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“Let us be alert to the season in which we are living. It is the season of the Blessed Hope, calling for us to cut our ties with the world and build ourselves on this One who will soon appear. He is our hope—a Blessed Hope enabling us to rise above our times and fix our gaze upon Him.” Tozer

The Issues For 2019: Looking Ahead

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Well, 2018 is in the rear-view mirror, but the issues and challenges it brought are still very much with us.

Especially for Christians who are serious about understanding and engaging the culture, here are four issues that merit special attention.

The first is the ongoing and intensifying conflict between LGBT rights and religious freedom, especially here in the U. S. Even as I write this, U.S. Senator Mike Lee is holding up the re-nomination of Chai Feldblum to head the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

Lee's reason is simple: Feldblum has been crystal clear that, in her mind, there's not a single scenario where religious freedom should prevail over LGBT rights.

Even if Feldblum's nomination fails, Jack Phillips still faces new charges of discrimination by the Colorado Civil Rights Commission, and rumor has it that Nancy Pelosi may push forward the Equality Act in the House this year. And that's just the beginning.

In fact, 2019 might be the year Christians ought to get serious about developing that "theology of getting fired." That is, it's time for us to decide when losing our jobs and livelihoods for refusing to go along with the new sexual orthodoxy is exactly what Jesus expects of us.

And as challenging as things are at home, the story abroad is orders of magnitude worse. This is the second trend to watch for in 2019. China has declared war on both its Christian and Muslim populations. As of this writing, it's not clear when, if ever, Asia Bibi will be allowed to leave Pakistan, even as Islamist radicals continue to hunt her and her family down. And thousands of Nigerian Christians have been slaughtered by Muslim herdsmen.

These are just a few examples why 2018, like 2017 and 2016 before it, is the worst year on record for religious persecution around the world.

Another area of culture that bears close watching, and needs a lot of clarity and prayer, has to do with bioethics. The recent news out of China about a researcher using CRISPR gene-editing to genetically modify embryos prior to implantation has raised alarms, although, as I recently told you, no one should be surprised. Human beings find the temptation to "play god" irresistible.

And we're currently on a new chapter in the onward march of our "Culture of Death." I'm talking about physician-assisted suicide, which is now legal in seven states and the District of Columbia. Currently, there's a campaign to add Maine to that list.

Fourth and finally, and because of all of these other things already mentioned, we'll face the challenge of needing to clarify where our loyalties ultimately lie, especially when it comes to politics. Of course, on many issues, Christians align much better with one side than with the other. Even so, Christians do not ultimately belong to the right or the left. The beginning of a New Year is a great time to clarify in our minds that ultimately we belong to a "Who" not a "what."

Look, 2019 will be challenging. But like those who've gone before us, we have to face the culture with clarity, courage, and compassion.

Europe's New "Munich": Iran

by Giulio Meotti January 3, 2019 at 5:00 am

Iran's terror campaign is not directed only at the West's democratic ally in the Middle East, but also at Europe itself.

"The Iranian regime spends nearly a billion dollars a year just to support terrorism". — Nathan A. Sales, US State Department Coordinator for Counterterrorism, November 13, 2018.

In 1938, the leaders of France and Britain signed the Munich Agreement with Hitler and Mussolini. British PM Neville Chamberlain hailed the agreement as bringing "peace for our time." The weak and blind European governments trusted the Nazi leadership, who were already planning not only the invasion of their neighbors, but also the Holocaust. Today's short-sighted effort by Europe to appease Tehran for profit is simply a replica of its 1938 surrender.

In November, just days after Iran's President Hassan Rouhani called Israel a "cancerous tumor in the region," and while various recent Iranian terror plots on European soil were under investigation, Iranian representatives met with EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini in Brussels to discuss nuclear cooperation in the framework of the unsigned, illegitimate "nuclear deal". Pictured: Mogherini shares a tender moment with Rouhani in Tehran on July 28, 2015. (Image source: EPA/Handout from Iran president's office) In the choice between greed and values, Europe is approaching an existential crossroads with Iran. Europe is both undermining its credibility and surrendering its principles.

For Western governments to defend the interests of businesses is normal. But to betray the Iranian people, who are repressed by their own regime; to undermine Israel's concerns about Iran's all too real threats of annihilation; to beg for an accord that fast-tracks Iran's nuclear weapons capability, and to boycott efforts by the US administration to hold the Iranian regime accountable for its actions -- these are not normal. They are lethal.

The Iranian leadership has long called for the destruction of Israel -- the country, along with Saudi Arabia, most at risk from a nuclearized and aggressive Islamic Republic. In November, Iran's President Hassan Rouhani, who has been hailed by the media as a "moderate", called Israel a "cancerous tumor in the region." A few months earlier, Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, tweeted similar remarks:

"#Israel is a malignant cancerous tumor in the West Asian region that has to be removed and eradicated: it is possible and it will happen."

In early November, Hamas, one of Iran's terror proxies, fired hundreds of rockets from Gaza into southern Israel. Brian Hook, the US Senior Policy Advisor to the Secretary of State and Special Representative for Iran explained:

"Iran has been providing materiel support to the Taliban since at least 2007. These same rockets have been used by Hamas in the past... we urge all nations, especially the European Union, to move missile sanctions through the European Union so that we can start managing the risk of a regional conflict through missile proliferation".

The attempt by the European Union (EU) to bribe Iran's leaders into compliance with international standards is futile. Iran's terror campaign is not directed only at the West's democratic ally in the Middle East, but also at Europe itself. In June, thanks to Israel, France foiled an Iranian terror plot targeting an event of the National Council of Resistance of Iran near Paris, which was attended by hundreds of dignitaries from Europe, North America and around the world. In the Netherlands, a political activist who campaigned for an independent Arab state in the Ahwaz region of Iran was shot dead in November 2017. In October 2018, Danish officials arrested an Iranian-Norwegian dual-national for plotting the assassination of Iranian dissidents living in Denmark. In the wake of that foiled plot, the Wall Street Journal commented:

"Even as Iranian hit squads are setting up shop across the Continent, the European Union is displaying a fundamental lack of seriousness about a country uninterested in distinctions between bombs, missiles and assassinations."

Europe, apparently, has a short memory. During the 1980s and 1990s, Iranian operatives engaged in assassinations targeting opposition figures in France, Sweden, Switzerland and Germany. In 1997, a German court concluded that the highest levels of Iran's "political leadership" ordered the killing of exiled Iranian dissidents at the Mykonos restaurant in Berlin. The Shah of Iran's last prime minister, Shahpour Bakhtiar, was found stabbed to death at his home outside Paris. Hamid Abutalebi, a high-ranking diplomat who has served as Iran's ambassador to Australia, the EU, Belgium and Italy, was accused of overseeing the 1993 assassination of Iranian dissident Mohammad Hossein Naghdi in Rome. When US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo charged Iran with conducting "assassination operations" in Europe, Tehran was merely resuming a deadly and effective terror campaign.

The recent Iranian terror wave in Europe began in 2012 with the deadly bomb attack on an Israeli tour group in Bulgaria, in which five tourists were killed. Hezbollah, Iran's Lebanese terror proxy was implicated in the bombing, and Israel accused Iran of ordering the attack. A senior American official revealed that the directions for the terror cell had been given to Hezbollah by Iran.

Nathan A. Sales, the US State Department's Coordinator for Counterterrorism, recently disclosed the total amount of money Iran is spending to finance terrorism:

"This may sound hard to believe, but Iran provides Hizballah alone some \$700 million a year. It gives another \$100 million to various Palestinian terrorist groups. When you throw in the money provided to other terrorists, the total comes close to one billion dollars... Let's pause to consider that, because it bears repeating: The Iranian regime spends nearly a billion dollars a year just to support terrorism".

How does one explain Europe's silence and weakness in the face of this terror threat? According to the British government, EU trade with Iran in 2016 stood at around \$8 billion and is expected to "quadruple by 2018". Iran traded \$1.15 billion worth of non-oil goods with the UK in the year to March 20, 2018 -- 154% more than the year before. The British government also pledged to expand business ties with Iran. France's trade with Iran saw a staggering rise of 112% during January-October 2017, compared the same period the year before. In 2017, the trade volume between Germany and Iran increased by 17%. Europe wants a piece of Iran's economy; it is begging for it.

Just day after Rouhani's Israel "cancer" speech, and when all these Iranian terror plots on Europe's soil were already under investigation, Iranian representatives met senior EU officials in Brussels to discuss nuclear cooperation in the framework of the unsigned, illegitimate "nuclear deal". After the talks, EU Foreign Affairs Chief Federica Mogherini said, "They equally expressed their determination to preserve the nuclear agreement as a matter of respecting international agreements and a key pillar for European and regional security". Iran thanked Europe for taking "practical steps" to safeguard the deal. Ahead of the meeting with the Iranians, EU Energy Commissioner Arias Canete said the deal is "crucial for the security of Europe, of the region and the entire world." Unfortunately, the opposite is true: appeasing Iran is catastrophic to the security of Europe and the Middle East.

Europe's appeasement of Iran is based on weakness and greed.

Two-way EU trade with Iran increased from €13.7 billion in 2016 to €21 billion in 2017. That is most likely why, since September, the EU is planning to create a "special purpose" financial company to thwart US President Donald Trump's new sanctions against Iran and help Tehran to continue to sell oil in the EU.

The Wall Street Journal reported that France and Germany are now leading the efforts to circumvent the Iranian sanctions. The journalist Benjamin Weinthal recently wrote:

"Germany exported \$3.42 billion in merchandise to Iran in 2017. Economic analysts said shortly after the 2015 nuclear deal was reached that German-Iranian trade could soon surpass \$10 billion per year. Approximately 120 German companies operate inside the Islamic Republic, and 10,000 German businesses conduct trade with Iran."

It should be noted that the German government not only rejected US sanctions but, as means of "facilitating German trade with Iran", is also providing state credit guarantees to German companies that do business with the Islamic Republic. Since 2016, the German government provided German firms with nearly a billion euros in export credit guarantees, "to protect their business dealings with Iran from the high risks of its markets." And despite the US sanctions, Europe is still a major destination for Iran's flag carrier. One week after the US imposed the new sanctions, including a ban on its airline, Iran Air flew to Paris, London and Hamburg.

Europe's blindness about the nature of the Iranian regime led Italy's parliament to open its doors to a delegation from the Institute for Political and International Studies, based in Tehran. This is the same organization that, in 2006, orchestrated an infamous conference denying the Holocaust. "Israel has a destructive role in our region. Israel is a country that has occupied Palestine and with the war wants to maintain its existence. Israel is a falsification," stated Iranian diplomat Alireza Bigdeli to the Italian parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee. A major European power is not only trafficking Iranian oil -- it is also whitewashing Iran's anti-Semitic propaganda.

According to British columnist Melanie Phillips:

"The Europeans' eagerness to continue to trade with Iran is disgusting. The United States lists Iran as the world's principal state sponsor of terrorism. The regime has been in a state of self-declared war against the West since it took power in 1979. It regularly denies the Holocaust and re-states its intention to wipe Israel off the map... So it should simply be unconscionable to trade with Iran. Yet the Europeans are bending every sinew to continue to do so".

Germany's former Foreign Minister, Sigmar Gabriel, recently traveled with a German economic delegation to Tehran. According to the newspaper Bild, Gabriel met parliamentary speaker Ali Larijani (who called the existence of the Holocaust an "open question") and Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, who is in charge of Iran's support for various terror groups in the Middle East. The new German Foreign Minister, Heiko Maas,

recently said that there is "strong unity" with Iran on minimizing the impact of US sanctions.

Europe, it seems, has chosen Iran over its values and the transatlantic alliance. Josef Schuster, the head of the Central Council of German Jews, denounced Germany's hypocrisy:

"It seems paradoxical that Germany — as a country that is said to have learned from its horrendous past and which has a strong commitment to fight anti-Semitism — is one of the strongest economic partners of a regime that is blatantly denying the Holocaust and abusing human rights on a daily basis".

A Europe where anti-Semitism is rampant again, according to a new CNN poll, sees no trouble in appeasing a country such as Iran, which routinely calls for destroying the Israeli Jews and denying the Holocaust.

EU greed can sometimes become embarrassing, as when the EU's foreign policy chief, Federica Mogherini, wearing a hijab, posed for selfies in Iran's parliament. Or when Sweden's Trade Minister, Ann Linde, led a delegation from her country to Iran and all the women wore headscarves. When Iranians took to the streets to protest their regime, according to Bloomberg's Eli Lake, Mogherini "was mute on the popular uprising in Iran." "She waited six days to say anything about the demonstrations there. When she finally did, it was a mixture of ingratiation and neutrality. 'In the spirit of openness and respect that is at the root of our relationship,' she said, 'we expect all concerned to refrain from violence and to guarantee freedom of expression'".

It was an exquisite example of moral myopia.

In 1938, the leaders of France and Britain signed the Munich Agreement with Hitler and Mussolini. British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain hailed the agreement as bringing "peace for our time." The weak and blind European governments trusted the Nazi leadership, who were already planning not only the invasion of their neighbors, but also the Holocaust. Europe's appeasement, instead of leading to peace, led to world war and Hitler's takeover of most of Europe. In 2018, Europe's leaders are again gambling with the security of their own citizens as well as that of their Middle East allies, especially Israel. Today's short-sighted effort by Europe to appease Tehran for profit is simply a replica of its 1938 surrender.

It just keeps growing....md

The Rotten Fruit of the NAR

Marsha West

To fully grasp all the reasons the New Apostolic Reformation is such a dangerous movement and why discernment bloggers incessantly warn about this cult, I'm going to take an excerpt from a piece I wrote a few years ago entitled "Dominionists are on the move...and they mean business." I began with a quote from NAR's Grand Poohbah, C. Peter Wagner:

Once we have the apostles in place, we will then bring the intercessors and the prophets into the inner circle, and we will end up with the spiritual core we need to move ahead for retaking the dominion that is rightfully ours.

Wagner was speaking of modern-day apostles and prophets. What did he mean by taking dominion that is rightly ours? I'll reveal his plans in a moment.

But first, I must urge readers to take Wagner and other NAR/word-faith wolves seriously. Moreover, it is imperative that Bible believers fully understand the inner workings of the NAR in order to, "recognize them

by their [rotten] fruit." (Mat. 7:16)

Listen to the words of Charles Spurgeon:

If you wish to know God, you must know His Word. If you wish to perceive His power, you must see how He works by His Word. If you wish to know His purpose, before it comes to pass, you can only discover it by His Word.

Lastly, while reading this, keep in mind that many NARwolves have been appointed to Donald Trump's Christian Advisory Board along with several Southern Baptist luminaries.

Dominionists are on the move...and they mean business

The NAR has a plan and a purpose. They believe that they have a mandate from God to restore the office of Apostles and Prophets and advance the Kingdom of God. According to Albert James Dager "dominion theology is predicated upon three basic beliefs: 1) Satan usurped man's dominion over the earth through the temptation of Adam and Eve; 2) The Church is God's instrument to take dominion back from Satan; 3) Jesus cannot or will not return until the Church has taken dominion by gaining control of the earth's governmental and social institutions. (Source)

So – the NAR/dominionist's goal is to transform society into the kingdom of God on earth. How? By controlling various aspects of society. The term they use is the "Seven Mountains," or "Seven Spheres" of society. The Seven Mountains are: 1) Arts and Entertainment; 2) Business/Economy; 3) Education; 4) Family; 5) Government; 6) Media; 7) Religion. The NAR holds that as they accomplish ridding the world of evil, things will get better and better and then Jesus Christ will return to set up His kingdom.

The goals of the CR and the NAR seem like a good idea, right? I mean, who could argue with wanting to influence the seven spheres of society that are dominated by secular humanists. Christians are not wrong in desiring to have a society based on Judeo-Christian principles. But here's the problem. This "mandate" the NAR mob subscribes to did not come from the Lord Jesus Christ. In John 18:36 Jesus made it clear: "My kingdom is not of this world."

However, dominionists never let a little thing like what Jesus said get in the way of their lofty goals. One of the most troubling aspects of their "theology" is the unbiblical teaching on spiritual warfare. They believe they have a kingdom mandate to do "strategic-level spiritual warfare" which is "a popular charismatic method of casting out demons from geographical locations or territories. It identifies three levels of demonic control on earth. Firstly, are "Ground-Level" demons, which possess people. Secondly, "Occult-Level" demons empower witches, shamans, magicians. Finally, "Strategic-Level" demons which are the most powerful of the three, are said to rule over certain regions or territories. Their main purpose is to hinder people from coming to Christ." (Source)

Hence, dominionists go hither and yon to do strategic-level spiritual warfare to tear down demonic strongholds established by Satan and his demons. This is not local; it's global.

Mainstreaming A Cult

Discernment ministries such as Deception in the Church, Let Us Reason, and Herescope have been reporting on the apostate Latter Rain, now the NAR, for decades. The Latter Rain holds that God is pouring out His Spirit just as He did at Pentecost and is using believers to prepare the world for His Second Coming. The name has been changed numerous times. "Presiding Apostle" C. Peter Wagner is the one who dubbed it the New Apostolic Reformation.

Some pro-family organizations such as the AFA, the Family Research Council and Liberty Counsel have

joined forces with the NAR to fight the culture war. Until recently not many folks were paying attention – but they are now. Why? Because the CR has brought the NAR cult into the mainstream.

In A Warning About Latter Day Apostles Herescope's Orrel Steinkamp gives us some background info on Wagner:

This restoration teaching percolated on the back burners of the Charismatic Renewal for years, but it was never promoted heavily and no one attempted to systematically implement it on a worldwide scale. Into this vacuum has stepped C. Peter Wagner as a central personality. Wagner has given organizational and promotional impetus to this so-called restoration and has taken bold steps to implement apostolic restoration to a wider Global Church – as a result he is positioned to have a greater influence than many other promoters of apostolic restoration.

Beginning with his association with John Wimber, Wagner moved quickly into charismatic Christianity. He has systematized certain charismatic spiritual warfare practices and developed his strategic warfare mentality etc. He also promoted what he called the "Third Wave." In this "Third Wave" he saw generic evangelicals getting involved with signs and wonders without adopting traditional Pentecostal Theology. He has a broad Evangelical pedigree and has notoriety as a former missiologist at Fuller seminary. He is the recognized heir and successor to Donald McGavern, the founding father of all church growth teaching. In addition to being a co-founder of the World Prayer Center in Colorado Springs, he is the founding president of Global Harvest Ministries, which is responsible for the "United Prayer Track" of AD2000 and Beyond" as well as many other missions related activities outside the AD2000 organization. The Billy Graham Lausan conference adopted Wagner's missions/evangelism agenda. And he is now in association with many holdovers from the Latter Rain of the 50's who got a new lease on life in the Charismatic Renewal.

Pinocchio's Nose

In a piece I wrote (here) I said that the CR was uniting with cultists. Wagner was indignant that I referred to the NAR as a cult. Within days he sent AN URGENT MESSAGE FROM PETER to his mailing list explaining what the NAR is and is not. Is it a cult, as I claimed? No, he said. "The NAR is definitely not a cult." He went on to say: Those who affiliate with it believe the Apostles' Creed and all the standard classic statements of Christian doctrine. It will surprise some to know that the NAR embraces the largest non-Catholic segment of world Christianity. It is also the fastest growing segment, the only segment of Christianity currently growing faster than the world population and faster than Islam.

The NAR is not an organization. No one can join or carry a card. It has no leader. I have been called the "founder," but this is not the case. One reason I might be seen as an "intellectual godfather" is that I might have been the first to observe the movement, give a name to it, and describe its characteristics as I saw them. ... The roots of the NAR go back to the beginning of the African Independent Church Movement in 1900, the Chinese House Church Movement beginning in 1976, the U.S. Independent Charismatic Movement beginning in the 1970s and the Latin American Grassroots Church Movement beginning around the same time. I was neither the founder nor a member of any of these movements, I was simply a professor who observed that they were the fastest growing churches in their respective regions and that they had a number of common characteristics." (Source)

Mike Oppenheimer of Let Us Reason responded to Wagner's explanation in a piece entitled "A Case of Pinocchio's Nose":

Wagner is claiming he does not want to be labeled a cult. He, as a teacher, ignores the fact that there are cults within Christianity that do confess many of the tenets of the apostle's creed on paper, they just don't implement them in practice.

Cult expert Walter Martin, says Oppenheimer, described a cult as "a group of people gathered about a specific persons [sic] interpretation of the bible... from a theological view point, the cults contain not only a few major deviations from historic Christianity." Moreover, "A cult in its most simplistic meaning operates in falsehood, either theologically, sociologically or both (in beliefs and practices). Some are theologically dangerous others are sociologically dangerous. Not all cults are physically harmful, but they are harmful spiritually. While the cults more often operate using control, they also operate in falsehood and will have secrets that are not public. They claim to have a new or better way applied to various aspects of Christianity, more often about salvation. This aspect is seen in the NAR as they state the church will not succeed without incorporating their apostles and prophets." (emphasis added)

Tap Dancing

Recently Wagner appeared on National Public Radio's Fresh Air. The tap dance he did around the truth could rival Fred Astaire who made tap dancing seem effortless. Granted, he did answer some of host Terry Gross' questions straightforwardly. For example, he admitted that the NAR's influence at The Response was "fairly strong and that it was a significant step forward in NAR's work in America." This is a chilling thought!

When asked about his close friend Ted Haggard's homosexual drug-fueled trysts with a male prostitute while pastoring the 10,000 member New Life Church, he lamented:

But when his homosexuality was revealed, it was a devastating blow to me, because not only was he pastor of this influential church, he was president of the National Association of Evangelicals. And he was a representative of all of us, and we all had a great deal of confidence in him.

When asked about the NAR'S Seven Mountain mandate, he made Fred Astaire look like a novice:

In terms of taking dominion, we don't – we wouldn't want to – we use the word dominion, but we wouldn't want to say that we have dominion as if we're the owners or we're the rulers of, let's say, the arts and entertainment mountain.

What we strive to do, and our goal is to have people in the arts and entertainment mountain who are committed to the kingdom of God. So therefore, we use the adjective they're kingdom-minded believers, and we – our goal is to try to have as many kingdom-minded believers in positions of influence in the arts and entertainment mountain as possible. And the reason for that is to help bring the blessings of heaven to all those in the arts and entertainment mountain.

To help bring blessings? Really? Then why did Wagner teach the following during a conference?:

Dominion has to do with control. Dominion has to do with rulership. Dominion has to do with authority and subduing and it relates to society. In other words, what the values are in heaven need to be made manifest here on earth. Dominion means being the head and not the tail. Dominion means ruling as kings. It says in Revelation Chapter 1:6 that He has made us kings and priests, and check the rest of that verse. It says "for dominion." So we are kings for dominion. (Source)

Wagner also wrote in a newsletter:

The kingdom of God furnishes the template for our stream. We believe that God's desire for this season can be discerned through 'The Dominion Mandate' and 'The 7-M Mandate.' Chuck [Pierce] has laid groundwork through his books, The Future War of the Church and God's Unfolding Battle Plan. I have been doing the same through The Church in the Workplace and Dominion! We want to provide a viable opportunity for apostolic alignment for leaders who minister in all seven mountains....

We feel that Global Spheres, Inc., will fill a gap for many who believe in the direction that Chuck, Doris and I are taking into the future, and who desire official alignment with us as their apostolic leaders. We do not want it to be a traditional, religious organization, but rather an aligned network of leaders from all seven spheres that make up societal structures. This is a way that we can do our part toward fulfilling the Dominion Mandate." [emphases and links added by Herescope]

