yogananda (1893 – 1952), an influential Hindu prophet who was very instrumental in spreading Hindu philosophy in America and whose writings have been foundational to many New Age writers, expresses a faulty view of Christ in his book, Man’s Eternal Quest:

“... We are a part of the divine Christ Consciousness present in all creation. Each individual intelligence is a part of that vast Christ intelligence. ... Jesus, Krishna, Buddha, Babaji – all are Christs. They had expanded their consciousness to receive Christ Consciousness. St. John declared: ‘As many as received him [the Christ Consciousness that was manifested in Jesus], to them gave he power to become sons of God.’ ... You do not imagine it, you feel it – this love that Jesus, Krishna, all of the great ones manifested – this universal intelligence and love which is called Christ Consciousness.”⁶

This is significant given what the writer of one of his most influential texts says in the introduction: “As a bright light shining in the midst of darkness, so was Yogananda’s presence in this world. Such a great soul comes on earth only rarely, when there is a real need among men. We are grateful to Yogananda for spreading Hindu philosophy in such a wonderful way in America and the West.”⁷ The Christ, according to this false teacher and those tied to his mission, is “the projected consciousness of God immanent in all creation. In Christian scripture it is called the ‘only begotten son,’ the only pure reflection in creation of God the Father; in Hindu scripture it is called *Kutastha Chaitanya* or *Tat*, the cosmic intelligence of Spirit everywhere present in creation. It is the universal consciousness, oneness with God, manifested by Jesus, Krishna, and other *avatars*....”⁸ (emphasis mine)

The influence from figures such as Yogananda has been wide. While others could be cited as examples of those who also experienced major followings, a couple examples of westerners who have themselves become influential heralds will now be considered. Many of these authors have been labeled early or later New Age advocates.

⁶ Paramahansa Yogananda, *Man’s Eternal Quest* (Los Angeles: Self-Realization Fellowship, 1975), 334 – 336.

⁷ Ibid., xii.

⁸ Ibid., 470.

Esoteric Christianity and Alice Bailey

This is not a new doctrine, this christology of the New Age Movement. It was known as early as the first century in that John and Paul addressed christological heresies in some of their writings. The communities that embraced the faulty doctrine came to be known as Gnostic communities. Even in those days, a separation between the man, Jesus and the Christ-spirit was made. Remnants of this teaching are heralded today by many. This idea enjoys quite an impressive platform. One current example will be mentioned before specifically addressing Alice Bailey.

The major motion picture, *Stigmata*, challenges its viewers to correct the injustice that is currently happening as spiritual formation presses forward. The crime unfolding before our very eyes, as they state it (in both narrative and in a literal, black and white fashion on the screen at the conclusion of the movie), is that the religious community which believes in the incomplete canon of the New Testament Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) are hiding the more accurate Gospel in Jesus' very own words, from us – even labeling this *Gospel of Thomas* as “heresy.” This appeal is “not a Hollywood fabrication/fiction,” but a real issue: lost Gospels do exist, Gospels, they say, which are the most accurate words of Jesus. Even the DVD promotional material speaks to the injustice of this conspiracy. These words happen to teach, among other heresies including a terrible undermining of women, an early Christology characterized by the Word as one of the spirit of antichrist.. “Split a piece of wood, and I am there; turn over a rock, and I am there,” Jesus says of the Christ spirit. This is no small concern given the thousands upon thousands who are being influenced by this instruction. But this ancient document is a current concern, a present-day

example. Before addressing some contemporary concerns, an early advocate of this same teaching position is found in Alice Bailey.

Alice Bailey was one of the early influential figures who served to further propagate this Gnostic christ. Two of her works dealing specifically with the definition of the christ are *The Reappearance of the Christ* and *From Bethlehem to Calvary*. In these works one can clearly see the same christology unfolding. Author of *Education in the New Age* (and over twenty other occult books), Bailey, in partnership with her spirit guide, “The Tibetan,” influenced thousands, including Dr. Jack Canfield, influencer of many through his nontraditional approach to education.⁹

Teilhard de Chardin: A Digruntled Priest with Global Aspirations

Teilhard de Chardin, an ex-Catholic priest has probably been even more influential in spreading the false concept of “Christ” as defined by Neo-Gnostic and New Age advocates. “Teilhard de Chardin (1881 – 1955) is almost without question the leading candidate in the West for spiritual father of the rising spiritual and political globalism now taking the world by storm.”¹⁰ Catholic mystic, evolutionary scientist, Chardin draws from a wide range of the best epistemological sources. In this merger, a different christ than that of biblical revelation emerges. Christ, in Chardin’s view, is a co-laborer with evolution to bring change. Although insufficient data is available to conclude clearly on some specific details, it is clear that Chardin believed in the universal christ whereby all religions will converge upon the Cosmic Christ who will satisfy all perspectives and usher in global peace.

⁹ See pp. 408-448, “New Age Education” in *Encyclopedia of New Age Beliefs*

¹⁰ Tal Brooke, “Preparing for the Cosmic Millennium and the Coming Global Church,” *SCP Journal* vol. 19:2-3 (Spring 1995): 6

This christ is intimately tied to evolution and global spirituality. "By disclosing a world-peak, evolution makes Christ possible, just as Christ, by giving meaning and direction to the world, makes evolution possible." (Chardin in *How I Believe*) "Christ is the great source of power and energy which is drawing all things toward itself." (Chardin in *Science and Christ*) "I believe that the Messiah whom we await, whom we all without doubt await, is the universal Christ; that is to say, the Christ of evolution." (Chardin in *Christianity and Evolution*) The progressive element in the context of deception once again emerges.

New Age and the Message of Prophet David Spangler

David Spangler, a more recent prophet who has made great impact, has written extensively on this subject of the Gnostic christ. In his doctrinal work on Christ entitled *Reflections On the Christ*, he writes the following concerning the birth of Christ:

"The true birth of the Christ was not the birth of Jesus. Jesus was an individual who himself had to recapitulate certain stages. ... He had to in his consciousness touch this Christ pattern. ... When he [Jesus] became awakened [tapped into the Christ pattern] there was sufficient power generated with the race itself to lift that awakened state still further. It made it possible for him then to become the Anointed One, for there to be in this case the reverse action of what happened with Buddha, a downward pull in which the Christ, or this cosmic force literally entered the vehicles of Jesus and took them over, and used those vehicles as a means of making a very important link with the Earth. The word 'Christos' referred to the Anointed One. This is exactly what happened; he was anointed with this cosmic power. He became the incarnation of this power on Earth. This being the actual birth of the Christ, Jesus had to manifest his own Christ consciousness before this could occur, because there has to be this resonating link." ¹¹

¹¹ David Spangler, *Reflections on the Christ* (Findhorn Findhorn, 1981), 6.

Spangler goes on to state the real message of the resurrection of Christ.

“...This is really the true crucifixion. It was not so much the hanging Jesus on the physical cross, but it was the entry of the cosmic Christ into the physical, etheric, mental, emotional energy patterns of the planetary body itself. From that point onward the Christ was no longer an educative force standing outside the planet, beckoning evolution forward. It became a very powerful force operative within the very structure of the planet itself, on really the lowest level, this is, right down to the nuclear levels, atomic levels.”¹²

In Response

Although many additional examples could be cited, the major point of contention deals with the fundamental way in which writers, including both historical and contemporary ones, clearly separate the historical figure Jesus from a universal consciousness often referred to as “Christ.” Jesus was the man who walked the streets of Palestine, who played in Galilee, who conducted humanitarian efforts in Judea and Samaria, and who was eventually seen as a prophet by some of his contemporaries. But make no mistake about it, this Jesus was not the Son of God. It is only those who hold to archaic religious thought who persist in believing Jesus the man was the sole embodiment of the Messiah, Christ. On the contrary, so the New Age doctrine goes, it was only his coming to understand, awaken and develop the altered state of divine consciousness which elevated Jesus the man to a higher position on the evolutionary plane. And it was only as a result of his tapping into the Christ consciousness that triggered Jesus’ transcendence. This dividing of the historical figure, the Lord Jesus Christ, has been the deception upon which the entire christology of the New Age Movement is based.

¹² Ibid., 7.

The following comparison/contrast yields a clear example of the dividing of the man Jesus from the expression of divinity through Christ consciousness, contrary to Biblical Christology. This comparison between the Christ of the Bible and the Christ of the New Age is mind-boggling. In the major category of facts about Being, the New Age Christ is exactly opposite that of the Biblical Christ. Even in this most basic category, one will notice a clear distinction between the two positions. Why? The New Age Christ is defined not as a person, but as a thing, a force, an attitude of mind, an all-present energy throughout the entire universe. Here's how a couple who could be classified to fall within the New Age movement specifically define Christ. Norman Paulsen, in his book, Christ Consciousness, states that all who possess Christ Consciousness share some basic common beliefs.

“All cases of Christ Consciousness basically state the same facts: (1) The vision of the incredible brilliance, much akin to our own physical sun; (2) The face-to-face meeting with a divine intelligence which permeates the whole vessel of the creation; (3) The absolute knowing that one is immortal and that any further pursuit of salvation is unnecessary, as one already has it; (4) The elimination of the sense of sin, and the full understanding of the law of cause and effect which binds thoughts and images together in the creation.”¹³

David Spangler (mentioned above) gives a concise definition of the christ after some introductory descriptions. Here again, note the major change of definition.

“What is the Christ? Within all life there exists a quality, an energy, which has as its basic characteristic irresistible growth, irresistible and inevitable expression of divinity. It is a quality which says that whatever form I am encased in I will not be held prisoner by that form, but I will transform it into

¹³ Norman Paulsen, *Christ Consciousness* (Salt Lake City: Builders, 1980), xxvii.

a greater form. I will use all life, all experiences as stepping stones to greater revelations of divinity. The Christ is the basic evolutionary force within creation.”¹⁴

All of the voices above are basically heralding the same song. How can this be? Is this not a direct fulfillment of the very first deception Jesus listed in the signs that speak of His soon return? “Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many.” At the very least, New Age Christology contributes or fosters the growth of this deception. These who are bringing this of-the-spirit-of-antichrist christology have also been included as one of the signs. Over the years this doctrine has gone from closet minority to cultural majority. These prophets of yesteryear have made an impact.

¹⁴ Spangler, 13.

CHAPTER 3

SECULAR CONSIDERATIONS

“Secular” historical considerations warrants definition. Webster’s *New World Dictionary* (Second College Edition) defines the term secular in this manner: “of or relating to worldly things as distinguished from things relating to church and religion; not sacred or religious; temporal; worldly.” The use of this term in this address does not limit the worldly realm to physical things, but includes spiritual things that are not included in church matters. Thus, early spiritual interests that have no association with Christianity are also included in these two chapters on secular concerns. First, recent historical considerations that relate to or have a bearing on deception themes will be addressed.

Global seed-planting through this century has been intense, especially in the last quarter. Primarily fueled by technology, our world has become a much smaller place – travel and tele-communication have made their contributions. The world has also become an unsafe place – techno-warfare could potentially end life on this planet. As a result, governments and political agendas are effected. Basic needs are provided through a web of suppliers, which, if broken, would have profound effects upon huge geographic areas, yes, even countries and continents. Economics,

as we have seen since the turn of the millennium, are, without doubt, interconnected. Japan's economy affects America's; America's, Europe's; etc. Global spirituality has also become a perceived absolute in order to achieve world peace. Much has been written about the dangerous threat that fundamentalism is to the current form of tolerance which has now become mandated. The extreme expressions of exclusivity are not acceptable – Jesus Christ cannot be the only way. If anything, he is but one way among many, so they say in their fundamental dogma.

It was just recently while flying with American Airlines that I found myself scrambling to get out a pen and piece of paper. We had just landed and many were putting items into bags in order to get off the plane. I was doing just the opposite. Why? As we taxied toward the terminal, the flight attendant welcomed us to Portland. At the conclusion of her farewell, she said, “And thank you for flying with American Airlines, a member of One World Alliance.” That concluding statement so caught my attention that I've been giving a more attentive ear to statements calling for global allegiance—and I'm hearing these types of statements on a much more frequent basis.

The following historical examples only scratch the surface of what has clearly become the number one prescribed agenda for many of the inhabitants of the earth: One World Alliance. Many web sites, one by this very name (www.oneworldalliance.com), speak to this appeal. Indeed, these historical considerations are so obvious that one may wonder why this is even questioned. That's the irony of it all! It's clearly happening, yet the true community of God in Jesus Christ is not, for the most part, responding, almost as if this movement is not actually ever- and powerfully-present and active.

Hints toward global movement are everywhere and frequent. The United Nations (UN) has been in existence for quite some time now. With over seventy-five Global entities, the UN is now firmly established as a major shaper toward one world ideology. The major societal categories (parts of culture that exist inherent to a culture's rising) are all represented in this organization. For example, many humanitarian concerns are represented though groups representing refugee, children, woman, and ethnic needs. Groups addressing food supply are multiple. Many energy and military organizations have been established. Financial (monetary) and economic (trade and supply) groups play consequential roles in global strategy. For a list of these influential committees and organizations, see the book, *Basic Facts About the United Nations* (produced by the United Nations) or view the video, *The History & Functions of the United Nations* (Presented by Library Distributors of America).

Although this group is cited as a recent historical entity, it has moved into a very influential position over the past few decades and thus is even more a contributor to the global mandate. For example, the United Nation's Racial Conference concluded in early September of 2001. World News Tonight covered portions of the Israeli/Palestinian controversy, in addition to humanitarian liberties especially predominant in South Africa. At this "World Conference Against Racism," slavery was decreed to be a crime against humanity. I found it interesting that the main media podium hosted two flags— 1) the UN flag; 2) a modified Yin Yang flag containing a third swirl.

In commentarial response, Taoism is able (and willing) to evolve with the New Age, even willing to modify its ancient symbol. For the sake of global peace,

accommodations are asked of all earthly participants. Is biblical Christianity willing to join the many other religious perspectives in accommodating beliefs whereby peaceful co-existence can be realistically attained? We can categorize major societal elements (e.g., political, economic, education, religious), but in reality they all must blend in order to bring about a new world order. This UN (political) action includes symbols that are more broad than simply global politics, for obvious reasons. They include economic, education and religious aspects in the guise of a philanthropic humanitarian effort of universal proportions. This would not be a bad thing, in-and-of-itself **if** revelation from God—forewarning a future ruler of deceit (actually, through his cunning he shall cause deceit to prosper under his rule; Daniel 8:25) who will use this for his own agenda—had not been given. But such revelation has been given, as seen briefly touched upon in chapter one. Other past examples also come to mind.

Many of the ten new directions of John Naisbitt's Megatrends (source: Warner; 1982) toward transforming our lives are tied to a global ideology—a few explicitly stating such: e.g., “World Economy,” “Networking.” The Humanist Manifest II commits to a global structure. “We affirm a set of common principles that can serve as a basis for united action—positive principles relevant to the present human condition. They are a design for a secular society on a planetary scale.”¹⁵

Another means to propagate information toward the global context through which deception will occur takes place through the media. Many movies and T.V.

¹⁵ William Bowen, *Globalism: America's Demise* (USA: Huntington, 1984), 201. For a powerful address on earlier signs of one-world commitments, see this entire text.

series promote the syncretistic (the bringing together of different things into a one), synergistic (the combining of energies together to make the whole stronger) ideology. Mediums of the recent past have been communicating these global seeds for quite some time. From Star Trek series (even the first generation) to the well-viewed children's movies, Care Bears (*Forest of Feelings* episode, for example, has a strong synergistic/syncretistic theme), this all-coming-together-as-one is pushed.

The very influential eclectic epistemology of Michael Polanyi serves as another example of global ideology. In his many works, Polanyi affirms the objective Modern or scientific model (after all, he was a chemist of high quality) but also includes elements of Postmodernity—the subjective—emphasizing the neglected aspects of relational existence. But this is not all. He also opens the door to the spiritual realm. His *Tacit Dimension* refers to this element as a legitimate aspect to be included in a holistic paradigm, exactly what, it is said, is needed for life today. While these seeds were planted (written) years ago, they are now being implemented as the paradigm shift continues. Polanyi's spiritual appeal (and others who have developed his thoughts further), though, is not one that is based on the biblical foundation but upon a worldview hostile to God's narrow truths that are forever settled in heaven.

Many books on the shelves of the mega book stores serve as further evidence of the number one mission of man: Global Unity – A Dawn of Harmony. Many popular expressions in culture are also reflecting this euphoric purpose for living. Yes! Secular man does have meaning in existence: to do his or her part in achieving world unity. “We dismiss the archaic idea, ‘vanity of vanities,’ that the chief purpose of man is to glorify him and enjoy him forever, especially the idea that we are to fear

God and keep his commandments. We deplore the deceit that labels contemporary humanism as purposeless. This is not true.” These ideas they share. In part, they are correct – they are offering a purpose for secular man. In part, they err, for their way is the way of destruction. But these ideas, while still growing today, are only past seed plants of many years ago. What’s going on today that further supports this truism of a strong commitment to a one world society?

CHAPTER FOUR

SECULAR MOVEMENTS

Secular culture, not realizing that it is catering to the setting up of the final global kingdom foretold in Scripture (i.e., the final ten-toed kingdom of Daniel 2; the kingdom of the forth beast in Daniel 7; the global rule of antichrist in Revelation 13, 17), is being moved forward. Having chosen to dismiss the biblical warnings, it has, in general, become ignorant to that which is explicitly stated in the Word concerning the days just prior to the glorious return of Jesus Christ. The following examples support this observation in that they continue to forge ahead with their plans.

In the last chapter, a major authority was quoted in relationship to Secular Humanism's faith tenet. The attitude conveyed in both Humanist Manifestos is clear. In no uncertain terms, biblical Christianity is rejected. In that state of deception—an absolute commitment is made toward world unity. The United Nations (UN) is one of many sound examples. Many organizations outside of the UN share its commitments to build toward this Dawn of Harmony. It's almost like the appealing chocolate carrot hung out over the trap—it's such a wonderful thing, let's reach for it! But, alas, the duplicity of the moment becomes very clear once one has taken the fall to the bottom

of the pit. But by that time, the time the trap is discerned, it's too late. The consequence has occurred.

Deceptions often include a promise for more or something greater. The consequences, though, don't always turn out to be what's promised—history affords many testimonials toward this end. One personal experience in this regard: The accountant of a major mission organization was very attracted by the offerings of what has now been catalogued as the “New Era” scam. At the time *investments* were being made, many things looked okay. As a result, Mission to the Americas jumped on for the ride, only to find it to be a hoax and a very unpleasant ride at that. Consequences tied to this false deal were great, although most of the loss has been retrieved with much effort through the resolution process. But this example is minor compared to the results of getting caught in this eternal scheme that seems to offer something we all aspire to—hope for world peace. The dividends are great if we only participate. This leads me to the next significant point.

The Bible clearly states that many of the earthly inhabitants will participate in this global mission, but, due to what they are participating in and who they become in bondage to, will eventually be deceived by the system and the leader of it all. This process of deception includes the worthwhile striving toward the chocolate carrot—a very good thing—world unity and *peace without war*. But global commitment is not the only deception (some question this is even a deception, I understand). I would like at this juncture to expose what I believe to be another deception currently being offered. Do you recall the challenge of deception that was referred to earlier? Those deceived do not often realize they are bound in the very state of deception—thus the

difficulty with this dangerous affair. Scripture states that deception will be especially strong in the days prior to the return of Jesus Christ, so much so that even the elect, if possible, might be deceived (Mt. 24:24). Our Lord Jesus further hints at the severity of the duplicity at hand when He goes on to say, “See, I have told you beforehand.” (vs. 25) He deems it important enough to bring clear forewarning.

Here is what I believe to be a great deception taking place today. I cannot prove it and, oddly enough (possibly tied to the challenging way the deception is put forth, perhaps?), I even find it difficult to articulate the concern to many, but I must press on in seeking to expose it. The deception, I believe, is this, recently illustrated in two major motion pictures have captured the attention of the world. *The Lord of the Rings; The Fellowship of the Ring* and *Harry Potter* continue to promote a worldview alternative to biblical Christianity. The theme is everywhere else in our western culture, not just expressed in these two movies. For example, *Buffy the Vampire* is a very popular T.V. series. In it, a different appeal to the world of magic is being offered—Wicca or modern-day witchcraft. There are many other shows doing the same. It’s in our culture’s response to the two major motion films that both fascinates and scares me.

It is not simply the profound and attractive ways the package is wrapped, although this is a deception in and of itself. In the movie, *Harry Potter*, for example, EVERY possible appeal is made to get into the practice of magic (sorcery). Fame, riches, excitement, even eternal life is offered. And it would be the ultimate loss to lose the great privilege to train in this *art*, even worse that death itself—this is clearly stated in the movie. One other interesting offering: This gift is not for a select elite

but for the most common of commoners. Harry is just a normal kid. Everyone can enjoy the blessings. So the carrot is offered. But there's much more to this deception than this.

We live in the world and are strongly influenced by the worldly mediums today. For almost a decade now, a strong (and strange) attraction for alternate states of reality has been on the increase. *The Sixth Sense*, *Matrix*, *The 13th Floor*, and many other *mediums* are only a few drops in the large bucket tank of examples. Through this instruction, and it is powerful instruction indeed, we are being trained to think in terms of the non-literal world. We are told the literal black-and-white is the old paradigm, and that we should move forward (some have stated this in the context of upward movement in evolutionary enlightenment) and live in the mystical world; the world beyond the obvious; the world below the surface plane. For clarification's sake, yes, we live in a physical and spiritual world, true. But when the *real* (I understand the philosophical questions here) world is, it seems, rejected or not paid attention to, trouble brews. The deception is that so many are failing to honestly acknowledge what is actually happening (the failing to affirm of the surface story line and what it is clearly promoting, instead accepting what's beneath it: for example, a simple *good triumphing over evil* theme in general)—in movies; in real life. This is deception.

It fascinates me in the sense that I'm amazed that the majority of both youth and younger adults don't seem to discern the danger of what has been outlined above. It's almost as if they don't see the point—more than just interesting. Even after lengthy dialogue, some still feel that those who raise these concerns are out to lunch as a result of the strong judgments about the clear appeal in *Harry Potter* concerning the

practice of the magical arts. Have we forgotten Revelation 9:21? But magic is exactly what both films are promoting on the surface level. They both promote the practice of magic arts—sorcery in the case of *Harry Potter*; wizardry in the case of the movie, *The Lord of the Rings; The Fellowship of the Ring*.

The observation many are making today is on the top or on the black-and-white level. It's what the actual (vs. symbolic) story line is advocating. Yet so many of them go to the analogy or allegory of the story and look for the good while missing the actual story as it unfolds—we're talking about magic in the movies, not God's moving. I don't deny the place of looking at the stories in symbolic ways, but I also go on to ask why the simple/plain/main/clear/literal story line is, for the most part, not even being acknowledged.

And it's here where I, at times, even become scared, not at the power behind what I believe the deception is, but the degree of blindness or willingness to acknowledge the other side of the coin. I find myself blown away at what I believe to be an amazing level of deception taking place. It's almost as if some people of God don't even want to acknowledge the blatant wickedness of what is being offered. Some simply don't see it. Yes, I know that Tolkein is a Catholic in background, but also that he is very mystical, so much so that it is not unfair of me to observe the movie form of *The Lord of the Rings* and conclude with some strong words of caution. (I separate the judgment of the movie from the books and the final conclusion—the movie concludes open-ended—we do not know the identity of the one who alone has authority over the ring) I simply observe that “Gandolf the Grey” is a wizard by confession and public witness, not one gifted by God through Jesus Christ.

Eschatological material speaks clearly against the participation in the practice of magical arts (Wicca, sorcery, magic, wizardry, witchcraft, etc.). Yet, even some people who go by the name “Christian” are strongly endorsing the film—and I’m not simply talking about the “high quality graphics,” “battle scenes,” etc. This concerns me. I believe strong deception is at work here. Can I *prove* it? No, but a fair, balanced (because I do acknowledge the place to look at the movie symbolically) appeal has been made to watch out for the chocolate carrot and what lies beneath, or should I say, on the surface—the deception of masquerading the clear story line through an appeal to see the symbolic, more universal theme. Enough of this example.

The turning on of the evening world news also serves to be a powerful informant and confirmation of global aspirations and needs, but content limitations require that I conclude. Secular actions toward this number one agenda have only been generally sketched. The tip of the iceberg presented above only constitutes a small percentage of global movements. Due to the clear commitment to globalism—a movement that secured *critical-mass* devotion as far back as the 1980’s—are additional citings necessary? The next chapter touches upon some current movements within the *sacred* community toward global unity, expressions actually serving to fulfill prophecies of end-time deception.

CHAPTER 5

SACRED MOVEMENTS

Could it be that history is once again repeating itself? The religious community of Jesus' day was looked to for spiritual direction. Yet, when it came down to the position of the current believing community in authority at that time, Jesus Himself clearly showed His contemporaries were far from the truth, even saying to *the Jews who believed in him* (after questioning the sincerity of their belief), "You are of your father the devil." (John 8). Is a similar phenomenon happening today? Are some of the popular spiritualities of our day advocating error such that they would miss the return of the Messiah as those living in the first century missed His first coming? In light of the prophetic deceptions developed in chapter one, and given the many examples of cultural deception, one has grounds to wonder. The following three examples only scratch the surface of many acts of duplicity currently taking place in contexts promoting spirituality.

Christianity and Rev. John Spong

I was introduced to Bishop John Shelby Spong on February 8th, 2001 when he came for a presentation at the Living Enrichment Center, a New Thought church

boasting of approximately 4,000 weekly visitors in the year 2000. There were over two hundred present for this lecture entitled, “A New Way to View the Christ.” Instead of offering a clear and thorough development of the seminar title, Bishop Spong echoed his offense over many of the basic doctrines of the Faith. Biblical creation, sin in general, the Fall and mankind’s ongoing fallen state and atonement only through the blood of Jesus Christ were some of the major issues he spent time scorning, yet with little justification except on the grounds of his own authority to pontificate.

Although a separate written address on the seminar theme has yet to appear, Spong has communicated the concerns above in two (of many) earlier works. I find it fascinating that a change in hermeneutical emphasis from the inductive, what-does-it-simply-say method to a non-literal, mythical method is the major theme of one of these two books. Titled *Rescuing the Bible from Fundamentalism: A Bishop Rethinks the Meaning of Scripture*, Spong seeks to undermine the position that the Bible is the very Word of God and is to be read in a way which allows it to speak for itself—the plain meaning of the text is rejected.

Through the text, the basic integrity of the Scriptures, if read in inductive manner, is made to look contradictory at best. He goes on to conclude his book on the very centerpiece of the Faith, Jesus Christ. In the chapter, “Who Is Christ for Us?” one can find many examples of Spong’s clear intent. The following will serve to begin our investigation.

Contrary to the unhistorical view of creedal fundamentalism and biblical literalists, there never was a moment when the Christ experience was captured to be normative for all time. So many of our classical theological

understandings are distinctly nonbiblical. But we have fused them so deeply into Christian tradition that we do not separate creedal concept from biblical content. Indeed, we tend to read the Bible through creedally formed Greek and Western eyes. Yet Mark would never have understood a word like *incarnation*. Paul quite obviously was not a trinitarian. Each generation spoke of the way they saw Christ in their day. Mark saw a cosmic struggle in the supernatural realm between demonic forces and the intervening God. Matthew saw a new and greater Moses fulfilling the expectations of the Hebrew Scriptures. Luke saw a new and greater Elijah reaching toward a universalism that would embrace gentiles as well as Jews. John saw Christ in terms of the preexistent deity who was Being itself, the great I Am. Each of these images participated in the truth of Christ. None of them bound Christ forever inside their images.¹⁶

Note how much attention is given to the basic tenets of the Faith—beliefs, contra Spong, that are indeed clearly revealed as timeless truths in the Word of truth. Remember, our Father does not seek to deceive us in His revelation but to communicate to us concerning who He is and what He has done. (I intentionally use masculine pronouns not to emphasize a particular gender over another nor to depict a male monarch but because Scripture, not human opinion, uses it.) God’s Word serves the people of God as the ultimate authority for faith and practice, unless we want to conform to the current world pressures seeking to lead us away from biblical Christianity and redefine the Faith once delivered as Spong does. Romans 12:2 offers counsel to the contrary. Spong goes on to bring a careful definition of “Christ” just before his epilogue.

Who is Christ for us today? I cannot answer this question for everyone. No one can do that. I can only bear witness to what I believe the Christ event is. Jesus is the point in the human enterprise where, for me, the divine and the human flow together perfectly, revealing God as the Source of love, the Source of life, and the Ground of Being. Jesus is human being where the essence of the divine life breaks forth with a peculiar intensity. Jesus reveals

¹⁶ John Spong, *Rescuing the Bible from Fundamentalism* (San Francisco: Harper, 1991).

God in loving totally, living fully, and being all that he can be. I worship the God I meet in Jesus by risking love, by daring to live, and by having the Courage to be myself—my best, deepest, and holiest self. As I walk to the edges of life and bump into the meaning of transcendence, I find God over, under, around, and through all that I know and all that I am.

So the call of Christ to me is an eternal call to love, to live, and to be. It is an invitation to work for those things that create life and to oppose those people, those attitudes, and those systems that distort life. It is to become aware of the freeing, exhilarating, consciousness-raising experience of the Holy God. That God calls me into ever-new possibilities. I have never met God by retreating from life. I seem to meet God only when I enter deeply into life. That is the God that I confront when I look deeply at Jesus of Nazareth. When I enter this experience, I turn to the words of Scripture and to the phrases of the creeds and I no longer find the sterile choice between literalism and nothing. I find rather an expression in dated words and time-warped symbols of the same reality that I am in touch with today at the edges of my human limits and in the dawning moments of a transcendent awareness. Then suddenly the ancient biblical story becomes my story, and its ancient symbols interpret my life. I know then that I have touched divinity, a divinity that is the same yesterday, today and forever. I breathe that divinity in and I worship its source and I commit myself anew to life 'in Christ,' as Paul would say, by living, loving, and being, as one who has been transformed by the infinite and eternal presence of God. Christianity becomes for me not an empty and outdated set of scriptural and creedal concepts but a new adventure in living as I walk side by side with Christians of the ages who, with me, have journeyed into the meaning of God.¹⁷

Joining many others who have made similar comments, Paul deParrie brings an insightful observation in his book, *Romanced to Death* when he writes

G.K. Chesterton once observed that in order to change a nation's religion, one only needed to change its language.¹⁸

Although simple, it is insightful and speaks to much of the confusion that has come about as a result of contemporary language games.

¹⁷ Ibid., 243, 244.

¹⁸ Paul deParrie, *Romanced to Death* (Eugene: Harvest, 1994), 13.

Why Christianity Must Change or Die is Spong's most recent "National Bestseller." By the way, why have these two books been labeled as such—with so many glowing recommendations to read them (see the first page of the 1998 release – "Praise for *Why Christianity Must Change or Die*")? Is it not a part of the deception of our day, the Psalm 2 cry from an anti-God system that seeks to throw off His heavy yoke (they say)? It will be interesting to see how they respond in the next ruling age where Christ reigns in glory. (I understand that the preceding comment is not academic, but when secular or *sacred* authorities are not willing to consider truth, epistemological priorities [ones that far exceed the opinion of one speaking on his/her own authority] mandate a momentary departure from the shackles, for truth's sake.)

The themes of this new and updated polemic are similar to that which he addressed in his recent lecture mentioned above: Creation (pp. 29 – 42), God-constructs (pp. 43 – 70), redefinition of "Christ" (pp. 71 –133), sin and eternal consequences (pp. 200 – 219) to name but a few. Once again, an example is appropriate.

I begin this ultimate chapter in an unusual way by stating my conclusions first. I do believe that there is an eternity that lies beyond the limits of my human finitude and in which I can participate. To say it traditionally, I do believe that there is life after death. I want that to be clear, but before the defenders of traditional piety begin to feel affirmed in their uncritical faith assertions, let me state my second conclusion. The content of this reality of life beyond the boundaries of death is so radically different from anything that has been proposed by the religious systems of the past that it is all but unrecognizable. Now, with the conclusions stated, let me build my case.¹⁹

¹⁹ John Spong, *Why Christianity Must Change or Die* (San Francisco: Harper, 1998), 201.

Also included in this redefinition work are the themes of prayer (pp. 134 – 148), ethics (pp. 149 – 167) and, surprise, a new (now emerging; yet future) church (pp. 168 – 199)! Final case in point, stated in Spong's own words in his epilogue.

So our journey into a new way of understanding our faith comes to its conclusion. I summarize that journey by looking again at the words of the creed, and I state the conclusions to which this study has led me.

I believe that there is a transcending reality present in the very heart of life. I name that reality God.

I believe that this reality has a bias toward life and wholeness and that its presence is experienced as that which calls us beyond all of our fearful and fragile human limits.

I believe that this reality can be found in all that is but that it reaches self-consciousness and the capability of being named, communed with, and recognized only in human life.

I believe that heaven, the domain in which this reality has traditionally been domiciled, is not a place but a symbol standing for the limitlessness of Being itself.

I believe that this realm of heaven is entered whenever the barriers that seem to bind human life into something less than that for which it is capable are set aside.

I believe in Jesus, called Messiah, or Christ.

I believe that in his life this transcendent reality has been revealed so completely that it caused people to refer to him as God's son, even God's *only* son. The burning God intensity was so real in him that I look at his life and say, "In you I see the meaning of God, so for me you are both Lord and Christ."

I believe that Jesus was a God presence, a powerful experience of the reality of that Ground of Being undergirding us all at the very depths of life. That is why the earliest Christians interpreted this Christ experience in the language of theism. That was the only language in which they knew how to speak of God.²⁰

The epilogue continues, but the point has been made. Kenneth Boa in *An Unchanging Faith in a Changing World* summarizes the "I believes" that are no longer credible in Spong's opinions as communicated in *Rescuing the Bible from Fundamentalism*.

The list of Christian affirmations Spong explicitly says are no longer

²⁰ Ibid., 220, 221.

believable is quite long:

- God as the creator distinct from the creation
- Adam as a special creation and historical figure
- The Devil as an actual entity
- The historical fall of humanity from innocence into sin
- Israel as ever having been God's chosen people
- The doctrine of the Trinity
- Christ as preexisting in heaven before his human life
- Christ as the incarnation of God, as the God-man
- The virgin birth of Christ
- Christ performed miracles
- The bodily resurrection of Christ
- The ascension of Christ
- The Atonement—Christ's death as delivering human beings from sin
- Salvation through faith in Christ alone
- Eternal punishment for the unbelieving or the wicked ²¹

The metanarrative of Postmodernity (i.e., in this spiritual context, truth is relative and tentatively subjective to each individual and to the believing community at large) is a clear foundation upon which Spong builds his house—a castle upon sand (Mt. 7:26) which will one day fall in homage before the Rock of Ages (Daniel 2). But wait, further evidence of the degree of deception is confidently expressed.

Those who think that Christianity consists of a supernatural deity who invades the world periodically, who works through a virgin birth, a physical resuscitation [even here Spong must twist through faulty redefinition], and a cosmic ascension, will find all that I say a threat to their faith. Those who believe that creeds are literally true, Bibles are inerrant, or popes are infallible will find me a challenge to their presuppositions. Those who have made the consensus of yesterday their only understanding of truth will call this heresy. Those who cannot think of God outside the categories of theism will call me a-theist. I expect to hear such charges as these more than once. ²²

²¹ Kenneth Boa, *An Unchanging Faith in a Changing World* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997), 127.

²² Spong, *Why Christianity Must Change or Die*, 226, 227.

In response and in conclusion to this example of present-day deceivers within the house of Christianity, Kenneth Boa articulates appropriate concern.

It is astonishing that a bishop of an orthodox Christian denomination endorses this interpretation of the Christian message. Judging from his writings, Bishop Spong believes virtually nothing that he professed to affirm when he was required to uphold the creeds of the early church as well as the Episcopal Church's quite orthodox confession. His beliefs are far, far closer to those of Buddhism or even secular humanism than to Christianity. So what is he doing in the church? And this question can be asked of thousands of ministers and professors in most of the mainline denominations today.²³

I need to include Boa's final word in his conclusion to this section of his book, but separate from the above for emphasis' sake.

Again, those who wish to reject Christian beliefs have the freedom to do so. But they ought to be honest enough to admit that they are not Christians.²⁴

Rev. Mary and New Thoughts at the Living Enrichment Center

The second example addresses the Living Enrichment Center, mentioned above. Before citing specific examples as to how this *ministry* serves as another example of present-day deception, it's worthwhile to describe the environment in which this ministry operates. The Living Enrichment Center (LEC) is located in Wilsonville, Oregon. The landscape is rural/country and the campus is well maintained. The main complex is huge. The sanctuary includes an earthy décor with cloth banners of nature in well-matched, earth-tone colors. It's actually very serene, well suited for the tired, busy middle-class, the group present in majority. The one

²³ Boa, 128.

²⁴ Ibid.

serving in the role of pastor is Rev. Mary Manin Morrissey, a woman of many gifts and talents. She plays a crucial role in the setting of the tone for this community.

One fall Sunday morning, I decided to attend the worship service. The worship songs included “Alleluia,” “I Am Free; I Am Forgiven” among others, while other tunes have also served to create the deceptive environment (e.g., “Jesus is OK with Me,” a song emphasizing the human Jesus who served as one of many avatars as a result of allowing the christ-spirit to indwell him). While the Sacrament was a smoke ceremony tied to Indian traditions (as opposed to the Eucharist), it was the sermon that bothered me the most. The title of her message was “Consenting to a Higher Power.” Without using the biblical text, Mary shared Paul’s story—portions thereof, anyway—of the Acts 16 account of the Philippian jailer. “Miracles were happening,” the story was told. God was moving. Only one odd thing: Mary completely neglected the real highlight of the story. While many truths of this account were shared, the main focus of the event was excluded: Jesus Christ. (“Christ” was mentioned once in the message, but *it* was not defined as the Word of God defines Him.) The “What must I do to be saved?” portion of the story was also left out. Instead, after telling about the earthquake and the chains falling off Paul and Silas, Mary went on to appeal to the Christ Consciousness, the Divine Power within each one of us so as to take us further in our evolutionary process. I couldn’t believe the degree of deception I was experiencing. “Why wasn’t the audience questioning the accuracy of the message?” I thought to myself, until I remembered II Timothy 4:3,4.

There exist other examples within this New Thought church. The book store is a clear expression of an ecumenical stance. This eclectic position is not simply

ecumenical within the scope of Christianity, but is all-inclusive, embracing all religions as possible paths one might take to find *God*, however that term is defined. This *ministry* was also a major sponsor of the Dalai Lama's coming to Portland in May of 2001. They are now seeking to build a Peace Temple in the city whereby all faiths and religious practices can co-exist in harmony. For more details about the ministry of this mouthpiece of deception, visit their web site at www.lec.org.

The Creation Spirituality of Matthew Fox

Matthew Fox is another influential prophetic voice further popularizing similar deception in the context of christological heresy. As I walked up the stairs of the University of Creation Spirituality campus building in Oakland, California in 1997, I was taken back by the kindness-of-a-different-kind hospitality. Those who I talked with were soft-spoken, respectful and helpful in answering my questions. To this day I continue receiving their material. Yet, the foundation there was/is not good. The day of my visit, Matthew Fox was away on one of his many speaking tours. Instead of a personal encounter, I was introduced to one of his influential works that was being highlighted that day.

The Coming of the Cosmic Christ (1988) has received much review and continues to be a major influence in alternative spirituality centers. In this work, biblical Christology is once again set aside for the christology of antichrist – we need to call things as they are if we have biblical authority to do so. Here is a brief sampling of the definition of “Christ” contained in this widely circulated text.

“... the theology of the Cosmic Christ—ignored for centuries—must be reconsidered seriously today.” (pg. 6) “Christianity has been out of touch with its ‘core,’ its center, its sense of mystical practice and cosmic awareness.” (pg. 7) “This Cosmic Christ will lead the way to a ... deep worship; deep ecumenism and interaction among all religions of the planet.” (pg. 8) “Divinity is not outside us. We are in God and God in us.” (pg. 50) “Indeed, the birthing of the Cosmic Christ is the purpose of the incarnation ... Divinity wants to birth the Cosmic Christ in each and every individual.” (pg. 122) “The Cosmic Christ is the *divine* pattern that connects in the person of Jesus Christ (but by no means is limited to that person).” (pg. 135) “There is a real sense in which the Cosmic Christ is not born yet. Even in Jesus the Cosmic Christ has yet to come to full Birth, for those who say they believe in Jesus have scarcely brought forth the Cosmic Christ at all on the mass scale that Mother Earth requires.” (pg. 136) “Divinity is found in all creatures. The divine name from Exod. 3:14, ‘I Am Who I Am,’ is appropriated by Jesus who shows us how to embrace our own divinity. The Cosmic Christ is the ‘I am’ in every creature.” (pg. 154) “The coming together of the historical Jesus and the Cosmic Christ will make Christianity whole at last.”²⁵

If Matthew Fox was a closet, not-listened-to voice, these words do not carry much influence. But they do in that he affects thousands through his Creation Spirituality. While Erwin Lutzer’s comment below in *Christ Among Other gods* applies to the New Age movement in general, it is pertinent to the deception Fox offers his followers.

The New Age movement has taken the Christ of the New Testament and sculptured Him (with verbal hammer and chisel) into a completely new image which is to their liking. This new sculpture is able to sit on the same display shelf with the sculptures of Buddha, Kristna, and other holy men. The tools used to remake Christ into this image are 1) discovering the ‘hidden writings’ that purport to contain the long-lost truths of the cosmic Christ; 2) transferring primary allegiance from Scriptural revelations to new revelations received through channelers and other psychisc; & 3) developing an esoteric system of interpreting the Bible that enables the reader to seek hidden meanings so Jesus can be made to appear as a New Age evangelist.”²⁶

25 Matthew Fox, *The Coming of the Cosmic Christ* (New York: Harper, 1988), 7.

26 Erwin Lutzer, *Christ Among Other gods* (Chicago: Moody, 1994), 116.

Concluding Remarks

Error is often mixed with truth. It is the mixing of the two that has contributed to major deceptions through the ages. While all the positions above have some degree of truth contained therein, it's important to ask the big-picture question—What is the holistic message that is being offered? We need to consider the whole package because it comes together. How does it fare in light of the general theme of deception and in light of the specific examples highlighted in Scripture? All of the examples above actually serve to fulfill prophetic warning about certain end-time deceptions. While they are clearly labeled heretical by the Christian community (that rests on the authority of Scripture) due to erroneous views on essential faith tenets, many other examples could be cited which propagate themes that could easily be adjusted to bring in deviant, (eternal) life-threatening doctrines. So again, how is one able to discern the veracity of these many *isms*? The next chapter takes us back to our authoritative canon or measuring stick for today whereby we, like those who have endured before us, have clear criteria.

CHAPTER 6

BIBLICAL MANDATES

A simple stating of pertinent eschatological passages that include the theme of deception was offered in chapter one. Before a personal theology on deception is presented in the next section, what could be called a biblical theology is appropriate. This chapter is an attempt to bring a brief theology of deception using the passages in chapter one. This is not a complete development, for many other passages addressing deception could be appealed to. The emphasis at hand is an eschatological address—thus, an end-time theology on this crucial theme follows.

A development of the little horn is found in Daniel 7:8, 20-25. Many end-time authors believe the little horn to be the Antichrist, especially given the context in which these verses are found—they are addressing the end of days. Note what Douglass Moo writes concerning Paul's insight about the rapture of the church:

He does so [he calms them] by citing events that *must* occur *before* that Day comes. According to the apostle, there are two of these: the αποστάσια and the revelation of 'the man of lawlessness, ... the man doomed to destruction' (v. 3). The latter is probably to be identified as the eschatological Antichrist, described also in Mark 13:14 and parallels and in Revelation

13:1-8—all these descriptions depend on the characterizations of this figure in Daniel 7:8, 20-25; 11:36-39.²⁷

The context of this chapter includes the little horn and that he is clearly set in the final earthly rule—symbolically articulated by the fourth beast. Following this, verses 9, 10 and 26, 27 point to the eternal rule of God (See also Dan. 2:34,35,44, 45).

I watched as thrones were put in place and the Ancient One sat down to judge. His clothing was as white as snow, his hair like whitest wool. He sat on a fiery throne with wheels of blazing fire, and a river of fire flowed from his presence. Millions of angels ministered to him, and a hundred million stood to attend him. Then the court began its session, and the books were opened. ... But then the court will pass judgment, and all his [the rebellious king's] power will be taken away and completely destroyed. Then the sovereignty, power, and greatness of all the kingdoms under heaven will be given to the holy people of the Most High. They will rule forever, and all rulers will serve and obey them.

(Daniel 7:9,10,26,27; NLT)

All the above has been done to show context. If this little horn is the same individual of Daniel 8:23ff, deception is one clear quality associated with his rule.

At the end of their rule, when their sin is at its height, a fierce king, a master of intrigue, will rise to power. He will become very strong, but not by his own power. He will cause a shocking amount of destruction and succeed in everything he does. He will destroy powerful leaders and devastate the holy people. He will be a master of deception, defeating many by catching them off guard. Without warning he will destroy them. He will even take on the Prince of princes in battle, but he will be broken, though not by human power.

(Daniel 8:23-25; NLT)

It's important to know our enemy. R.C. Sproul says of Erwin Lutzer's book, *The Serpent of Paradise*, "I found this book a veritable treasury of Biblical insight ...

²⁷ Douglas Moo, *The Rapture: Pre-, Mid-, or Post-Tribulational?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 188.

it is positively brilliant. It is the best treatment of the person and work of the enemy I have ever read.” (comment on back cover) How does this relate to deception? One of Satan’s leading titles is *the father of lies*. Deceit is one of his major character qualities. While the little horn is to be distinguished from the dragon (Revelation 12, 13), these two are allies toward the end of deceiving the entire world. Daniel 11:23 is also tied to verse 27 where the two kings who lie to each other (at the table) is found. The figure of this chapter is one of deceit. The breaking of the covenant, later in this chapter, also speaks to this one’s lack of integrity. He is not trustworthy.

In addition to the Daniel passages, many New Testament texts also highlight the presence of deception in the days prior to the second coming of Jesus Christ. The reason why the preceding chapter so focuses on christological concerns is directly tied to the many passages where this very theme is raised as one major issue of deception. Jesus, too, makes this clear. Many false christs, deceptive claims, are forewarned—and it’s not only the first example that follows “see to it that no one deceives you.” Many other similar warnings are also given. The deception will be so bad, Scripture says, that even the elect, if possible, are threatened. If the signs and miracles are so great that even the elect are in danger, a problem of great proportion surely exists.

But it’s not only in signs and wonders. It also includes deceptive claims (Matthew 24:5). And if John 16:1-4 includes people of the end, the influence of the deceivers will be such that persecution against God’s people is extended while at the very time the same (those who are deceived and who go on to persecute God’s people) believe to be doing God’s very work. The degree of deception here is almost beyond comprehension, but that’s how great it gets.

I Thessalonians 5, while not using the term deception, also demonstrates, in another context, a state or degree of deception. Here, while *they* are in the midst of saying, “peace and safety,” sudden destruction will come on them. This is describing a deceived state. Paul exhorts the believers, on the other hand (“But you, brethren...”) to be discerning so as to avoid falling prey to the false perspective.

One of the major concerns of II Thessalonians 2 is deception. “Don’t let anyone deceive you,” Paul writes in the context of describing what must take place before the return of Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him. But he doesn’t stop there.

And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming. The coming of the *lawless one* is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

(II Thessalonians 2:8-12; NKJV)

Once again, deception is a main concern in the days prior to Christ’s return.

What is it that is included in the process of falling away, according to I Timothy 4? Deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, the Word of God says. Here again, duplicity through instruction is one key part of the lie. In II Timothy, Paul appeals for a clear response to those who live the character qualities of the last days and who also do not put up with sound doctrine but, who rather, embrace myth. After describing these, he writes, “Have nothing to do with them.”

When Peter writes his final letter, false prophets once again warrant attention. Why is this? Why does the Word of God constantly address this theme? Because it is a divine fact, a fact in God's omniscience graciously extended (revealed) to those who would receive it for, in part, the purpose of discerning the times. He does not want His people deceived. As a result, God has seen to it that the closing books of His complete revelation to us make strong exhortation toward this very end of emphasizing the crucial mandate to be in His truth. Included in the exposure to this truth are many clear warnings about falsities that have eternal significance.

John, in his first two letters, could not be clearer concerning, for example, the *teaching* of Christ. This appeal is not calling for the obedience of Christ's teachings (he does that elsewhere), but on the correct view of Jesus Christ. Those who hold to the correct teaching, have God. Those who do not embrace the truth about who this Jesus is (Jesus = Christ; Jesus Christ has come in the flesh), do not have God. Teaching to the contrary is directly tied to the spirit of antichrist. This includes deception.

The Book of Revelation brings the conclusion to the revelation of God. Concluding this first section, it is a fair appeal to be in the Word so as to be exposed to God's truths that expose darkness. May we continue to be people of the Book. The Word of God constantly calls us to be in the Scriptures. It does so because of the power the Word of God holds to transform, enlighten and save. Perhaps it's why opposition to the basic disciplines of walk with God is often so successful. The opposition knows this and, through the world, the flesh and the devil, does everything possible to thwart this essential mandate from God most High.

SECTION II

IN RESPONSE – A PERSONAL THEOLOGY

In the previous section, biblical, historical and contemporary theologies on the theme of deception were offered. In this next section, my own personal theology is developed. While this particular end-time view is shared by many due to its clear articulation in the Word, it is also a personal conviction. Jeremiah's *fire in the bones* comes to mind. But in order to avoid certain extreme (fallacious) applications of subjectivism to biblically revealed objective truth, the following clarification is important.

There are elements of profound significance in Karl Barth's writings—elements even more wonderfully addressed and developed in the Word! For example, the Word of God must become existentially true to the individual (subjectively true) before much avail. But the Word of God is just that, the Word of God, even before it is personally received and applied. The Word of God does not become such only when a personal acknowledgement as such is made. Yes, it becomes personally real to an individual when passionate reception is granted, but it is still the *forever-settled-in-heaven* Word of God prior to its existential reception. It stands as truth on its own, whether or not one chooses to accept it.

The truth of the Word is true in and of itself. An illustration is appropriate at this juncture. A human observer is not a requirement for a tree to actually fall in the forest. Let me be clear: We do not need a human observer to witness the falling of a tree before it can be acknowledged as having happened. The event of a falling tree is fact whether or not there was a witness present. This sounds petty on the surface, but this is an important truism yet contested by a popular paradigm summarized by *seeing is believing*. On the other hand, if individuals do not actually experience personally, for themselves, the event, certain things are lost. In this, the one missing the event misses the personal experience. But making the full circle, existential encounter does not affect the reality of, in the case of this illustration, the falling tree.

It is extremely important that one embraces biblical balance at this trailhead. The theme of deception will be revisited shortly, but first, another appropriate illustration. “God said it; I believe it; that settles it.” Yes, but there’s so *much more* to it than that. It’s the taking out of limited opinion—“I believe it”—that brings the greater. In seeking to be clear on this neglected concept, “God said it; that settles it” is actually a statement endowed with greater certainty because limited humanity is taken out of the equation. God’s Word is true whether or not one chooses to believe it. In that it is *much more* relates to the taking of the authoritative judgment out of humanity’s hands and rightly yielding to the Sovereign LORD, which is actually much more indeed!

In the proper balance (as God defines balance) of all elements or pieces to the puzzle, one’s experience is affirmed but reality outside of one’s limited, subjective box is also affirmed. As a result, elements of personal theology are correctly

recognized as legitimate, but in proper perspective. This in no way underestimates the crucial role *commitment* has in moving the adherent forward in action. A local display at the Seventh-Day Adventist Church in Sandy, Oregon recently read, “You don’t really believe it ...” on one side of the billboard. On the other side it went on to read, “... if you don’t live it.” Passionate belief takes one much further down the road of application than an apathetic one. And it’s for this reason that this personal theology is included in this dissertation. Tied to this matter is the steward’s giving of account to the Master. Lord, because I believe, I move in particular fashion. One final concern in this introduction to section two is worthy of mention.

Members of the household of Faith are individually accountable to their Lord. While God judges believing and disbelieving communities, it is the individual who is judged separately both during the time one lives on the earth and on the day of accounting before the Bema Seat of Christ (Ecc. 12:14; II Cor. 5:10). While one is to speak out if sin is occurring in the camp, one is not accountable for the good deeds or misdeeds of fellow members of the kingdom of God. While their actions have effect due to God’s response to His people while still present on earth, individual judgment remains. It’s a *both/and* thing, but the eternal reckoning emphasizes individual giving of account. Why do I labor on this issue?

As a result of individual accountability, I am personally accountable to God for my life-actions. In response, I take very seriously (as I believe all God’s people should) the simple 1 + 1 equation developed in the first section—Scripture clearly speaks to eschatological deception prior to the return of Jesus Christ (1) + Recent past and present deception (1) = Response: a plan of action (2). But first, a personal

theology that integrates major branches of theology into my personal position is worthy of prior consideration. It is articulated in this work because the audience for which this dissertation is especially written is the Executive Board of Directors of Endurance Ministries, Inc. As field director of this ministry to which they are tied, they need to know the firm conviction of their ministry director who leads ministry efforts on Endurance Ministries' behalf.

Therefore, before a plan is presented whereby these biblically defined contemporary problems can be addressed, a personal theology is added. There must be truth and action, but action is often brought as a result of the degree of passion one has for the truth. While the truth stands on its own, it must be believed if it is to be appropriated and acted upon (see introductory comments). This next section develops all three (orthodoxy, orthopathy, and orthopraxy) in a personal context that takes into consideration exegetical, biblical, systematic, historical, philosophical, cultural and practical theologies. Because this section is a personal theology, personal pronouns are used extensively in the next three chapters.

CHAPTER 7

THEOLOGICAL SPIRITUAL FORMATION – THE ORTHODOXY

“Spiritual Formation” is in vogue, at least for the next few years or so. While this pursuit of intimacy with God has existed long before this new title became popular (e.g., King Solomon ... *there is nothing new under the sun*), it is being considered today in a fresh way. As a result, many doors of opportunity are opening. But spiritual formation has a theological foundation—it does not exist in a vacuum. Before one *does* contemplative spiritual formation, one must have a belief upon which the passion and practice is based.

Chapter seven offers a personal systematic theology on one particular theme—one that proposes a chronology due to end-time events unfolding in the context of time. This bigger picture includes a greater degree of interpretation due to the many pieces that are being considered. In other words, it adds to biblical theology a synthesis or picture of the whole. So what are some explicit observations or principles that can be made toward the piecing together of the big picture? At the very outset, it must be acknowledged that chapters one and six are not exhaustive in scope—there are other major eschatological topics, not to mention and further develop, additional truths on the specific theme of deception.

Biblical formulation on the specific topic of deception was attempted in the first and sixth chapters. As clear through the preceding section, I apply these passages to a futurist position given the options available, but not the futurist position of the Dispensationalist. One clear example should suffice to bring further clarity. Dr. Thomas Ice, in *The Great Tribulation: Past or Future?* lists the four main possible positions concerning the fulfillment of biblical prophecy—Idealist, Preterist, Historicist, and Futurist positions. He goes on to say this of the “Futurist” position:

Futurists (future) usually believe that almost no prophetic events are occurring in the current church age, but will take place in the following future episodes: the Tribulation of seven years, the Second Coming, the 1,000-year millennium, and the eternal state. [According to his view, the church age ends at the Pre-Tribulational Rapture when the church is taken up and begins a different era in which God once again refocuses His attention on Israel]²⁸

Endurance Ministries holds a non-Dispensational (as Classical Dispensationalism goes) Futurist position. As one of the directors, I concur with this ministry’s statement of faith and also embrace the tenet that major eschatological details (communicated in clear eschatological contexts) are just that—details about the end-time just prior to the return of Jesus Christ. (See the glossary for an important definition of “The Second Coming of Jesus Christ”) While there are multiple interpretive viewpoints communicated in the illustration on the next page, one must decide which will be foundational to the ministry in which s/he (she or he) engages. The term “Futurist,” in this work, allows for the present unfolding of these signs. It is the viewpoint of this ministry that we are living in the days of the birth pains or

²⁸ Thomas Ice and Kenneth, 5.

CONTEMPORARY OPTIONS IN ESCHATOLOGY

(one of a few ways to consider the various end-time positions)

Amillennialism (generally)	Current era		Satan loosed & defeated		2nd Coming of JESUS CHRIST		Great White Throne Judgment		Eternity
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Key to understanding: A significant aspect of the position - No millennial (1,000-year) reign of Christ

Postmillennialism (generally)	Current era (Millennium)		2nd Coming of JESUS CHRIST		Satan loosed & defeated		Great White Throne Judgment		Eternity
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Key to understanding: A significant aspect of the position - The "millennial" reign of Christ PRECEEDS the event of His Second Coming (The millennial reign of Christ is figurative through His Church). Or, as described in the title of the position, the Second Coming of Jesus Christ takes place **AFTER** His 1,000-year reign.

Premillennialism (generally)	Current era		2nd Coming of JESUS CHRIST		Millennial Reign of Jesus Christ		Satan loosed & defeated		Great White Throne Judgment		Eternity
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Key to understanding: A significant aspect of the position - The millennial (1,000-year) reign of Christ FOLLOWS the event of His Second Coming. Or, as described in the title of the position, the Second Coming of Jesus Christ takes place **BEFORE** His 1,000-year reign.

Pretribulationism	Current day		RAPTURE		Anitchrist & Tribulation		2nd Coming of Jesus Christ		Millennium						
Midtribulationism	Current day		Antichrist & Tribulation		RAPTURE		Great Tribulation		2nd Coming of Jesus Christ		Millennium				
"Pre-Wrath"	Current day		Antichrist & Tribulation		Great Tribulation		RAPTURE		Trumpet Blasts & Bowls of Wrath		2nd Coming of Jesus Christ		Millennium		
Final Trumpet	Current day		Antichrist, Tribulation & Great Tribulation		Initial 2nd Coming appearing in the sky (6th Seal)		Trumpet Blasts		RAPTURE before the wrath of God is delivered		Bowls of Wrath upon the earth		2nd Coming of Jesus Christ		Millennium
Posttribulationism	Current day		Antichrist & Tribulation		Trumpet Blasts		Bowls of Wrath		2nd Coming of Jesus Christ & RAPTURE (Revelation 19)		Millennium				

beginning of sorrows (αρχὴ ὠδίνων) of Matthew 24:8. Unlike the Pre-Tribulation Rapture viewpoint, the rapture does not necessarily precede the unfolding of all that which takes place in Matthew 24:4-30 (cf. Lk. 21:28 and the context that immediately precedes it). In fact, the gathering event is said to take place immediately after the tribulation period.

“Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. Matthew 24:29-31 (NKJV; emphasis mine)

I have come to the position I have with good reason, but do not thoroughly defend the position here in this practical ministry project due to the readership for whom this ministry plan is intended. The Executive Board of Directors of Endurance Ministries already subscribes to the eschatological position foundational to Endurance Ministries’ action plans. Be that as it may, there is a need for providing some warrant for the Final-Trumpet position from which this ministry operates. What follows is believed to be a sufficient-for-this-dissertation justification for action—not absolute proof that can never be offered—but sufficient evidence showing this position to be a viable option. This will be an attempt to define “correct doctrine” within the more subjective context of a personal theology. Indeed, apart from the raw message (i.e., without human interaction with the biblical text), can a personal theology be attempted without the subjective element?

This call to action is directly tied to an eschatological position that allows the Word of God to say what it says. Appendix A and preceding concerns have already addressed this issue. In piecing together an early, rough, and by-no-means-finished view, I come to the following conclusions that have a profound influence upon how I respond in action. The doctrinal position is well titled: Final-Trumpet Rapture. It is believed that Mt. 24:31, I Cor. 15:51,52, I Thes. 4:13-18 and Revelation 11:15-19; 14:14-16 are all addressing the same event—the Rapture of the people of God in Jesus Christ. The following page highlights the relationship these passages (are believed to) share. As a result of the placement of this crucial event, God’s people will experience the deceptions, persecutions, rejection, etc. from a world which, at that time, will be committed to following the one seeking to further instate a one-world system. In this context, the many deception passages considered in chapters one and six will be applicable. The emphasis is not upon an eschatological chronology but upon themes in that particular setting. Due to the theme of deception’s direct link to a specific setting in current and future history, it is important that the context is clarified.

One of the major motivations behind this work is the conviction that the final generation before the return of Jesus Christ will be a cataclysmic one filled with great upheaval. This world in general will experience terrible times, but this topic is outside the parameters of this work. Nevertheless, during these times, the people of God in Christ Jesus are a major concern of this ministry. This ministry contends that those in Christ will not be raptured before the persecutions and deceptions. As a result, Endurance Ministries wishes to raise biblical discernment whereby cultural deceptions are exposed and rejected. Our position that followers of Jesus Christ will be present

Matthew 24:29-31

“Immediately after those horrible days end, the sun will be darkened, the moon will not give light, the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of heaven will be shaken.

And then at last, the sign of the coming of the Son of Man will appear in the heavens, and there will be deep mourning among all the nations of the earth. And they will see the Son of Man arrive on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

And he will send forth his angels with the sound of a mighty trumpet blast, and they will gather together his chosen ones from the farthest end of the earth and heaven.”

(NLT; emphasis mine)

I Cor. 15:51,52

“But let me tell you a wonderful secret God has revealed to us. Not all of us will die, but we will all be transformed.

It will happen in a moment, in the blinking of an eye, when the last trumpet is blown. For when the trumpet sounds, the Christians who have died will be raised with transformed bodies. And then we who are living will be transformed so that we will never die.”

(NLT; emphasis mine)

I Thes. 4:15-18

“I can tell you this directly from the Lord: We who are still living when the Lord returns will not rise to meet him ahead of those who are in their graves.

For the Lord himself will come down from heaven with a commanding shout, with the call of the archangel, and with the trumpet call of God.

First, all the Christians who have died will rise from their graves.

Then, together with them, we who are still alive and remain on the earth will be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air and remain with him forever.

So comfort and encourage each other with these words.”

(NLT; emphasis mine)

Revelation 11:15-18

“Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices shouting in heaven: ‘The whole world has now become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign forever and ever.’ And the twenty-four elders sitting on their thrones before God fell on their faces and worshiped him. And they said, ‘We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, the one who is and who always was, for now you have assumed you great power and have begun to reign.

The nations were angry with you, **but now the time of your wrath has come. It is time to judge the dead and reward your servants.** You will reward your prophets and your holy people, all who fear your name, from the least to the greatest. And you will destroy all who have caused destruction on the earth.”

(NLT; emphasis mine)

Revelation 14:14-16

“Then I saw the Son of Man sitting on a white cloud. He had a gold crown on his head and a sharp sickle in his hand.

Then an angel came from the Temple and called out in a loud voice to the one sitting on the cloud, ‘Use the sickle, for the time has come for you to harvest; the crop is ripe on the earth.’

So the one sitting on the cloud swung his sickle over the earth, and the whole earth was harvested.”

(NLT; emphasis mine)

during the tribulation time presupposes sufficient warrant for this belief affecting life-action.

A dialogue with the director of the Pre-Tribulation Research Center will serve to show support for the position (correct doctrine) that prompts ministry action. A few years ago when I was first considering this ministry seriously, I decided to write a few leading figures in the end-time arena. Dr. Thomas Ice was the only one to respond. To make a long story short, Dr. Ice and I exchanged three letters. In my initial contact, I simply asked for one Scripture passage in clear support, not for the Rapture, but for the Pre-Tribulational timing of the rapture event. He responded he could not offer one, but then went on to make the claim that I could not offer one either. This prompted my third letter that included three passages in support of the Final-Trumpet position. To this letter, I never received response. Because a statement of this magnitude bears consequence and in fairness to the full context of the exchange, a full quote of the written correspondence is included in Appendix C. I include this not for polemic reasons but to sincerely demonstrate clear support for the position—even to the extent of labeling it in my personal theology as “correct doctrine.”²⁹

In fairness to Dr. Ice and many others, Pre-Tribulational advocates have what they feel to be theological justification as to why Matthew 24 and Revelation 11 and 14 do not apply to the church. But these are theological traditions based upon a certain view of biblical interpretation. In the case of the timing of the rapture, this view, due to lack of clear objective passages, is implicit; explicit is the position of Final-Trumpet Rapture because that is what the Scriptures explicitly teach. I

²⁹ Please receive the genuine intent of this inclusion and be faithful in conveying the message if you choose to use the material in this third appendix.

understand this does not “prove” the Final-Trumpet position. There are other positions—like the Pre-Wrath and Preterist positions—that are also growing in popularity today. But here’s my point: clear warrant for this position exists. The diagram on the next page demonstrates how some of the major passages fit together.

The above is only a statement of the position. What is much more clear, and what is the emphasis of this project, are the many passages that teach the very premise of this work: before the Second Coming of Jesus Christ many deceptions will flourish. Chapters one and six served to establish this clear point. The focus of this paper is not to further justify the Final Trumpet position but to go back to the theme of present-day deceptions.

Given all the above, it is clearly possible that the rapture of those in Christ Jesus will not occur until the final trumpet (I Cor. 15:51,52; Rev. 11;14). It is also clearly possible that the gathering of God’s people occurs after the tribulation period (Matthew 24:29-31)—a period of time filled with great deception. After the declared theme is articulated in verse one of I Thess. 2, Paul goes on to cite two things that must occur before “the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him.” Note the context here and that which Paul is addressing. He links these two together but goes on to say two things will precede this *day*.

Deceptions will be rampant in the days before our Lord Jesus’ return. Again, chapters one and six bring sufficient support for this fundamental-to-this-dissertation tenet. It’s also clear through the examples of chapters two through five that both recent history and current culture are embracing and propagating some of the very

deceptions the Bible forewarns. Our position is sound with more than sufficient grounds to move forward in active ministry.

While a full defense of this chronology is not in the scope of this practical paper, it is with strong support. That it is a currently viable and completely valid position is not in question. If this position had no warrant, this project should stop here, but such is not the case. In light of the chronology on page 72 and as a result of the motif of deception in the days before Christ's return and its very presence in our contemporary experience, it is appropriate to sound the trumpet of concern at this time. As a result of the evidence offered in Section I, including both biblical and current cultural affairs and because there does not exist clear and undisputed grounds for rejecting this position (it is one of many viable options as one interprets the Scriptures), there is just grounds for moving forward from this sound foundation of correct doctrine to practical ministry.

The foundation is set with strong biblical, recent historical and contemporary justification. This doctrinal emphasis is prerequisite to action, but action without broad grounds may be harmful, counterproductive action. The position of this ministry and that which fosters action is tied to a basic, well-supported starting-point presupposition: warnings about harmful deceptions are applicable today. As clearly evidenced in preceding chapters, many false christs, teachers and prophets are vying for position. In the context of a global setting, these movements are significant. The Word of God is that faith-based authority which drives this ministry. For a further articulation of philosophical concerns and influential presuppositions that are crucial to this end-time position (crucial in forming any position on any topic under the sun,

for that matter), see Appendix A titled “Issues of Philosophical Theology.” While philosophical and interpretive “assumptions” are confessed, they are well founded.

But creedal “belief” is only one part of the understanding of belief. The next chapter ventures into right passion concerning correct doctrine. This is an absolute necessity if a personal theology is to include conviction that really matters.

CHAPTER 8

PASSIONATE SPIRITUAL FORMATION – THE ORTHOPATHY

It is stated that George Fox (1624 – 1691), an English religious leader and founder of the Society of Friends, contributed to the popularizing of the term “quake” in his admonition to *quake* at the Word of the Lord. Eventually, “Quaker” became a popular name for members of the Society of Friends. In this term I find a striking description of the zeal that drove Fox, similar to Jeremiah’s fine-in-the-bones passion. “Quake: to tremble or shake; to shudder or shiver.”

“Belief” is a big, loaded word. It is interesting that within its definition, both orthodoxy (creed or doctrine) and orthopathy (emotional conviction) is conveyed. Webster defines the term in this manner: “1. the state of believing; conviction or acceptance that certain things are true or real 2. faith, esp. religious faith 3. trust or confidence 4. anything believed or accepted as true; esp., a creed, doctrine, or tenet 5. an opinion; expectation; judgment” Wow, there are many issues packed into this little word. In addition to the idea of correct doctrine, belief also relates to how passionate one is toward the creed embraced. “Trust,” “conviction,” and “confidence” all relate to this aspect of the word. One can *know* a doctrine without really holding to a

conviction that it is true, but this is incomplete. Very little action occurs if one does not have conviction-belief with creedal belief. This is why passion is so crucial.

In similar fire-in-the-bones emotion, as a result of the clear Word of the Lord, I am driven passionately forward in this ministry. Someone has got to be a present watchman who sounds the trumpet and heralds the warning of these deceptions, thus exposing the eternally consequential deceit. What, in part, has contributed to the passion?

Modernity downplayed the role of individual experience. Today, a more balanced perspective allows for the inclusion of testimony as a result of Postmodern correctives. This being so, coupled with the permission to use anecdotal evidence if relevant to the issue at hand and the influence past process has upon one's personal theological perspective, the following is a brief biographical in relationship to this theme of deception.

The Raising of Passion—An Anecdote of Significance

In the early 1970's, we drove all the way to Reno, Nevada to hear it stated over and over again: "JESUS IS COMING!" Dave Wilkerson, author of *The Cross and the Switchblade*, shouted. I was about thirteen at the time. It was this event that started an interest in biblical prophecy. In 1979 I grew further interested in end times as a result of Pastor Lee Toms, at the time, senior pastor of Arcade Baptist Church in Sacramento, California. While he didn't preach on the prophetic topic often, his love for the Word of God established my personal plumb line of criteria whereby things were measured, including prophetic time lines. It is this devotion to biblical revelation that has gotten me into trouble over the years.

In 1981 – 1985, my wife and I were in San Jose attending Pacific International College. Philosophy, Christology and Eschatology were my favorite classes. It was during this time that I was exposed to Millard Erickson's *Contemporary Options in Eschatology*. To this day, Erickson holds influence. I remember writing a paper that did not favor the Pre-Tribulational Rapture position and was rather surprised by the emotional response I received from the instructor. This served to further increase my interest in this topic of end-time scenarios.

In 1985 – 1990 I attended seminary at Western Seminary and assembled my doctrinal statement in preparation for ordination. To my disappointment, the ordination council never touched upon the theme of end times. I was anticipating some good interaction. Instead, a couple contemporary “hot buttons” were raised, prompting questions that were currently being discussed in the theological community. I was ready to state and defend my position, but the opportunity never presented itself.

It was also a joy to serve under Pastor Rich Hagenbaugh at Gateway Baptist Church during this time. When being interviewed for the youth director position, the elders asked if I knew of anything that would disqualify me from serving in that capacity. I responded, due to the constitution of the church, that the pastoral staff was to agree whole-heartedly with the doctrinal statement (which was Pre-Tribulational in eschatological perspective), and that I favored a non-Pre-Tribulational position. I was also hoping for an opportunity to share more in this context, but time did not permit. The board appreciated my honesty and said that pastoral staff meetings and the course work at Western Seminary would cure me. To this we laughed and moved ahead with the call.

I was also taken back by cultural events and movements during this time. Major indicators in the New Age movement and through the media in general seemed like early signs that further contributed to the shaping of society in such a way as to prepare for the fulfilling of very specific prophecies that were to take place before the return of Jesus Christ. I also noted a continued shift in perspective concerning biblical Christianity. The world was growing less tolerant of the truth claims while at the same time boasting a tolerant attitude toward all faiths and practices. (Even as I write this paragraph, major discrimination against basic Christian ministry continues to present itself at one of the local colleges where I serve.) This brings me to the next chapter in ministry service.

In 1990 I was appointed for collegiate ministry with a mission that is now called Mission to the Americas. In this setting I have enjoyed being in a cutting-edge context. “The philosophy of one generation is the cultural norm of the next”—fortune cookie wisdom. Once again, there were so many indicators hinting to end-time predictions that I began praying about ministry in the context of end times. With the passing of my wife to cancer in 1996, I began writing on end-time themes. After having lost financial support for the campus ministry due to my eschatological heresy (as some sincerely viewed it), I began seeking ways to minister that would not immediately bring rejection as a result of a strong theological tradition. The Lord used this to spark my observation of major biblical passages that emphasized themes in context of end-time events. As I studied, I also observed culture. I was amazed at what I was seeing—further current-day expression of exactly what the Scriptures forewarned would take place prior to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

Perhaps I could simply minister through contemporary themes that fulfilled some of the major prophetic signs. Deception, among other topics, was frequently mentioned in many major prophetic passages and was (and continues to be) a current cultural affair. It was about this time that I met Sean and Kendra, two New Age students. It's advantageous to tell their story.

Kendra was born in Cuba, smuggled out in a crop duster that crashed in the Florida Everglades. For many years, Kendra had lived in the Northwest. About seven years ago she started attending Mt. Hood Community College. It's here where I entered the picture. One day during the Fall '94 Term, just prior to the beginning of the Spanish class we were both taking, I overheard Kendra preaching about how she used many religions in order to help her along in her spiritual journey. From the Catholicism and Baptistic roots of her parents to various forms of Buddhism, from New Age spirituality to, well, I saw her again just last month, but couldn't tell you what she is dabbling in today. Back in 1994, though, Kendra had come to the place in her life where she was her own spiritual guide, looking within for answers and strength through this pilgrimage of life.

The next week she *just happened* to pass by our literature table. As she passed, I said hello and told her that I was a fellow student in her Spanish class. That was sufficient to get her to stop and look over our materials. She chuckled as one of our booklets, *The New Age Movement*, caught her eye. "What's this?" she said with a smile. That was the beginning of a major cultural lesson for me. Referring back to her message in class that past week, our conversation quickly landed on the very common idea that all paths lead to the Ultimate Reality or God. "Jesus, taught," I

responded, “that He was the way, the truth, and the life and that no one comes to the Father except through Him.” I’ll never forget her creative counter. “The problem with you is that you’re interpreting it incorrectly.” She went on to share the following illustration. There was an auto accident. When the police recorded the testimonies of those who had witnessed the accident, they found the reports were different.

“**Everyone**,” she went on to say, “has a **different perception!**” You see, Kendra believed that it’s this different perspective thing that needs to be applied to the whole of life. Different perspectives concerning the auto accident; different perspectives concerning reality in general—including the way one looks at John 14:6.

In response to her illustration and truth claim, I said, “That’s right, but while there were indeed different reports from those who had witnessed the accident, it’s important not to forget that **the accident happened in the first place. It was a real event!**” Her response was typical of the mental processing of many today. “That’s beside the point!” she said. “No!” I responded, “that’s a major part of the point, for the witness reports would not have been submitted had the accident not occurred!” She disagreed. As she walked away, she said, “I guess we’ll just have to see in the end, won’t we?” That’s what she said. But *the end* according to her worldview simply cycles into another beginning—reincarnation.

Our second meeting took a different twist whereby I sought to avoid our different worldview perspectives and simply build the relationship. Through a number of kind acts that I’ll not take time to articulate here, our friendship grew. The next term I exposed Kendra to the following dialogue between two Greek philosophers that Plato penned quite some time ago and recorded in *Ideas* (pg. 28; Sahakian and

Sahakian). Sean, Kendra's boy friend had entered into our ongoing conversations by this time and was especially interested in the ideas that were being considered.

Protagoras: Truth is relative, it is only a matter of your opinion!

Socrates: You mean that truth is mere subjective opinion?

Protagoras: Exactly! What's true for you is true for you, and what's true for me is true for me. Truth is subjective.

Socrates: Do you really mean that? That my opinion is true by virtue of its being my opinion?

Protagoras: Indeed I do!

Socrates: My opinion is: Truth is absolute, not opinion, and that you Mr. Protagoras, are absolutely in error! Since this is my opinion, then you must grant that it is true according to your philosophy!

Protagoras: You are quite correct, Socrates

"Well," I asked her the next time I saw her, "what did you think?" "It was interesting," she responded. "A N D ??" I asked, hoping for a little more by way of response. "It was interesting, but I DISAGREE!" she said. She didn't even catch the very point of the dialogue—to show her her inconsistency, namely, that she believes in everyone not only having a right to his or her opinion, but that every opinion is equally true **while at the same time telling me that she did not think that the point of the philosophical discussion was right**, which again contradicts her very approach to life. She didn't discern she was repeating the very mistake of Protagoras. Deception at work? Possibly. The next meeting I gave her a quote from Dr. Ravi Zacharias' book, *Can Man Live Without God?*, which addressed the same issue from a different vantage point. To my knowledge, Kendra has not discerned her error, even to this

day. I visited with Sean two years after this event and was saddened by his state of confusion. He had given me a book to read (during my contacts with Kendra) titled *Awakening to Zero Point: The Collective Initiation* by Gregg Braden. Sean was so confused as a result of all the channeled revelation that he had received (that he was telling me about during our visit) that I have a very difficult time even following what he was trying to say. Upon reflecting on that discussion, deception and the fruits thereof were surely a part of Sean's state of mind that day.

In 1998, epistemological shifts were of such major concern that I was forced to spend a great amount of time on this fundamental issue. Culture had further rejected biblical authority in favor of a radical individual subjectivism across the life-category board. Contending worldviews were highlighted in the context of pluralism. As a result, the *truth foundations* theme underwent major development. To hear reports of faculty telling students that one's opinions were placed at a higher priority than truth due to our state of uncertainty was quite the surprise. "Another form of deception?" I asked myself mentally. It was as a result of discussions with students, faculty and church leaders that further confirmed the importance of this matter that drove me to biblical studies on truth and related concerns.

I would say 1999 was a pivotal year for me. Three events had profound impact. God used interaction with Reed College students and a local philosophy instructor—all skeptics of the faith—to open my eyes to many things. The degree of deception was increasing. The following passages came to mind.

Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a

message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. Let no one in any way deceive you, for *it will not come* unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposed and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God. Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things? And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he will be revealed. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains *will do so* until he is taken out of the way. Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearing of His coming; *that is*, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false, in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.

II Thes. 2:5-12 (NASB-ue)

(I understand that we have yet to see the revealing of this individual whereby the deception will be even greater. But early signs of this deception are clear in light of our biblical standard or canon.)

But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons ...

I Tim. 4:1 (NASB-ue)

Although the revealing of the man of lawlessness has not yet occurred, expressions of deceit are everywhere today, as is the spirit of antichrist.

The second experience of 1999 took place at the Vedanta Society building on Taylor and 55th in Portland, Oregon. I was taking a religions class at Western Seminary and visited one of the society's mid-week events. The converted estate served as the setting for the scripture reading (by a man demonstrating high reverence and keen interest in what he was reading) and commentary from the Swami who entered in when he felt led to do so. The reading was from *The Gospel of Sri*

Ramakristna, a work less than two hundred years old from an enlightened one who was honored at one of the early global strategy meetings in the late 1800's. The commentary often used biblical truths (e.g., the Father figure of God as an example of God's personal nature combined with the paradox of the non-personality of God through God's transcendence) to promote the idea of common themes in all religious perspectives. Knowing Hinduism as I do, *deception* once again came to mind. Yet, some of those who were attending (about fourteen that evening) were captivated by the setting and were caught up in their meditative state. The experience was indeed a *blessing* for them. II Timothy 4:3-5 came to mind.

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but *wanting* to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desire, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths. But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. (NASB-ue)

The final informal education concerning the theme of deception came as a result of attending a friend's graduation from Landmark Forum, a group emphasizing self-help training that is thriving in major cities throughout the world. In a well-decorated conference room at the Double Tree Hotel at Lloyd Center in Portland, Oregon, the commencement put to use quality handouts and a variety of presentation styles to promote the principles advocated. (As I've researched it, Landmark Forum is a spin-off of EST, an older self-help cult of fourteen years ago. EST "sold" the technology to Landmark Forum.)

The participants of this graduation ceremony were professionals for the most part. Although being honored as a graduate of the first seminar, my friend became quite bothered when pressure was exerted to sign up for the advanced seminar while at

the same time seeking to persuade me (his guest who had come simply to witness his graduation, not to receive a sale's pitch) to take advantage of the first seminar.

Testimonies also spoke of how beneficial the advanced course was—contributing to the increase in salary of one who said with excitement, “This more than paid for the advanced seminar.” My friend was becoming even more suspicious. The straw that broke this camel's back occurred when the speaker (who was presenting Landmark Forum's main secret) said our answer was found in our vast ignorance. In this state of mind, she said, we find solutions to our many problems. The solution: accept our ignorance and many current pressures will dissipate. I remember thinking how there can be great deception in partial truth. Because this was a self-help appeal, I wonder how many discerned how the very appeal implodes upon the one relying upon limited help to bring solution. Through these eye-opening experiences, I grew to believe that if I found the right program, further education would be helpful.

Having been accepted into the George Fox Evangelical Seminary Doctor of Ministry program, I began employing the education toward many aspects of ministry. This program actually played a key part in establishing Endurance Ministries as a formal, incorporated ministry. Through much practical instruction, the Lord used the program to not only see Articles of Incorporation filed in 2000, but eventually played an influential part in seeing us through the early stages of organization, culminating with the first official organizational meeting in December of 2000. Months thereafter, the non-profit status was provisionally granted. But the program did not simply aid in the incorporation process. What is much more significant was the material that contributed to the organization in preparation for ministry. This dissertation, for

example, will serve as an early draft for a ministry plan for the next decade (Section III).

There are many other encounters that have contributed to the discerning of deception and passion for ministry in this context. Through them all, the Word of God has made the greatest difference in my life in that it has provided a basis or criteria whereby deception is measured. Knowing and accepting God's truths have allowed gracious insight that has brought about a tremendous passion for this service. In this context, passion is abundant. Through the growing disinterest in things of the biblical God and our culture's rejection of the things of God; through the church's diminishing passion (in many contexts, anyway—not all) for walking with or abiding in God; through the world's growing hunger for spiritual things; and through the myriad of signs (and those only from my puny vantage point), it is a day with great need. By the grace of God, I confess a *quaking* such that I cannot remain idle any longer. What can be done?

Emotionalism or eschatological sensationalism is a potential problem in any setting if excess begins to cloud objective biblical truths. But when those truths are maintained and passionately believed whereby belief prompts action (James 2:14-26), watch out, that's a match made in heaven.

I accept the doctrine that great deceptions will occur before the coming of Jesus Christ. Actually, I would die for this conviction. I not only find that the Bible clearly forewarns about many end-time deceptions prior to Christ's physical/bodily return (developed in chapters one and six), but also see these deceptions unfolding all around us today. Chapters two through five only scratch the surface of examples

everywhere. The prophetic warnings are beginning to be realized. I find these creeds explicit as I see the actual happening of these predictions. My warrants are sufficient to bring a passionate, orthopathic (i.e., correct-feeling) response that mandates action. I cannot simply sit back and observe this deception without responding to it. The degree of conviction is such that I must act. Woe is me if I address not this issue. Both orthodoxically and orthopathically justified, I press for action. Hopefully, by the grace of God through His Word's revelation concerning how He desires His people to respond, I will move ahead with correct practice.

CHAPTER 9

PRACTICAL SPIRITUAL FORMATION – THE ORTHOPRAXY

In brief review, chapters one and six served to begin an exegetical and biblical theology on deception. Chapters two and three defined a (recent) historical theology on this theme while chapters four and five highlighted examples of contemporary theology. (Appendix A offers philosophical theology [with an epistemological emphasis] that establishes foundational warrant for certain theological assumptions. Appendix B includes practical theology examples from each Endurance Ministries' ministry category. Section III provides an initial ministry plan. Appendix C is one example of dialogue in the communal systematic theological context [see the definition of "systematic theology" in the glossary in the back]) A personal systematic theology has been offered in chapters seven and eight. This ninth chapter introduces practical theology—a response to the reality of deceptions in the context of a personal theology.

In chapter one the criteria or standard of correctness was appealed to—the Word of God. But a firm epistemological foundation demands additional response (James 1:22). Orthodoxy is correct doctrine; orthopathy, correct feeling or emotion.

Orthopraxy is correct practice or application. Assuming the correct doctrine of massive end-time deception just prior to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ and assuming my convictions toward this end are correct, I must press on in action. If I am true to the universal principle that we are to be doers of the Word and not hearers only (James 1:22 – note: deception is herein!), if I am to be likened to a wise man who builds his house on a rock, I must both hear and do what is correct (Matthew 7:24). As in Nancy’s case (the woman in the introduction), I seek to follow her example. It is better to obey God than men.

In seeking to be an obedient follower of Jesus Christ along this theme of deception whereby I demonstrate love for my fellow believers, I must engage in application. “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’” (Matthew 7: 21-23; NKJV) I want to abide and love God through desire-driven obedience. As I do so, my actions will be opposite that of living for myself.

We hear a lot about the hypocrisy of the people of God today. The main charge is tied to failing to be doers of the Book, the revealed Word of God, which we say is our authority for faith and practice. I don’t want to walk any longer in the state of hypocrisy. I am willing, at any cost, to live what God has clearly forewarned would occur just prior to the return of Jesus Christ. The sign-posts (that He has stated time and time again would occur) are unfolding today—deceptions abound. The problem is

acknowledged and my commitment to this challenge is high. How can I now contribute to the solution to the problem using the revelation He has given as my guide?

The foundational position upon which the following action is based is God's Word. I believe that God communicates in His Word, truths toward which we are invited—commanded, actually—to respond. God sets the standard or criteria. From there, we have the choice whether or not to obey. The plumb line, standard of measurement, canon, warrant, justification or grounds for action for followers of Jesus Christ is God's Word and His Spirit which does not operate in contradiction to His written Word. There are clear warnings about end-time deception. This deception will occur, in spite of what the advocates of the Openness of God theory say concerning God's prophetic material being conditional based upon which path humanity decides to take. But if individuals do not open the Book to retrieve these crucial warnings (to go back to an earlier analogy, if one does not go into the forest and find the fallen tree to actually experience for him/herself), God's pronouncements are of no avail to them personally. But this whole process actually involves more than this even though this is an essential first step. It's here where we have another choice.

Assuming one has taken the step of opening God's Word to see just what it does say about the end times but chooses to disregard the pertinent information, personal application also fails. While the truths are real (the tree does lie in the forest), they are not efficacious to those who choose to reject them—at least not right away. The day of accounting will also come. Additional steps must be taken once knowledge of the information is gained. The issue of response to that material is now

the fork in the road about which one must decide. Since this is a personal theology, allow me to make it personal. Once I discover these truths by going into the Word and finding them for myself, do I then go left and give little to no response and set my own priority as to how I live hereafter? Or, do I go right and take God's counsel for my life and devote my actions thereto. Passion is demonstrated therein! Oh Lord, the appeals toward taking up my cross ring strong. Dear Father, the revelation to lose my life for Your sake and live it on Your behalf are screaming at this moment. By Your grace, I choose to be a steward who remains active in Your fields doing Your work as opposed to working my one-by-one plot—"one" yard, "one" acre. It really makes little difference given the counsel found in II Corinthians 4:16-18.

Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal. (NIV)

In this context, the setting of helping people grow in biblical understanding concerning what God has forewarned in the days ahead, I confess grave shortcomings. Why? Beyond my many personal limitations in finances and presence (as long as I've tried, I still find that I can only be physically present in one place at one time!), I am faced with a much greater obstacle that is completely beyond my control: others. The problem statement of this dissertation is a horrendous one: How can I further educate those within my influence to better discern the crucial eschatological deceptions of our day that are clearly spoken of in the Word of God?

In order to strive toward answering this problem of deception, a few crucial, common sense questions and answers should first be considered. Before one can discern the deceptions, one must first have a definitive source whereby the deceptions are labeled as such. Given biblical account is trustworthy and speaks accurately on these things, one must first **know** what the eschatological deceptions are. In order to do so one must open the Book to discover those clearly articulated in the Bible. This is a crucial step. So what does the Word of God say concerning deception in general? Does it go on to specifically state certain eschatological deceptions?

Please understand, I am not repeating chapters one and six at this juncture. I am simply highlighting that fact that the Bible has answers for those who would seek them. It's the seeking-out-of-these-answers that not only poses the dilemma, but is actually one of the great challenges today. Let me state it yet another way. Question: How does one become familiar with (actually know) these deceptions? An early but essential first-step: By reading the Word with the intent to learn these deceptions. But what is necessary today to get people to do just that? This is indeed a major prerequisite and itself becomes a part of the problem because so many people are not currently reading the Scriptures. We must persuade people to do so by speaking to the critical consequences this current affair is to their personal well-being (this is truly an eternally significant matter!).

If we neglect the passages that God has graciously given us for the very purpose of equipping us to better discern the many false teachings which will be propagated in the days of the end, will we not be making a conscious choice toward contributing to our very own deception as a result of casting aside the very means that He has provided to help us avoid becoming deceived? This is bottom-line stuff—that which we must do in order to avoid potential apostasy.

Given great increase in apathy today, this is a major ministry challenge.

People are so busy with so many things. The question in light of seeking to expose people to these concerns is, “But how?” This is one area of research that must be included in Endurance Ministries’ ten-year plan. It would be wise to brainstorm and to prayerfully consider ways to go about motivating people toward at least a heightened level of concern.

Once one knows the general themes of deception, one can then move forward in discerning the day. Having been equipped (II Tim. 3:16,17) for ministry today through the knowing of God’s perspective, we can begin to look for cultural expressions thereof. Now that we know what the deceptions are, we can discern the moment. Once again we return to another question. How can these two goals be realized? This takes us to the third section of this work. Through persuasive education about these two themes: 1) knowledge of the general air of deception and some of the more specific particulars; and, as a result, 2) biblical discernment of culture’s propagation of these deceptions, practical ministry can take place.

In light of all the above, a couple years ago a few laymen began praying for the Lord’s direction as to *how should we then live*. “Lord, how do You want us to go about ministry in light of these crucial concerns?” was our prayer. As stated in the preceding chapter, the Doctorate of Ministry Program at George Fox Evangelical Seminary has provided excellent direction in helping to see the ministry both established (including incorporation) and the following specific ministries (outlined on the next page) conceptualized. At the beginning of the program in January of 2000, it was only a dream. At this juncture, most of what follows by way of a practical

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*CM! Growing Persecutions
at Home and Abroad*

ministry plan is yet to be realized. Through the early development of this dissertation, some preliminary steps have already been taken (e.g., early drafts of the initial introductory newsletters; registration of domain names for Internet ministry; creation of outlines for specific presentations relating to the purpose and objectives of Endurance Ministries). Although only a beginning, this is sufficient to form the following ten-year ministry plan that is slated to begin in January of 2003.

SECTION III

SOLVING ESCHATOLOGICAL DECEPTIONS OF OUR DAY

The foundations have been set. We have seen much biblical data supporting the theme of end-time deceptions. The Word of God includes both general and specific predictions that *deception* will be rampant in the days prior to the return of Jesus Christ. As one takes seriously these warnings, one discerns a fascinating reality: our culture, today, is filled with deception. As a result, we have a problem worthy of address. While some would say, “Do not make the same mistake of past Christian communities by claiming the end-time passages for today,” it is the conviction of this ministry that indicators are such that we cannot afford to follow this counsel. We are called to be ready in every generation if the indicators are such to warrant preparedness. Biblical signs point to a day when we must prepare. That day is today. To respond contrary could possibly contribute to the very attitude and state that Jesus forewarns would be present in the days preceding His return – unpreparedness, and, in partial result, deception, possibly even to the extent of falling away (I Tim.4). God forbid.

Therefore, Endurance Ministries is devoted to help solve the problem of contemporary deceptions clearly warned about in the Scriptures. But how should we proceed in going about this task? Through education ministries below, instruction using biblical materials that includes exposing present cultural deceptions affords an increase in critical thinking whereby one is better prepared to discern our times. The exposing of the problem, we believe, is a first necessary step in the correction process. Information along these lines will be initially presented through the mediums of newsletters, web sites and presentations. Although this is only the beginning of an awesome journey, these three mediums will always be essential parts of the ministry experience along the way. As a result, these informational commitments are a high priority of Endurance Ministries.

CHAPTER 10

NEWSLETTERS

Newsletters are one way in which to go about informing the public about important messages, movements and events tied to the theme of deception. Information about this written service will be promoted through promotional mailings to churches and individuals, web sites and presentations (including presentation materials/handouts). An initial complimentary introductory edition of each newsletter will be made available to those who bring request. Information about ongoing paid subscription will be included in these initial publications. Three newsletters will be developed in preparation for their debut in 2003. The names of these newsletters will be *Endurance Ministries*, *Truth Foundations* and *Contemporary Issues*.

The outline of the next three newsletter entries will include specifics about each publication (frequency, publication dates and cost), the general and specific purpose of each, the anticipated audience and content emphasis of each newsletter. To be sure, there will be additions and adjustments while in route through the ten-year plan, but this will serve to set an initial proposed course of action.

Endurance Ministries Newsletter

Date, frequency and cost of publication

Initially, Endurance Ministries Newsletter (EMN) will be published twice a year. Publication (mailing) deadlines are March 1st and September 1st. Subscription cost is \$60/year through 2007. Beginning 2008, a doubling to quarterly publications will raise the subscription rate to \$100 annually. This rate includes costs tied to the producing and mailing of the newsletter with an understanding that a portion of the subscription will go toward further supporting the newsletter ministry on a financial basis.

NOTE: Introductory Edition 2003, no. 1 (March)
 2003, no. 2 (September)
 and so on

Purpose of newsletter

The purpose of this newsletter is clear: To glorify God through the promotion of biblical truths pertinent to our contemporary culture. This will especially emphasize both general and specific concerns tied to the topic of present deceptions. False teachings concerning the basic doctrines of the faith, false movements in opposition to biblical Christianity, and false heralds of deceit will be included in the material. The authoritative source determining the standard of measurement is the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments.

Targeted audience (readership)

The targeted audience of all newsletters will be quite different from that of the Internet ministry web sites. Due to the annual subscription cost, it is anticipated that

the overwhelming majority of readers will be Christians who are, in light of the biblical mandate to watch and be ready, seriously committed to this contemporary affair. As a result, paying readership will afford the liberty of being more specific in address and will permit more depth than a general reading audience would allow. The EM newsletter is written to a Christian audience that is somewhat knowledgeable and concerned about eschatological issues. The biblical data is emphasized in this newsletter.

Content (scope: topics, article series, etc.)

In light of the purpose of this newsletter, a variety of articles will be produced, all contributing to the fulfillment of the newsletter's intent. Although not exhaustive, the following list of articles (stated by way of theme, general idea, and/or title) will be included in the EMNewsletter. Holy living, theological presuppositions (e.g., Matthew 15), "On Running" (endurance theme), Scripture (observation of individual passages; the putting the individual pieces together so as to present a synthesis or biblical theology and a proposed chronology), fictitious stories that articulate EMN's purpose and themes, "Jesus Christ: A Tribute," Contemplative Christianity, doctrine (e.g., New Age Christ-ology), hermeneutics, biblical foundation, help (counsel) for a troubled day, maintaining perspective, challenge articles and the communicating of the Gospel message will be some of the articles included in this newsletter. Typical inclusions will also cover announcements, events and promotion of other ministries.

Truth Foundations Newsletter

Date, frequency and cost of publication

The first ten years of *Truth Foundations Newsletter* (TFN) will include biannual publications (May and November—mailing deadlines set at the first of each month). After 2012, a quarterly publication will be considered by the Executive Board of Directors of Endurance Ministries, Inc. A \$40/year subscription will be the initial cost of the newsletter. Once again, like EMN, a complimentary introductory edition will be made available to those who request it.

NOTE: Introductory Edition No. 1 (May/2003)
 No. 2 (November/2003)
 and so on

Purpose of newsletter

The *TFN* will address the crucial epistemological theme: How we know and the quality and/or credibility of the information sources relied upon to know. Because this issue is the rock-bottom starting point in pursuit of truth, it even precedes worldview formation. In other words, it takes knowledge methods or sources of information to define a worldview in the first place. Dr. Ed Miller, in his introductory philosophy text titled *Questions that Matter*, states it this way:

“It is true that our answers to the question of reality will largely determine our answers to many other questions. But we cannot really answer any question at all, not even the question of reality, until we have become clear on the still prior question of knowledge. Think about this until you see it: Judgments about reality, morality, art, society, religion, politics, science, or anything else, presuppose judgments about knowledge itself – whether we can know, how we can know, and what we can know. Take for example, your knowledge that ‘In fourteen hundred and ninety-two, Columbus sailed the ocean blue.’ How did you arrive at this piece of know-ledge? In your claim to ‘know’ this there are surely contained many implicit judgments about epistemological issues such as the limits of reason, the role of sense experience, the relevance of intuition, the assurances of historical investigation, the nature and criterion of truth, the nature and certainty of ‘facts,’ the possibility of certainty, and

degrees of certainty. If such a welter of considerations is necessarily involved in such a harmless claim as 'In fourteen hundred and ninety-two, Columbus sailed the ocean blue,' then how much more attention must we give the epistemological underpinnings of claims about reality, value, moral responsibility, society, and God?"³⁰

This concern seeks to answer the question, among other crucial questions, "How does one arrive at a worldview perspective?" Dr. Earle Ellis in *Christ and the Future in New Testament History* adds to Miller's insight:

The Role of the Prophet in the Quest for Truth"

"All serious inquiry, whatever the discipline, professes to be a quest for truth. Whether it is a court hearing a case at law, a biologist or physicist at work in the laboratory or a theologian reading the book of a biblical prophet, each one seeks the truth or truths thought to be conveyed in the respective contexts. Each also recognizes the complex nature of truth as, for example, information about a fact, the comprehension of an idea or concept, knowledge through personal relationship or a combination of such things.

The Approach of Philosophy

Philosophy is traditionally the discipline that has classified the significant objects of truth as God (or ultimate reality), man, and the world. And it has set the essential questions: What is? How do we know? How shall we act? The questions, in turn, govern three general divisions of philosophical study: metaphysics, epistemology and ethics. The divisions are interrelated, and the answer given to the epistemological question, 'How do we know?' pretty much determines the answer given to the other questions."

TFN's purpose is to further address this all-important prerequisite to the defining of one's worldview. Philosophers label this issue as one of the categories of absolute presuppositions. There is nothing under the sun that does not either directly or indirectly relate to this most basic of all starting points. Because beliefs flow from

³⁰ Ed Miller, *Questions That Matter* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1992), 179,180.

worldview paradigms, and because these perspectives are formed by methods of knowledge vested with varying degrees of authority, this crucial topic is one emphasized by Endurance Ministries due to its tie to truth, and therefore, deception.

Targeted audience (readership)

A general reading audience is anticipated. While the cost of this newsletter is lower than *EMN* so as to encourage a wider readership, the subscribers will most likely be predominately Christian. With this assumption and given the inherent holistic view of this topic, certain presuppositions are minimized. Religious or revealed supernatural truths are not deemed secondary to epistemological “truths” of man. Each source is allowed to define itself as opposed to accepting an opposing tenet-fraught worldview that rejects a particular method under consideration. From there, an individual decision is encouraged. As a result of this approach, an open-to-spiritual-truths non-Christian is not threatened but encouraged to consider the biblical claims. There are many passages that address this crucial concern, some of which are well summarized by the following passages.

It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in man.
It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in princes.
Psalm 118:8,9 (NASB-ue)

Forever, O Lord, Your word is settled in heaven....
The sum of Your word is truth, and every one of Your
righteous ordinances is everlasting.
Psalm 119:89,160 (NASB-ue)

The grass withers, the flower fades, but
the word of our God stands forever.
Isaiah 40:8 (NASB-ue)

“For My thought are not your thoughts, nor are your
ways My ways,” declares the Lord. “For as the heavens
are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than

your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts.”
Isaiah 55:8,9 (NASB-ue)

For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, *are called*. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence. ... Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you seems to be wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, “He catches the wise in their *own* craftiness”; and again, “The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile.” Therefore let no one boast in men.”
I Corinthians 1:26-29;3:18-21a (NKJV)

Content (scope: topics, article series, etc.)

The scope of this newsletter is such that it allows for great variety of address. The following articles will be included in *TFN*. “A Stark Contrast: God’s Ways Vs. Man’s Ways,” Scripture addressing the theme of truth, book and movie reviews, “On Authority: A New Emerging Global Paradigm,” philosophical articles, challenge articles (e.g., “What is American Christianity’s Real Authority?”), “The Skeptics Corner” (from the biblical perspective—I doubt, question and deconstruct the skeptics inconsistent foundation), a series entitled “Cultural Clues,” fictitious stories emphasizing the theme, true stories that have taken place in social settings, Jesus Christ as the Word of God, biblical authority, and the Gospel message will be among the articles included in this newsletter. Once again , many more will be added.

Contemporary Issues Newsletter

Date, frequency and cost of publication

Initially, an annual publication of *Contemporary Issues Newsletter (CIN)* will be mailed by July 1st at a subscription rate of \$30/year. Mid-way through the ten-year plan, biannual publications will be mailed on the first of July and January. Due to the doubling of the newsletter at this time, the subscription rate will raise to \$40/year (in 2008).

NOTE:	Introductory Edition 2003, no. 1 (July)
	(annual) 2004, no. 2 (July)
	After 2008 2008, no. 6 (January)
	(biannual) 2008, no. 7 (July)
	and so on

Purpose of newsletter

As a result of clear biblical themes, those in Jesus Christ who are listening and devoted to (does Is. 6:9 and Matt. 13:14,15 have any application today?) the Word of God have insight transcendent to man. Psalm 119:97-100 puts it this way:

Oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day. You,
through Your commandments, make me wiser than my enemies; for
they are ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers,
for Your testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the
ancients, because I keep Your precepts!

Given this wisdom, we are able to discern culture through God's illumination. The EM and TF ministries emphasize the themes the Bible states will be major concerns in the days prior to Jesus Christ's return. It is the taking of these themes to cultural movements and events upon which *CIN* focuses. It uses scriptural themes as the

foundation to discern contemporary movements but focuses predominately upon current affairs. These themes include persecution, deception, globalism, religious pluralism and syncretism, biblical prophecy and in-the-house-of-nominal-Christianity concerns. With biblical insight, today's events are scrutinized.

Targeted audience (readership)

Given the purpose of *CIN*, this newsletter anticipates a predominately Christian audience but one that is more general than the *EMN* readership. While biblical passages are referred to, the main emphasis are current cultural affairs and how the unfolding of these events fulfill biblical passages forewarning of these very movements and deceptions. It is also assumed, given the cost of this newsletter, that open-minded non-Christians will also comprise a portion of the reading audience. Daniel 11 states those who have insight will instruct many. Endurance Ministries may very well be one expression of this very prediction.

Note: See Daniel 11:29-35 (end-time context beginning in verse 20)

Content (scope: topics, article series, etc.)

Scripture is the authoritative revelation that informs. As such, certain themes are emphasized (Article 12 in the Constitution of Endurance Ministries, Inc. lists end-time themes emphasized in the Bible). It is these themes that define the way by which a critical eye is applied to current events. The content of this newsletter is therefore directed by biblical insight but applies that insight to present-day affairs. When these affairs transpire, commentary is offered that is driven by or sourced in God's wisdom for the age.

Articles in this newsletter will include the addressing of global themes (from pluralism to syncretism), groups and movements contributing to the global mandate, religious (e.g., the Parliament of World Religions, Matthew Fox' Creation Spirituality, National Council of Churches), political (e.g., the ongoing war on terrorism and its fostering greater global interconnectedness), and economic (e.g., national markets are effected by world markets—no longer do we find isolationists) are all categories with which this newsletter will take up pen.

Some Concluding Thoughts About Newsletter Ministry

In our Information Age, it is crucial to be correct. These newsletters will require a veracity of content so as to present a model of lasting integrity. Tight control over the material published will be administered; contributing articles, by invitation only. The initial introductory newsletters for each ministry category (i.e., Endurance Ministries, Truth Foundations, and Contemporary Issues – the three major ministry branches of the incorporated ministry, Endurance Ministries) will be *time* neutral (addressing general issues that are not faddish concerns), introductory-to-the-ministry in emphasis, and intentionally more controversial (but not polemic) than subsequent editions so as to create further interest in the specific matters of concern and toward the possibility of generating subscription.

CHAPTER 11

INTERNET SITES

Realistically, newsletters only receive a small circulation. The Internet, while having inherent weaknesses as a result of global access, offers some strengths on the other side of the coin of accessibility. With these features in clear mind, EM has decided to commit to ministry over the World Wide Web. All web sites will be of a tone for all viewers and which informs. A humble, presuppositional yet matter-of-fact approach will be taken that affirms objective biblical truths while at the same time offering these truths to whoever would receive them. EM does not want to communicate an attitude that conveys we alone have truths and others do not, but one that takes sincere joy in the truths God has graciously made available to whoever would accept them. In this mode, a meek but truth-offering approach is fostered and maintained. This reflects the biblical worldview. God has offered His truth, and we in turn offer the same (vs. our petty opinions)—His truths, not human theory.

An example at this juncture would help further clarify concerns along the very lines of ruling authorities. Being such a crucial determinant to the content of the Internet sites, the following illustration demonstrates how often the putting of human opinion above the clear teachings of the Word of God takes place—and often we don't

even realize or acknowledge it's happening until major damage has been done. O Lord, open our eyes. Onward to the illustration. Has our Postmodern day had any effect upon the church in the area of our grace-given truth foundation? Consider for just a moment, if you would, some titles from the *Counterpoints Series* by Zondervan Publishing. *Five Views on Apologetics*, *Five Views on Law and Gospel*, *Three Views on the Rapture*, *Four Views on Hell*, *Three Views on the Millennium and Beyond*, *Four Views on Salvation in a Pluralistic World*, *Five Views on Sanctification*, *Three Views on Creation and Evolution*, and there are more titles due out in the months ahead! (Note: one-third of these works address "end-time" concerns) Yes, these views do exist—it is a reality that they are present, I do not deny this. My question and point, though, is simple: Isn't this a very expression of a relative mindset toward the Word of God? Is the Bible made out to look as a book with no clear truth, but only one that feeds controversy? A local, highly vocal opponent of the Faith recently argued, "The Bible is a bad epistemology!" (a bad source of knowledge) His main argument in support of this claim? "Theologians disagree about everything." Now we know this to be an exaggeration, a clear overstatement. But you know what, he has a valid, poignant point, **does he not?** And who is contributing to this very reality? We fail to discern some of the long-term consequences of our decisions. It's time to get back to practical ministry, ministry that acts upon truths clearly revealed in the Word of God.

In this setting, all initial sites will be ten-page sites. The hosting service, given difficulties that have occurred over the past four years with secular hosting companies, will be E-zekiel web hosting services, a service that helps ministries of various types

accomplish ministries over the Internet. The cost for a ten-page site is \$227 annually plus a one-time setup fee of \$50. Therefore, the projected cost for this ministry over the next ten years will be approximately \$25,000. At the end of the ten-year plan, the .com sites will be expanded (if deemed necessary) and the .org sites will be updated as needed. All email response from the web sites will be placed on a secondary level to that of the email response given through the newsletters. This is intended to guard the limitations of the field director who does not have the time to give to responses that are not serious in-quiries. An approach will be established whereby, with at least some degree of accuracy, the inquirer will be known as either a newsletter or a web site respondent, thus the seriousness of inquiry can be somewhat determined.

Given the purpose of the ministry supporting these sites, edification, evangelism and equipping toward those contemporary, eschatological ends will be the primary focus of the sites. With every site, the question, “How does this fulfill our ministry purpose?” will be asked. Due to the educational thrust of this ministry, information about the themes articulated in Article 12 of the Constitution and Bylaws of EM will be the scope of the topics addressed, keeping in mind the contemporary mandate of this service. This ministry will not turn into a service that concentrates on yet-future events (that is, speculations about future events described in the Word of God—although an acknowledgement is made concerning events yet future that are clearly outlined in the Word of God) as much as one that exposes current cultural affairs and movements. An example will help establish clarity at this juncture. EM will not speculate about possible ways prophetic events like the six seals of Revelation

might unfold. While it will stand on the clear statements of the text, the speculative theorizing about just how these events will unfold will not occur. With that, the following ten entries will state the focus of each web site.

www.endmin.com

Publication Deadline: 1/2002

Purpose: Endurance Ministries seeks to further educate the God's people concerning Biblical truths pertinent to the days prior to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

Words: Endurance/Perseverance, Biblical Prophecy, Second Coming, Jesus-Christ Devoted, Prophetic Education, Gospel Proclaiming, Contemporary Concerns, End-Time Encouragement,

Eschatology,

Culturally Relevant, Rapture, Bible-Believing, Informational

This web site will be a major site of Endurance Ministries covering general services and themes of this educational service. As a result of general address, it will include the Truth Foundations and Contemporary Issues themes on a surface level but will also provide links to other sites for further depth of inquiry. Included in the ten-page site will be a listing of services, an events' schedule, pages addressing the Gospel, pertinent Scriptures, the position of Endurance Ministries, the sound foundation that the Word of God is as an epistemological truth method, and help for troubled days.

It is the intent of this Internet ministry to educate biblically, to bring encouragement as a result of meditation upon God's faithful promises concerning His bright tomorrow, and to introduce the major themes the Bible states will be especially predominant in the days prior to the return of His dear Son.

www.truthfoundations.com

Publication Deadline: 1/2002

Purpose: A service sponsored by Endurance Ministries, Inc., Truth Foundations seeks to address preliminary starting-point presuppositions inherent in one's search for truth.

Words: Truth Inquiry, World View, Philosophical (Epistemological), Modern & Postmodern Paradigms, Biblical Foundation, Theme: Knowledge Methods/Authority Voices/Information Sources, Speaking-the-Truth-in-Love Commitment

This is the major site for one of the three ministries of Endurance—the three being 1) Endurance around major biblical, end-time themes, 2) Epistemic concerns tied to the building of worldview (i.e., Truth Foundations), and 3) Contemporary cultural issues currently unfolding that are either directly tied or closely related to the major end-time topics. Addressing the philosophical category of knowing, Truth Foundations does not fear to tread in philosophical essentials. To be distinguished from a *philosophy of men* (Col. 2:8-10), this branch of philosophy is inherent in every paradigm, including the biblical one—every perspective relies upon sources of information that speak authorita-tively in the defining or building of that worldview. One cannot get away from this initial starting-point presupposition. This is the topic of address in this site.

www.truthmatters.com

Publication Deadline: 1/2002

Purpose: Truth Matters is a service provided by Truth Foundations, a ministry committed to helping

society build worldview foundation based upon all sources of available truth.

Words: Truth Inquiry, World View, Theme of Address: How do we know?, Holistic in Consideration, Main Topic: Methods of Knowledge/Voices of Authority/ Sources of Information

We have intentionally created a separate URL for the purpose of reaching the non-Christian. While addressing the same theme of www.truthfoundations.com, this site is devoted toward doing so without the biblical appeal. The following introductory page that has been developed to date will help set the tone of this site.

Truth Matters

Our title communicates a two-fold intent:

1. Truth really does matter, in fact, it matters a great deal; and
2. It is the matter or issue of truth and our search for truth to which this site is devoted—the arrival at truth is the sincere hoped-for destination of this inquiry!

We feel we have been uniquely fair in going about *this as-neutral-as-possible* investigation into this most important of all journeys. The search mandates the use of a tool – knowledge. “Which knowledge methods are being relied upon to form worldview perspective?” “How good are these sources?” “Are these authority voices of sound quality?” “What are the limitations tied to each specific method of knowing?” and “What are the consequences of depending upon erroneous truth foundations?” are only a few of the many questions we will be addressing on this journey.

In pursuit of truth, have we discerned the starting-point presuppositions inherent in the inquiry, or are we searching for truth with the outcome already predetermined as a result of influential faith tenets? These, often hidden assumptions, are the key issue in forecasting the outcome!

Truth Matters simply seeks to open this rock-bottom assumptions box In order to allow for a search for truth that minimizes the biases as much as one is able. Look this site over carefully and write to us if some questions arise. Walk with us for a while on this exciting, second-to-none journey in pursuit of truth. If you would like a free

copy of our introductory *Truth Foundations' Newsletter*, direct your request to:

Truth Foundations
P.O. Box 92098
Portland, Oregon 97292

Only *snail-mail* requests are being processed at this time. Thank you

www.enduranceministries.com

Publication Deadline: 6/2002

Purpose: Endurance Ministries seeks to further educate the God's people concerning Biblical truths pertinent to the days prior to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

Words: Endurance/Perseverance, Biblical Prophecy, Second Coming, Jesus Honoring, Prophetic Education, Gospel Proclaiming, Contemporary Concerns, End-Time Encouragement, Eschatology, Culturally Relevant, Rapture, Bible-Believing, Future Information

Www.enduranceministries.com will take a much more openly biblical approach than www.endmin.com. As a result, many Scripture passages will be included in this site. The end-time *Final-Trumpet position* of this ministry will also be stated and defended. Because of the full name tied to this domain, a Christian readership is presumed to be the major audience. While it is understood that anyone who has access to the Internet can find this site (and as a result, tone and content is expressed accordingly), a Christian audience is sought. Readers wishing to respond to the information on this site can do so through email at "mail@enduranceministries.com."

www.truthfoundations.org

Publication Deadline: 6/2002

Purpose: A service sponsored by Endurance Ministries, Inc., Truth Foundations seeks to address preliminary starting-point presuppositions inherent in one's search for truth.

Words: Truth Inquiry, World View, Philosophical (Epistemological), Modern & Postmodern Paradigms, Biblical Foundation, Theme: Knowledge Methods/Authority Voices/Information Sources, Speaking-the-Truth-in-Love Commitment

This web site will open its ten-page site in the following manner:

Truth matters, does it not?

Don't we all start somewhere as we begin a journey?
As we search for truth, where do we begin the investigation? Fair question!

In pursuit of truth, have we realized the initial presupposition inherent in the inquiry, or are we searching for truth with the outcome already set as a result of some influential, but possibly not-so-good, faith tenets? These (often hidden) assumptions directly influence the outcome! But do we recognize these key determinants? Most of the time, we do not. Phrasing this more philosophically, what's the epistemological foundation upon which we build worldview? WAIT, I don't want to lose you – let me try to restate it yet another way. What sources of information do we rely on to bring us to *truth*? Are these sources or methods of knowledge reliable? In our journey, are our tools or pieces of equipment we trust in, sufficient? Do we understand that these very information sources serve as authority voices? These are both fair and crucial questions! So, once again I ask, don't we all start somewhere?

Indeed we do!

Truth Foundations is an educational service that simply calls the genuine seeker of truth to look more closely at some of the crucial rock-bottom assumptions that exist at the beginning of the inquiry in order to allow for a search for truth that minimizes biases, as much as one is able. I readily confess that one's pursuit is completely presupposition-free. But we must start somewhere if this journey is to be made.

This ministry helps expose our need for further thought on this matter. If one begins a long ocean journey slightly off course, the consequences could be great. If we walk through the journey of life slightly off course at the very beginning stage as a result of erroneous and/or incomplete tools (equipment;

truth foundations), even greater consequences may lie before us! And that they do because the whole journey of life is of much greater significance than simply a geographical trek across a state or continent, even a global tour.

Join us as we seek to uncover and think more thoroughly about the most basic, yet absolutely essential concept tied to all search-for-truth inquiries. Joy and freedom in your journey.

www.currentmatters.org

Publication Deadline: 6/2002

Purpose: This site takes up current events that fulfill predictions concerning the days just prior to the end of days. The Bible's prophetic accuracy is amazing.

Words: Contemporary Issues, Cultural Movements, Biblical Prophecy, Current Events, Present Affairs, Today's Spirituality, Contemporary Secularism, Predicted Conditions, the Future is Today, the Return of Jesus Christ

Currentmatters.org is quite different than the above sites in that it specifically focuses on contemporary issues. While relying upon the Word of God for direction as to what is emphasized by way of coverage of present cultural affairs, the focus of this site is on present happenings and significant global, regional and local events. The Gospel is also communicated due to the likelihood of non-Christian readership.

www.simpletonsinchrist.com

Publication Deadline: 9/2002

Purpose: Don't be fooled by this URL. The wisdom of this world is foolishness compared to God's eternal wisdom and Truth. Eternal Life is a Reality

Words: Forever, Everlasting Life, Salvation, Jesus Christ, Good News, Gospel, John 3:16, Eternal Hope, Victory Over Death, Fountain of Youth A Reality, Immortality, Peace with God

Simpletonsinchrist.com is our Gospel site. The entire site is devoted to the stating of the Good News in a variety of ways. The other sites will have links to this site, in addition to different Gospel presentations on their pages, depending upon the targeted audience. This site will include some basic apologetic appeal, including the evidence of fulfilled prophecy. It will be this theme (accuracy of biblical prophecy) that will direct the inquirer to the Endurance Ministries' sites if an interest is present or raised.

www.simpletonsinchrist.org

Publication Deadline: 9/2002

Purpose: This site addresses the concern of Psalm 11:3. If the Biblical authority is undermined by a false interpretation method, God's revelation is undermined and/or polluted.

Words: Types of Literature, Hermeneutics, "It says what it means", Genre, Bible Interpretation, Literal, Plain Understanding, Prophetic Literature, Simple Meaning, Textual Meanings

This site contains a radical paradox. The simple appeal, one that the world sees as foolish (but just how wise, really, is the world?), is to allow the Scriptures to say what they say. The unreachable depth of this site touches upon the tough issue of hermeneutical approach. The issue at hand of this site: biblical interpretation, indeed, a deep topic, one bearing great significance and concern. This site is meant for the Christian who wants to go deep yet who also submits to the divine approach—the Truths of the Word are as simple on the surface as they are in great depths. Only in God do we find this simplicity in profundity! Like the Gospel, so simple even a child can understand it to the extent of sincerely and efficaciously appropriating it, yet so

profound that even the greatest (even the inspired) theologian, the Apostle Paul, cannot plummet its depths. “Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearch-able are His judgements, and His ways past finding out!” (Romans 11:33; NKJV) The hermeneutical inquiry also contains both elements of depth and simplicity – only in God.

www.enduranceministries.org

Publication Deadline: 12/2002

Purpose: Endurance Ministries seeks to further educate the God’s people concerning Biblical truths pertinent to the days prior to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

Words: Endurance/Perseverance, Biblical Prophecy, Second Coming, Jesus Honoring, Prophetic Education, Gospel Proclaiming, Contemporary Concerns, End-Time Encouragement, Eschatology, Culturally Relevant, Rapture, Bible-Believing, Future Information

I have yet to determine the emphasis of this site to date. The domain name has been registered through 2010 and is not due for publication until just before the beginning of the Ten-Year Plan. Further prayer and thought will be invested in seeking the Lord’s direction for this site, once again, keeping in mind the purpose and objective of Endurance Ministries.

www.endmin.org

Publication Deadline: 12/2002

Purpose: Endurance Ministries seeks to further educate the God’s people concerning Biblical truths pertinent to the days prior to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

Words: Endurance/Perseverance, Biblical Prophecy,
Second Coming, Jesus-Christ Devoted, Prophetic
Education, Gospel Proclaiming, Contemporary
Concerns, End-Time Encouragement,
Eschatology, Culturally Relevant, Rapture,
Bible-Believing, Informational

Like the enduranceministries.org site, the endmin.org site also lacks specific direction at this time. The schedule for publication is set for December of 2002, so there is yet time for thoughtful development. This domain, though, is only registered through 2002 and as a result, needs to have an additional registration of ten years. This can and should be done sooner than later.

CHAPTER 12

PRESENTATIONS

Newsletters and web sites are powerful mediums through which to inform, but they do lack the personal touch. In accommodating this dynamic for the sake of a balanced ministry, presentations of a variety of forms will also be offered by this ministry. Currently, six presentations revolving around the theme of exposing and enduring deceptions have been created, the further development of which will take place through 2002 whereby a strong list of ministry presentations are available. The truth foundations' theme also includes six presentation titles, once again, to be developed through 2002. I have also begun working on (in rough form) three contemporary issues presentations currently underway.

All of these presentations will include PowerPoint and other audiovisual elements. Handouts, materials, and eventually DVD copies of the presentations will be made available. The presentations will vary radically depending upon the need of those who sponsor the seminars, classes, sermons, adult education series, workshops, conferences, etc. The presentations that follow are *seminar* presentations. Classes, sermons, workshops and conferences will obviously have a different format. In accord with the three categories of Endurance Ministries, the following three groups of

presentations exist: Enduring Matters!, Truth Matters! and Current Matters! Each entry below includes a short descriptive annotation and a general outline.

“Enduring Matters!” (EM) Presentations

“EM: Exploring the Biblical Themes of our End Times”

If you were to do a six-month intensive study in biblical end-time literature, you would find certain themes especially emphasized concerning the characteristics of the days prior to the return of Jesus Christ. These themes are everywhere in society **today**. We don’t have to speculate into the future. We have enough to concern ourselves with in response to these matters. This seminar introduces these themes, each including current examples of how these predictions are unfolding before our very eyes.

Introduction	Joy in God’s Prophetic Accuracy
Session 1	Revealed Concern: Deceptions Escalate; Response: A Call to Discern
Session 2	Revealed Concern: Pursuit of A Dawn of Harmony Response: A Call to Separate and Speak Out
Session 3	Revealed Concern: Persecution Against God’s People Response: A Call to Endure
Conclusion	Joy in Tribulation; Glory to God Through Perseverance

“EM: A Proposed Chronology—Crucial Insights Toward Preparedness”

Using major prophecies contained in the Word of God, this seminar pieces together a general proposed chronology of events. While Endurance Ministries seeks

to emphasize and minister through presently expressed end-time themes, it also confesses and makes available to the Christian community (for an-Acts-17-type consideration) a theological viewpoint. If you're curious about how Endurance Ministries sees the fitting together of biblical prophecy with current events, this presentation is for you.

Introduction What's Ahead

Matthew 24

Revelation 6 – 17

Daniel 2, 6 – 12

Putting the puzzle all together with other pertinent passages

Conclusion How to Prepare

“EM: Cultural Clues”

God's Word is awesome, indeed! Only an all-knowing God could outline human history as He has. The miraculously accurate predictions concerning the people of God, certain world events, and the First Coming of Jesus Christ are amazing to ponder, but that's only the half of it. In this New Covenant period, God has also given clear sign posts concerning the days before the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, many are beginning to emerge in culture today! Rejoice, for our salvation is drawing near, nearer than when we first believed.

Session I Deep Commitment to a One World Alliance

Session II Deceptions Unfolding Exactly as Jesus Described

Session III Persecutions Growing as the Sides Polarize

Session IV Gospel Proclamation Continues

“EM: Help for Tough Times”

Lest we become discouraged, lest we grow weary in well doing and give up, we are encouraged to consider His Who endured when shortsighted and sinful people did terrible things to Him. Jesus Christ continues to shine as our glorious example. Through the written Word of God, we are informed, enlightened and thus encouraged to persevere in the eternally consequential race set before us.

Prelude	Celebrating God’s Faithfulness
Act I	Perspective in Suffering
Act II	The Psalms
Act III	The Stories
Act IV	The Prophetic Literature
Benediction	Our Father’s Desired Blessing

“EM: End-Time Evangelism”

Daniel speaks of a time when people will listen to those who “understand.” John, in Revelation, speaks of the whole world hearing eternal Gospel proclamation. Jesus also speaks of the worldwide proclamation of the Gospel, then the end will come. Let’s use our day, and the opportunities of this moment, to point once again to the amazing accuracy and truthfulness of the Word of God. Show those interested the passages that describe the days before His return. Use this infallible evidence as a

springboard to share the Good News of eternal relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

Session 1	God's Goodness: Late Professions are Accepted
Session 2	God's Word is Being Fulfilled ... AGAIN!
Session 3	Passionate Commitment has Always Inspired
Session 4	The Holy Spirit of God Continues to Draw

"EM: Biblical Interpretation—Where Does One Begin?"

"Just how is one to understand the prophetic literature with all the symbolism and metaphor? This material is so difficult even the *experts* don't seem to agree." Yet, God's promises, His promises, bring special blessing to those who read and obey. Almost one-third of the material in the Bible is prophetic. He wants us to know—we just have to be in His Word. That seems to be more than half the battle today, realistically speaking.

Introductory Matters	Starting of the Same Page
Session I	The Simple Message – Observe, Don't Interpret
Session II	Considering the Immediate Context
Session III	Considering the Holistic Context
Session IV	God's Understanding – Pray for It
Concluding Matters	Finishing on the Same Page

“Truth Matters!” (TM) Presentations

“TM: A Biblical Apologetic for a Postmodern World

This seminar applies the concept of truth foundations to cultural paradigms of our day. In addition to exposing the source of both the Modern and Postmodern views on truth, this teaching series introduces the question: “What will be the next ruling perspective of the early 21st Century?”

Introducing the Concept: Using the Postmodern Paradigm

Defining the Concept: Using the Modern Paradigm

Modeling the Concept: Using Apologetics as an Example

Applying the Concept: Taking the Tool to Heart and Action

“TM: On CREATION, CHRIST & CROSS And CONSUMMATION

This teaching series applies the truth foundations’ material to the issues of origins, the Person of Jesus Christ (emphasizing His passion), and major concerns taking place today that the Word of God teaches will occur prior to the Second Coming of His Son.

Introduction Truth Matters! The foundation to this series

Session I CREATION: Clarity amidst much confusion

Session II CHRIST & CROSS: Help from the biblical source

Session III CONSUMMATION: Encouragement for a difficult day

Conclusion Truth Matters! How then shall we live?

“TM: A Skeptic’s Criticism

In this interactive seminar we use a predominate mind-set to show the power invested in the truth concept. When all is said and done, it’s actually the healthy agnostic who ends up committing the contradiction, not the one embracing biblical worldview. This is a fun but very serious presentation that has been helpful to many collegians over the past decade.

Introduction	What’s the Matter?
Session 1	Facing the Contradiction
Session 2	Exposing the Culprit
Conclusion	Applying the Matter

“TM: A Philosophical Inquiry—In Search of Truth

This is our “heavy” seminar for those wanting to take this crucial epistemological issue deep. While not academic in presentation, many scholarly materials and concepts are employed to bring a heady, intellectual address, but again, one that stirs the heart toward obedient application.

Introduction:	Defining Epistemology
	Wrestling with the Concept of Truth
	Conclusions from a Holistic Foundation

“TM: *Balance*, A Huge Word When Applied to Contemporary Authority Voices

Why is it that God’s revelation is placed secondary to mankind’s? On what grounds is this a correct premise? This teaching series challenges this firmly

entrenched tenet much like the philosophers of the Intelligent Design Movement challenge the ruling paradigm of metaphysical naturalism in science. This applies the same idea to an even more crucial topic, how do we know?

Introduction	Truth Appeal and its Relationship to Authority Voices
Session I	Who Sets the Criteria of what Establishes Balance?
Session II	Considering the Strengths of Each Authority Voice
Conclusion	What, The Abundant Life in Christ is at Stake?

“TM: Truth Under Attack—Out-house and In-house Campaigns

This presentation exposes the many assaults on the Word of God today. The cases may shock you, but they are clearly documented and are contributing to the undermining of the God’s eternally-settled-in-heaven revelation. Like never before in history, it seems, biblical truth is questioned. But is it with good reason, or is darkness sparing no expense on the direct, all-out effort. “If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?” (Psalm 11:3; NASB-ue)

Introduction	The Fundamental Issues at Hand: Truth
Session 1	Overt, Out-house Operations
Session 2	Covert, In-house Operations
Conclusion	Truth Matters! His Marching Orders

“Current Matters!” (CM) Presentations

“CM: Hermeneutically Speaking”

Can the Word of God be made to say anything? Is this really the case? Well, maybe not everything, but the degree its message is being destroyed by those who claim to bring its message is more than we care to confess and quite disconcerting. If we apply the hermeneutical approach of some within the camp of Christianity to the major doctrines of the faith, we would suffer shipwreck, doctrinally. This seminar seeks to raise discernment about some of these deceptions currently taking place.

Introduction	The BIBLE: Basic Instructions Before Leaving Earth
Session 1	God's Intent for Revelation
Session 2	Authorial Intent Easily Undermined
Session 3	Lessons from History
Session 4	Current Affairs
Conclusion	In Response: A Child-like Faith

“CM: Globalism—Secular Messages and Movements

The treat of annihilation has been well presented the past two decades. People have grown to fear it. Nuclear and other high-tech weaponry does present a real possible end to life on earth. How can this dilemma be addressed? The best way is to unite the world in one common purpose. Much work in the crucial social categories of language, politics and economics has already been invested in toward these ends. What's happening today along these lines?

Introduction	Global Passion: Purpose for Secular Mankind
Session 1	Political Expressions
Session 2	Economic Expressions

Session 3 Linguistic Expressions

Conclusion God-illuminated Response: How do God's People Respond?

“CM: Globalism—Spiritual Messages and Movements

Religious belief has always contributed to the divisions of people. From an early point in human history, religious battles have been waged. Today, religious ideology, especially expressed by the intolerant fundamental perspectives, again threatens global peace. As a result, much work needs to be done to erase this evil. So state many futurists today.

Introduction Global Passion: Cause for the New Spirituality

Session 1 Eastern Expressions

Session 2 Western Expressions

Conclusion Biblically Illuminated Response: How do we Respond?

“CM: Deceptions—Spiritual and Secular Messages and Movements

God has communicated clear signs whereby His people discern the evil day. Deceptions are one of those signs. Today as we look to the left and to the right, deceptions are everywhere. This seminar exposes a few crucial contemporary deceptions in both secular and spiritual contexts.

Introduction	“See to it that no one deceives you!”
Session I	Spiritual Deceptions
Session II	Secular Deceptions
Conclusion	Some depart anyway, following deceiving spirits

“CM: On Sharing the Good News in the Lord Jesus Christ”

We have an ongoing commission from our Lord Jesus to go and make disciples. The proclamation of the Gospel is a crucial element in the process. If you’re interested in using contemporary themes and tools to reach our generation for Jesus Christ, you’ll want to catch this seminar.

Session 1	Introductory Matters
Session 2	Using Contemporary Themes
Session 3	Using Contemporary Tools
Session 4	Concluding Matters

“CM: Growing Persecutions at Home and Abroad”

Our Lord Jesus is so good. He provided for us such an example as He walked this earth two thousand years ago. In facing increased opposition, how are we preparing for what the Scripture calls the “overcoming of the saints of God”? While the title sounds discouraging, this is a seminar fostering strength and hope through these difficult times.

Introduction What's Definitely Ahead?

Session I What's Current

Session II How to Respond

Conclusion What's Definitely Ahead?

In conclusion to the section, if the Lord does not build this house, those who labor, labor in vain. Oh Lord, may Your hand of blessing continue to be upon this work based upon Your clear counsel.

CONCLUSION

A Story

Nancy grew up a Baptist. She was a sheep, one who, for the most part, conformed to and supported her home church's doctrine, life-style and ministry activities. In a day of growing disrespect for Christian leadership, her honoring demeanor was seen as such a precious commodity. Given the direction the world was heading in relationship to this *giving respect to whom respect is due*, Nancy applied the principle: it is better to obey God than to follow the examples and dictates of the ruling authorities, be they individual or the collective majority. In her respect for leadership, she in turn gained the respect and admiration of others.

It was in her youthful vigor at the age of thirty-five when she met Mark, a man eight years her senior. Enjoying a healthy relationship (in the eyes of the nominal American church – others would describe it *lukewarm*), Nancy and Mark, as single adults, grew to enjoy each other's company. During the years they spent together, their relationship matured. Over time, it blossomed into love for one another.

One day Nancy's ears fell captive by a sermon simply titled, "The State of the Church." It seemed to be a fair presentation, for both positive and negative observations were communicated by this visiting circuit preacher. But it was what

Nancy heard *in the negative* that really impacted her. At times she wondered about these very issues, including the lack of intimacy with her Lord and the passionate life of devotion to eternal things. Another concern of hers: how the church in general, it seemed, was so like the world. Conflicting-with-Genesis-One views on origins, a renewed (but different) emphasis on the formation of the Christ-spirit or “Christpower” in you, and a promoting of optimistic human potential to see in a new dawn of global harmony were only a few of the things that concerned her. These messages were not only in her work and social settings, they had crept into her church. These seemed foreign to her until about five years ago when she first began hearing more and more appeal toward the end of how *Christianity must change or die*. But it just so happened that the visiting preacher touched upon so many of these shared concerns.

This message caught her attention—so much so that she decided to give up her Sunday evening and catch the same speaker for a seminar that titled, *Truth Matters! On Creation, Christ & Cross and Consummation*. Since she had the afternoon free, she took the sermon notes and visited a web site that was mentioned in the message. At first she was confused by it all until she read one small quote which helped put all the pieces together. “It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man; it is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes.” (Psalm 118:8,9) “Wow,” she said to herself, “what a simple concept, yet one that runs deep. ‘Simplicity in profundity.’ Hmmm, I like that,” she said. As she read over pertinent messages and concise philosophical statements about the issue of truth and how one comes to truth, the light further brightened. It was as a result of this experience that confirmed her

going to the evening presentation. She was taken back by a reading on the third web site (the first site had links to multiple sites) that appealed to Jesus' application in Matthew 15—how God disdained the practice of religious traditions of man being placed above (as more authoritative than) God's Word.

It was during this reading that she received an ICQ message from Mark. He was *calling* to invite her out to dinner, to which Nancy responded, "Well, I'm going to attend a seminar this evening. Would you care to join me?" "I'll tell you what," Mark replied, "let's strike a deal. Let's catch both." And that they did. Little did they realize at the time how much that evening would forever affect their relationship. To make a long story short, Mark was offended by the message, labeling it as another one of those fundamentalist, doom-and-gloom perspectives about the last days. Nancy on the other hand, took the free devotional titled *The One Year Book of Bible Prayers* and a simple but quality printout of a list of Scriptures about the days just prior to the return of Jesus Christ. Ten minutes into their dinner, they agreed not to talk about the seminar content, for it had become too controversial. With the redirection of conversation topic, they went on to enjoy one another's company that evening.

This day began for Nancy a ten-year journey into the study of contemporary issues in light of biblical prophecy. At the end of this period, which included a major inductive study of the Word of God, Nancy found herself discerning culture through a biblical grid as opposed to one offered by the contemporary religious community, which by that time had gone from being pluralistic in perspective to syncretistic in mandate—"more than just interesting," she thought. She also critically observed that the two positions (the biblical one and the spiritual one offered by the contemporary

church) were rapidly growing to be in direct opposition with one another. Again, this fascinated her.

In the fourteenth year of her relationship with Mark, global conditions were such that Nancy could not remain as quiet as she had been in the past. Things were heating up eschatologically so much so that she was compelled to speak out. She began telling others about pertinent Scripture passages, web sites, newsletters and videotapes of live presentations concerning crucial biblical themes. Over this year she had countless discussions with Mark—brief ones, for the most part, due to, at times, apparent lack of interest on his part. But it was more than that. Something was clearly wrong, for he seemed even further opposed to her concerns even though her warrants were impeccably justified. The fact that Mark was coming from a Christian background also rang odd, for through the years he had become more outspoken against biblical truths. “He should be more open-minded about these matters,” Nancy thought.

It was almost a year later that she decided to be even more vocal with Mark about her discoveries. She revisited an earlier discussion that she and Mark had had on the eternal consequences tied to following the present global mandate to contribute to world peace through the simple (but further) joining the established One World Alliance by accepting this mark that provided both essentials-for-living and non-essential pleasantries of great sensual appeal. To this, Mark just had to respond.

Mark shouted back, “**But I was always told, ‘Once saved, always saved.’ ...**”
You know how the story unfolds from here.

A Farewell

“But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of ... which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” (II Timothy 3:14,15) It is my prayer that Yahweh God, most high above all so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth, would be pleased to use this ministry as a final-day herald concerning the many deceptions that are currently being promoted globally. In the midst of difficult days, may what small part Endurance Ministries plays make a difference unto His glory and praise, toward the making of a distinction so as to rescue some, and toward the further fostering of the patient enduring of the saints of God in Jesus Christ.

“Now unto Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to God our Savior who alone is wise, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen.” (Jude 24,25; NKJV)

APPENDIX A

ISSUES IN PHILOSOPHICAL THEOLOGY

Stating it one way

Why is it that I delay a formal declaration of my position, theologically, until Section Two? It relates to starting-point assumptions inherent in every general worldview construct and equally so in every perspective on specific concerns. Philosophers use the phrase “absolute presuppositions” to refer to this universal phenomena. When it comes to biblical interpretation, for example, we are met with the question: where do we begin the process? Do we start with the inductive approach, building a worldview perspective from particular facts or individual cases, or, in this case, from individual passages? If so, what are the shortcomings of such an approach given our many limitations in evaluating case-by-case pieces? For example, are there influential but unrecognized suppositions affecting step-by-step conclusions?

If we choose to approach it from the other direction and start with deduction (the reasoning or building paradigmatic meta-narratives from general big-picture principles whereby the individual facts are interpreted in light of the whole), what are the limitations of this method? Not only this, but in reasoning from the “known” to

the unknown, what or who defines “known”? Are there not worldview influences tied to any answer? Thus, “absolute presuppositions.” John Grassmick, in his *Principles and Practice of Greek Exegesis* (pg. 16) touches upon this very theme when he writes,

By now the student is aware of what is called the “hermeneutical circle.” This refers to the fact that the full understanding of a book as a whole depends upon a careful exegesis of each of its passages while, on the other hand, the full understanding of any single passage depends upon an understanding of the whole book in which the given passage occurs.”

It has been recognized that both induction and deduction are crucial ingredients in sound evaluation, but here again, we still must confess limitations! How do we know the big-picture, through intuitive knowledge? If so, whose? Fair questions. No, first we consider pieces and then try to put the individual pieces together. Again, what of the limited judgments that are used to define the individual pieces? There are clear limitations here. I do believe the point has been made, but all for good reason.

All the above point out our philosophical plight: we reason circularly—we can’t help it. To put it in a less offensive-to-our-dignity manner, we confess faith tenets. “Everyone has presuppositions!” argued one opponent of the faith, and that to support his rejection of biblical Christianity! But on what grounds? It all eventually goes back to influential, yet unprovable beliefs. I must include a personal note at this juncture: God’s worldview is once again, through limited but deep-reasoning contemplation, affirmed—it’s “by faith!” Only in God do we find truth attired in this sweet state. He alone is capable of expressing it in both simplicity and in great profundity.

Back to hermeneutics and its tie to end-time positions that bears influence on (depending upon, in part, the degree of convictive belief or passionate conviction from creedal belief—dictionary definitions of “belief” often include both aspects) how one goes about living. This is why the outline of this dissertation is constructed the way it is. We behave in light of our beliefs, understanding that our beliefs are shaped by influential authority sources. A ten-year plan of action is suggested as a result of doctrine and conviction toward that doctrine. The sources informing that belief are multiple. The general diagram on the next page will help clarify.

Action
as a result of

^

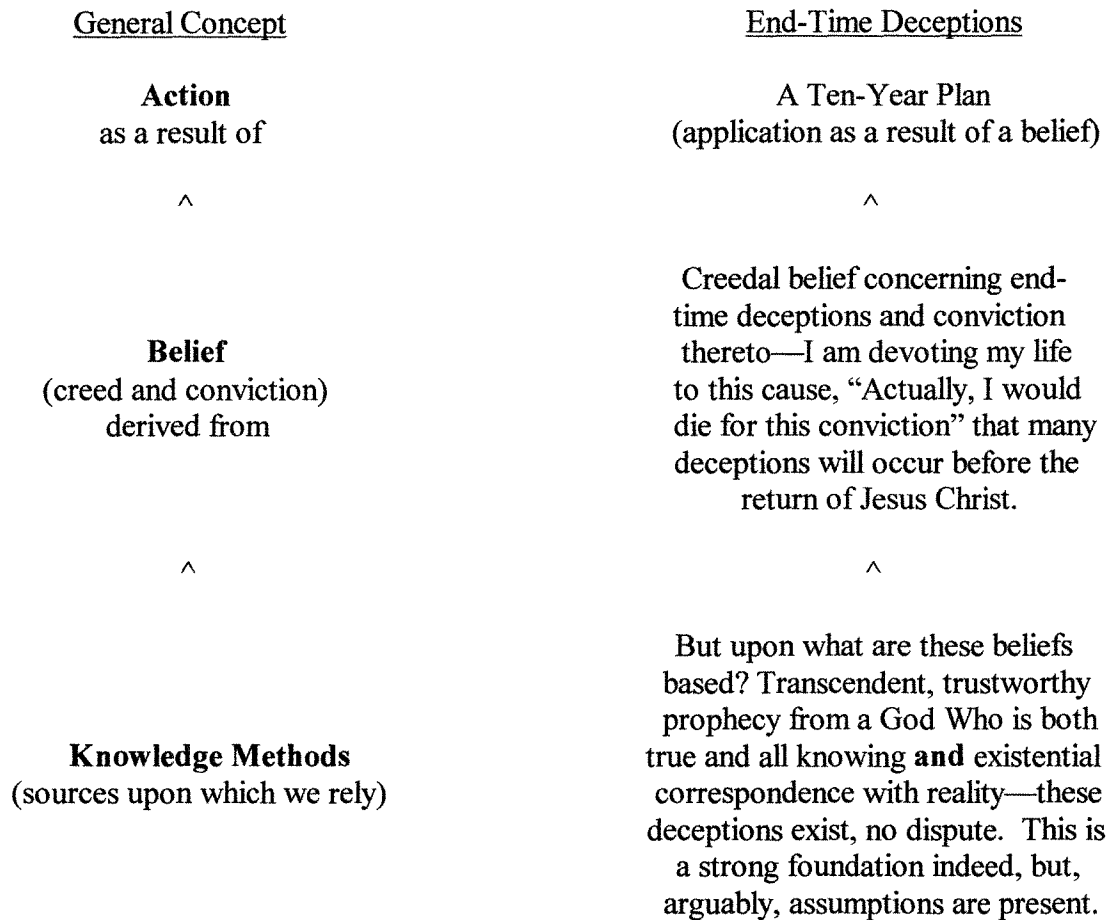
Belief
(creed and conviction)
derived from

^

Knowledge Methods
(sources upon which we rely)

Given our epistemological methods and the degree of authority vested in each method (i.e., authority of God in the Word [chapters 1,6] and authority of humanity in secular humanism [chapters 3,4] and sacred spirituality [chapters 2,5]), we lean upon information sources to come to belief. Depending upon how much truth we vest in these and other methods, we often act accordingly. These methods or sources of knowledge actually serve as standards of authority. The diagram on the next page takes the general concept of crucial foundations (and how these sources influence

behavior) and applies the matter to the more specific concern at hand, which should bring even further clarification as to how this relates to the theme of deception prior to the return of Jesus Christ.



Therefore, as a result of simply (but in profundity) allowing the different epistemological sources to define and speak for themselves (allowing primary sources a fair hearing), and then from there going on to investigate the credibility of these different methods that are tied to different sources which affect quality of information, I go on to place credence in certain methods (not always at the exclusion of particular sources, but) at a higher level of authority than others. Science, for example, is a

changing method by its very definition. Conclusions change as more information is gathered. God's revelation, on the other hand, is enduring and has a heightened degree of qualitative and quantitative character or quality that far exceeds humanity's methods (empirical, rational, and general experiential methodologies).

Given all the above, it is the well-evidenced and viable choice of Endurance Ministries to 1) place Scripture at the authority we have, and 2) embrace a simple, inductive hermeneutic that is well summarized by, "It says what it means and means what it says." This is not to deny the fact of multiple genres. The theme of deception is contained in many literary styles, including proverbial or wisdom, poetry, law, historical, epistolary and prophetic literature.

These are crucial elements within Philosophical Theology that bear a heavy influence upon outcome. God has graciously given absolute truths upon which we are to depend if we are to experience that abundant-life perspective He offers to those who would humbly receive it. While unprovable, the absolute presuppositions in yielding to God's paradigm concerning absolute truth (including truths concerning end-time deceptions) is embraced with sound warrant given Who God is, even in the midst of our uncertainty. This is the biblical worldview position and the confessed faith-tenet foundation upon which this practical ministry project is based.

Stating it yet another way

Given individual worldview perspectives of author and readership, preliminary assumptions are confessed. These *absolute assumptions*, as philosophers call them, actually abound in every paradigm. Due to the limited vantage point from which we

operate, absolute proofs for many positional tenets are unattainable. Once again, the biblical perspective “by faith” is consistent with the correspondence theory of truth!

Three related philosophical presuppositions that directly influence conclusions of this ministry project are readily confessed. First, the reliability of the biblical data to speak correctly on eschatological issues is assumed. In accord with claim to be the actual words of God, the Bible is credited as such. The Openness of God position that holds God’s knowledge of the future is uncertain due to the allowance of humanity’s freedom of choice (and as a result, the end-time passages are tentative) is rejected due to its contradiction to explicit truths articulated in the Word of God. The clear teachings of Jesus concerning His Second Coming and signposts indicating the proximity of His return have not occurred in full. He is yet to return. Humanity is not currently experiencing the millennial reign as outlined in Revelation 20. Therefore, a pre-millennial return of Jesus Christ is presumed by Endurance Ministries. As such, many predicted events that are to happen just prior to His return are yet to occur. Yet, we are beholding global events that match the early eschatological descriptions of the days prior to our Lord’s return. As a result of this both/and dynamic, we are told to watch.

Secondly, the natural, simple-meaning or inductive hermeneutic in approaching the biblical text is the most reliable method toward extracting the intended meaning. The clear teachings of Jesus concerning what will transpire prior to His return are not filled with symbolic metaphor but are stated as actual-event signposts pointing to His soon return. When these things happen, we are to look up, for our salvation draws near. Note the content of Luke 21:28, especially the things

which immediately proceed. The glossary definition of the Second Coming of Christ at the conclusion of this work serves to bring clarification concerning the definition of “His literal, physical return.” It is the biblical record that speaks authoritatively. Interpretation thereafter is, confessionally debatable, but there are strong grounds for this inductive view based upon the simple reading of the text. Our Father’s whole intent in His Word is to inform—to communicate to us concerning Himself and His ways. With this assumption (one not provable but clearly presumed in Scripture), the most effective means by which to receive the message is to first observe what is stated. Interpretation follows. This is the second major presupposition of this work.

Now one related concern before moving on to the third assumption: The extremes of certain language theories which state observation is interpretation is rejected—there is a text that exists and that bears an objective message. Those who polemically play the relativistic language game themselves serve as sufficient examples of the contradiction inherent in their game-playing. (see Millard Erickson’s primary example of Derrida on page 119 of *Postmodernizing the Faith*)

The final major faith tenet of this work relates to hierarchy of epistemological order and is actually a fruit of the first assumption that the Bible is indeed the actual Word of God. The Word of God holds preeminence over secondary human-based knowledge authorities (e.g., empirical, existential, and even ecclesiastical tradition, to name but a few). The clear teachings of Jesus concerning the mandate from His Father offers a crucial model for us today—we need to follow the example of our Lord if indeed we are truly His disciples. Time and time again through the Gospel of John, Jesus responds that He is not doing His own will but that of the Father—that He is not

bringing His own message, but the message of the Father. The traditions of mankind, if contradictory to the clear revelation of God, are not an option if we seek to be obedient followers of Jesus Christ. Dogmatic? Yes, for truth is narrow by definition (common-sense philosophy), as is the way (biblical universals: Mt. 7:13,14; John 14:6; Acts 4:12).

APPENDIX B

EXAMPLES OF PRACTICAL THEOLOGY

As outlined on page 94, three educational ministries are currently being emphasized in Endurance Ministries: newsletters, web sites, and presentations. What follows in this appendix is an example of each in the context of the three ministry branches of the incorporation: Endurance Ministries, Truth Foundations, and Contemporary Issues.

The first section of this appendix is a newsletter example. The endurance ministry category will be used for this example (*Endurance Ministries' Newsletter*) as opposed to the other two newsletters. The second section is a web site example. The Truth Matters site (tied to the Truth Foundations ministry branch) will serve as the example. The presentation example will be in the context of Current Matters!, the presentation title under the contemporary issues ministry department.

A Practical Ministry Example of one of our Newsletters – Endurance Ministries

Endurance Ministries' Newsletter

Endurance Ministries is committed to the following distinctives:

- The Truths the Word of God communicates concerning the days prior to the glorious return of Jesus Christ
- The end-time themes that are so clearly defined in the Scriptures, as opposed to an emphasis on theological speculation. These Biblical themes are everywhere in society TODAY!
- Ministries of education concerning edification of the believer in Jesus Christ, evangelism to those still listening, and equipping toward the further discerning of our day

Are We Still Listening to God's Word, or Have We Thrown Away Our Foundation? Are We Really *People of the Book* Today?

I come from both Lutheran and Baptist streams (see Richard Foster's *Streams of Living Water* for an excellent address on religious traditions through the ages). Both denominational perspectives hold dear the Word of God. Yet, when I venture into some of these churches, I depart wondering if this is still the case.

Has our Postmodern day had any effect upon the church in the area of our grace-given Truth foundation? Consider for just a moment, if you would, some titles from the "Counterpoints Series" by Zondervan that you can find at your local Christian book stores. *Five Views on Apologetics*, *Five Views on Law and Gospel*, *Three Views on the Rapture*, *Four Views on Hell*, *Three Views on the Millennium and Beyond*, *Four Views on Salvation in a Pluralistic World*, *Five Views on Sanctification*, *Three Views on Creation and Evolution*, *Four Views on the Book of Revelation*, and there are more titles due out in the months ahead! (Note: one third of these titles



Is Evangelical Christianity contributing to the undermining of the authority of God's Word by making it a book of opinion?

address "end-time" concerns) Yes, these different views *do* exist, I don't deny this. But my related concern, though, is this: Isn't this a very expression of a relative mindset toward the Word of God? Is the Bible made out to look as a book with no clear truth, but only one that feeds controversy? An opponent of the Faith once argued, "The Bible is a

(Continued on page 3)

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

On "Running the Race"	2
A Sketch of <i>EMN</i> Content	2
Jesus Speaks Clearly	2
What are EMs' "Themes?"	3
The Saga of Julie Ann Pile	4
Ten Internet Ministries	4,5
Additional newsletters?	5

A Response to Psalm 11:3

"If the foundations are destroyed,
what can the righteous do?"
(NASB-ue)

This loaded question was penned thousands of years ago, yet the insight it allows those who receive it today brings great encouragement.

Because Endurance Ministries is devoted to Biblical Truth, this verse serves to point to a crucial question: What is the foundation upon which authority is vested in order to come to a perspective on anything under the sun? This ministry confesses that it is the Word of God. It is the Bible that serves as our authority. Ω

Matthew 24:4,5

And Jesus answered and said to them, "See to it that no one misleads you. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will mislead many.

(NASB-ue)

Words to ponder:

"Many today are claiming to be Christ.

How can this be?

Through a redefining of the term, *Christ* is made out to be a force, a universal energy spirit, actually, God within all, instead of the unique, one-and-only God-man, **JESUS CHRIST."**

Mark 13:5,6

And Jesus began to say to them, "See to it that no one misleads you. Many will come in My name, saying, 'I am He!,' and will mislead many. (emphasis mine)

(NASB-ue)

Running the Race: On Enduring

I just had to give up skiing and basketball. Having suffered a boot-top break of both the tibia and fibula—my leg from the break down



"... let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily hinders our progress. And let us run with endurance the race that God has set before us. We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, on whom our faith depends from start to finish."

Hebrews 12:1b-2a (NLT) AMEN!

was just hanging there—OUCH; having had a knee go out in a direction it doesn't normally go and needing a huge (and hurtful) needle to extract the blood and fluids in that inner knee; and having had a complete Achilles sever, I've stopped the hot-dogging and hooping. Bummer! And YES, a low pain tolerance is another reason—I'm a wimp BUT I CAN STILL RUN!

And run I must if I'm to accomplish certain goals. But these are tied to the physical. There's a spiritual race that far exceeds the triviality of running Glendoveer, a two-mile course around one of the golf courses here in Portland.

Endurance Ministries' main emphasis is enduring in the walk with the Lord Jesus. As one of our theme passages states, "Those who endure to the end will be saved." Endurance is crucial. We don't want to be like some of the Old Testament kings and commoners who failed to endure. How sad; how discour-

(Continued on page 5)

A Sketch of Endurance Ministries' Newsletter Content

The "Word" of God serves us so! The life-work example of Jesus Christ, the Word incarnate, is such a ministry to us who seek to walk as He walked. In like manner, the powerful, precious written Word also serves us, as it does this education ministry. Endurance Ministries brings a variety of genres to our newsletters. As the written Word contains many types of literature, so too does the *Endurance Ministries' Newsletter* (EMN). From fiction to theological address, from simple observation of Biblical passages to the posing of challenging questions, from poetry and music to ministry of help & counsel, as we venture into tough times, the *EMNewsletter* uses these (and other) literary styles to further communicate God's message for our age.

For a partial list of themes that this newsletter addresses,

please see the next page. We are also thankful to the Lord for guest contributors that allow for the drawing from many sources who share these Biblical truths. If you'd like to be a regular subscriber while at the same time support this ministry, go to the bottom of page five of this newsletter for further details. Thank you for taking steps toward obedience to our Lord's call to be prepared. As we proceed to travel further away from the state of luke-warmedness that so pervades Western Christianity, may God bring you deep blessing! In so doing, our Lord God is glorified and we grow in better understanding just what the abundant life in Jesus Christ is all about. Joy in your travels! Even so, please come quickly sweet Jesus—we long for Your return. Ω



For subscription, write
Endurance Ministries
P.O. Box 92098
Portland, OR 97292

Are We Still Listening to God's Word, or Have We Thrown Away Our Precious Foundation? (continued)

(Continued from page 1)

bad epistemology." (a bad source of knowledge) His main argument: "Theologians disagree about everything!" Now we know that's an overstatement, but you know what, he



Forever is Thy WORD settled
in heaven, O sovereign LORD!

has a valid, poignant point, does he not? And who's contributing to this?

We are so short-sighted. We fail to discern some of the long-term consequences of our decisions. No, the revelation of God offers Truth, period. Wait, I've just come up with the next counterpoint theme: *Four Views on God's Revelation*. Perhaps it's already been thought up as another addition to the series, I sincerely would not be surprised. Saddened, yes, surprised, no. Why we so blindly follow the course of this world I do not know, but it's happening on this crucial fundamental issue to a degree that is scary. God's true people will accept that which is clearly stated in the Word as His Truth firmly settled.

Here's one Truth worthy of your consideration: "Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." (Matthew 24:29-31; NKJV) Ω

What are the "Themes" of Endurance Ministries?

The Constitution of Endurance Ministries has a clear statement about the themes this ministry emphasizes. Because it is so clear, and because we are seeking to introduce you to this ministry, a portion of Article 12 is quoted below. This should clarify our intent.

"The Bible emphasizes some crucial end-time themes which are the distinctives of Endurance Ministries. The following topics of concern, toward the end of evangelism and discipleship and ultimately unto the glory and praise of God as His Word is obeyed (1 John 5:1-5), will therefore be among the top priorities of Endurance Ministries. ...

Truth matters, especially given the consequence which comes as a result of acting upon belief. But just how does one go about forming belief, including general worldview and specific perspective on particular topics? One must have an epistemological foundation upon which to stand. Christians have as their foundation, the Word of God. This essential allows for the living out of God's worldview. Within its pages, it warns of deceptions, deceptions lying not in the distant future but that are present today. Through the Word of God, the discerning of worldly culture, in which lies these deceptions, is extended. On the list of end-time character qualities is *hatred of God*

and His people. As the cultural deceptions are exposed (we are to forewarn others of the looming evils which bear great consequence),

the Word of God teaches that great persecution will come to those who, as a result of genuine loving care for those around them, expose the deceptions. ... God's people are to patiently endure under these circumstances. They are to remain faithful to sound doctrine in the midst of a world that has rejected Truth for myth. As the world mandates a global culture, syncretistic demands will be made. God's people are told to respond, not in agreement, but in rejection—we are to separate from the worldly system. As a result, a further wave of persecution will occur. This takes place under the leadership of one who the Bible calls 'antichrist.' As one in absolute opposition to Jesus Christ, even claiming to be Christ ('anti' communicates two ideas: *against* and *instead of*). Christians will have no part with this figure but will remain faithful to the True Messiah, Jesus Christ. Given all these are revealed in Scripture, Endurance Ministries seeks to provide help and encouragement in response."

A theme-by-theme list is then articulated in the rest of the article. Suffice is to say, this is a clear presentation of that to which Endurance Ministries is devoted. If you are interested in more, please subscribe. Ω



Endurance Ministries has gone global through the World Wide Web. See pages 4 and 5 for details.

Notes:

Please visit our web
sites on the Internet

www.endmin.com

www.enduranceministries.com

www.currentmatters.org

www.truthmatters.com

If we can be of further
assistance to you, please
contact us.

Endurance Ministries
P.O. Box 92098
Portland, Oregon
97292-2098

mail@endmin.com

Notes:

**"And so, by your own
tradition, you nullify the
direct commandment of
God. You hypocrites!"**

Jesus Christ
(Matthew 15:6,7a NLT)

The Saga of Julie Ann Pile

This is a true story* about a woman who desired to walk obediently with God. Her name has been changed.

It was after a period of deep hurt that Julie finally



*The Bible speaks of future things. Because of its accuracy, its future predictions are as good as history.

decided to get right with God. This included a passion to be a woman of her word no matter what it cost her. She realized that a tongue under control was an important early step. She no longer wanted to make promises that she really knew she could not keep. While some of these promises were very good ones, they had to be kept if the other or others involved were to be encouraged as she had sincerely hoped.

The news took along time to get out—a lot longer than it took for the word to spread that she was not a woman of her word. But eventually, she became known as one who really cared for those

who she served. Yes, some continued to wonder in erroneous judgment, but many did not. Those who responded in trust were very blessed by what Julie had to offer. In fact, not only were they ministered to as a result of open-mindedness to at least read what she had penned in her letters, they also found some of her concerns, because they were indeed Biblically based, to unfold before their very eyes.

One day it happened. A very influential figure entered upon the world scene. Some, as a result of actions that fulfilled some of the Biblical prophecies about

(Continued on back page)

Theological Traditions of Men; God's Word: Which One Weighs Heavier?

You've heard it before: Jesus was gentle with the sinner seeking restoration yet hard on the religious leaders who, in the case of the story in Matt. 15, placed their traditions above the revealed Word of God. Let's let the Word speak for itself:

Some Pharisees and teachers of religious law now arrived from Jerusalem to interview Jesus. "Why do your disciples disobey our age-old traditions?" they demanded. "They ignore our tradition of ceremonial hand washing before they eat." Jesus replied, "And why do you, by your traditions, violate the direct commandments of God?"

For instance, God says, 'Honor your father and mother,' and 'Anyone who speaks evil of father or mother must be put to death.' But you say, 'You don't need to honor your parents by caring for their needs if you give the money to God instead.' And so, by your own tradition, you nullify the direct commandment of God. You hypocrites! Isaiah was prophesying about you when he said, "These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far away. Their worship is a farce, for they replace God's

commandments with their own man-made teachings.'"

(Matthew 15:1-9 NLT)

This ministry elevates the clear teachings of Scripture above current theological traditions of religious leaders. As a result, it stands firm on the clearly revealed Truths of God. In so doing, we seek to worship God in spirit and truth, thanking Him that our worship is not in vain. In the midst of a very spiritual day, are we placing God's Word first, over our own?



**It's better to obey
God than man!**
(See Ps. 118:8,9
and Acts 4,5)

Ω

Introducing Our WEB Ministry

We are sincerely thankful to the Lord for His leading in the direction of these newsletter ministries. Currently, three are being published on a regular basis. *Endurance Ministries Newsletter*, *Truth Foundations Newsletter*, and *Contemporary Issues Newsletter*. Realistically, though,



Global Ministry through the Internet

newsletters only receive a small circulation. Although there are inherent weaknesses in Internet education, Endurance Ministries has decided to commit to ministry over the World Wide Web with certain features in clear mind. Due to global access, all web sites will be of a tone

for all viewers (10 are due to be up and running by 2003). A humble, presuppositional yet matter-of-fact approach will be taken that affirms objective Biblical Truths while at the same time offering these Truths to whoever would receive them. Endurance Ministries does not want to com-

municate an attitude that conveys we alone have the Truths and others do not, but one that takes sincere joy in the Truths God has graciously made available

In this mode, a meek but Truth-offering approach is fostered and maintained. This reflects the worldview perspective God articulates in His Word. He has clearly offered His Truth. We in turn desire to offer the same to those willing to listen (vs. offering petty opinions of human theory). The Internet ministry offers global access toward the accomplishing of these God-honoring goals. So go ahead, visit us on the World Wide Web the next time you're on-line. Ω

1 John 2:21-23 (NLT)

So I am writing to you not because you don't know the truth but because you know the difference between truth and falsehood. And who is the great liar? The one who says that Jesus is not the Christ. Such people are antichrists, for they have denied the Father and the Son. Anyone who denies the Son doesn't have the Father either. But anyone who confesses the Son has the Father also."

Running the Race: On Enduring (continued)

(Continued from page 2)
aging! Instead, we desire to run with endurance the spiritual race in Jesus Christ.

Toward that end, Endurance Ministries (EM) is devoted to further educating God's people on Biblical themes relating to our days. We want to further contribute to the raising of Biblical discernment. God asks this of us as He states time and

time again: "WATCH!" EM accomplishes this education ministry at this early juncture through three main vehicles: newsletters, web sites and speaking ministries. We've addressed the first two in other articles, but what about speaking ministries?

We currently offer "Truth Matters!" "Enduring Matters!" and "Current Matters!" presentations using the me-

dia technologies of our day. If you discern the lack of depth in the church today and wish to sponsor a seminar, workshop, class, etc. on the themes mentioned on page three, contact us at

mail@endmin.com

Let's not be like King Joash in II Chron. 24. Let's finish the race through God's provisions, in Jesus' name. Ω

"Although there are inherent weaknesses in Internet education, Endurance Ministries has decided to commit to ministry over the World Wide Web with certain features in clear mind."

Read In More Depth Through the Newsletters

We can only say so much through the globally accessible web ministry. As a result of this limitation, Endurance Ministries' newsletters more fully address the contemporary concerns spoken of in the Word of God with great urgency. We do not want to appear sensational. If there were not reasons for deep concern, if so many biblical predictions were not unfolding before us, then, no, such concern

should not be raised. But these Biblical themes are here, present today, and we must begin discerning them. If you would like to further support this ministry through paid subscription to our newsletter(s), please email us at mail@endmin.com for further information. *Endurance Ministries' Newsletter* is published twice annually until 2008 when rates will increase—reflecting a doubling of publication issues.

Until then, annual subscription is \$60/year. This covers both printing and mailing costs and contributes to further ministry development. If, after reading through this introduction (we would also encourage you to look over the web sites), you would like to order a subscription, send a \$60 check to

Endurance Ministries
P.O. Box 92098
Portland, OR. 97292



Biblical Education through the Internet, Newsletters and Live Presentations for the glory of God and the edification of His people.

**Endurance
Ministries, Inc.**

P.O. Box 92098
Portland, Oregon
97292-2098

We're on the Web!
www.endmin.com

**Endurance Ministries'
Purpose and Objectives
Statements:**

"The purpose of Endurance Ministries is to glorify God through the promotion of Biblical Truths which will be especially vital in the days prior to the Second Advent of the Lord Jesus Christ."

"Given Endurance Ministries' purpose, the primary ministry objectives are educational in nature: Evangelistic unto Christ Jesus; Edifying unto Christ-likeness; and Equipping unto the work of the ministries of Evangelism and Edification."

(taken from Article 2 of the Constitution of Endurance Ministries, Inc.)

Julie Ann's Saga Continues

(Continued from page 4)

this little horn, began to pose the question, "Could this possibly be the one the Bible calls the First Beast of Revelation 13?" "Is this the Antichrist?" Julie was included among the many who raised this fair question. After all, the Word of God clearly indicates that many are deceived during this period just prior to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. It was indeed an appropriate question. Yet, those who were listening to the other spiritual voices of the day decided not to further inquire about this possible alternative.

Julie asked the Lord for help. "Lord, what can I do to help those who call themselves yours further consider our request to at least study the Scriptures to see if what is being suggested is possibly true?" Fair prayer it was. Julie could not persuade. It could only be the reception of the Holy Spirit's warning that would change the hearts of those who were failing to correctly discern the day.

Well, the time after the initial signing of the covenant passed quickly, until half way into it, anyway. At that time, exactly what many had forewarned took place: this charismatic leader broke the covenant and removed the regular sacrifice. People around the globe began citing many passages from Daniel and Revelation concerning the dangers of following this world leader. Some responded favorably and began to evaluate critically through Biblical wisdom just what was being offered by this man of intrigue. Others didn't bother.

One day in prayer, Julie sensed a strong answer from the Lord. It was one of deep blessing for her.

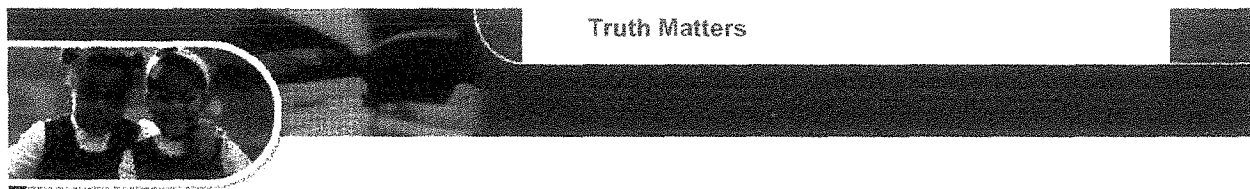
*(To be continued
in the next newsletter)*

"For this reason you also must be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think *He will!*"

Matthew 24:44 (NASB-ue)



A Practical Ministry Example of one of our Web Sites – Truth Foundations



[About Us](#)
[Our Concern](#)
[Events](#)
[Contact](#)
[Site Map](#)
[Home](#)

[make home page](#)
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[print page](#)
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Welcome to Truth Matters!

Truth Matters is an information source provided by Truth Foundation, a service committed to helping society build worldview foundation based upon ALL sources of available truth.

Our title communicates our two-fold intent:

1. Truth really does matter, in fact, it matters a great deal; and
2. It is the matter or issue of truth and our search for truth to which this site is passionately devoted. The arrival at truth is the sincere hoped-for destination of this inquiry!

We feel we have been most fair in going about an *as-neutral-as-possible* investigation into the MOST IMPORTANT of all starting-point journeys. The search for truth mandates the use of a tool - knowledge. "Which knowledge method is being relied upon to form worldview perspective?" "How good are these sources?" "Are these authority voices of sound quality?" "What are the limitations of a specific information source?" and "What are the consequences tied to erroneous truth foundations?" are only a few of the many crucial questions we will be addressing on this paradigm-building journey.

In pursuit of truth, have we discerned the starting-point presuppositions in the inquiry, or are we searching for truth with the outcome already predetermined as a result of influential faith tenets? These, often hidden assumptions, are the ones forecasting the outcome!

Truth Matters simply seeks to open this rock-bottom-assumptions box in order to allow for a search that minimizes the biases as much as one is able. Once multiple methods of truth have been fairly considered, we can then go on to embrace certain methods as more authoritative than others given how they fare through this initial allowing-the-sources-to-initially-define-themselves inquiry. Again, this is crucial if we sincerely desire to begin the journey with as little bias as possible.

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In pursuit of truth, have we discerned the starting-point presuppositions inherent in the inquiry, or are we searching for truth with the outcome already predetermined as a result of influential faith tenets? These, often hidden assumptions, are the key in forecasting the outcome!

Truth Matters simply seeks to open this rock-bottom-assumptions box in order to allow for a search that minimizes the biases as much as one is able. Once the multiple methods of truth have been fairly considered, we can then go on to embrace certain methods as more authoritative than others given how they fare through this initial allowing-the-sources-to-initially-define-themselves inquiry. Once again, this is crucial if we sincerely desire to begin the journey with as little bias as possible.

Look over this site. Walk with us for a while on this exciting second-to-none journey in pursuit of truth. If you would like a free copy of our introductory newsletter which further addresses this essential theme, direct your written request to:

TRUTH MATTERS

About Us

Because truth is self-contained, the vehicle through which this information is extended is not the centerpiece. Actually, we choose not to focus on ourselves but on the issue at hand. Let us illustrate through a true story while visiting Reed College in Portland, Oregon one sunny fall day. We had posted Plato's famous dialogue between Socrates and Protagoras on the issue of relative, subjective truth. (If you have not read this, you should!) Due to the setting, we were trying to help these intellectual giants see an internal contradiction in embracing holistic relativism. While a few were willing to discuss the point at hand, we had more come up and make comments or ask related questions, but ones which were beside the point. For example, one asked, "Do you have a copy of this in its original [language]?" After apologizing that we did not, the student left. Another stated as she pointed to the handout, "This is excellent. It's even better in the Greek!" But in similar fashion, turned and walked off. WAIT! Let's talk about the real thing, that which really matters here!

We simply don't want to get sidetracked on unimportant, secondary issues. The concern of truth is what matters, and because this is the sincere intent of this site, let's begin our journey. Dr. Ed Miller (in his introduction to philosophy text titled *Questions That Matter*) states the theme of this site in a simple, common-sense, easy-to-understand manner:

"It is true that our answers to the questions of reality will largely determine our answers to many other questions. But we cannot really answer any question at all, not even the question of reality, until we have become clear on the still prior question of knowledge. Think about this until you see it: Judgments about reality, morality, art, society, religion, politics, science, or anything else, presuppose judgments about knowledge itself - whether we can know, how we can know, and what we can know. Take for example, your knowledge that 'In fourteen hundred and ninety-two, Columbus sailed the ocean blue.' How did you arrive at this piece of knowledge? In your claim to 'know' this there are surely contained many implicit judgments about epistemological issues such as the limits of reason, the role of sense experience, the relevance of intuition, the assurances of historical investigation, the nature and criterion of truth, the nature and certainty of 'facts,' the possibility of certainty, and degrees of certainty. If such a welter of considerations is necessarily involved in such a harmless claim as 'In fourteen hundred and ninety-two, Columbus sailed the ocean blue,' then how much more attention must we give the epistemological underpinnings of claims about reality, value, moral responsibility, society, and God?" (pp. 179,180)

There is one *big* word in this quote. "Epistemology" is one of the major branches of philosophy. It is the inquiry which poses the question, "How do we know what we (think we) know?" Webster's New World Dictionary (Second Collegiate Edition) defines this most fundamental-toward-the-building-of-one's-worldview term in this way: "The study or theory of the origin, nature, methods and limits of knowledge." [Note: this dictionary definition correctly points to a plurality of knowledge methods and sources. This is crucial but not always the case in every dictionary definition. Some are exclusive, but we cannot be if our starting point is to be fair and holistic]

If this is, as Dr. Miller and others have claimed, the most rock-bottom foundational concern in our search for truth, if it is the prerequisite to

everything else under the sun, wisdom would direct us to fairly consider all methods of truth as potential sources worthy of consideration if our journey is indeed going to be all-inclusive!

Using Webster's definition, an important observation is offered. Each method of knowledge has its own origin or source, nature, and set of limitations. No wonder some philosophers refer to this topic as "absolute presuppositions." Proof or absolute certainty is not possible given who we are - finite, limited beings. But we must start somewhere if this fascinating journey is to begin, and genuinely fascinating it is! So here again, we are met with related questions. Because we are not used to thinking about this crucial matter, we are going to phrase it slightly different than we did on the home page (so as to be sure we're on the same page). Bear with one more attempt on our part to state the concern as clear as possible. It's important.

Truth matters, does it not? Don't we all start somewhere as we begin a journey? As we search for truth, where do we begin the investigation? Fair questions!

In pursuit of truth, have we discerned the initial suppositions inherent in the way we look at what we accept as true premises? These (often hidden) assumptions directly influence the outcome! But do we recognize these key determinants? Most of the time, many do not. 1) Have we identified the sources or methods of information we rely upon to bring us to truth? 2) How good are these things upon which we depend - are they reliable? Of what quality are they, really? 3) Do we understand that these very sources of knowledge serve as authority voices? and, 4) What if we are wrong about the credibility or truth of these influential sources in which we vest varying degrees of authority to come to any perspective on anything under the sun? These are both fair and crucial questions! So, once again, we ask, don't we all start somewhere? Indeed we do!

Truth Matters is an educational service that simply calls the genuine seeker of truth to look more closely at some of the crucial rock-bottom assumptions that exist at the beginning of the inquiry in order to allow for a search for truth that minimizes the biases, as much as possible. This service helps expose our need for further thought on this matter. If one begins a long ocean journey slightly off course, the consequences could be great. If we walk through the journey of life slightly off course at the very beginning as a result of erroneous and/or incomplete tools (i.e., truth foundations), even greater consequences may lie before us! And that they do because the whole journey of life is of much greater significance than simply a geographical trek across a state or continent, or global tour for that matter.

Join us as we seek to uncover and think more thoroughly about the most basic, yet absolutely essential concept tied to all search-for-truth inquiries. Joy and freedom in your journey. *(For those wishing a printed copy of this page, you must copy, paste, and then print if you wish to catch the entire text - printing from this site does not always include the entire document. We apologize for the inconvenience.)*

[Return to home page](#) ; [On to "Our Concern" page](#)

Our Concern

The fundamental concept is articulated on the "Home" and "About Us" pages. But how can this highly abstract concept be framed in more tangible, easy-to-understand ways? The following material casts this search for truth into more practical expressions. Hopefully, after looking over the following pages, you will further see the essential and vitally important nature of this inquiry. If you'd like more information or have a question or two, please

join us for one of our events,

email us at mail@truthmatters.com, or

write us at Truth Foundations; P.O. Box 92098; Portland, OR. 97292.

The search for truth is tied to the study of knowledge, to which the following pages are devoted.

[A Diagram](#)

[Good Questions](#)

[On Culture](#)

[Philosophical Inquiry](#)

[Back to our Home Page](#)

Thanks for your interest in this crucial matter ... Truth Matters!

A Diagram

I don't know about you, but I'm a visual learner. When things are put in picture form, well, that's a good thing! The diagram below has helped hundreds better understand the tie truth foundations has to practical living.

<u>General Idea</u>	<u>Synonyms</u>	<u>Commentary</u>
ACTION ^ ^ ^	Behavior, Doing	We ACT according to BELIEF that includes both creed and conviction. Webster's Dictionary
BELIEF ^ ^ ^	Conviction; Passion Creed; Doctrine	definition of belief emphasizes both aspects of belief. BUT, how does one construct a general
FOUNDATION	Information Sources	belief system or specific view on a particular issue?

Actions flow from beliefs that are formed by knowledge methods. It's all contingent upon

TRUTH FOUNDATIONS !

It's these Truth Foundations that serve as authoritative sources that we rely upon to come to our own construct of belief. But what are these sources, how good are these sources, and, well, you know the crucial question that follows if you've read the "Good Questions" page.

For a more complete foundation sufficient and worthy of embrace, visit Truth Foundations for a brief summary of a foundation of truth second to none. Seriously! But there are additional questions, [Good Questions](#) to further ponder at this juncture.

On Culture

Culture is yet another way to go about considering the issue of how we know what we know. One way to look at the cultural dynamics is through a Modern/Postmodern comparison and contrast.

For hundreds of years now, Modernity has emphasized the methods of science and reason in the pursuit of truth. Lately however, Postmodernity has helped to bring things into better balance (although some have gone into imbalance by over-emphasizing subjective truth at the expense of rejecting objective truths). But what are the limitations of both of these ways of looking at life?

These perspectives are offerings of humanity - it's people who use their heads (reason) and eyes (observational science) to come to truth. It's people who, while living, use experience to define reality for them. But there are so many limitations to both, even when human constructs of truth that include spirituality are added to the objective and subjective methods. Michael Polanyi's materials serve as an excellent example. Even though he emphasizes both objective methods (he was a chemist and a thinker affirming science and reason) and subjective, existential methodology, he goes on to offer spiritual truth appeals. Is this package complete? Is this paradigm sufficient, or are we still missing a *full plate* (of knowledge methods)?

The Bible says God's ways are higher than mankind's ways as high as the heavens are above the earth - Old Testament: Isaiah 55; New Testament: I Corinthians 1-3. This is quite a significant contrast! It says God's truths are much more complete than what humanity has to offer. Read the Proverbs for wisdom beyond this world. Read the Psalms for testimonials about God's relational faithfulness to those who seek Him out. You will find these reads to be an inspiration and a blessing.

One final approach in better discerning the importance of sound Truth Foundations:

A philosophical consideration leads those who are open to truth to give a fair consideration of all sources claiming to offer truth. Warning: many have come to Jesus Christ as a result of this type of open-minded Truth inquiry. "Why?" you might wonder. He is truth, and those who come to him find transcendent Truth in God and in so receiving His gift, are set free.

[To the final page of this site](#)

Philosophical Inquiry

On the "About Us" page we cited Webster's Dictionary definition of *epistemology*. "The study or theory of the origin, nature, methods and limits of knowledge." We went on to make an important observation: Each method of knowledge has its own *origin or source*; each source of information has its own *nature, quality or characteristics*; and each knowledge method has its own *set of limitations*.

Using Webster's definition, the following evaluation-of-methods grid offers tremendous primary-source insight. In other words, in order to be fair to each method (remember, we're on a journey in search of truth and desire to be all-inclusive so as to fairly consider all available information sources), we must listen to a definition of each method that correctly describes itself as it is essentially defined. This is a fair inquiry, as opposed to distorting or misrepresenting a particular method. The grid below is not exhaustive, but allows for a good start.

<u>Origin/Source</u>	<u>Nature</u>	<u>METHODS</u>	<u>Limitations</u>
Humanity (H)	??	Science	Process done in context of humanity. Observation of physical things is emphasized.
Humanity (H)	??	Reason	Process done in context of humanity. Rational or mental thinking is emphasized.
Humanity (H)	??	Experience	Process done in context of humanity. A combination of human-based processes is emphasized.
Plural (H & G)	??	Tradition	Process done in context of humanity. A combination of human- and God-based ingredients is emphasized.
God (G)	??	Bible	As is (self-defined), the Biblical source is God's spoken Word in context of human participation.

In application, a suggested assignment:

The Word of God (as it clearly claims) is a source frequently misrepresented today. Some who genuinely seek truth have been rather taken back when they decide to read the book and let it speak for itself. In light of much anecdotal evidence telling of great blessing as a result of reading this source, we challenge you to take the time (due to the eternal consequences tied to the themes addressed) to fairly consider what the Bible says about itself, as opposed to blindly believing speculative theories in contradiction to its statements and truth claims. Don't worry, it won't bite. Just read it. Start in the New Testament by reading through the Gospel of John. This short book has a lot to say about truth, as do the other books in his name (i.e., the Letters of John). The other book this same author had part in writing is Revelation - a book that (when written almost two thousand years ago) told of future things that are actually unfolding TODAY!

A Practical Ministry Example of one of our Presentations – Contemporary Issues

If you would like to host a
Current Matters!

presentation at your church,
 college or seminary campus,
 please contact us at:

Endurance Ministries, Inc.
 P.O. Box 92098
 Portland, Oregon 97292

jonswanson@msn.com

Visit us on the Web:

www.truthmatters.com
 (intended for non-Christian viewers)

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Current Matters!
A Look at our
Present Cultural Dynamic

because
TRUTH
MATTERS!

Host:

Jon P. Swanson

(Collegiate Minister with Mission to the Americas and
 Director of Truth Foundations/Endurance Ministries, Inc.)

**"If the foundations are destroyed,
 what can the righteous do?"**
(Psalm 11:3; NKJV)

WELCOME, in Christ Jesus' precious name!

Current Matters!
(schedule and outline)

Introductions	Monday
Session I	Tuesday
<i>Introducing the Concept</i>	
Session II	Weds.
<i>Defining the Concept</i>	
Session III	Thursday
<i>Modeling the Concept</i>	
Session IV	Friday
<i>Applying the Concept</i>	

My PERSONAL Applications

(as a result of increased confidence in His Word)

1. Personal Encouragement:

2. Personal Evangelism:

3. Personal Equipping:

Truth Matters! A Biblical Apologetic for a Postmodern World
Truth Foundations' AMF Young Adult Camp; July, 8-15, 2001.

APPENDIX C

CORRESPONDENCE IN SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

As stated in the main document, it is important that the reader accept the sincere intent of this inclusion. This round of correspondence between Dr. Thomas Ice and myself is included here to show how far unproven presuppositions influence a specific view. In this case, it the concern of the timing of the rapture event. Definition of terms is crucial, for it makes or breaks one's position.

In the following dialogue with Dr. Ice, I focus on the concern of just when the rapture takes place. I simply asked for clear biblical support for the Pre-Trib view. No support was offered but due to the assumption that I could not give any biblical justification for my position, I responded. In this return, I gave three passages while at the same time raising the concern of theological traditions and just how tentative they are depending upon warrant from the Scriptures, thus my appeal to *faulty systematic theology*.

Please receive the genuine intent above and be faithful in conveying the message if you choose to use the material in this appendix. In a day of deception, it is important to walk in integrity, proper representing those of other viewpoints—thus my inclusion of the entire correspondence.

Dear Doctor Tom,

June 1, 1998

I really need your help. I would assume if you're willing to write extensively on the topic of end times and establish a ministry which is set aside toward this end, you would take the time to respond to individuals like myself who are also devoted to the study of this crucial issue.

I am a campus minister with Mission to the Americas (formerly, Conservative Baptist Home Mission Society) and am pursuing a Th.M. (Theology) at Western Seminary in Portland, Oregon. (I enclose a paper which I presented at the national ETS meeting last November only to illustrate the degree of seriousness I devote to things which our Lord has called me. Eschatology is one of those *things*.)

Would you please respond to the following concerns.

1. In your "The Truth About the Tribulation" booklet, you fail to give biblical support showing "the tribulation" is equivalent to "the Day of the Lord" or "the Wrath of God." In all of the passages quoted, even the word *tribulation* is missing. While your clear purpose is to define "the tribulation" as "the Day of the Lord," you fail to provide **biblical** support. You seem to assume the very point you are trying to prove at the very beginning of the address. Since this is one key issue, I'd appreciate your response. My need: Could you cite clear passages of Scripture which support your supposition? (By the way, I have read When the Trumpet Blows [pp. 57-84] and conclude with the same request.

2. It is clear, biblically, that Jesus Christ is returning. There's no dispute among believers on this fact. I do, though, remain unconvinced that the passages you cite in support for the pretribulational rapture event are necessarily distinguishable from the sure event of His Second Coming. I've read "The Truth About the Rapture" booklet and can very easily, literally (biblically), and smoothly show the passages to speak of one event. My need: Since this (the Second Coming of Christ) is the undisputed teaching of Scripture, could you please provide clear biblical support for a pretribulational, pre-antichrist two-fold/stage return of our Lord?

3. If there is lack of biblical support for a two-fold/phase coming of Jesus Christ, the definition of the term "imminency" becomes an even greater issue. Biblically speaking, I do not find imminency ever taught. Imminency is not the same as "waiting patiently," or the same as saying "His coming is at hand," or, from the very words of our Lord, "I am coming quickly." While the passages which you cite could be interpreted as support for an any-moment return of Jesus Christ, they could also be cited as appeals toward readiness/preparedness. There is a difference between the two ideas. My need: Could you provide one passage where it is clearly stated that Christ may come at any moment?

Thank you for the courtesy of your response.

For the glory of our Sovereign King,

Rev. Jon P. Swanson
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Pre-Trib Research Center

Dr. Thomas Ice
Executive Director

June 24, 1998

Jon Swanson
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Dear Jon:

Let me begin by congratulating you on your degree of seriousness. Note the following responses:

Question 1: The Tribulation

First, we do cite passages that use the term "tribulation." This is noted on pages 8 through 15. It is explained on page 9 that the time of "distress" is the NASB translation of the Hebrew word **צָרָה**; which the KJV translates as "tribulation," from where we get the popular eschatological term. I don't know how an individual of your caliber and seriousness of things eschatological could have failed to read or comprehend our clear statement. You have a need to read and comprehend what others write. I know that we have properly communicated this, since at least two other opponents of our view have understood us to be saying what I have reexplained (i.e., preterists Gary DeMar and Ken Gentry). Thus, contra your false statement, we do provide biblical support for this term in our book. Other passages are cited in this section that use the word "distress" or "tribulation" (KJV).

Second, we also cite Zephaniah 1:14-18 (p. 12) as an instance where "day of the Lord" and "distress" or "tribulation" are used to describe the same event. "Day of the Lord" is used in some form at least three times in this passage. "Distress" or "tribulation" is used twice as well. Thus, it is clear from the context that this plethora of descriptives are used to describe a single episode popularly known as the tribulation. This is scriptural support.

Question 2: The Rapture

As stated in our book on the rapture, a synthesis of rapture passages when compared to a summary of second coming texts yield the differences we noted. I am sorry that you are not convinced. Some people are not able to distinguish

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between an apple and an orange. Further, since the Bible (starting in the Old Testament) describes the “wrath to come” (1 Thess 1:10; cf. 5:9) as a descriptive for what we call the tribulation, then the Bible teaches that believers will be removed before the tribulation, i.e., pretribulationism. The Greek word *ῥύομαι* translated by the NASB as “delivers” carries the idea “to draw or snatch out to oneself” (Cremer, p. 516). Such an eschatological context supports our notion that believers will be removed before the tribulation, by means of the rapture taught in 1 Thessalonians 4.

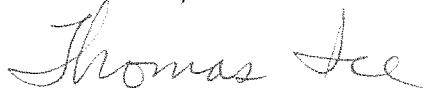
Your deductive logic in favor of your view does not work when you turn around and demand a specific passage that states pretribulationism. Show me a passage that teaches that the rapture will occur after the tribulation or in conjunction with the second coming. You will not be able to do that. Thus, you have to reason in a similar fashion as pretribulationists to prove any position. We believe that the New Testament in its way, with its language teaches pretribulationism. I could ask all kinds of questions to Scripture that it does not answer in a way that would satisfy the precise nature of question. Show me one verse that states the Trinity. Provide a verse that explains how Christ can be God and man. The Bible teaches this, but not in a single verse. It is the result of putting together biblical teaching and drawing the only conclusion possible within the perimeter of Holy Writ. So it is with pretribulationism, . . . and I might add any other view of the timing of the rapture.

Question 3: Imminency

I'll simply repeat the passages you referred to, because you and all who reject the pre-trib understanding of imminence as including an “any-moment” dimension must explain how the “eagerly waiting” for Christ passages would allow the appearance of anti-Christ, the dozens of tribulation events, and finally the second coming. The sense of those passages demand that the next event is the coming of Christ. This can only be if He comes in the air and raptures His church before He returns to the earth with His bride. Sorry you do not get it. But those passages teach imminency. In fact, the NASB translates *ταχυνή* with the English word “imminent.” You are correct about one thing, the implication drawn from an imminent event is readiness/preparedness—which pretribulationist teach—but others cannot. Even though you are not a pretribulationist, perhaps you are an operational pretribulationist who teaches that we must be prepared for the coming of Christ, even though you are looking for anti-Christ.

Hope this has been helpful.

Maranatha,



Thomas D. Ice

July 4, 1998

Greetings Dr. Ice, in the precious name of our Lord Jesus!

Thank you for taking time to respond to my letter of June 1st. I realize that your schedule is full but believe my response to your note worthy of your thoughtful consideration. I'd like to take you up on your invitation to show you a passage supporting the post-antichrist, post-tribulational, yet pre-wrath Second Coming of our Lord to rapture His people. You go on to say that I "will not be able to do that." You see, you once again assume too much. I've not, to date, shared my position with you. For you to say "You will not be able to do that [i.e., "Show me a passage that teaches that the rapture will occur after the tribulation or in conjunction with the second coming."]," is presuming you know my position, which you do not. Isn't this a fair and just observation?

Since you do ask that I show you **biblical support**, I will be honored to do so. Before I do, though, I need to, in response to your note, communicate that I don't feel you have answered my question regarding the tribulation period and its equivalence to "the Day of the Lord." I have read your material carefully and discern an incorrect association with the two through **biblical study**. New Testament progressive revelation further illumines its definition of the tribulation period, which separates the wrath of antichrist and the world against God's elect from the wrath of God which is poured out on the earth. While there is indeed a Day of Wrath coming upon the inhabitants of the earth (those who have received the mark of the beast), it is crucial that one

have a correct (biblical) definition of *that day*. The New Testament does bring a clear picture concerning the timing of the Wrath of God. Thus, in answer to your request to show you a passage that teaches the rapture occurs after the tribulation or in conjunction with the second coming, please give careful and prayerful consideration to my answer concerning the harmonizing of the catching up of God's people (I Cor. 15 & I Thes. 4) and the event of the second coming. Note, for clarification's sake: I am not a mid-trib, "Pre-wrath", or post-tribulationist. Please, to avoid faulty association, listen carefully to the position which I feel the Scriptures clearly teach. I am a premillennialist who believes that the Scriptures clearly teach a pre-wrath rapture (one not defined by Rosenthal, Cooper and Van Kampen - i.e., at the Sixth Seal, but which is described in Rev. 11 at the *final trumpet* and which is also addressed in Rev. 14:14ff. Because the wrath of God clearly comes through the bowl judgments, I do agree with you that the Church will indeed miss the "wrath of God," as it is biblically defined!). You see, I am able to give clear passages which inductively demonstrate the Scriptures teach 1) the rapture occurs after the tribulation period and 2) before the wrath of God. Here are the passages in support of this position.

Matthew 24 does not mention the pretrib rapture. Instead, Jesus mentions the period of the beginning of sorrows. "Then," tribulation, of which includes the event of the abomination of desolation (No chronological words or phrases at the beginning of verse 15). That the tribulation of verse 9 continues through the period of the great tribulation is contextually supported, as some of those in your movement advocate. The point, though, is what follows *the tribulation of those days*.

"Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven (cf. vs. 3, "what will be the sign of Your coming...?"), and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory."

(I find it sad how often your material does not include the next verse, which goes on to describe the rapture event.)

"And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."

Without interpretation; simply observing what the passage clearly teaches, we find the following:

First the tribulation, then the coming of the Son of Man, which includes the gathering together of His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. This passage clearly teaches the gathering occurs **after** the great tribulation. The passage goes on to clearly state the inhabitants of the earth will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

There you have it. One passage which clearly teaches "that the rapture will occur **after** the tribulation or in conjunction with the second coming."

The passage is that which is observed, not interpreted through a faulty systematic theology. It says what it means and means what it says.

II Thessalonians 2 teaches the same! "Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him." Two things must happen prior to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him: 1) the falling away, and 2) the revealing of the man of sin. Simple observation of the passage cites Paul's topic of address, the coming of Jesus Christ and our gathering, both of which will be preceded by the apostasy and the revealing of the man of sin. First or Second Thessalonians also do not mention the pretrib rapture.

There you have it. Another passage which teaches the rapture will occur ... in conjunction with the second coming."

The passage is that which is observed, not interpreted through a faulty systematic theology. It says what it means and means what it says.

If the book of Revelation is chronological (and given the historical parenthesis of Rev. 12 - 14:13), the exact same scenario unfolds. (The entire book does not mention the pretrib rapture)

First, the tribulation period (cf. Mt.24:9-28 w/ Rev. 6:1-11)
 Then the heavenly signs (cf. Mt. 24:29 w/ Rev. 6:12,13)
 Then the sky receding (cf. Mt. 24:30a,b w/ Rev. 6:14-17)
 Then the final trumpet and the Rapture (cf. I Cor. 15,
 I Thes. 4 & Mt. 24:30c w/ Rev. 11:15-19 & Rev. 14:14-16)

A foundational key to the understanding of the position I believe the Scriptures to teach rests on the "trumpet passages". I believe Matthew 24:31, I Corinthians 15:51,52, I Thes. 4:13-18 and Revelation 11:15-19; 14:14-16 are all describing one event. Please see the yellow 8.5 x 14 enclosure entitled "End - Time Chronology."

The above is my response to your/my "Question #2." Finally, concerning "Question #3," it is your material which confesses a narrow understanding of the word imminency. At one point you give a fair definition of the term, but then go on to accept only one aspect of the definition. I think the majority of the readers see this inconsistency. It further confuses your readers when they see books coming out from Pretrib authors with titles such as *10 Reasons Why Jesus Is Coming Soon*. This is in direct opposition to your very counsel.

Brother Tom, I really feel we could both benefit from an ongoing exchange of thoughts - in one sense, toward the principle of *iron sharpening iron*. I believe that we of all people, of common faith, should talk over doctrinal issues. Communication is so important in coming to a better understanding as to where one is coming from. I look forward to ongoing written dialogue with you over this extremely important issue.

Co-laboring with you for the glory of our Lord Jesus,

Jon P. Swanson
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GLOSSARY

Theology. Inquiry about God and God's ways.

The Second Coming of Jesus Christ

A highlight of human experience—God sets up His eternal kingdom. There are many definitions of this event. Due to the variety of opinions as to how the return of Jesus Christ takes place and since it is a key aspect defining this ministry, the following definition of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ is meant in this work unless stated otherwise in the context emphasizing a particular portion of His return.

In light of the teachings in the definitive source—the Word of God, the Second Coming of Jesus Christ is a three-part return. 1) He is first seen at the scrolling apart of the heavens (Rev. 6:14-17; cf. Mt. 24:30); 2) He then comes to gather His people (Rev. 11:15; 14:14-16; cf. Mt. 24:31); and, 3) He comes in battle and returns to the earth (Rev. 19).

For communication's sake and because integrative theologies apply different definitions to some common terms, the following definitions are applied to the listed terms when used in this dissertation in application to specific branches of theology. The listing is alphabetical as opposed to a logical, sequential ordering.

Biblical Theology. A timeless emphasis on what the whole of Scripture teaches on (in application to the specific topic of this work) eschatological deception before the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Note the further degree of interpretation (compared to that of Exegetical Theology) that is required at this level in that Scripture interprets Scripture, but occurring through the thoughts, grids, and presuppositions of those doing the work. One must decide, among other things, which Scripture principle gets emphasized over another, for example. Some hermeneutical works develop the priority of the explicit passages, teachings or principles being accepted over that of the implicit.

Contemporary Theology. Whereas Historical Theology emphasizes the theological positions of individual and collective viewpoints of the past; whereas Personal Theology emphasizes the individual convictions of today, Contemporary Theology emphasizes the present convictions of current believing communities.

Exegetical Theology. A timeless emphasis on the content of individual passages. There is a degree of interpretation at this level, but minimal in that the observation (vs. interpretation) of the text is emphasized.

Historical Theology. An inquiry in the belief structures of both individuals and believing communities of past generations.

Personal Theology. An individual's own worldview, especially concerning Who God is and how God interacts with us, and, in specific application to this work, one's perspective on end-time deceptions.

Philosophical Theology. An inquiry into the epistemological prerequisite—how do we know? (see the appendix for this dissertation's philosophical perspective on this crucial issue in addition to some basic preliminary assumptions in going into this work)

Practical Theology. The application of belief about God's being and involvement with us—how these truths are lived out through action.

Systematic Theology. In our case, Systematic Theology is an attempt to interpret the theme of end-time deceptions in light of 1) the broader eschatological scheme and, 2) the big-picture of Scripture that integrates the whole biblical worldview. The more one allows Scripture to be one's ultimate authority for faith and practice, the closer one will be to its intent. In relationship to Exegetical and Biblical Theologies, there is a further degree of interpretation at this level due to the inherent element of constructing a holistic paradigm from a multi-volume source (i.e., more information we have to work with, the more difficult our task becomes due to our many limitations—shortcomings that affect our conclusions. Does this lead us to relativism? No, because God graciously allows us out of our ignorance **if** we but accept His divine truths that bring transcendent transformation. But we must be humble enough to receive them through child-like faith. Indeed, back to "by faith."

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