

“The Prophets have spoken?”

By Florian Berndt

Introduction

As I’ve been reading different responses to the presidential elections in the US, I’ve been deeply saddened by the reactions and behavior that is being espoused by some of those who claim to be leaders in the church. This writing is therefore not so much meant as a political statement, but as my concern about the blatant attempts to hijack people’s personal conscience via “pseudo-prophetic manipulation”.¹ Also, I love and believe in the practice of the gifts of the Holy Spirit – including prophecy – and have been helping people to tune into our Abba’s voice for many years myself. Hence, this is not a dismissal of the prophetic in itself, but a critique of certain practices that have led to the increasing corruption of a gift and ministry that was meant to build up the body of Christ.

The Backstory

During the 2016 presidential election in the USA, several young people I mentored in the prophetic approached me in distress because they had been sent video’s by ministers that claimed that not supporting Donald J. Trump in his way to the White House would remove the blessing of God from their life – none of these kids had ever experienced anything like this before, and most weren’t even American, so that they could not even have voted in that election anyway. It took a significant amount of pastoral care to help some of them through this, as they often were not even able to admit their confusion for fear of being ridiculed by their peers for even considering such a narrative. These kids had just started to trust in their own ability to listen to Abba’s heart for themselves, just to be confused by these strange voices, and I am sorry to say, these are not isolated incidents.

Now from what I gather, numerous popular voices in the “apostolic/prophetic movement” in the US have stated that they clearly “have heard from God” that Donald J. Trump will “triumph” in the 2020 election – even “in a landslide”. As we all know by now, these predictions have been proven false. Even in the unlikely event, that the supreme courts turn the win over to the Trump administration, the claims still don’t match up. As a result, several of the followers of these predictions are beginning to confess their disillusionment on social media, as the cognitive dissonance is being on full display and alleged visions and positive confessions spiral down

¹ This phrase was originally coined by my dear friend Mercy Aiken in a post on social media. It perfectly describes the dynamics I seek to address.

into desperate attempts to somehow explain away the obvious, namely that the emperor has no clothes – all the while attempting to keep the religious machinery going by telling everyone to stay calm, pray harder, believe more, and fast longer for the desired outcome. “The prophets have spoken, stay the course” has become the mantra for many who have put their trust in these predictions.

“Pseudo-prophetic Manipulation”

To be clear, “the prophets” didn't predict anything concerning the outcome of the American election. In fact, as in every other election, there have been voices that made opposing predictions as well, not to mention the numerous faithful one's that refuse to engage in political roulette.² What did happen though, is that a group of spokesmen for a certain movement, with a certain theological outlook - mostly from the US, and mostly loosely connected to each other - made aforementioned predictions, and several people jumped on board. In fact, everyone who has followed these movements for a longer period of time will recognize this as a pattern. It is usually either a more experienced player in the game, or an over-zealous newcomer that will step out and make the first prediction concerning a certain outcome, and if it appears that his proclamation contains some factual truth, other's will quickly follow and thus create the illusion of consensus via confirmation bias, no matter if the details match or not. Everyone who has studied the history of prophetic movements can testify to this, and to claim that “the prophets have spoken” - in the attempt to prevent followers to jump ship - when the predictions don't match reality reveals the subtle elitism that has crept into these circles, that have all too often become echo chambers for ideologies that have nothing to do with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, no matter how much they are clothed in “Christian” terminology.

The stubborn insistence on being correct and the consequent twisting of words and narratives, in the face of actual reality, unveils the “orphan mentality”³ at the heart of such movements, as

² E. g. Ron Cantor, a Messianic leader in Israel, claims he “twice heard from God” that Joe Biden would win because of the church's idolization of Donald J. Trump. Apparently, he himself would have hoped for another term of the Trump administration. Ron Cantor, “What I felt God told me about the election in September,” *Messiah's Mandate*, (accessed November 2020) <https://messiahsmandate.org/what-i-felt-god-told-me-about-the-election-in-september/>.

³ By this I don't mean the abusive practice of labelling those who don't submit to one's authority as spiritual orphans, but the basic condition of the human heart that has forgotten how to cry out “Abba, Father!” (Mark 14:36, Romans 8:15, Galatians 4:6). This understanding has been at the core of my own ministry over the years and was originally pioneered in our time by *Fatherheart Ministries International* in New Zealand (www.fatherheart.net). For a biblical exploration of this theme see Stephen Hill, *John – A Prophetic Revelation* (Taupo, NZ: Ancient Future Publishing, 2019) 277-293. Scottish writer George MacDonald, who was ahead of his time in many regards and whom C. S. Lewis considered to be his spiritual father by writing, taught about this specifically in one of his

it becomes obvious that their foundation rests on being right rather than in being loved, so that personal identity and ministry can't be told apart anymore and the majority of such ministers not only refuses to apologize, but to even consider that they should not ever have made such predictions in the first place. Instead we often see one of the following scenarios being played out:

- Prophecies being simply deleted from personal ministry websites, without any explanation or mentioning of it ever again.
- The message being intentionally misquoted, so that its meaning changes over time and those who don't pay attention don't notice.
- A new series of prophecies being released, so that the old one's are quickly forgotten, as it gets increasingly harder to keep track with the oncoming flood of predictions.
- Facts being hyper-spiritualized or twisted till they fit into the preferred narrative.
- Those who question the validity of the message are being threatened with divine judgment.

Two recent examples of this are two prophecies that circulated on the internet shortly before and after American election day. The first one ended with the following warning to all those who don't share the authors opinion:

“This is an unabashed prophetic warning I will give right now to undershepherds in the Body of Christ. If you go or have gone on the record of being anti-Trump and do not amend it by election day you will have ‘never heard of again’ written over you— unless or until you will make as equal a repentance as the level of statement of rejection against President Trump that you made. One of the strongest themes in the scriptures is the accountability and subsequent judgment for not recognizing who God was sending. All of Israel's judgments were always preceded by the people having rejected a prophet or leader God had chosen. Bethsaida and Chorazin were to have greater judgment than Sodom and Gomorrah for not recognizing who Jesus was. For ministerial leaders in the Body of Christ the ‘Trump- evidence’ of call and anointing is so overwhelming, beginning with his name, followed up by who opposes him, followed by what he has advanced— that to miss this one goes under major transgression. This is a last warning for some of

you, and yes I am aware it is not 'cool' to give this type of warning. Don't let YOUR PRIDE about someone else's 'pride' do YOU in. He is literally saving your children and your children's children with his courage..."⁴

In other words, the author claims that the blessings of God for ministers – including success in ministry - are dependent on recognizing “the ‘Trump-evidence’ of call and anointing”, based on connecting certain dots, that are taken as proof for these claims. Note also the push to label those who disagree as being “anti-Trump” in the attempt to basically accuse dissenting voices of hatred. Apparently, the author of this “prophetic warning” cannot fathom the idea that someone could make a prayerful and thoughtful decision whom to vote for in an election apart from his input, or the input of his circle of associates. This attitude is exactly what makes these words sound so cultish and makes a mockery of prophetic ministry in the eyes of those who have never become aware of the voice of Jesus in their own life.

The second example is from a minister that was among the first voices to promote Donald J. Trump as “the Trumpet”.⁵ He actually did originally not claim that Trump would become president, but simply that he would be used by God, which is important to note as to the aforementioned dynamics of how bolder these claims become over time as more people jump on board of the original prophecy. It should therefore not come as a surprise that this man's entire ministry has by now focused in on the “Trump Prophecies.”⁶ Apparently he sent out an e-mail to his followers shortly after his predictions of a re-election had been proven false:

“As many of you know, there has been a chorus of mature and tested prophets in America with a proven track record that have predicted Donald J. Trump would be re-elected President of the United States. I am one of them. However, we are now watching news unfold today that is saying otherwise. In fact, I believe Joe Biden will soon prematurely announce that he is the next President of the United States. Chaos will ensue. Either a lying spirit has filled the mouths of numerous trusted prophetic voices in America or Donald J. Trump really has won the Presidency and we are witnessing a

⁴ Jonny Enlow, “Your Vote is Your Boat,” *The Elijah List* (accessed November 2020) https://elijahlist.com/words/display_word.html?ID=24542.

⁵ Jeremiah Johnson, “Donald Trump Shall Become the Trumpet,” *Charisma Magazine* (accessed November 2020) <https://www.charismamag.com/blogs/prophetic-insight/23916-prophecy-donald-trump-shall-become-the-trumpet>.

⁶ Jeremiah Johnson, *Trump and the Future of America*, (Lakeland, FL: Jeremiah Johnson Ministries, 2020).

diabolical and evil plan unfold to steal the Election. I believe with all my heart that the latter is true. You read that correctly. Donald J. Trump won the 2020 election last night and the chorus of prophets who saw into the future and prophesied it were ACCURATE. They should not apologize. In fact, in the coming weeks many of them will be harassed and slandered. It will be nothing more than a Satanic attack to rattle them and challenge the faith of the people of God. You must understand ... China, Big Tech including Fox News, and Social Media Platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, are all in on this demonic agenda to steal the 2020 Election from Donald Trump. I cannot even publish this online for fear our ministry will be censored once again. These media outlets are the modern-day false prophets of Baal. They are shouting, mocking, deceiving, and taunting the people of God.”⁷

Note how the author presents himself as a victim of the media and equates the criticism for his refusal to apologize as the “shouting, mocking, deceiving, and taunting the people of God.” I am not sure if he is consciously aware of this, but he is basically saying, that those who don’t agree with his stance can’t be considered to be God’s people, drawing a very clear line between us vs them. The elitism, threats, and blatant divisive language stand in stark contrast to the Spirit of Jesus, Who “made Himself of no reputation” (Philippians 2:6-8) - according to prophetic teacher James Jordan, one of the hallmarks of true Christian character that results from resting in Abba’s love.⁸ The entire procedure reminds me of Paul of Tarsus’ letter to the Colossians in which he warned his fellow believers of such attempts to intimidate them: *“Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and their obsession with angels disqualify you. Such a person also goes into great detail about their visions; but in reality they are puffed up with idle notions by their unspiritual mind. They have lost connection with the Head, from whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows through the increase of God”* (Colossians 2:18-19). In other words, such rhetoric created the illusion of a hierarchy of closeness to the divine voice and to either impress or intimidate those who don’t feel yet as secure in Abba’s love. Further, what Paul is warning us of here is, that we cannot exalt ourselves over our siblings by refusing to acknowledge the body of Christ, without also shutting out the voice of the head of the body and thereby open ourselves up to deception. Is it

⁷ John Sandeman, “The ‘Prophets’ Who Said that Trump Would Win Blame Demons,” *Eternity News* (accessed November 2020, <https://www.eternitynews.com.au/world/the-prophets-who-said-that-trump-would-win-blame-demons/>).

⁸ M. James Jordan, *The Ancient Road Rediscovered-What the Early Church Knew* (Taupo, NZ: Fatherheart Ministries, 2014).

any wonder then, that so many who have listened to these predictions fall prey to conspiracy theories like QAnon? A disturbing example of this comes from the aforementioned minister's own social media page in which he describes an alleged encounter with a malevolent entity as the source of his insights into the political arena:

“Suddenly, all I can describe is the authority and mind of Christ came upon me and I pointed my finger back at this demon and demanded, ‘Who is the source behind your power and influence?’ It began to laugh hysterically, a sound that still taunts me and with great rage this demon answered and roared, ‘The Media!’ I fixed my gaze upon it and said, ‘You devil that has come to deceive the whole world through the media and is being exposed right now, I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to reveal your agenda!’ With a sneer it began to manifest a foul spirit and the first wave I smelled was FEAR. I saw the Coronavirus spreading across the whole world and the spirit of fear attached to it. The second wave of stench the demon manifested was HATE and I saw the cities on fire and racism escalating. The third wave that came was GREED and it was the strongest of all the smells. In that moment of time, by way of Holy Spirit revelation, I understood that what we are witnessing in 2020, beyond a virus and beyond racism and police brutality is a diabolical and sinister agenda called ‘greed’. A wave of fear has hit through the virus and now a wave of anger through the riots, but the real culprit is greed! In other words, the world is being held hostage right now by demonic forces preparing the way for the man of lawlessness. There is so much deception being spread through the media that now we must understand what we are ‘seeing’ and ‘hearing’ on the news and social media is a simple diversion from the real truth! I'm telling you right now by the Spirit of God that what is happening in our world today has surpassed a virus, racism, and police brutality and the sooner we recognize what's really going on, the sooner we can gain the victory! For those who have ears to hear and eyes to see, we must now begin to target our prayers on the spirit of greed and understand the fight is regarding the finances! The finances behind the virus! The finances behind the rioting and looting! The finances behind taking down the President! Millions are being sold a false report. The African American race and their justified pain is being preyed on by an agenda filled with greed! The agenda behind the virus and hopes to vaccination and dominate is greed! After this encounter I finally see it like never before! China. The WHO. George Soros. Bill Gates. Follow the spirit of greed in this hour and

it will not only expose the agenda behind the fear and hate but it will lead you to the freedom only found in TRUTH!"⁹

What this author is basically saying is that one can't trust one's own perception of reality, but needs his input to discern truth. He blatantly accuses those who acknowledge the reality of the coronavirus of having fallen prey to a spirit of fear and those who participate in racial protests to a spirit of hatred. Actually he puts these accusations into the mouth of the entity he claims he encountered and blames the media and several other institutions and individuals for it. Everyone who is familiar with cultic operations can see how dangerous this line of reasoning is – not to mention the apparent source of the information at hand. What's even more concerning is that the author apparently doesn't see the problem with this. Yet, those who remember the early days of the charismatic movement remember how individuals and movements that obtained spiritual knowledge in this way quickly descended into all kinds of error, in doctrine and behavior. It is therefore no coincidence that the author's apparent insights sound exactly like QAnon propaganda and similar conspiracy theories. Christian historian Gregory S. Camp has dissected the roots of many of these ideas that emerge ever so often, in ever-changing veneer to draw well-meaning people under their influence and warns that "there is a real danger that Christians could pick up some extra spiritual baggage in their understandable zeal to recognize the 'signs of the times.'"¹⁰ Hence he recognizes and laments the influence of conspiracy theories on current prophetic movements in the US and around the world.

But What About Their Track Record?

Many followers of these ministries don't dare to speak out against these abuses for fear of offending God and having been convinced by the celebrity status of their idols that mindless acceptance of prophetic words is what is required of them – despite the numerous New Testament admonishments to test *all* prophetic utterances, since we all can get it wrong. This shows that there is a deeper issue at hand in terms of the image of God that has been conveyed by many of these prophetic messages themselves, that work like a spell on the mind of the gullible. In addition, not a few of these ministries put out regular teachings on how to discern false prophecy themselves, often putting their own spin on the theme and thereby distracting

⁹ Jeremiah Johnson, "An Urgent Prophetic Alert and Warning," *Facebook* (accessed November 2020) https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=2582980608655962&id=1518297238457643.

¹⁰ Gregory S. Camp, *Selling Fear: Conspiracy and End-Times Paranoia*, (Grand Rapids, MI, : Baker Books, 1997) 190.

from their own failings and frankly abusive handling of the gift. Those who caution towards deeper discernment are often scapegoated and labelled ‘heresy hunters’ – even if they are operating in the prophetic themselves and seek to restore health and balance to the ministry. A recurring theme in this regard is the claim to accuracy and a proven track record. While this is important, it should not be an excuse for abusive behavior. So if we notice such discrepancies, it does no harm to also investigate these claims, which is exactly what an increasing number of veterans in the ministry have started to do. One example is Charismatic historian and apologist William de Arteaga, who has written a theological reflection on this issue.¹¹ While de Arteaga’s book deals primarily with the hate-filled rhetoric of “The Trump Prophecies,” published by Mark Taylor and Mary Colbert, he notices the same inconsistency and lack of accountability in those who followed foot.¹²

A few examples of what actually has been spoken by those prophetic ministers who now push for the unconditional support of the Trump Administration reveals that things are not as clear as they claim. Author and former fire worker Mark Taylor, who has reinvented himself as a QAnon influencer with a large social media platform, claimed that Trump would “bring honor, respect and restoration to America.” But rather than bringing honor to the country, the President’s behavior in recent TV debates and the entire election process have rather been proven an embarrassment for many Americans in recent weeks. Taylor’s further predictions have become so obviously entrenched by political propaganda and hate-filled rhetoric, that it is hard to believe that anyone would still fall for them.¹³ As already noted, aforementioned minister Jeremiah Johnson, did at first not predict the presidency of Donald J. Trump. Rather, the original word that would spark a series of increasingly bolder claims stated that Trump would “not fear man nor will he allow deception and lies to go unnoticed.” Interestingly, he is known now for having lied more than any American president before him, even by the most conservative estimation.¹⁴ Johnson puts in the same prophecy the following words in God’s mouth: “Though many see the outward pride and arrogance, I have given him the tender heart

¹¹ William de Arteaga, “On Discerning Trumps Character and Presidency: A Theological Reflection on How False Prophecy Influenced American Politics” *Pneuma Review* (accessed November 2020) <http://pneumareview.com/william-de-arteaga-on-discerning-trumps-character-and-presidency-a-theological-reflection-on-how-false-prophecy-influenced-american-politics/>.

¹² Mark Taylor and Mary Colbert, *The Trump Prophecies* (Crane, MO: Defender Publishing, 2019).

¹³ Mark Taylor, “Prophecies by Mark Taylor” *Bible Concepts* (accessed November 2020) <https://www.bibleconcepts.com/erics-library/books-and-studies-by-others/prophetic-words-by-mark-taylor/>.

¹⁴ Dara Lind, “Trump Lies. All the Time.” *Vox* (accessed November 2020) <https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2016/9/26/13016146/donald-trump-liar-media>.

of a father that wants to lend a helping hand to the poor and the needy, to the foreigner and the stranger.” Needless to say, this has not been realized as the Trump administration has not become known for lending a hand to the foreigner and stranger. In fact, even the strongest supporters never make claim to Trump’s “tender heart of a father” but constantly excuse his rude behavior and ruthless policies with the caveat that no one is perfect. In other words, we can already see here the attempt of creating an alternative reality that carries with it very abusive implications.

Another prophet with celebrity status that is claimed to actually have predicted the election of Donald Trump to presidency is the late Kim Clement. His prophecies are often cryptic and it appears that later interpreters have connected the dots. In the same prophecy that Clement predicted Trump becoming “the Trumpet” he also predicted that Bill Gates would open a financial gate to the church, which is interesting since Gates has become basically a villain in the scenario that is being peddled by those who claim this prophecy speaks about Trumps presidency.¹⁵ The same word is also often connected to another prophecy that contains to date many unfulfilled factors, but is also very clearly not about Donald Trump but in fact the presidency of Barak Obama, who has hardly been accepted by the mainstream charismatic church.¹⁶ It is unclear why anyone ever thought it is appropriate to connect these two messages, since Clement very clearly states about whom the second one speaks. Lance Wallnau too was one of the loudest voices that predicted Donald Trump’s victory in the 2016 presidential election, comparing him to figures like the Apostle Peter, Martin Luther, Winston Churchill and the biblical Cyrus.¹⁷ This practice of taking random historical and biblical characters and situations and applying them without any context to current events has become a common practice in some prophetic circles and is historically highly problematic.¹⁸ Wallnau predicted: “Jesus is putting his hand on a Peter right now; like you’re just saying, it’s a businessman. Trump is a businessman with the keys of the kingdom right now to wreck what hell has been

¹⁵ Kim Clement, “Trump the Trumpet Prophecy” (accessed November 2020)
https://www.elijahlist.com/words/display_word/5190.

¹⁶ Kim Clement, “Obama Prophecy” (accessed November 2020)
http://www.elijahlist.com/words/display_word/6340.

¹⁷ Lance Wallnau, *God’s Chaos Candidate: Donald J. Trump and the American Unravelling* (Keller, TX: Killer Sheep Media, Inc., 2016).

¹⁸ Eddie Hyatt, “Thinking Biblically About Prophets” *Hyatt International Ministries* (accessed November 2020)
<http://www.eddiehyatt.com/prophets.html>.

doing over the United States.”¹⁹ The difficulties arise in that Wallnau seems to equate the Kingdom of God with a specific political party – especially if we remember that Jesus refused any political office (John 6:15). The aforementioned practice of applying random biblical events to current situations has further led to the erroneous idea that one’s own nation can be compared to ancient Israel and that one’s preferred political party is the enforcer of God’s will on earth, which has driven countless people away from the faith in their disillusionment with the churches obsession with political power. Reading up on the actual history of the biblical characters Wallnau equates with Donald J. Trump, the analogies quickly break down and the insistence of continuing in this matter negates any meaning of language. Besides, there is not a single incident in the New Testament in which a prophet anoints a political leader. The reason for this is, that for Christian’s there is only one Anointed One and He refused to bow down to the ways of this current world system to gain political power (Matthew 4:1-11). Hence, we see no interest in political power in the early church. It is only after Christianity becomes the religion of the Roman Empire that an interest in Christians having political influence emerges. Sure, the New Testament was primarily written during times of persecution, but still, the focus is solely on the Kingdom of God. Not only did Jesus refuse a political office, He also forbade His followers to take up weapons on His behalf (John 18:36). In other words, God doesn’t need us to fight for His rights. It was only later on, that church officials “anointed” kings and queens as their nations became Christianized. But the church didn’t have much of a say in the matter and often simply just sanctioned the political succession of rulers. Such an “anointing” should also not be confused with the Anointing of the Holy Spirit which has been given to all of us (1. John 2:20). In fact, it seems that confusing the two has led some who carry a genuine prophetic gift to ‘speak out of office’ - meaning they got caught up in politics and spoke outside of their realm of authority.²⁰

Just a quick fact-check on the most popular political prophecies regarding the Trump presidency shows that things are not as clear as those who claim a track-record of high accuracy to impress their followers and intimidate their critics. When it comes down to it, the only thing that was really correct is that Trump would win the 2016 election, but given that there is a 50/50 chance that rather seems random. Let’s also not forget that these are the same ministries that predicted the win of their candidate of choice for 2012 – something that did not actually happen.²¹ No

¹⁹ Lance Wallnau, “RWW News: Bakker: Trump Is Our Peter” (accessed November 2020)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ppYMd_pv9VU.

²⁰ Thanks to Eric Janzen for this valuable insight.

one ever apologized so far I know for these mishaps, even though many believers were made to feel it was their fault that the predicted outcome didn't occur, because of their alleged lack of faith, purity, commitment or prayer. Instead, the next series of prophetic words was released and the whole episode was swept under the carpet. Yes, those who predicted that Trump would become president of the United States got it right, but so did apparently "The Simpsons," "Rage Against the Machine" and "Back to the Future 2" - hardly prophetic me thinks.²²

So how did we get here?

There are numerous factors that have led to the previously mentioned "pseudo-prophetic manipulation" that occurs when the prophetic gift is hijacked to spread political propaganda. My friend Peter Helms diagnosed the core of the issue in a recent personal message:

„Most of us want security and certainty. We want to know the outcome. We hate uncertainty and being out of control. So we opt out for playing things safe, making sure we are covered and we take as little risk as possible. We bought into the fantasy of a safe place and yet we never seem to find it where we think it is. This safe place is deep within us, within our true self, where Christ our hope of glory actually resides, to many not known at all because we live so much on the surface. But this safe place is within all of us, regardless of what we believe or think or feel. We just need to take a deep breath and be still. Because we live in fear most of the time, we look for outside solutions to the unrest of our own souls. We look for strong and authoritarian leadership who will tell us where to go and what to do. We don't want responsibility and so we hand over the keys of our brains to someone who sounds confident in what they believe. Or we try to find a reason why things don't seem to work out. We feel like a victim and quickly discover that we've been cheated by others. Now we get into blaming someone else or the system for our mishaps. Again we refuse to take responsibility. Or we gorge ourselves into theories that excuse our own involvement and focus on the problems out there. Or we try to take control in that we somehow believe we are better than them and have a mandate to triumph and win.“²³

²¹ Marko Joensuu, "Why Did So Many Prophets Get the US Election Wrong?" *Mentoring Prophets* (accessed November 2020) <https://www.mentoringprophets.com/2013/02/why-did-so-many-prophets-get-us.html?fbclid=IwAR3YN16-nouLj5HJbC3sXX-OgERIDazL--Xg30fuB4VnuzyyqVPzHUV2wlg>.

²² "Us Elections: How the Entertainment World Predicted a Trump Presidency" *BBC* (accessed November 2020) <https://www.bbc.com/news/entertainment-arts-37936369>.

²³ Peter Helms in a personal e-mail conversation. (Slightly edited.)

Again, it comes down to us not truly knowing and trusting that we are loved – beyond our wildest dreams (Romans 8:14-16, 1. John 3:1, 1. John 4:18). If we don't feast on the tree of life, we will feast on the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, right and wrong, in and out. Rather than enjoying the beautiful gift of our Abba speaking to us in our everyday life, reveling in His love and learning to pass this love on to others, we decide to engage in the rat race of the pursuit of power and influence – and thereby step outside the prophetic tradition of the Scriptures, culminating in the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth.²⁴ In fact, the abandonment of His person and teaching underlies our political maneuvering, on both ends of the political spectrum. But we cannot forget, it is “the testimony of Jesus that is the Spirit of prophecy” (Revelations 19:10), foremost the Jesus of the Gospels, lest we create an idol of Him in our own image, of which we can be certain if that image fears or hates the same people that we do. In addition, the creation of a Christian celebrity culture is increasingly hindering authentic relationships for the sake of “covering” and “culture of honor” teachings and restricts the voice of Jesus to a few people on stage. The late John Wimber was deeply grieved when he saw this finally happening in the movement he had started, after it was first agreed that “everyone can play.” The chasing of “anointings” and the refusal of some prophetic ministers to be tested are the result of such dynamics in which the core message of the Gospel is being considered boring and irrelevant, as the cravings for extraordinary events and esoteric teachings becomes prevalent, often breeding a growing elitism that creates factions and a party spirit within the body of Christ (1. Corinthians 3:4).

With some Christian ministers in the US calling for civil war, we can know that the church is being tested in the same way that Jesus was in the wilderness, namely to grasp for the power of this world in the attempt to “take it for God.”²⁵ Not surprisingly, many of the prophetic ministers that supported the Trump administration in this way also promote the “seven mountain prophecy,”²⁶ that led to the development of a new strategy for missions by Bill Bright and Loren Cunningham in 1975, with the mandate to bring change to the seven mountains of influence in society – religion, family, education, government, media, arts & entertainment and

²⁴ Brad Jersak, *Can You Hear Me? Tuning in To the God Who Speaks* (Abbotsford, BC Canada: Fresh Wind Press, 2012).

²⁵ Rick Joyner, “Civil War #RickRants” *Facebook* (accessed 2020) https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?v=262116191567258&ref=watch_permalink.

²⁶ Jonny Enlow, “Our Goal” *Restore 7* (accessed November 2020) <https://restore7.org/>.

business.²⁷ The problem with the seven mountains philosophy is that those who espouse it often ignore the corrupting influence of power, as if this could never happen to Christians. Yet, whenever the church opted for political power, it ended up on the side of the oppressors rather than the oppressed. History has shown this again and again. According to Eric Janzen:

“The true prophets in the Old Testament are easy to spot, because they are the ones the kings don’t want to see or hear from. The false ones are those who care more about pleasing the king’s ego than they do actually listening to what Yahweh is saying. These are the ones the kings like.”²⁸

Conclusion

I believe that as the church is being overtaken by a fresh revelation of Abba’s love and we are rediscovering the old story of the Good News of Jesus Christ, the idol of the sovereign ruler with its philosophy of “might makes right” is being unveiled in our midst as having been set up in the temple of God, pretending to be Godself. As we see our idols tumble, we are being challenged to let go of our partisan politics and fear-filled narratives, decolonize our faith and let go of the god of raw power and brute force for the sake of the Crucified One. The one thing all these alleged prophecies have in common is that they portrait a god that looks nothing at all like Jesus, a sovereign ruler that shouts his commands so that his armies can follow and his enemies tremble as he squishes them under the boot of his theocratical rule. As George MacDonald once wrote: “God will not conquer evil by crushing it under foot, any god of man's idea could do that, but by conquest of heart over heart, of life over life, of life over death, of love over all.”²⁹ But that’s exactly what these voices have tried to convince others to vote for under threat, a narcissistic ruler, that couldn’t care less for the truth and who throws a temper tantrum when it doesn’t go his/its way. I guess the saying is true, we become like the god we worship. Not so with the Abba revealed in Jesus Christ, the Crucified One, the One Who is “self-giving, radically forgiving, co-suffering love,”³⁰ Whose love drives out all fear (1. John

²⁷ Loren Cunningham & Bill Bright, “The History of Seven Mountains” *The Seven Mountains* (accessed November 2020) <https://www.the7mountains.com/history-of-the-7-mountains>.

²⁸ Eric Janzen in a personal e-mail conversation.

²⁹ Georg MacDonald, „Quotes from the Heart of George MacDonald“ *The writings, spiritual vision and legacy of George MacDonald and Michael Phillips* (accessed November 2020) <http://www.macdonaldphillips.com/fromtheheart.html>.

³⁰ With thanks to Brad Jersak who coined this awesome phrase.

4:18). Why won't these ministers just let people vote according to their conscience, listening to the voice of Abba for themselves? Why do we even think we need to stir them via prophecy? Did the God revealed in Jesus Christ not make space for our own personhood and patiently waits for consent as He woos us with His love? Why else would the restoration of all things take so long? If God would be only raw power and only interested in winning, He could have had that any time. But the Gospel of Jesus Christ tells us that is not the way He wants to relate to us. In fact, it tells us that He would rather suffer with us, than to do violence to His creation. No human mind could have invented such a God. No wonder, the Apostle John warns us to let go of our idols that blind us to the fact that Christ is come in the flesh and not to see Him in our neighbor is to not see Him at all (1. John 4:20 and 5:21). That's what turned the religious fanatic Paul, who was so sure of his zeal for Yahweh, into the vessel of love (2. Corinthians 5:14-15) that had come to know Him as "the Father of mercies and God of all comfort" (2. Corinthians 1:3). It is time to fully embrace the vision of the Crucified One, Who died for all, so that all died, and that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for Him Who died for them, and then to apply this logic also to our prophetic ministry – for the sake of the church and for the sake of the world. For prophecies may fail, but His love never fails (1. Corinthians 13:8).