

The Angels' Footpath: A Review

Neil Girrard

All quotes are from *The Angels' Footpath*, Ronald R. Cooke, 2010, unless otherwise noted)

Ronald Cooke's *The Angels' Footpath* is predicated on the idea that Christianity, institutionalized churchianity, stands in need of a second reformation, a renaissance. (p.191) This idea is indeed radically correct. And indeed it is no understatement to say that the "church" has done its utmost to make the original gospel of Christ completely irrelevant, ineffective and impotent.

The book is a theological treatise wrapped up in a futuristic thriller. Rick, the main character of Cooke's book is a muted-down Messiah figure who has a mission "to clarify the message of Christ, reinforce the values God has taught us, reemphasize Paul's message about love, and to add one other – the existence of a spiritual universe." (p.192) Thus Rick comes as the next Messiah though he himself would deny that's what he's doing. (p.280)

Cooke does not attempt to clarify Christ – he simply reshapes Christ into his own theology, which is not God- or Christ-centered. When a minister, who subscribes to the fallacious notion that the Bible (the Book) is infallible. (p. 280), tells Rick, "Your opinions are less important than Scripture," Rick simply ignores him. (p. 278) Apparently the author believes he should just ignore this "hostile comment" because, as Rick says elsewhere, "there is no universal consensus on the nature of God, the divinity of Jesus, the concept of original sin, or the characterization of hell." (p. 201) But just because humans cannot come to agreement on what God has revealed about Himself does not mean that we are thus entitled to concoct some new theology that changes, weakens or dismisses what *God* has said about Himself.

It is here that we can perhaps best see that the author begins with the radically correct idea that Christianity needs another reformation (apparently in response to Roman Catholic sectarianisms) and, rather than turn to Christ and God to be led into all truth (as Christ promised He would do for His genuine followers – Jn. 15:26, 16:13), the author puts forth the idea that because "we do have a more sophisticated grasp on physics, chemistry, mathematics, biology, and so on...we also have to develop a more sophisticated understanding of God." (p. 191) Anyone who reads and truly ponders Paul's letter to the Ephesians (for example) or John's first letter (as another example) will find the understanding of Paul and John of the ways of God to be for more sophisticated – and accurate! – than the views expressed in *The Angels' Footpath*. Few, if any, modern writers attain to the height, depth and breadth – or longevity! – of the New Testament! Why? Because Paul and John and the other New Testament writers were led by the Spirit of truth.

Paul also wrote, "You once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the *spirit* who now works in the sons of disobedience..." (Eph. 1:2) Cooke's "spiritual universe" differs in at least one very significant way from spiritual reality – Cooke's "spiritual universe" has no real bad guys, certainly no devil or Satan capable of deceiving, harming or killing anyone. Many warnings and clear meanings of the New Testament must be simply discarded to think that God, who sent His messenger Jesus (p. 191), doesn't know more about spiritual reality than does Cooke. Cooke's "angels' footpath," on which good humans die to become angels (completely contrary to Christ's words which clearly differentiates between the angels and the sons of God who are the sons of the resurrection – Lk. 20:36, etc.), does more to deliver misguided, unsuspecting souls into the hands of the spirit who now works

in the sons of disobedience than it does to encourage men to diligently live their lives in obedience to Christ now so as to be ready to enter into the joy of their Lord (Mt. 25:21) when they pass from this life.

Similar errors are made in regard to the characterization of hell. Cooke believes “we humans make our own hell” (p. 253), a belief he has formulated in reaction to the equally false notion that hell “is a place of fire and brimstone overrun with wicked demons who find great pleasure in torturing humans.” (p. 197) Such a place would be a demon’s “heaven”! Christ Himself, however, spoke more about the realities of a hell than any of the writers of the New Testament and described it as an “everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.” (Mt. 25:41) When Satan is cast into this fire, he will be *tormented* forever (Rev. 20:10) – the idea that he and his angels and demons will be free to torment others or that they will rule in hell is a man-made “theological” fabrication.

Cooke also reconstructs “the Holy Trinity” as “God the Holy Father, God the Holy Mother, and God the Holy Spirit” (p. 178) and as an “energy” which came together as a unity within the plane of his notions of the spiritual universe. (p. 210) Cooke’s beliefs are built on the “model [of] the natural order of things.” (p. 278) Paul wrote, however, “Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, *according to the basic principles of the world*, and not according to Christ. For *in Him* dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete *in Him...*” (Col. 2:8-10) There is no need to “add” the existence of the spiritual realm to the teachings of Christ and the New Testament. Christ has already raised up His followers and seated them with Him in the spiritual, heavenly places *in Christ Jesus*. (Eph. 2:6) The “trick” is to not be led away by the error of the wicked and so fall from our steadfast place *in Christ*. (2 Pet. 3:18) Cooke’s neo-gnosticism is simply and completely beyond the scope of the things God has revealed about Himself. The Bible never argues the existence of God but simply promises that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. (Heb. 11:6) Those who want a “God” of their own vain imaginations can only create a “God” completely different from the one true God.

Cooke’s “God” is not one who loves and interacts with human beings on any personal or individual levels. Cooke’s views can only be called deist – “God does not usually intercede in our affairs.” (p. 199 – see Heb. 7:25, however, where Christ “ever lives to make intercession for those who come to God through Christ”) and “God seldom interferes with the affairs of [man’s] planet.” (p. 294 – see Christ’s basic instruction to pray “Your kingdom come. You will be done *on earth* as it is in heaven.” – Mt. 6:10) It is no wonder then that Cooke is “desperate for a refreshing and contemporary interpretation of Christian theology” (p. 191) – his “God” is an absentee Father! Love that is not individual or personally experienced is not love. Cooke’s views make a lie out of Christ’s promise, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love Him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.” (Jn. 14:23) Cooke’s views are simply very different from Christ’s words.

Jesus said, “If anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or ‘There!’ do not believe it. For false christs and false prophets will arise and show great signs and wonders, so as to deceive, if possible, even the elect.” (Mt. 24:23-24) Cooke’s Ricardo Juan Sanchez Vasquez would simply be one of the false christs who will come to deceive and distract people from following after the real Christ. Rick’s “gift” (p. 112, etc.) is more reminiscent of *The Dead Zone*, *The Mentalist* or some Hollywood movie than it resembles that of Paul (Acts 13:9) or Jesus (who rarely did any miracle the same way twice!) If the author had intended to create one of the false christs Jesus warned about, *The Angels’ Footpath* would be a brilliant piece of writing. As it is,

Cooke only demonstrates just how easy it will be for someone who comes in his own name with his own new theology (that embraces just about everything except the truth which Jesus promised that those who followed Him would know – Jn. 8:32) that would deceive even those in the “church.”

Cooke is right that “humanity desperately needs an enlightened vision of the spiritual” (p. 179) but that need is drastically overshadowed by man’s need for a Savior who will safely guide him through hostile spiritual territory. He is right to dismiss the need for approval from any “church” institution and is even right that we should not necessarily be bound by historically traditional views of the Scriptures. And we certainly need something that goes far beyond what was taught to us in Sunday school! (p. 177) Rick even says, “I do not believe it would be productive to change or delete the Scriptures. Rather, we seek to view them from the perspective of twenty-first century knowledge.” (p. 279) But by seeking to view spiritual truths from this contemporary perspective and not by way of being led into all truth by the Spirit of truth, Cooke simultaneously changes, deletes or dismisses Scriptural truths and thereby completely weakens and changes God’s message of hope and redemption for mankind.

Let the reader beware! This other-wise very well written piece of futuristic fiction, as gripping as its drama may be and as realistic as its scenarios may well prove to be, is a departure from “the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.” (Jude 3) Walk only the path of Christ that leads to eternal life (Mt. 7:14) even though that way *requires* a cross and a lifestyle of self-denial (Lk. 9:23) Anything else is merely a deception from the father of lies, Satan (Jn. 8:44), that murderer who spiritually preys upon the human race as a lion preys for food. (1 Pet. 5:8) The devil enjoys a sophisticated intellectualian for lunch just as much as he does any other flavor of human soul-meat.

Let he who has ears hear.

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