

QUESTIONS CONCERNING DR. JOHN PIPER

By Rev. Ken Silva, Southern Baptist pastor-teacher, June 16, 2010



The Lord chose to raise up [Apprising Ministries](#) as an online apologetics and discernment work; as such, it's a large part on my mission here to cover trends developing within the church visible. Unfortunately we live in a time where, in my opinion, a tsunami of apostasy—likely driven by [1 Peter 4:17](#) judgments—is rapidly heading toward the mainstream of, largely pretending to be Protestant, evangelicalism. Sadly, we're watching the Reformation being undone as more and more people embrace corrupt [Contemplative Spirituality/Mysticism](#) (CSM); particularly within the neo-liberal cult of the sinfully ecumenical [Emerging Church](#).

One of the trends developing as the above happens is a neo-Reformed new Calvinism, which I touched upon recently e.g. in [Mark Driscoll And Neo-Reformed New Calvinist Contemplative Spirituality](#). As I said in recent posts such as [Acts 29 Network And Reformed Counter Reformation Spirituality?](#) and [Acts 29 Pastor Matt Chandler On Being A Reformed Charismatic](#), in my estimation, there's very good reason for concern as these people are rapidly growing in popularity, and in influence within the younger sector of the Reformed Camp; blessed as they are by [Dr. John Piper](#), who's seen by some as a “pioneer” of this New Calvinism. [1]

Now I will tell you that I'm really not very familiar with Dr. Piper as he's never been my cup of tea; it's not that I'd thought badly of his ministry, it simply wasn't one that I felt led to follow. As I recall, one of the first posts in which I ever mentioned Dr. Piper was [Doug Pagitt, John Piper, And Karma Kick-Back](#) where heretical universalist [Emergent Church](#) pastor [Doug Pagitt](#), part of the Emergent trinity along with his progressive theologian in residence [Tony Jones](#) and EC guru [Brian McLaren](#), takes issue with Dr. Piper's views of the [Emerging Church](#) and its new “big tent” progressive/liberal [Emergence Christianity](#).

A couple of days later I would write [Rick Warren To Be Featured At Desiring God 2010](#) where I was among the few who broke the story that Dr. Piper had made the ill-advised decision to invite [Leadership Network](#)'s propped-up Purpose Driven Pope [Rick Warren](#) to DG 2010 as a keynote speaker. Then, as I

shared in [Rick Warren Doctrinal And Sound?](#), unfortunately it got even worse when Dr. Piper decided to defend his decision:

At root I think [Rick Warren] is theological and doctrinal and sound.
(as cited [Online source](#))

So whether one even knows it or not, Warrengate is now still slowly simmering; Dr. Piper's choice here has had the rippling effect of people, even outside of any discernment ministries, beginning to look a little closer at his theology, educational background, and associations; e.g. his charismatic bent, [Fuller Theological Seminary](#), and the late Ralph Winter. To give you a peek into how someone like myself becomes aware of some of these issues, I received a tip from a source; as I followed up on it, it would eventually lead me to discover some disturbing information that I am going to begin sharing below.

It really becomes all the more necessary when I was sent a link today to a book review by [Dr. Gary Gilley](#), pastor of [Southern View Chapel](#), of Dr. Piper's [When I Don't Desire God](#); in it Dr. Gilley brings out his own concerns with some of the theology of Dr. John Piper:

- Finally, Piper quotes favorably from a very disturbing stable of authors: Dietrich Bonhoeffer (popular liberal theologian, who, by the way, was executed not for his faith in Christ, but for his part in an assassination attempt on Adolf Hitler) (p. 90), Dallas Willard (leader in the unbiblical spiritual formation movement) (p. 119), G.K. Chesterton (Roman Catholic author) (p. 196), and Richard Foster (father and main promoter of the infiltration of Roman Catholic mysticism into evangelical circles) (pp. 192-193). He also speaks twice of the "dark night of the soul" which comes from counter-reformation Catholic mystic St. John of the Cross (pp. 217, 229).

Most disturbing is Foster's quote calling for "new prophets to arise in our day" to which Piper responds, "And when they arise, one way that we fight for joy in God is to read what they write" (p. 193). After authoring a book which majors on pointing us to the Bible in our fight for joy, it is disconcerting to now read of an encouragement to read the words of modern prophets; and coming from Foster's perspective and Piper's theology on prophets, they are both referring to extrabiblical revelation through present-day prophets).
([Online source](#))

Most disturbing is right; you know e.g. from [Steve Gladen, Saddleback Church Small Groups, And Quaker Mystic Spirituality](#) and [Saddleback Church, Rick Warren, And Spiritual Disciplines](#) that the [Emerging Church](#) would end up being a Trojan Horse that squishy evanjellyfish leaders would bring right into their own camp as the vehicle from which this spurious CSM spirituality, which is a romanticized version of the Counter (hello) Reformation spirituality of the apostate Roman Catholic Church—which they've been pawing off for years as so-called [Spiritual Formation](#)—would be unloaded.

I've also pointed out that it's an incontrovertible fact the main purveyors of CSM would be the [Living Spiritual Teacher](#) and [Quaker](#) mystic [Richard Foster](#), along with Southern Baptist minister [Dallas Willard](#); who many people don't seem to realize is quite literally Foster's spiritual twin and teaches the same things. And I've also told you, in no uncertain terms, that it's well past time for evangelical leaders to begin recognizing the inclusive, and increasingly universal, fruit of this spiritual skubalon of Foster-Willardism. So now you have the backdrop upon which to see what I am going to show you; and it just may also shed some more light upon what I already showed you above.

First of all, if you don't know, [Bethlehem Baptist Church](#) (BBC) is where Dr. John Piper is listed as "Vocational Elder; Pastor for Preaching & Vision; Chancellor, Bethlehem College and Seminary." [2] Under [Resources](#) at the BBC website we find the [Library](#), and then at the bottom of that page under [Links](#) we find the [Online catalog](#). Notice above that Dr. Gilley correctly expressed concern that Dr. Piper "quotes favorably from a very disturbing stable of authors"; two of which are leading proponents, and personal

practitioners of, Quaker—and refried Roman Catholic—mysticism; and in addition, both Foster and Willard are hostile to Reformation theology.

Have you stopped to think, if someone knows another’s work well enough to be familiar with it in order to favorably quote from it, they are indeed reading it. The question is: What could a Calvinist holding to the doctrines of grace of Reformation theology learn about proper Christian spirituality from a Quaker mystic whose own prolonged practice of spurious CSM has led him into the sinful ecumenicism of, contra Reformation, considering the apostate Roman Catholic Church—which Dr. John MacArthur calls a front for Satan—as a genuine expression of the Christian faith; even though she long ago placed her anathema on the very Gospel itself?

The main vehicle for CSM is corrupt [Contemplative/Centering Prayer](#) (CCP); a type of meditation in an altered state of consciousness, which itself is a form of neo-Gnosticism that flowered in the antibiblical monastic traditions of apostate [Roman Catholicism](#). I’ve also showed you that Foster’s “Christian” message, which is also the fruit of his own practice of CSM, is now so drastically diluted that he’s even listed as one of the gurus at something called the [Living Spiritual Teachers Project](#). Over at the interspiritual website [Spirituality & Practice](#) you will find this Quaker mystic included; and since when were Quakers ever evangelical Protestants?

But there is Richard Foster listed right alongside such false religious teachers as [Deepak Chopra](#), [the Dalai Lama](#), [Emergent Church](#) EC guru [Brian McLaren](#), [Thich Nhat Hanh](#), [Eckhart Tolle](#), and [Marianne Williamson](#). Do you think there’s any chance whatsoever that the aforementioned Dr. John MacArthur would ever find himself listed there; well, maybe about the time ice skates become standard issue in Hell. But I’m sorry to have to inform you it now gets worse concerning Dr. Piper. Look at the following one finds in the [Bethlehem Baptist Church](#) library as we search online. Richard Foster, [Prayer Finding the Heart’s True Home](#):



[\(Online source\)](#)

Here, from my personal copy, is a little sample of what we learn about “prayer” from guru Foster:

Contemplative Prayer immerses us into the silence of God. How desperately we in the modern world need this wordless baptism... Contemplative Prayer is the one discipline that can free us from our addiction to words. Progress in intimacy with God means progress toward silence... It is recreating silence to which we are called in Contemplative Prayer...

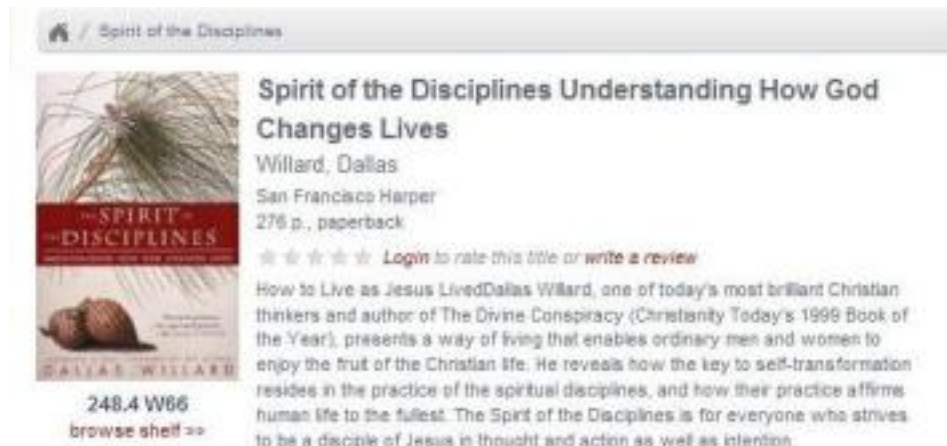
A Warning And A Precaution

At the outset I need to give a word of warning.... Contemplative Prayer is not for the novice. I do not say this about any other form of prayer... Contemplative prayer is for those who have exercised their spiritual muscles a bit and know something about the landscape of the spirit. In fact, those who work in the area of spiritual direction always look for signs of a maturing faith before encouraging individuals into Contemplative Prayer...

I also want to give a word of precaution. In the silent contemplation of God we are entering deeply into the spiritual realm, and there is such a thing as a supernatural guidance. While the Bible does not give us a lot of information on that, there are various orders of spiritual beings, and some of them are definitely not in cooperation with God and his way! ... But for now I want to encourage you to learn and practice prayers of protection. [3]

As I pointed out elsewhere, this couldn't be clearer that what we're actually dealing with here is a new form of Gnosticism. Can you see; above we have the "initiated" and "enlightened" ones who are the superior Christians, as they "work in the area of spiritual direction" (when was this ever part of Protestant practice), and then they are looking for those disciples "who have exercised their spiritual muscles" enough for initiation because this CCP—even though necessary for "intimacy with God—still "is not for" every Christian. This is a return to Romanist religious bondage; and an asceticism-lite form of Pietism.

It seems peculiar to me that Dr. Piper would wish his flock to be exposed to Foster's foolishness. Then there's Foster's clone Dallas Willard and his own ode to asceticism [Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives](#):



([Online source](#))

Pastor Bob DeWaay performed a thorough, and biblical, dismantling of Willard's twisting of God's Word in his excellent [Critical Issues Commentary](#) article [The Dangers of Spiritual Formation and Spiritual Disciplines: A Critique of Dallas Willard and The Spirit of the Disciplines](#); so here I'll simply give you DeWaay's conclusion as he completely blows up the central pillar upon which Foster-Willardism rests:

The spiritual disciplines are not taught in [Matthew 11:29, 30](#) (Willard's primary proof test), and even Willard admits they cannot be found elsewhere in scripture... As with most unbiblical approaches, the spiritual disciplines are based on the idea of innate human powers that can be harnessed for good. Holding a false concept of sin as a "disruption of that higher [spiritual] life," **Willard looks for a solution through finding our true potential, individually and corporately, through spiritual disciplines that will enable us to reconstruct the rule of God now...**

Starting with a serious misinterpretation of [Matthew 11:29, 30](#), Dallas Willard built his entire system on the idea that Jesus' "yoke" consists of various spiritual disciplines. The issue in Matthew 11 was Messianic

salvation—finding true Sabbath rest in Christ rather than following meticulous religious rules decreed by the Scribes and Pharisees. The idea of practicing spiritual disciplines was imported to the text, not found there.

We live in an age of mysticism. People lust for spiritual reality and spiritual experiences. The danger is that unbiblical practices will give people a real spiritual experience, but not from God. ([Online source](#), emphasis mine)

Notice the quasi-dominionism these debunked spiritual disciplines are supposed to enable us to start to accomplish; and now we consider that in the BBC library [Online catalog](#) we find five books from former professor of Church Growth at *Fuller Theological Seminary School of World Mission* C. Peter Wagner, including his infamous [Third Wave of the Holy Spirit Encountering the Power of Signs and Wonders](#):



([Online source](#))

Christian apologist Sandy Simpson has collected some informative articles concerning C. Peter Wagner at his fine [Deception In The Church](#) website [4]; so for now I'll just tell you that "C. Peter Wagner [is] Convening Apostle of the International Coalition of Apostles" [5], one of the spiritually nefarious [Kansas City Prophets](#), and "has long held to the heretical Latter Rain position." [6] Again it would seem rather odd for Dr. Piper to appeal to a false prophet for teaching concerning "spiritual warfare" [7] and to actually encourage his flock to read his warped works [8]. Sadly, since Dr. Piper made his error of inviting Rick Warren to DG 2010, more questions are now arising.

In closing this, for now, let's consider that Dr. John Piper and C. Peter Wagner were both quite taken with the late "mission engineer" Ralph Winter [9]; each associated with [Fuller Theological Seminary](#), and as you can see in [Influences: Rick Warren And C. Peter Wagner Of New Apostolic Reformation](#), it was Wagner who was Rick Warren's mentor when Warren "wrote his doctoral dissertation at Fuller Seminary on his church growth ideas." Now we remember when Dr. Piper said in his defense of the Warren invitation, "I just think he could put me to shame with his aggressively, in-your-life, transformative discipling of his church." [10]

And we're told that Dr. Piper met Rick Warren at Ralph Winter's funeral; as we stop and consider all of the above, another question comes emerging: Could it be they all already had much more in common than we even knew?

Endnotes:

- [1] <http://tinyurl.com/az6xvh>, accessed 6/16/10.
- [2] <http://tinyurl.com/2818eq5>, accessed 6/16/10.
- [3] Richard Foster, *Prayer: Finding The Heart's True Home* [New York: Harper Collins, 1997], 155, 156, 157.
- [4] <http://tinyurl.com/2fxqqon>, accessed 6/16/10.
- [5] <http://tinyurl.com/2b7rlnp>, accessed 6/16/10.
- [6] <http://www.letusreason.org/Latrain33.htm>, accessed 6/16/10.
- [7] <http://tinyurl.com/klrtxa>, accessed 6/16/10.
- [8] <http://tinyurl.com/34l5chm>, accessed 6/16/10.
- [9] <http://tinyurl.com/n8wxjx>, accessed 6/16/10.
- [10] <http://tinyurl.com/387e677>, accessed 6/16/10.