Youth With A Mission

Ecumenical (Catholic/Charismatic) Evangelism

- Youth With A Mission (YWAM) is one of the largest mission groups in the world -- an international parachurch organization with roughly 11,000 permanent and 51,000 short-term and student youth "missionaries" [see note] serving in over 800 operating locations in over 135 countries. YWAM operates with a volunteer staff of about 12,000. It was founded in 1960 by a young Assemblies of God college student, Loren Cunningham, to "train young Christians for short-term volunteer service in evangelism and faith development." YWAM operates as a family of ministries rather than as a very structured, centralized agency, maintaining no international headquarters -- each YWAM location does its own mobilizing and training, and sets its own priorities in carrying out ministry. As part of this "family," YWAM operates two "mercy ships," the Good Samaritan and the Anastasis, both of which provide medical and emergency supplies and conduct discipleship training and evangelism at ports around the world. Floyd McClung Jr. heads YWAM today as its International Executive Director, while D. Leland Paris is the Director of the Americas. YWAM also has a strong charismatic influence.

- Since the late-1970s, YWAM has worked closely with Catholic charismatics. In 1978, a YWAM worker in Austria was praying about whether it was possible for a born-again, Bible-believing Christian to be a committed Roman Catholic and decided it was. Beginning in 1978, YWAM workers in Austria began to cooperate with Catholics there. By 1984, YWAM formally accepted a proposal to work with the Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches in various projects. YWAM has since played an important role in helping "nascent [emerging] charismatic communities among Roman Catholic youth," resulting in the spreading of new Catholic centers for evangelism training.

There are now a "good number" of young Roman Catholics working for YWAM, including Rob Clarke, the national director of YWAM's discipleship training center in Dublin, Ireland. (Clarke has said: "We are trying to get away from the idea of simply 'converting' Catholics -- that is turning them into Protestants -- and towards a framework of ministry within the Catholic Church.") A YWAM representative at the 1987 Charismatic Congress in New Orleans estimated that up to 1,000 of YWAM workers were Catholics. YWAM also worked with three Roman Catholic dioceses in Poland in building "local communities of faith" (12/92, Religion Watch). This pattern of YWAM cooperation with Catholics is spreading from Europe to Africa and Asia (1/4/93, Christian News). Al Akimoff, YWAM's director for Slavic Ministries, said YWAM's missionaries are not aiming to lure Catholics out of their churches.

- Besides YWAM's Catholic connections, it is also very much tied into the Charismatic Movement. Although YWAM does not label itself "independent charismatic," it absorbs by far the lion's share of the independent charismatic missionary force worldwide. An estimated fifteen percent of YWAM's full-time missionaries and annual short-termers are independent charismatics. (Reported in the 2/15/93, Christian News.)

- YWAM is a somewhat sanitized version of Jesus People, USA (JPUSA -- publishers of Cornerstone magazine). Like JPUSA, YWAM is counterculture, charismatic, and youth-oriented, promoting the idea that young people can be heroes who will save the world. Also like JPUSA, they frequently live communally and have been accused of cultic brainwashing by ex-members, as well as the abuses of the Shepherding movement. Martin Spacaro, who was with YWAM for four years, considers the organization a borderline cult. Spacaro also claims that during his time with YWAM, he "did not once hear the doctrine of justification by faith articulated." He also claimed YWAM is anti-intellectual, discouraging informed theological understanding, and that it incorporates a feelings-oriented Pentecostal theology. (Reported in the 9/11/95, Christian News.)
- Roughly 15,000 people gathered together in St. Louis, Missouri, June 21-23, to participate in Celebrate Jesus 2000 (not to be confused with an ecumenical evangelistic program operated by Mission America which has the same name). This is the sixth ecumenical-charismatic conference sponsored by the North American Renewal Service Committee. (The conferences were originally called "North American Congresses on the Holy Spirit and World Evangelization.") The first was in Kansas City in 1977 and was attended by 50,000 people. That was the first major conference to include the "three streams" of the Charismatic movement -- Classical Pentecostals, Charismatic Protestants, and Charismatic Roman Catholics. The next two meetings were held in New Orleans, Louisiana in 1986 and 1987. Then there was a conference in Indianapolis in 1990, and one in Orlando in 1995. YWAM has participated in all except the first North American (charismatic) Congress, and was right at home in that radically ecumenical environment in St. Louis.

The Executive Committee for the 2000 conference was composed of Vinson Synan (Pentecostal), Nancy Kellar (Roman Catholic nun), Jim Jackson (Christian Believers United), and Vernon Stoop (United Church of Christ pastor). There were many well-known speakers, including Jack Hayford, Pat Robertson, Stephen Hill, John Kilpatrick, Cindy Jacobs, John Arnott, Steve Strang, Richard Roberts, Michael Scanlan, Tom Forrest, Thomas Trask, and Rick Joyner (all either charismatic or Roman Catholic, or both). The stated goals of the meetings in a nutshell are threefold: (1) To promote and celebrate the Charismatic movement, (2) to promote ecumenical unity between all denominations, and (3) to further world evangelism. The grand focus, though, is ecumenical unity. These conferences present a microcosm of the end-times ecumenical movement. The fact that the error is intermingled with and glossed over with truth makes the ecumenical movement attractive to large numbers of people and extremely dangerous. (Source: "CELEBRATION JESUS 2000: END TIMES CONFUSION IN ST. LOUIS," David Cloud, Way of Life Literature.)

- The 9/93 issue of Charisma magazine had a section of articles discussing the legacy of the "Jesus Movement" of the late 1960s. Some key words/phrases characterizing this movement were: Sexual revolution, acid generation, long hair, hippies, rock/folk music, rebellion, anti-war protest, peace, love, "Jesus freaks," flower children, communes, and coffeehouse ministries. Chuck Smith and Calvary Chapel were prominently discussed. The "Jesus Movement" helped fuel the wildfire spread of the charismatic movement along with its so-called Contemporary Christian Music. It gave vitality to Campus Crusade, Youth With A Mission, and Jews for Jesus. Cornerstone magazine (indirectly) and Greg Laurie (an early Calvary Chapel convert) are also products of the Jesus Movement. (Reported in the 9/15/93, Calvary Contender.)

- YWAM participates in the A.D. 2000 Evangelism organization. Billy Graham, Luis Palau, Campus Crusade's Bill Bright, and Kyun Chik Han of Korea were named as four Honorary Co-Chairmen. A.D. 2000 Evangelism is ecumenical, compromising to the core, and even has some New Agers in its ranks (e.g., Jay Gary and Robert Muller), yet many undiscerning or uninformed professing believers are supporting, praising, and participating in it. [Jay Gary was writing a guest column (in 1994) for YWAM's bimonthly 12-page news-service, World Christian News. It goes to all A.D. 2,000 leaders.] This unscriptural evangelism movement includes Roman Catholics, Orthodox, Charismatics, Pentecostals, and Protestants of all kinds. It is evident that many have not yet realized the impossibility of evangelizing the world when millions of those participating in that effort preach a false gospel. This makes the A.D. 2000 Evangelism program a curse, not a blessing. (Rome has in fact, it's own branch of A.D. 2000 called "Evangelization 2000.")

According to the July-August, 1993, Mission Frontiers Bulletin, "These International Coalition leaders share the vision of the A.D. 2000 and Beyond Movement. ["A church for every people and the Gospel for every person by A.D. 2000," is their slogan.] They are 'front line' leaders, implementers, activists, equippers, and/or mobilizers in the ministry of world evangelization. Coalition members give leadership to the involvement of their own constituencies and share spiritual counsel with the various A.D. 2000 boards, committees and resource network leaders. They will seek to rally support and resources of all kinds to see the objectives of the movement fulfilled." (Emphasis added.) Seeking "all kinds" of support simply means that they will utilize whatever group claims to
be in agreement with their "objectives" of global evangelization. The problem with such an inclusivist policy, however, is that some of the groups whose support they are trying to enlist embrace many unbiblical beliefs and strange gospels (September-October 1993, *Foundation* magazine).

- In 5/92, so-called leading evangelicals joined a coalition of science and religion sponsored by the "Joint Appeal by Religion and Science for the Environment." Joint Appeal is based at New York's godless Episcopal Cathedral of St. John the Divine, a bastion of New Age/ecumenical/Antichrist deception. Its blasphemous dean, James Parks Morton, declares that "the body of Christ is the earth ..." Out of the 5/92 meeting came an environmental consortium of the U.S. Catholic Conference, the National Council of Churches, the Evangelical Environmental Network, and the Consultation of Jewish Life and the Environment.

The environmental movement is a religion, a "bio-spiritual faith" in which man is a part of the natural order of things "with no special claim on its resources and no special claim on God's love." Such pagan folly is gaining an increasing following among evangelicals, who now claim that Christ's command to preach the gospel includes rescuing the environment. Such is the message of a course titled "Environmental Stewardship: A Biblical Perspective" taught at *YWAM's* University of the Nations at their headquarters in Hawaii. "Thus, [professing] Christians enter compromising partnerships with the ungodly and expend their time and efforts on caring for a temporal earth instead of preparing souls for eternity" (3/94, *The Berean Call*).

- *YWAM's* University of the Nations co-published a book with the charismatic-oriented organization Global Mapping International, titled, *Target: Earth*. The book integrates the message of urgency for worldwide evangelism with a New Age ecological and peace message. It erroneously traces Roman Catholicism to A.D. 33, which implies that it is, as it claims, the true church from which all others split. (In fact, *Roman Catholicism was spawned under the Emperor Constantine in the fourth century*, and was the first great apostasy from the true Faith.) The author-contributors to *Target: Earth* could be best classified not as New Agers or liberal theologians, but as new evangelicals or members of the "Redemptive Community." Redemptive theology, like the "Christian" Reconstructionists/Dominion Now theologians, is concerned not just with saving souls, but with saving the planet and the world social order. Thus, *YWAM* and its allies closely identify with the environmental activism and paranoia found in New Age writings. (Reported in a 12/95 *Media Spotlight* Special Report titled "Celebration 2000: Neo-Orthodoxy and the New Evangelism," pp. 11-12.)

- *YWAM* is experimenting with a new, unscriptural missions strategy. Several international missions organizations, including *YWAM*, are testing a new approach to missionary work in areas where Christianity is unwelcome. A March 24, 2000, *Charisma News Service* report said some missionaries are now making converts but are allowing them to "hold on to many of their traditional religious beliefs and practices" so as to refrain from offending others within their culture. The *Charisma* article noted: "Messianic Muslims, who continue to read the Koran, visit the mosque and say their daily prayers but accept Christ as their Savior, are the products of the strategy which is being tried in several countries." One particular church planter in Asia related how 50 members of a Muslim family accepted Christ as Savior and formed their own fellowship. He writes in *YWAM's* staff newsletter, "They continued a life of following the Islamic requirements, including mosque attendance, fasting and Koranic reading, besides getting together as a fellowship of Muslims who acknowledge Christ as the source of God's mercy for them." According to the Charisma report, the church planter said these "Messianic Muslims" also "meet according to mosque traditions in a style that would horrify many Western Christians." Yet he claimed that this method is Biblical. The *Charisma* report added that "YWAM is also adopting the approach in India, where a team is working with a Hindu holy man."

This new approach in which the missionaries or church planters teach new converts that it is acceptable to continue to adhere to pagan beliefs and practices is completely contrary to Scripture.
God's Word declares that a believer becomes a "new creature" in Christ at the moment he is saved and commands the believer to therefore separate from the "unfruitful works of darkness" that once held him in bondage. Certainly many Jewish Christians in the first-century church at Jerusalem and elsewhere did need a better understanding of grace vs. law, but those Judaizers who espoused the idea that newly professing Christians needed to become more zealous in law-keeping were diametrically opposed to the apostolic instruction for the church. They actually became the chief enemies of the apostle Paul as he sought to evangelize all men with the same Gospel of God's grace apart from works and establish New Testament churches comprised of Jews and Gentiles alike (Rom. 4:16-25; Eph. 2:11-18; Gal. 3:10-14; 5: 1). Paul emphasized the fact that the law was "bondage" but that life in Christ is "grace and peace." Those who come to Christ must reject, turn from and separate from other gods and unbiblical beliefs and practices, no matter how "culturally established" such practices and beliefs may be. Of course, the new believers were to refrain from causing undue offense, but a difference certainly existed between causing undue offense and actually continuing to live, act, worship and believe as the unsaved Jews or Gentiles. (Source: May-June 2000, Foundation.)

- Promise Keepers is the gigantic new (1991) "men's movement" among professing evangelical Christians. Its roots are Catholic and charismatic to the core. PK's contradictory stand on homosexuality; its promotion of secular psychology; its unscriptural feminizing of men; its depiction of Jesus as a "phallic messiah" tempted to perform homosexual acts; and its ecumenical and unbiblical teachings should dissuade any true Christian from participating. Promise Keepers is proving to be one of the most ungodly and misleading movements in the annals of Christian history. Nevertheless, YWAM is a promoter of this ecumenical, charismatic, psychologized men's movement, as evidenced by various YWAM directors speaking at PK men's conferences (e.g., John Dawson in 1996).

- Other YWAM notes:

(a) YWAM and three of its executives endorsed and participated in the 9/95 National Evangelistic Census (NEC), a Kingwood, Texas charismatic/ecumenical ministry to "turn the nation back to God by winning our cities to Jesus." NEC sponsors an annual one day "census"/global neighborhood survey where teams of two go door-to-door asking questions from a form and presenting the "gospel"; an NEC brochure predicts: "The angels in heaven will be shouting when the goal of 25 million souls are reported won to Jesus in one day!" (Among other endorsers are Campus Crusade for Christ, the E-Free Church, and A.D. 2000 & Beyond Movement, as well as hyper-charismatics John Osteen, John Hagee, Charles and Frances Hunter, Frederick K.C. Price, Morris Cerullo, Marilyn Hickey, Dick Eastman, Jack Hayford, and Richard Roberts.) [YWAM has also taken part in the annual ecumenical/charismatic (now defunct) March For Jesus campaigns.]

(b) Author John Dawson (International Director for Urban Ministries of YWAM) is one of the big-time "spiritual warfare" promoters in the professing church today. He has written Taking Our Cities for God: How to Break Spiritual Strongholds (Creation House:1989) and Defeating Territorial Spirits (in which Dawson claims, "battles against evil spiritual forces controlling our cities can be waged and won"). YWAM's fascination with the "strategic-level spiritual warfare movement" is concerning, because its characteristics are akin to shamanism (i.e., witchdoctoring). [The shaman's world is one of direct daily contact with the spirit realm. The shaman leads his people in spiritually efficacious rituals or public dances/marches to the glory of his spirits. He develops methods and techniques to overcome evil spirits, techniques he receives from good spirits, so he believes. Communication with invisible entities is totally subjective, often experimental, and always pragmatic: if it works it's good medicine. The "good" spirits give the shaman spiritual discernment, enabling him to recognize curse-laden objects and even to "see" evil entities which could be destructive to his village. All such
methods, techniques, and rituals encompass sorcery and are diametrically opposed to God's way. (Source: 7/97 TBC.)

(c) Leaders of YWAM appointed their first female national director in 3/93 to oversee a 200-member staff in Switzerland. At a 1992 conference, YWAM founder Loren Cunningham spoke out strongly against what he called "cultural bias" against women. He also warned that God's blessing might be removed if YWAM did not commission female leaders (7/92, Charisma) (cf. 1 Tim. 2:11-14; 1 Cor. 14:34-37).

(d) Methods used by YWAM at their Discipleship Training School are some of the same types of methods used by Chinese Brainwashing experts, the Moonies, and Scientology. Students are isolated from their families and old acquaintances, forced to participate in obsessive personal confession and exposure in small groups using classical "sensitivity training"/encounter group techniques familiar to many cults, and forced to accept appointed authorities just for authority sake, whether the authorities acted correctly or incorrectly (Laurie Jacobson, The Cultic Studies Journal, Vol. 3, No. 2, 1986). [The Discipleship Training School (usually 24 weeks in length) is the basic YWAM school that serves as a prerequisite to applying as YWAM staff and all other YWAM training programs.]

(e) Growing out of the encounter group movement in the 1960s were what is now termed "Large Group Awareness Training" (LGAT). LGAT's are part psychotherapy, part spirituality, and part business. Erhard Seminars Training (est) was the most successful of these groups. The est model of self-transformation is structured around an intense weekend experience along the lines of sensitivity training, and has been widely imitated. One such imitation is Momentus, which describes itself as a dynamic Christian seminar which "restores self-examination as a crucial aspect of Christian transformation." Momentus has come under fire from cult awareness groups as well as from former participants. Nevertheless, YWAM praises it highly and recommends it for YWAM trainees. [And why not? -- Momentus' techniques are strikingly similar to those used at YWAM's Discipleship Training Schools (see above).] (Source: "Momentus: Killing the Inner Victim," Media Spotlight, Vol.23-No.3, October 2000.)

(f) Al Akimoff, YWAM director for Slavic Ministries, said: "YWAM's missions are not aiming to lure Catholics out of their churches ... our philosophy is not to tear down but to build on what's there" (8/93, Charisma).

(g) YWAM is a signatory to the 1974 Lausanne Covenant -- an ecumenical evangelism effort begun by Billy Graham and Leighton Ford.

(h) YWAM leader Lynn Green is calling upon Christians to "make peace with Muslims through reconciliation rather than confrontation" (Charisma News Service, 9/11/02). In April of 2002, he held caucuses of Christian and Muslim leaders in Beirut and Damascus and urged Christians to refrain from "collectively demonizing" Muslims. Green was a leader in the Reconciliation Walk (see below) from 1996-1999, during which ecumenical Christians retraced the path of the medieval Catholic crusades to Palestine and apologized "in the name of the church" for the atrocities committed by the crusaders. (Source: 9/27/02, FBIS.)

(i) YWAM, along with its friends at A.D. 2000 & Beyond, organized "A Walk of Reconciliation" in order to 'promote better understanding between Christians, Muslims, and Jews... A walking tour that is building bridges with Muslims and Jews." The Reconciliation Walk was launched in 1996 to apologize for the harm that the Crusades brought to the people of the Middle East during the Middle Ages. "Identificational
repentance” was called for in order to “purge the corporate sin of Christians during the Crusades.” The hope is that the project “will result in substantial reconciliation between the major monotheistic faiths.” (Reported in the 1/96, Perilous Times.) This is an exercise in vanity. The atrocities were not committed by Christians in general but specifically by Roman Catholics under the urging of the popes. Ecumenists have an unscriptural view of the church, which they see as being composed of all denominations. It was not the church of Jesus Christ that committed those atrocities; it was the devil’s harlot church, the one described in Revelation 17 as "drunken with the blood of the saints." In addition, YWAM and others have no authority to reconcile and build bridges to Christ-rejecting religions. The Cross of Christ is God’s only salvation bridge. For Muslims, Jews, and others who refuse that, there can be no real reconciliation (3/15/97, Calvary Contender; 9/27/02, FBIS). Basic understanding like this frequently escapes YWAM leaders.

(j) YWAM is one of the "sending agencies" of Adopt-A-People (Colorado Springs, Colorado), a mission strategy that rather than focusing on countries and missionaries, focuses on people groups or "nations'/tribes. Their ecumenical motto is "A Church For Every People," and it publishes a "List of Unreached and Adoptable Peoples" through its Adopt-A-People Clearinghouse (co-published by A.D. 2000 & Beyond Movement and the Southern Baptist Convention Foreign Mission Board). Resources available include books by A.D. 2000's Luis Bush and Jay Gary. (Other sending agencies are TEAM and The Jesus Film Project.)

(k) YWAM has sought and received the endorsements of a number of liberals and ecumenicals: Bill Bright (Campus Crusade for Christ), Tony Campolo, Dick Easton, Millard Fuller (Habitat for Humanity), Jack Hayford, Bill Hybels, Bill McCartney (Promise Keepers), and Billy Graham.

(l) YWAM's leadership, including both Loren Cunningham and Joy Dawson, have been on the Benny Hinn "This Is Your Day" show in endorsement of his ministry, pledging to work with him. Joy Dawson flew to Hawaii with Hinn for his 2002 crusade, and stood on stage with Hinn promising that YWAM would work with Hinn to evangelize the youth of the islands. Local YWAM leadership in Hawaii is now responsible to implement Hinn's future crusades in Hawaii, and YWAM will be helping Hinn all over the world. Hinrich Kranzlin, director of YWAM Oceania, indicated that he has only minor problems with Hinn, but no real major problems with YWAM working with Hinn, and considers Hinn to be a good evangelist. (YWAM also helped organize the ecumenical World Christian Gathering On Indigenous People in Hawaii in October of 2002, and promoted the event on Honolulu radio.) (Source: "YWAM: The Facts About Their Headlong Dive Into Apostasy," by Sandy Simpson, 12/7/02.)

(m) YWAM has been promoting heretical books by Third Wavers like Rick Joyner and Francis Frangepane, publishes books by George Otis, Jr. and C. Peter Wagner, and hands out many others all over the Hawaiian Islands to pastors and church leaders there. YWAM is actively inviting people out of Biblical churches to go to Third Wave churches and events. In Micronesia, YWAM is actively proselytizing people from Evangelical churches to go to the Brownsville type church there, using false spiritual warfare techniques such as binding territorial demons, blowing shofars on mountain tops, getting the Holy Spirit by impartation and "through the mouth," going up to the hills with salt and water to "reconcile men with women in the culture," prayer walking, spiritual mapping, etc. (Source: "YWAM: The Facts About Their Headlong Dive Into Apostasy," by Sandy Simpson, 12/7/02.)

- The following is from an email BDM received in 1996. The writer was a former YWAM
missionary who went through YWAM's Discipleship Training School (DTS) and served on the YWAM mercy ship Anastasis: (For more testimonies from former YWAM'ers ...)

During the classroom phase [of DTS] different instructors come to teach and or minister. One instructor was a psychologist -- a devoted disciple of Larry Crabb. He taught on Cliff Jumping and exposing our true selves to others so we could have a higher degree of intimacy with them and with God. Along this vein, [DTS has] small groups in which students discuss their feelings, griefs, etc. with one another ... In retrospect they were nothing more than encounter groups. A lot of YWAM training involves being "freed from your hurts or past" so you can serve -- sound a little like inner healing? In addition, on more than one occasion I was concerned about YWAM's soteriological errors. -- Such statements as: "God is revealing Himself to the Muslim world by appearing to them in dreams. Muslims worship the same God we do, they just have a little distorted vision of him."

On a more practical level, YWAM doesn't fare much better. DTS students … are required to do work around the base or ship. Usually these are menial tasks [regardless of] the abilities of the student. This is [supposedly] necessary in order to learn servitude and humility. After [successful completion of] DTS people can go on staff with YWAM. Many times they do not receive the positions promised. They also tell DTS students that part of the function of the DTS training is to develop character. It would seem at times, though, that YWAM behavior borders on hazing, just to see if they can get a reaction out of you.

Often times their preparation for outreach is poor. Off to some 3rd world country goes a party of DTS students with minimal contacts and minimal preparation. I did my outreach in Albania. Many of my classmates were professionals like myself or had a skilled trade. Thirty of us went into three different areas of Albania -- To do what??? We didn't have a clue. YWAM said, "Just do a little friendship evangelism or whatever God shows you." So we spent 8 weeks doing not much. We had two dentists in our group and they went to a few villages and pulled some teeth. That was it. Many outreaches involve dramas. That's all they did -- dramas all day long for 8 weeks.

The last day of my DTS was the happiest day of my life. I couldn't wait to get away from them. They were always trying to get inside my head and get me to express my real feelings and to reveal some nonexistent emotional pain.

Now for the straw that broke the camel's back. Almost a year after completing my DTS, I went out to a YWAM meeting with some friends. The speaker was a man named Steve Pretzel. His first words were, "I sense a tired spirit here. I want you all to close your eyes and go to that place where you meet Jesus. It might be in the mountains or by a stream or in a field. But go to that place where you meet Jesus. And, Jesus is coming to you and He's going to minister to you, and only you know how he's going to minister to you." Pure inner healing/visualization!

YWAM also stoops to flat-out extortion to prevent people from spreading the message about YWAM's many problems -- they use the story of Joshua
and Caleb, cautioning students not to bring back a bad report of YWAM lest the wrath of God fall on them.

**Note:** It is unbiblical that youth should be displaced from their own families and artificially isolated in their own company. In addition, the young are not intended by God to be missionaries. In fact, there is a strong warning not to exalt novices, which most young Christians obviously are (1 Tim. 3:6). One has only to do a word study on "youth" to see that it is a doctrine of devils to send the young out to do the labor of the mature Christian. Some will cite Timothy and David as examples, but both of these young men were exceptional, and were not segregated in groups of their peers.

(Source: [Return to Text])

---

**Biblical Discernment Ministries - Revised 1/2005**