

Esoteric Christianity

by Carl Teichrib

It was a four-hour visit, but it seemed like all day.

For a number of months I had been dialoging with a local gentleman who claimed to have had a deep spiritual experience. Shaken and changed by this supernatural event, this gentleman declared that the “veil had been opened” and that he had entered the “Holy of Holies” within his own soul. He claimed that through this experience he had been given a true understanding of who God is, and that he now knew the hidden secrets of God’s heart—“the oracles of God.”

This type of alternative spiritual view wasn’t new to me. I had come across similar views through my studies in the New Age Movement. However, it still caused consternation when, sitting at my dining room table, this dynamic individual was now actively trying to persuade me of the validity of his experience and spiritual position. More than that, his ultimate aim was to lead me into a similar experience so that I too could come “face to face with Jesus” within my own soul.

It was an exhausting afternoon—his experience versus whatever I understood the Bible to say; “we don’t need the Bible, just put it on the shelf” was something he repeated on many occasions. Why? During our discussions, both at this particular meeting and at subsequent others, I was told that “truth” *already* resided in the soul. Moreover, God was revealing this new soul-reality by doing “a new thing” through fantastic (“mystical”) experiences. After my guest departed it felt like a spiritual whirlwind had ripped through my house. But something good came out of this episode; it made me think.

Throughout the course of our time together, my guest continuously referred to “fearing God”—not that we *were* to fear God, but just the opposite. The claim was simple: in order to know God fully, man must shed any fear of God, for the fear of the Lord breeds pride, lust, and anger. This fear of God, my guest explained, was the root of pride and sin.

Scripture, however, paints an opposite picture:

2 Chronicles 19:7—“*Now let the fear of the LORD be upon you. Judge carefully, for with the LORD our God there is no injustice or partiality or bribery.*”

Job 28:28—“*The fear of the Lord—that is wisdom, and to shun evil is understanding.*”

Psalms 19:9—“*The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever. The ordinances of the LORD are sure and altogether righteous.*”

Psalms 111:10—“*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all who follow his precepts have good understanding.*”

Proverbs 1:7—“*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline.*”

Matthew 10:28—“*Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in Hell.*”

And in the song of Mary found in the first chapter of Luke, Mary tells us in verse 50, “And His mercy is on those who fear Him. From generation to generation.”

Now my guest also had a verse—even while exclaiming that the Bible was no longer relevant—“there is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love” (1 John 4:18).

Is this a contradiction? No. The context of 1 John 4:18 centers around love, salvation, and punishment for sin. One commentator writes,

We must here distinguish between the fear of God and being afraid of him. The fear of God is often mentioned and commanded as the substance of religion. Such fear is consistent with love, yea, with perfect love. But then there is a being afraid of God, which arises from a sense of guilt; and so fear here may be rendered *dread*. *There is no dread in love.* (Matthew Henry)

The bottom line is this: as Christians, we must revere God without holding onto the fear that comes with judgment—as our penalty for sin has been paid in full by Jesus Christ. This is the basis for our confidence before the throne of grace; assurance through Christ’s sacrifice, coupled with an intense reverence for a God who is terrifyingly awesome and infinitely powerful.

But by equating the “fear of God” with pride and sin, my guest was saying something far different.

Yes, I understood that his position didn’t jibe with Scripture, but something larger was nagging at me. And then it hit me: my guest had literally reversed the truth.

Why is the lion considered the King of the Jungle and a “beast of pride”? Simply because he has no rival and fears nothing. Why did Lucifer fall—because he feared God with humility and trembling? Just the opposite. Scripture tells us that the pride of Satan (Lucifer) was his downfall (Ezek. 28:17 and 2 Tim. 3:6). Pride says, “I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High” (Isaiah 14:13-14).

This is akin to spitting in God’s face and declaring “I no longer fear you. I will become as you are, or better.” To say “I no longer fear God” is the ultimate act of pride and arrogance; it places the creature as equal to or above the Creator.

But *who* was telling my guest that to fear God was the root of pride? In later conversations, he explained that the spirit within his soul guided him into all knowledge. When I asked him which spirit it was that had control of his soul, and directly challenged whether or not it was an agent of Satan masquerading as an angel of light, he sharply replied that “as long as you have no fear, it doesn’t matter which spirit it is.”

This is very dangerous ground. The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, an occult society that had its start back in 1887, teaches that “Fear is failure and the forerunner of failure...Therefore fear not the Spirits, but be firm and courteous with them...” (Israel Regardie, *The Golden Dawn*, “Fourth Knowledge Lecture”). Yet, God’s Word tells us that we are not to believe every spirit, but rather to test them to see if they are from God (1 John 4:1).

Please understand, this is nothing to fool around with. In 2 Corinthians 11 we find that “Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light.” Furthermore, 1 Peter 5 tells us that “Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.” Obviously, the realm of “spirits” isn’t something to be taken lightly.

The Aquarian Gospel of Jesus the Christ, a New Age text written in response to a mystical vision, also links fear and spirituality,

When man comes to himself and comprehends the fact that he is son of God, and knows that in himself

lies all the powers of God, he is a master mind and all the elements will hear his voice and gladly do his will. Two sturdy asses bind the will of man; their names are Fear and Unbelief. When these are caught and turned aside, the will of man will know no bounds; then man has but to speak and it is done. (*The Aquarian Gospel of Jesus the Christ*, Chapter 92)

Notice the connection between suppressing spiritual fear and rising to a god-like state (“in himself lies all the powers of God”). After all, becoming God is what this is all about, isn’t it? *The Aquarian Gospel of Jesus the Christ* states; “Now, men and birds and beasts and creeping things are deities, made flesh” (Chapter 28). John Randolph Price, author of *The Planetary Commission*, says it even more dramatically, “Nothing can touch me but the direct action of God and God is my Omnipotent Self. I can do all things through the Strength of the Christ I AM. I AM STRENGTH!” (emphasis in original, p.133). Annie Besant, past leader of the Theosophical Society and one of the “mothers” of the New Age Movement taught, “Man is not to be compelled; he is to be free. He is not a slave, but a God in the making” (*Esoteric Christianity*, p.220).

During the numerous follow-up conversations that ended up happening with my guest, it became evident that he followed this self-deification line to a remarkably degree. It’s the same line that Satan used in the Garden of Eden, the same line that caused man to fall: “You will not surely die... For God knows that when you eat of it [the forbidden fruit] your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God...” (Genesis 3:4-5).

Today, just as in the past, we as Christians are in a vulnerable position. The short book of Jude describes this problem very simply, “For certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are godless men, who change the grace of God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord” (vs. 4).

This fits in our modern age as much as it did during the early church. My mystically-oriented guest was very “evangelistic” with his message, and ended up going from church-to-church proclaiming this new gospel—sometimes using very blunt tactics, but more often using provocative statements and questions in order to open doors and seed confusion.

Romans 11:34 rhetorically asks, “Who has known the mind of the Lord?” In this day and age, many men and women are now claiming that they know the mind of the Lord, the secrets of God, and the hidden thoughts of the Almighty. They come equipped with new prophecies, teachings, and doctrines; often validated by fantastic experiences, signs and wonders, and great proclamations of “thus saith the Lord.”

Dear reader, be aware! Be aware of wolves in sheep’s clothing, be aware of experienced-based teachings which counter or twist God’s holy Word, be aware of those who proclaim an “esoteric” version of Christianity—rightfully teaching that Jesus was divine, but adding to it the message of self-deification.

Jesus said in Matthew 24, “Watch out that no one deceives you. For many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many.”