

Renovaré Teachings that Contradict the *Statement of Faith* of the Evangelical Free Church of America

Tim Davis
www.whateverispure.org

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This document demonstrates how the teachings of Renovaré contradict the *Statement of Faith* of the Evangelical Free Church of America (EFCA). The first column of the table presents the ten paragraphs of the EFCA Statement. The second column presents the Renovaré teachings that contradict all ten paragraphs of the EFCA Statement.

Renovaré was founded by Richard J. Foster and James Bryan Smith. Dallas Willard is the primary teacher for the first year of the Renovaré Spiritual Formation Institute (2010-2011) and serves on the Renovaré Ministry Team alongside Foster, Smith, and others. Foster and Willard spearheaded the Renovaré Bible. The Renovaré purpose statement is as follows:

Renovaré is a nonprofit Christian organization headquartered in Englewood, Colorado, and active worldwide. We seek to resource, fuel, model, and advocate more intentional living and spiritual formation among Christians and those wanting a deeper connection with God. A foundational presence in the spiritual formation movement for over 20 years, Renovaré is Christian in commitment, ecumenical in breadth, and international in scope. (www.renovare.us)

About this document: All Renovaré quotations cited in this document are from Renovaré publications, publications by Smith, Foster, and/or Willard, or published interviews with Richard Foster. Underlined portions of the EFCA *Statement of Faith* denote those portions that are contradicted by Renovaré teachings.

This document is self-contained on paper, but the electronic version contains links to web sites for more information (posted at www.whateverispure.org). Links are made only to the following authoritative sites:

- Renovaré web sites (www.renovare.us),
- web sites of publishers of Renovaré material or published interviews with Foster: HarperCollins (www.harpercollins.com) and Quaker Life (www.fum.org),
- Dallas Willard's web site (www.dwillard.org),
- the EFCA web site (www.efca.org/about-efca/statement-faith),
- and links to Google Book Search, which allow the reader to view online most of the Renovaré quotations used in this document.

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EFCA Statement	Renovaré contradictions of EFCA Statement
<p>1. God: We believe in one God, <u>Creator of all things, holy, infinitely perfect, and eternally existing in a loving unity of three equally divine Persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Having limitless knowledge and sovereign power,</u> God has <u>graciously purposed from eternity to redeem a people for Himself and to make all things new for His own glory.</u></p>	<p>Foster limits the knowledge and sovereignty of God, by claiming that we are incarnated co-creators with God who work with God to determine the outcome of things.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">We are working with God to determine the outcome of things. It needs to be said reverently, but it does need to be said: we are co-creators with God in advancing His kingdom upon the earth. (<i>Study Guide for Celebration of Discipline</i>, Foster, p. 25)</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">We can descend with the mind into the heart most easily through the imagination ... To believe that God can sanctify and utilize the imagination is simply to take seriously the Christian idea of incarnation. God so accommodates, so enfleshes himself into our world that he uses the images we know and understand to teach us about the unseen world of which we know so little and which we find so difficult to understand. (<i>Celebration of Discipline</i>, Foster, 3rd ed., pp. 25-26)</p>

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<p>2. The Bible: We believe that God has spoken in the Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, through the words of human authors. As the verbally inspired Word of God, <u>the Bible is without error in the original writings, the complete revelation of His will for salvation, and the ultimate authority by which every realm of human knowledge and endeavor should be judged. Therefore, it is to be believed in all that it teaches, obeyed in all that it requires, and trusted in all that it promises.</u></p>	<p><i>The Renovaré Spiritual Formation Bible / Life with God Bible</i> was spearheaded by Foster and Willard:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Spearheaded by bestselling authors Richard J. Foster (<i>Celebration of Discipline</i>) and Dallas Willard (<i>The Divine Conspiracy</i>), ... (publisher's web page, HarperCollins)</p> <p>The Renovaré commentators "bypass" Scripture that does not fit their preconceived ideas. Foster was interviewed by <i>Quaker Life</i>, June 2005: [<i>sic</i>]:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>Interviewer:</i> I noticed that the focus on the with-God life circumnavigates inconsistencies found in Scripture and differing opinions about theology. By looking at how God revealed himself to people throughout Biblical history negates all those arguments. "You bypass it all," stated Foster. ...</p> <p>(continued on next page)</p>

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<p>3. The Human Condition: We believe that God created Adam and Eve in His image, but they sinned when tempted by Satan. In union with Adam, human beings are sinners by nature and by choice, alienated from God, and under His wrath. Only through God's saving work in Jesus Christ can we be rescued, reconciled and renewed.</p>	<p>The Renovaré Bible calls Adam and Eve archetypes, not real people, and says that prior to sin, their innocence was not virtue but ignorance and a lack of character.</p> <p>Adam and Eve “fell” because, though innocent, they lacked character. Innocence is not virtue. Innocence, for all its beauty, is a form of ignorance and lack of character. ... To develop Adam’s and Eve’s character – and ours too – God has to be “absent” as well as present in human life. Just as our parents care for us around the clock in infancy and early childhood and then gradually withdraw their presence from us as we physically mature, so God is intently present to us at our spiritual infancy and then allows us to be increasingly “on our own” as we spiritually mature. (<i>The Renovaré Spiritual Formation Bible</i>, pp. xxxvii)</p> <p>The Genesis narrative of creation is prehistory. The individuals named in these early stories, such as Adam, Eve, Cain, Abel, and Noah, are larger-than-life archetypes representing the complex relationship between humankind and God. Similarly, specific events such as the Garden of Eden, Noah and the flood, and the tower of Babel are broadly representative of God’s creative interaction with all of humankind. (<i>ibid.</i>, p. 14).</p> <p>Smith sees God’s wrath as temporary.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>God’s wrath is a temporary and just verdict on sin and evil. (The Good and Beautiful God, Smith, p. 121)</i></p> <p>Prior to coming to Christ, Smith says that sin is not normative.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">While sin is not actually normative before conversion (even the unregenerate don’t say about sin, “Hey, that was really life-enhancing!”), sin <i>after</i> conversion is even more disconcerting. (<i>ibid.</i>, p. 158)</p> <p>Smith says that sin does not separate us from God:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">The chief point is that there is only one thing that separates us from God, and it is not our sin. It is our self-righteousness. Our self-righteousness does not turn God from us, but us from God. It is not my sin that moves me away from God, it is my refusal of grace, both for myself and for others. (<i>ibid.</i>, p. 102)</p> <p>Smith says that hell is on earth, and that the doors of hell are locked from the inside.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">A person – even a person others think of as decent and upright – who rejects God is experiencing hell on earth. ... Thus the doors of hell are locked from the inside. (Smith, p. 125)</p> <p>(continued on next page)</p>

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<p>4. Jesus Christ: We believe that <u>Jesus Christ is God incarnate</u>, fully God and fully man, one Person in two natures. Jesus – <u>Israel’s promised Messiah</u> – was conceived through the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He lived a sinless life, was crucified under Pontius Pilate, arose bodily from the dead, ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father as our High Priest and Advocate.</p>	<p>Foster claims that God is not only incarnate in Jesus, but that God is also incarnate and enfleshed inside all people in the world (see page 2 of this document).</p> <p>The Renovaré Bible’s position on Jesus as Israel’s promised Messiah is clearly inconsistent. The Renovaré Bible denies that Isaiah prophesied that Jesus is Israel’s promised Messiah. The commentary on Isaiah says:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">It is right to say that the tradition of Isaiah does not ‘predict’ Jesus. Nonetheless, the early Church, in its interpretive imagination under the inspiration of God the Spirit, found the utterances of this tradition especially important for its testimony to Jesus. (pp. 982)</p> <p>The commentary is completely silent on Luke 4:17-21, where Jesus says “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”</p> <p>The New Testament commentary says the early Church considered Isaiah’s prophecy to apply to Jesus, but does not say the prophecy actually does apply to Jesus:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">A politically powerful African (v 27) reads Isaiah 53, which early Christians understood as prophecy of the Messiah. (p. 1998, on Acts 8:27-35)</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Isa 53:4 is said to be fulfilled by Jesus’ healings, ... (p. 1807, on Matt 8:17)</p> <p>In some cases, the commentary merely notes that the Old Testament is cited by New Testament authors, but does not state that the Old Testament is fulfilled prophecy:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Paul presents Jesus in terms of Judaism’s Scriptures. His thinking is shaped by Isaiah’s. (p. 2034, on Acts 28:23-27)</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">This quotation from Isa 29:13 is nested between segments of Jesus’ confrontation with the scribes and Pharisees over their hypocrisy in fastidiously following the law of Moses, but neglecting its spirit. (p. 1859, on Mark 7:6)</p> <p>Although The Renovaré Bible contains extensive verse-by-verse commentary, there is very little commentary on Isaiah found in the New Testament. Only one single anomalous affirmation of Isaiah’s prophecy appears in the entire New Testament commentary:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">The promises God made to Israel through the voices of prophets like Malachi and Isaiah are being fulfilled in Jesus Christ. (p. 1845, on Mark 1:2)</p>

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<p>5. The Work of Christ: We believe that Jesus Christ, as our representative and substitute, shed His blood on the cross as the perfect, all-sufficient sacrifice for our sins. His atoning death and victorious resurrection constitute the only ground for salvation.</p>	<p>Renovaré claims that the Work of Christ can transform and renew non-believers even if they have not come to repentance and are still dead in their sin. See the Renovaré purpose statement on page 5 of this document.</p>

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<p>6. The Holy Spirit: We believe that the Holy Spirit, in all that He does, glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ. He convicts the world of its guilt. He regenerates sinners, and in Him they are baptized into union with Christ and adopted as heirs in the family of God. He also indwells, illuminates, guides, equips and empowers believers for Christ-like living and service.</p>	<p>Foster says the Holy Spirit not only indwells believers, but that God also “enfleshes [H]imself into our world.”</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">To believe that God can sanctify and utilize the imagination is to simply take seriously the Christian idea of incarnation. God so accommodates, so enfleshes himself into our world that he uses the images we know and understand to teach us about the unseen world of which we know so little and which we find so difficult to understand. (<i>Celebration of Discipline</i>, Foster, 3rd ed., pp. 26)</p> <p>Renovaré teaches that the work of the Holy Spirit in an individual can be a renewing work without necessarily being a saving work. That is, they claim the Holy Spirit can renew non-believers while at the same time leaving them in the state of non-belief. See the Renovaré purpose statement on page 5 of this document.</p> <p>The Renovaré Bible claims that God must sometimes be absent from believers. This notion contradicts the union-with-Christ element of the EFCA Statement.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">To develop Adam's and Eve's character – and ours too – God has to be “absent” as well as present in human life. Just as our parents care for us around the clock in infancy and early childhood and then gradually withdraw their presence from us as we physically mature, so God is intently present to us at our spiritual infancy and then allows us to be increasingly “on our own” as we spiritually mature. (<i>The Renovaré Spiritual Formation Bible</i>, pp. xxxvii).</p> <p>The commentary in the Renovaré Bible forms the supposed theological foundation for the notion of God’s absence. The commentators develop this theory further into a specific practice: the “spiritual discipline of solitude.”</p> <p>(continued on the next page).</p>

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<p>7. The Church: We believe that the true church comprises all who have been <u>justified by God’s grace through faith alone in Christ alone.</u> They are united by the Holy Spirit in the body of Christ, of which He is the Head. The true church is manifest in local churches, whose membership should be composed only of believers. The Lord Jesus mandated two ordinances, baptism and the Lord’s Supper, which visibly and tangibly express the gospel. Though they are not the means of salvation, when celebrated by the church in genuine faith, these ordinances confirm and nourish the believer.</p>	<p>Renovaré teaches specific methods and practices that must be done to obtain God’s grace. Strong claims are made about these specific practices.</p> <p>The function of the Spiritual Disciplines is now clear. They are the <i>means</i> for receiving God’s grace. (<i>Study Guide for Celebration of Discipline</i>, Foster, p. 6, emphasis in original)</p> <p>Richard J. Foster shows that it is only by and through these practices that we can find the true path to spiritual growth. (book jacket of <i>Celebration of Discipline</i>, Foster, 3rd Ed.)</p>

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<p>8. Christian Living: We believe that God's justifying grace must not be separated from <u>His sanctifying power and purpose</u>. God commands us to love Him supremely and others sacrificially, and to live out our faith with care for one another, compassion toward the poor and justice for the oppressed. With God's Word, the Spirit's power, and fervent prayer in Christ's name, we are to combat the spiritual forces of evil. In obedience to Christ's commission, we are to make disciples among all people, always bearing witness to the gospel in word and deed.</p>	<p>Foster and Willard claim that a person's own work must be done first before God can transform and renew that person (a part of sanctification).</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Our work – our only work – is to place ourselves in the way of Christ and invite Him to work on our lives, individually and collectively. The Spiritual Disciplines are merely an attempt to describe how we can accomplish that work. (<i>Study Guide for Celebration of Discipline</i>, Foster, p. 6)</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">He reveals how the key to self-transformation resides in the practice of the spiritual disciplines, and how their practice affirms human life to the fullest. (<i>The Spirit of the Disciplines</i>, Willard, back cover, written by convention in the 3rd person)</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>The Spirit of the Disciplines</i> presents a way of living that enables ordinary men and women to join with God and realize their highest aspirations of well-being and -doing. The key to this self-transformation resides in the practice of the spiritual disciplines. Readers will learn why the disciplines work and how their practice affirms human life to the fullest. <i>The Spirit of the Disciplines</i> places solitude and silence, prayer, simple and sacrificial living, meditation upon God's word and ways, and service to others at the heart of the gospel. (http://www.dwillard.org/books/SpDisciplines.asp, Willard's web page for his book)</p>

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<p>9. Christ's Return: We believe in the personal, bodily and <u>premillennial</u> return of our Lord Jesus Christ. The coming of Christ, at a time known only to God, demands constant expectancy and, as our blessed hope, motivates the believer to godly living, sacrificial service and energetic mission.</p>	<p>The Renovaré Bible commentary states that no timeline can be applied to John's Revelation. The commentary for Rev. 20 bypasses the millenium in silence.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">John's vision probably confuses Westerners more than it would either John's Asian churches or many non-Western cultures today. For one thing, we understand time as sequential, irreversible forward movement. We have trouble imagining earthly existence without that consecutively ticking clock. Events in John's vision, however, are not strung like beads on a string, one scene following upon another. Instead, the scenes are arranged in a collage, with God on his throne at the center. To follow this concentric mode of telling what John saw in his visions requires a radical readjustment of our internal spiritual clock. Our tendency is to arrange a "time line" that we can then use to "solve" Revelation. (p. 2265-2266)</p>

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<p>10. Response and Eternal Destiny: We believe that God commands everyone everywhere to believe the gospel by turning to Him in repentance and receiving the Lord Jesus Christ. We believe that God will raise the dead bodily and <u>judge the world, assigning the unbeliever to condemnation and eternal conscious punishment</u> and the believer to eternal blessedness and joy with the Lord in the new heaven and the new earth, to the praise of His glorious grace. Amen.</p>	<p>Smith says that anyone can escape from hell, and that God’s wrath is temporary. He says that Jesus forgives the sin of all people for all time, and that God is not our judge.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">God’s wrath is a <i>temporary and just verdict on sin and evil</i>. (Smith, p. 121; emphasis in the original)</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">A person – even a person others think of as decent and upright – who rejects God is experiencing hell on earth. ... Thus the doors of hell are locked from the inside. (ibid., p. 125)</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Jesus not only forgives the sin of all people for all time, he broke the power of sin itself. (ibid., p. 153)</p> <p>Smith says the following statement is false:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">If God were our judge, the verdict would be “Guilty as charged.” (ibid., p. 78)</p> <p>The commentary on Matthew is extensive and half the length of Matthew itself. Despite being extensive, the commentary is silent on the topics of hell, eternal fire, judgment and weeping/gnashing of teeth. There is no commentary on the following passages that deal with these topics: 3:1-12, 11:1-24, 13:24-50, 18:12-20, 20:1-27, 21:12-45, 22:1-33, 24:1-51, and 25:1-46. The following passages have commentary, but that commentary ignores hell:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● On 5:29-30 (cut off hand rather than go to hell): <p style="padding-left: 40px;">an example of pushing an argument to the point of absurdity.</p> ● On 10:28 (fear hell): <p style="padding-left: 40px;">advice about anxiety.</p> ● On 16:8 (gates of Hades): <p style="padding-left: 40px;">the city ... spring ... was seen as an opening into Hades.</p> ● On 18:8 (eternal fire): <p style="padding-left: 40px;">The woes in verses 7-9 are reserved for those who mislead and teach children in a false way.</p> ● On 23:15 and 23:33 (Pharisee converts are sons of hell): <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Pharisees [were] hypocrites</p> <p>Likewise, no clear discussion of hell or Hades is present in the <i>entire</i> New Testament commentary.</p>