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How Many Minutes in Heaven? The Celestial Travels of Don Piper

by **G. Richard Fisher**

It appears that to achieve celebrity status in the Christian literary world or be a successful televangelist, it helps to have at least one trip to heaven.

Don Piper's book *90 Minutes in Heaven: A True Story of Death and Life*¹ is far from the first of its kind. With dozens of books in this genre, one would think that these adventures would now fall into the category of "uneventful events." Over the past four decades, there have been so many of these heavenly reports — some bogus, some cultic, some explainable in medical terms — that one should not get overly excited with yet another testimony.

Piper may genuinely believe he went to heaven, but his story is just another book covering a well-worn theme.

The Bible already tells us all we need to know about heaven. Jesus, Ezekiel, the apostles Paul and John, and other biblical writers have given



us enormous amounts of information.

The title of Piper's book, *90 Minutes in Heaven*, is a paradox. Heaven is an eternal place where believers go permanently at death, not a place people enter and leave.

It must also be asked if a "trip to heaven" could have an explanation other than supernatural. Christians can't be expected to accept everyone's claim of going to heaven for brief periods when so many of these reports contain contradictory details and unbiblical teachings such as Universalism. We must ask where the Bible says short visits to heaven are a possibility.

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Editorials

DON'T YOU BELIEVE IT

Things keep getting stranger. The "Father of Lies" seems to be operating in high gear and discernment appears to be at an all-time low. It is as if we are in the days of Judges again, when "everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (Judges 21:25). We at PFO have always believed that extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence. Perhaps it is most appropriate that PFO's headquarters is in Missouri, the "Show Me" state.

Christians in America are too gullible. Many will accept any claim as fact and give no thought to verification. Jesus, citing the Old Testament, said, "by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established" (Matthew 18:16).

Some will remember John Todd, who toured churches telling of his key role in the Illuminati organization, which he said wanted to take over the world. Others will recall Mel Tari's fake Indonesian revival. Mike Warnke fooled the public for years with his story of being a satanic high priest. The story of Crying Wind, the poor Indian girl from a Kickapoo reservation, turned out to be all fiction. Moody Press was flummoxed as Crying Wind was revealed to be hot air. Rebecca Brown was exposed as a deluded drug addict who lost her medical license. Her bogus battles with Satan were all produced by her wild imagination and drug usage. Lauren Stratford claimed to have been a breeder for satanic baby sacrifices. She was exposed as a habitual liar and pathological attention-seeker. Later, she changed her image and claimed to be a Jewish survivor of the Nazi Holocaust.

All of these frauds raked in large amounts of money from book sales and donations. Some continue to do so even though their deception has been exposed.

A current case in point is Joel Rosenberg, author of *Epicenter*. Rosenberg asserts that Muslims are being converted to Christianity — without anyone sharing the Gospel with them — through visions, dreams, and other miraculous means (pp. 204-215). It should come as no surprise that a Muslim can dream of Jesus. Muslims are taught about Jesus — but that He is only a prophet. Many Middle Eastern countries have Christian communities and the day-to-day mingling is bound to result in some exposure to Christian beliefs and ideas.

Such conversions would be easily documented, but documentation isn't forthcoming. The stories are no more than hearsay and Christian folklore that would appear to make the need for evangelism and missions obsolete. Such stories contradict Paul's statement in Romans 10:14-18.

Stories of miraculous conversions of Muslims become a little easier to understand when one remembers the propensity in Arab culture for certain kinds of deception. Lying to maintain the subjective idea of honor is common. In fact, telling untruths under such circumstances is not considered lying. This is not to say that all Arabs are dishonest, but the pressure for a dramatic story accompanied by a material inducement or perks may inspire the storyteller to embellish events. Add to this a propensity for overstatement and a need for acceptance, and one has the recipe for a wild tale.

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PIONEER TELEVANGELIST DIES

The preacher who was a pioneer in using television to carry his sermons to a worldwide viewing audience has died. Rex Humbard, regarded by some as the very first televangelist, died Sept. 21, 2007, of natural causes. He was 88.

Humbard made his television debut in 1949 when, at the time, his only religious competition was Catholic Bishop Fulton J. Sheen. By 1953, a weekly broadcast from his Calvary Temple, a converted theater in Akron, Ohio, had a viewing audience of millions. By the end of the decade, Humbard, his church, and television ministry moved to a new 5,400-seat domed facility in nearby Cuyahoga Falls and changed its name to Cathedral of Tomorrow. His program was televised for nearly 30 years on 350 stations throughout the United States and Canada. The church services were frequently accented by celebrities including Pat Boone, Johnny Cash, Roy Rogers, Oral Roberts, and Kathryn Kuhlman, helping to draw large crowds and enlarge his viewing audience.

Like today's televangelists, Humbard had his share of controversy. The *Akron Beacon Journal* reported that in 1961, "organized religion met organized crime as Rex Humbard accepted a \$1.2 million, 15-year mortgage loan" from a pension fund of the Teamsters union headed up by Jimmy Hoffa. The newspaper further disclosed that by 1973, Humbard's "Cathedral owed the Teamsters a total of \$5.6 million on three loans."

In 1971, Humbard began construction on what was to be the largest tower in Ohio and was to house a revolving restaurant, observation deck, religious museum, and television studio at its top, and a circle vision theater at ground level. A fleeting start to the \$3.9 million project — where the concrete tower standing 494 feet tall was erected in just 22 days — was stalled by lawsuits and financial woes, leaving an empty concrete shaft that would never be completed and the object of prolonged ridicule by his critics. Humbard blamed the failed endeavor on "the untimely and inappropriate action of the State of Ohio" which he said deprived his organization of "the needed finances."

As Humbard's television ministry grew, so too did his compensation and the secrecy surrounding it. The *Beacon Journal* claimed that Humbard's income was "mostly a mystery" and much of his family's earnings were "undisclosed."

Humbard's Cathedral of Tomorrow would quickly become a mere shadow of its glory years. Almost from the start, Humbard and his church began to unravel as they were beset with questionable financial dealings and declining revenue, along with the administrative strife that followed. In February 1983, Humbard resigned as pastor to devote himself full time to his television ministry. His brother-in-law, Wayne Jones, followed him as pastor for two years. Less than three decades from its legendary beginning, turmoil, refashioned ambitions, and leadership changes reduced the congregation to 850 regular attenders. In 1985, Humbard's television complex was purchased by Ernest Angley Ministries. The Rev. Kerry Edwards was named pastor of the Cathedral in 1988, but was fired a year later causing further misfortune with a church split of nearly half its remaining worshippers.

In the 1990s, Humbard was a prominent on-stage presence at the healing campaigns of Benny Hinn. Funeral services and burial were held in Akron.

—MKG

LIKE FATHER, LIKE SON?

Controversy never was far from evangelist Oral Roberts. Now his son, Richard Roberts, finds himself embroiled in a crisis of his own. The younger Roberts is having to defend himself against a lawsuit with stinging allegations that he utilized university resources and donations for personal and family use. Roberts is president of Oral Roberts University, the Tulsa-based institution founded by his father in 1963. The lawsuit was filed on Oct. 2 by three former ORU professors who allege they were fired from the school for having questioned how funds were being spent.

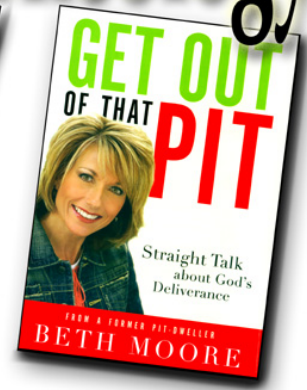
The lawsuit contains a variety of charges, including the one that he allowed his daughter and several of her friends to use the university's jet for a senior trip to the Bahamas. According to an Associated Press report, "The \$29,411 trip was billed to the ministry as an 'evangelistic function of the president.'" Other allegations claim that during the past 14 years, Roberts has had his university-owned home remodeled 11 times; that ministry donations were used to purchase a white Lexus SUV and a red Mercedes convertible for his wife Lindsay; that Mrs. Roberts had spent nearly \$40,000 at one clothing store in less than a year; and that university and/or ministry employees were frequently called to Roberts' home to finish homework assignments for his daughters.

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Get Out of That Pit-iful Theology

A Further Look at the Subtle Error of Beth Moore

by M. Kurt Goedelman with G. Richard Fisher



It would be inaccurate to say, “She’s back,” for her new books continue to roll off the printing presses. With each new publication, including her recent, *Get Out of That Pit*, popular Bible teacher Beth Moore stays near the top of the best-seller list. This current title touts Moore as “a former pit-dweller,”¹ and she writes, “To be completely candid with you, I don’t even remember life before the pit.”²

Moore writes in her book, “Several months ago God threw me into His Word to perform a sort of analysis of what a *pit* is exactly.”³ Then she writes, “we’ll define *pit* this way: a pit is an early grave that Satan digs for you in hopes he can bury you alive.”⁴ Moore boasts of being able to help others through this study. But it is through her book and one’s boredom — not an awareness of sin — that this supposedly happens:

“Through the pages to come, some of you will recognize your pits. For most of you awareness won’t come because you suddenly see how bad you are, but rather because you will wake up to how bored you are.”⁵

Moore further writes:

“This book is not about getting out of the pit for a while. It’s about getting out of the pit for good.”⁶

Despite the claim that her book provides a permanent deliverance

from pit-dwelling, one can apparently never be really sure. Just following her declaration of permanence, she cites a “Case in point” of her “friend with a fierce drug dependency problem” who encounters “relapses” and “confusion concerning her intermittent bouts of victory.”⁷ Thus the reader is left wondering what constitutes their “victory.”

Moore tells her readers that, “life on Planet Earth consists of one crisis after another. Beloved, this I promise you. Circumstances will offer unceasing invitations back to the pit.”⁸ This is certainly true in the fallen world in which we live, but such declarations offer little hope and are even more diminished when given with an absence of sound biblical instruction.

Moore uses familiar terminology, but then offers confusing definitions. It makes for confusing reading. If by a “pit” she means sin or falling back into sin, she does not give clear teaching on the initial deliverance from the pit of being lost into salvation (Psalm 40:1-3). If one wanders too close to a pit of sin, there is to be quick recovery through confession (1 John 1). Focus is not to be on the pits of sin, but rather paths of righteousness and progression in holiness. As such, Moore’s focus is unhealthy.

MOORE IS NOT ENOUGH

As noted in a *Quarterly Journal* article last summer,⁹ Moore has admi-

nable qualities, but what sound biblical expressions she offers are often muted by faulty interpretations and a lack of adequate scriptural exposition. It’s not that what she says is completely wrong, it’s that she doesn’t say enough.

Moore seems to admit to such an inadequacy when she tries to be humorous and states, “I’LL TALK LOUD. What I lack in knowledge I make up for in volume.”¹⁰ She admits that “by nature I’m a people-pleaser,” and labels some of the counsel she offers as “amateur psychology.”¹¹

INCOMPETENT TO COUNSEL?

In one of her illustrations, Moore describes an ordeal she experienced when she tried to help a loved one:

“I made a decision to do whatever it took to turn this woman around. Two months later we were both in shambles. She was mad at me and I was mad at her. Not speaking, as a matter of fact. I am thankful that we got over it, but the experience settled something that had always nagged at me: even if we are unselfish and undistracted enough to give another person our all for an indefinite period of time, can we save them from themselves? I don’t think so.”¹²

Such an encounter is devoid of sound biblical counseling, and it is of

little wonder that both Moore and the lady she was trying to help “were both in shambles.” For all her writing under the banner of biblical studies and “Helpful lessons for those who feel like they live in a state of confusion,”¹³ Moore defaults to “I am a huge proponent of godly professional counseling.”¹⁴ And she further demonstrates her inadequacy when she asserts, “Also, I must keep in mind that professional counseling is not my job.”¹⁵

Moore does not explain what she means by “godly professional counseling.” Such a blanket description can mean virtually anything — even with the adjective “godly” attached. There is a lot which falls under the umbrella of “Christian” or “godly” counseling. Most of it is anything but Christian or godly.

In the Church today, counseling can be “big business,” and with that comes the baggage of psychiatry, psychology, and other worldly egocentric points of view. Moore’s lack of specificity here can be deadly. The hybrid therapies of Ed Smith (TheoPhostic counseling) or the unbiblical spiritual warfare counseling of Mark Bubeck, Neil Anderson, and the like might be considered “godly professional counseling” to some. There is a Pandora’s box of inner-healing techniques that are confusing and contradictory, but which pass for counseling.

From Moore’s broad description, it would not be surprising if she is unfamiliar as to the biblical counseling method known as nouthetic counseling. While the term “nouthetic counseling” may be new to many Christians, the practice and very word itself is certainly not. Those true to the Word of God — from New Testament times onward — have counseled one another nouthetically. The biblical word comes from the Greek noun *nouthesia* (or the Greek verb *noutheteo*) and means (or is translated as) “admonish,” “correct,” or “instruct.” It involves correction by word, with the Word, and directed toward biblical behavioral change.

It is essential to be discriminating within the realm of counseling. John MacArthur explains:

“Not only do psychologists sell supposed cures for a high price, but they also invent diseases for which the cures are needed. Their marketing strategy has been effective. Invent problems or difficulties, harp on them until people think they are hopelessly afflicted, then peddle a remedy. Some of the supposed problems of our culture are pathetically trite. Self-image, looks, codependency, emotional abuse, mid-life crisis, unfulfilled expectations — today’s ‘infirmities’ were once seen more accurately as the pains of selfishness. Egocentricity has become a major market strategy for psychotherapists.”¹⁶

It is interesting to note that what MacArthur points out as “pathetically trite,” are some of the very issues Moore describes — directly or indirectly — in her own life. Speaking of shaky self-esteem or battling to see value within herself are staples found throughout her writings.¹⁷

In her book, Moore throws around secular psychological clichés and is quick to bemoan her low self-esteem. In the very first paragraph she tells readers that she has “had a life long struggle with seeing value in myself.”¹⁸ But she exults that “God has dealt with that handicapped part of me.”¹⁹ Her remark that following “a lifetime full of dysfunctional relationships and inevitably unmet expectations” it took motherhood to make “getting well and becoming a whole person finally worth any amount of work it required”²⁰ is further astounding and an insult to women who are unable to bear children. To that she adds, “Sadly, I didn’t like myself enough to do it just for me.”²¹ True humility is not thinking less of yourself, but thinking of yourself less.

Her confessions are so frequent they are almost embarrassing. The downside is that immature Christians may try to imitate this type of attitude to get their own inside track with God.

It is all imagination and emotion in the end and may well be an invitation into a “pit.” It is a type of attitude that draws empathy from and the accolades she desires. Her piety and low self-esteem, masked within cute stories, plays big with those reading her books and watching her videos.

Moreover, it is not unfair to question Moore’s lack of biblical understanding in the area of counseling. Her books repeatedly project the pop and novel theologies of the day. In *Get Out of That Pit*, one will not even get past the Foreword (written by her husband Keith) before encountering the unbiblical concept of generational bondage:

“He made the pain of our wounds so unbearable that we were willing to do anything to break out of the generational bondage that tried to hold us. You name it: alcoholism, betrayal, abandonment, depression, rage, sexual addiction, and almost anything else you can think of were our heritage.”²²

Yes, younger generations can be influenced by the sinful examples and lifestyles set before them by their parents and grandparents. And Exodus 20:5 and other similar verses do speak to the culpability of parents and their succeeding generations who — and it must be emphasized — “hate” the Lord. But it goes beyond Scripture to maintain that there is some type of generational bondage or curse which is passed from parents to offspring. Biblical counselor and author David Powlison instructs:

“The Old Testament provides repeated instances of idolaters reaping destruction with moral decay and violent death extending to their descendants. But nowhere in the Old Testament is this connected with demons of moral bondage being passed down through the generations. The notion of generational transference of demonic agents is quite simply a piece of occult theology that has infiltrated the EMM [ekballistic mode of ministry] worldview.”²³

The teaching of generational bondage is speculative and extrabiblical. Parents may influence, but they cannot determine. The teaching of generational bondage makes a mockery of grace, human responsibility, and accountability before God. Generational bondage — also called ancestral bondage or ancestral curses — is more at home with superstition and myth, and quells the true freedom we have in Christ by sidetracking and derailing Christians from healthy spiritual growth. It mires one in the past rather than motivating one to press forward (Philippians 3:13-14).

IS SHE OR ISN'T SHE A COUNSELOR?

Moore's evasion, as far as being a "counselor," is equally troublesome in that counseling is exactly what many of her books offer — and this is something that even her publisher admits she is doing as evidenced by the book's summary statement which was noted above. Remember that it said, "Helpful lessons for those who feel like they live in a state of confusion." Again, MacArthur speaks to the heart of Moore's error in thinking:

"The rise of counseling clinics poses another problem for the Church: the trend has removed the counseling ministry from its proper arena in the church body and conditioned most Christians to think of themselves as incompetent to counsel. Many pastors, feeling inadequate and perhaps afraid of possible malpractice litigation, are perfectly willing to let 'professionals' take over what used to be seen as a vital pastoral responsibility."²⁴

Likewise, the Apostle Paul admonishes believers with:

"We who are strong [in our convictions and of robust faith] ought to bear with the failings and the frailties and the tender scruples of the weak; [we ought to help carry the doubts and qualms of others] and not to please ourselves" (Romans 15:1, Amplified Bible).

And:

"Personally I am satisfied about you, my brethren, that you yourselves are rich in goodness, amply filled with all [spiritual] knowledge and competent to admonish and counsel and instruct one another also" (Romans 15:14, Amplified Bible).

Moore may wish to put emphasis on or defer to professional counselors, but Paul stresses that all members of the body of Christ — not simply professionals or the church's elders — can and should be active in the ministry of admonishing, exhorting, correcting, and warning, all of which are components of counseling. The Romans passages cited above, as well as 1 Thessalonians 5:14, Colossians 3:16, and others all teach us essential lessons we must not overlook.

MOORE'S PIT-IFUL THEOLOGY

In her current best-seller, Moore describes a variety of pits. And you can get into one of these pits in any of three ways: by being thrown into it,²⁵ by slipping into it,²⁶ or by jumping into it.²⁷

Moore tells us that the first way, being thrown in, comes about "without doing one thing to deserve it and without wallowing your way into it. ... This one's a pit of innocence."²⁸

Of the second means of finding yourself in a pit, by slipping or falling into it, Moore writes:

"Yes, you got into this pit yourself, but it certainly wasn't planned. It wasn't what you wanted. In fact, falling into a pit may never have entered your mind. You certainly didn't mean for things to turn out the way they did. You didn't see it coming, but now you're in a hole."²⁹

While Moore asserts that entry into this type of pit is a result of getting into it "yourself," she repeatedly states that Satan is really the one putting a person into the pit. We are told of "Satan's basic progressive plan" and how he is at work with false philosophies, empty promises,

and fiendish plots using "ignorance to get the person near enough to the mouth of the pit for him or her to slip in."³⁰

The final way into a pit is jumping in. Moore defines access through this means by the person who is "well aware that what you're about to do is wrong, probably even foolish. But for whatever reason, the escalating desire to do it exceeds the good sense not to."³¹ In so many words, Moore tells her readers, been there, done that, "When all is said and done, you, like me, probably do what you do because you want to."³²

Having learned the three ways into a pit, what exactly are these pits? As earlier noted, Moore defines a pit as an early grave dug by Satan, and she later adds to that "pit-dwelling is primarily a state of mind."³³ She also provides readers with a litany of pits in which one can dwell.

Moore lists a variety of ways to get thrown into a pit: being the victim of a sudden tragedy or crime; having a loved one with a mental illness; spousal abandonment or divorce; drug or alcohol use by a family member; sickness or disease; financial loss; sexual molestation; and/or the death of a loved one.³⁴ That bad things happen to us in a fallen world is a given. However, we can handle these biblically as we depend on God's grace.

Moore's inventory of ways to slip into a pit are equally varied and include gluttony and eating disorders, homosexuality and fornication and/or adultery, unethical business dealings, bankruptcy, and drug abuse.³⁵ Yet does anyone really slip into the above, or are they calculated and repeated choices?

Those who jump into the pit will find themselves in one of many snares and the way they got there closely resembles the former group. Her "jump into a pit" list includes stealing, cheating, sexual immorality, vengeance, and drunkenness.³⁶ In the end, there is no difference between "slipping" and "jumping." Both appear to be calculated.

As one surveys all the ways Moore says people can find themselves in a pit, it is important to note that nearly all of these are physical in nature. Absent from her catalog of “pits” is any warning regarding lack of spiritual disciplines, which feed these problems. That omission is crucial. Peter Jeffery says, “Without a disciplined life you will stagnate as a Christian.”³⁷ That neglect of self-control and disciplines is an open invitation to a pit.

Seminary professor and author Donald Whitney observes:

“Nothing contributes to the growth of spiritual heat and light more than the persevering practice of the Christian spiritual disciplines. The disciplines are the bellows and the iron poker — tools in God’s hands through which He stokes and blows upon the eternal fire He Himself ignites in His people.”³⁸

Spiritual disciplines — including daily staying in the Word — will strengthen and refine our faith. They are the elements which will keep us from a pit, or the means whereby God will take us through or out of a pit. We are called to put the Word into practice in obedience each and every day. And doing so will help to keep us clear from the pits. If the primary ingredient of a certain medicine is missing, the medicine will be ineffective in prevailing over the disease. Likewise, if we neglect spiritual discipline our lives will be severely ineffective and open to all kinds of pits. Second Timothy 3:17 says the Word is given so that the man (or woman) of God may be complete, not lacking anything — and that includes the ability to stay out of, steer clear of, or travail through life’s many pits.

Employing discipline allows us to walk away from sin and keeps us from some of the very pits that Moore describes. The Apostle Paul stressed such discipline and desired believers to be infested with “flees”:

- flee from sexual immorality (1 Corinthians 6:18),
- flee from idolatry (1 Corinthians 10:19),

- flee from the love of money (1 Timothy 6:10-11), and
- flee from youthful desires (2 Timothy 2:22).

Spiritual discipline is a constant activity throughout a believer’s walk in the process of his or her sanctification. Failure to put into practice time in the Word, prayer, fellowship, serving others, church attendance and ministry, along with other such disciplines, are critical concerns which are lacking in Moore’s study.

Consider the example of a pianist who was in the midst of performing a concert. Shortly after beginning his recital, the electricity went off and the theater went dark. However, this did not prevent him from continuing with his concert. Why? Because the pianist had discipline — and whether in the brightness of stage light or in the throes of the darkness of a power outage, he knew well both his instrument and the musical score. It is the same with Christians who actively pursue spiritual discipline. Life need not be one pit after another, even in a dark world.

TOO IMPORTANT TO NEGLECT

Likewise — and equally disconcerting — is Moore’s failure to list bad, aberrant, or errant theology on her list of pits. This is vital as well. Doctrine is a two-sided coin of discernment and direction; discernment to know right from wrong thinking, and direction to know right from wrong conduct. The Apostle Paul instructed:

“Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers” (1 Timothy 4:16, NIV).

And:

“What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 1:16, NIV).

Throughout his epistles, Paul repeatedly stressed the importance of sound doctrine or teaching. Sound doctrine has a good effect on one’s spiritual health. It goes without say-

ing that as we view the landscape, we see a “sick” Church and this is because the Church has allowed itself to be so permeated with so much “sick” doctrine. It can’t be stressed enough that what one believes is so very important, because it affects the way one lives.

It is also of keen interest to note that Moore uses as the springboard of her teaching, Scriptures such as Psalm 40:2 (David’s declaration of deliverance) and Genesis 37:23-25 (Joseph being thrown into a pit by his brothers). However, one very important “pit” in Scripture missed — or avoided — by Moore is the statement made by Jesus and recorded in the Gospel of Luke:

“He also told them this parable: ‘Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit?’” (Luke 6:39, NIV).

Again, sound doctrine is so very important. Paul says to correctly handle or rightly divide the Word of Truth (2 Timothy 2:15). Paul by trade was a tentmaker and knew that all the pieces of fabric must be cut straight for them to properly fit together as a tent. The same holds true for theology. It is crucial, for if you don’t cut the pieces correctly the theology doesn’t fit together. One can’t go to an auto parts store or salvage yard and ask for just any transmission because the one on his automobile has failed. The replacement part must be specific and correct for it to rightly fit and work properly. Likewise, failure to correctly handle the Word, thereby teaching inadequate or bad doctrine, is like the blind leading the blind — eventually both will fall into the pit.

“THE CALL OF THE PIT”

With all her supposed knowledge of pits and how one gets there, one would think Moore is immune to pit-dwelling. Not so:

“I’m dealing with some negative experiences that could put me there in the blink of an eye. In fact, I think God has appointed me to feel the call of the pit at exactly the time I’m working on this book so I won’t have to rely

entirely upon memories for its content."³⁹

She then adds, "I can tap into my own present experience and empathize with you."⁴⁰ However, Moore's readers would be better equipped if she would spend more time tapping into the Word — rather than her experiences — for sound biblical counsel and instruction. Likewise, it is shortsighted to suggest that God would appoint her to "feel the call of the pit" to write such a book. Oncologists don't need to get cancer to treat it. Biblical counselors don't need to experience all types of marital conflict before writing a book on solving marriage problems. Biblical counselors such as Jay Adams, Wayne Mack, Martha Peace, and Elyse Fitzpatrick would argue against such a precondition. They would tell you what is needed are an understanding and working knowledge of the Word of God. Counselors and authors certainly go through trials, but they are not a prerequisite. Second Corinthians 1:3-5 says we will and offers us hope and reason:

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ."

Consider the plight of one biblical counselor who went through a series of emotional, financial, and physical situations — one right after another. By her own admission, her initial response may shock you:

"For the first time in many years I began to question God. ... How does this square with what He says about Himself? Is He loving? Is He merciful? I fell headlong into a pit of despair and discouragement."⁴¹

But then she makes an important distinction — the *whys* of her "falling

headlong into a pit" coupled with intent and hope:

"God has been gracious to [my husband] Phil and me during these years. He's used our suffering as the means to reveal to us new understanding about Himself, His great goodness, and our considerable need for a Savior. These lessons have been precious to us. We thank Him for them. He's used our suffering in the lives of others, as well, as they've prayed and suffered with us. We've grown to love our church and our friends more deeply than ever before. ... Our trial was fashioned for us by a wise God who knew exactly what kind of suffering we needed. The trials we endure are meant to get at the idolatry, self-love, and independent unbelief that God desires to purge from our life. They're also meant to cause us to love Jesus Christ more and more, and sometimes they're not discipline at all, but rather part of God's mysterious plan to glorify Himself."⁴²

Although it's not a picnic being in a pit, it doesn't have to be as desperate or harmful as Moore would have one believe. As Corrie ten Boom would often say, "We must tell people that no pit is so deep that He is not deeper still."⁴³ Knowing that, we can, like James commands, "count it all joy when you fall into various trials" (James 1:2).

FAULTY STRONGHOLDS

Moore digresses from sound exposition and once again offers an inaccurate or distorted interpretation of a *stronghold*, a label she applies to several types of sin. In an earlier book, Moore alleges that she researched "sexual strongholds," a theme she claims God directed her to address.⁴⁴ Scripture never links the word "sexual" with the word "strongholds." In her new book, Moore now informs her readers:

"Scripture has a name for a small distraction that becomes a big distraction. It's called a *stronghold*."⁴⁵

Moore's imagination is strongly at work here. She then further broadens her meaning of stronghold:

"In other words, if I have a relationship through which I can no longer prioritize Christ and His Word, Satan is building a stronghold there. If watching what I eat is no longer a means to better health and instead has become a major preoccupation, Satan is building a stronghold. If a same-sex friendship takes on a dimension of jealousy usually limited to a male-female romance, Satan is building a stronghold."⁴⁶

This may sound good to the untrained, but it is simply not so. Major sinful preoccupations are just that and are never referred to as "strongholds." For Moore, it appears, any evil and sin can be classified as a stronghold. Moore cites 2 Corinthians 10:5 as the basis for her teaching. She quotes only a portion of the passage — "every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God"⁴⁷ — which really does not allow her readers to discern "stronghold" in its proper biblical context. Thus it is in her partial quoting of the verse — where she fails to allow the text to speak for itself — that she is able to expand its meaning to "anything." Herein she departs from sound exegesis.

The Apostle Paul metaphorically instructs believers that the "weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds" (2 Corinthians 10:4). He then proceeds to inform us as to the meaning of his metaphor; that is, what those strongholds are, as he writes, "casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ" (vs. 5). Paul defines these "strongholds" as false teaching and false philosophies, not as idols of the heart, sexual sins, drunkenness, and the like. Apologists are the ones dealing with "strongholds" (false teaching). In fact, some of Moore's teachings are so off the

mark that they could be called "strongholds."

Moore, like many other contemporary theologians, offers a very broad interpretation of "stronghold." As a result, when Christians now hear the word "stronghold," they are inclined to think along the lines of some besetting temptation, trespass, or sin which has an unbearable grip on them. However, many times in Scriptures a "stronghold" (Hebrew: *misgab*) is good — something that provides safety and security, a place of refuge and defense. Context is king. Christians should well have a "stronghold" in their lives:

"The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold" (Psalm 18:2).

FRAGMENTED FORGIVENESS

Just as Moore strays from sound biblical interpretation in her use of "stronghold," she also presents a prevalent, but unbiblical, concept of forgiveness. She writes:

"...we've got to open our ears and hear that difficult word again: *forgive*. It's a tough thing to do, but we've got to forgive, even — no, *especially* — those who don't care to be forgiven. ... Humbly, but very specifically, forgive them not only for their destructive actions, but also for their *ignorance*. You have no other choice if you want out of that pit."⁴⁸

Biblical forgiveness is a transaction. When repentance is offered and forgiveness sought, then forgiveness can (and must) be given. In the true biblical sense, God's forgiveness is conditional (based upon our repentance), but to whom it will be given is unconditional (Jew, Greek, rich, poor, slave, free, big sinner, little sinner).

Colossians 3:13 instructs us, "even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do." Additionally, Ephesians 4:32 commands, "forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave

you." The Lord forgives us by confession, repentance, and seeking forgiveness. Consider how this direction is so often repeated in His Word:

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

"I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,' And You forgave the iniquity of my sin" (Psalm 32:5).

"For You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive, And abundant in mercy to all those who call upon You" (Psalm 86:5).

"He who covers his sins will not prosper, But whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy" (Proverbs 28:13).

And the often-repeated verse that believers recite in the midst of seeking revival:

"If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land" (2 Chronicles 7:14).

There is a term used for describing forgiveness without repentance. It is *Universalism* — the belief that everyone with or without repentance will be saved.

The act of confession and then forgiveness is also to be employed amongst believers. Consider the instruction of the Lord Jesus:

"Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him" (Luke 17:3).

The operative phrase there (and similarly in verses cited above including 1 John 1:9 and 2 Chronicles 7:14) is, "if he repents, then forgive him."

Examine also the parallel verses from Matthew's Gospel to the passage from the pen of Luke:

"Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.' And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector" (Matthew 18:15-17).⁴⁹

Here again we have an operative phrase which moves the offended party from one course of action to a new or higher level of action and involvement. That operative phrase is, "if he will not hear" or "if he refuses to hear." To employ Moore's methodology, the process of Matthew 18 is stalled at the very first step. Recall her assignment that "we've got to forgive, even — no, *especially* — those who don't care to be forgiven."

If we apply this course of action to the person who "will not hear," there will be no need to follow the Lord's directive of the involvement of others, including, ultimately, the church family. This shortcoming is significant because it disconnects us from Jesus' instruction. The process outlined by our Lord out of His great love and mercy is prescribed in this way to add a compelling force to bring one to repentance and restoration. Matthew 18:15-17 is not implemented to get the sinner out of the Church, but to get the sin out of the sinner.

Ken Sande, in his definitive volume on personal conflict resolution and peacemaking, writes:

"Many Christians balk at this teaching. Some churches ignore or refuse to implement Matthew 18:17, even though the Bible teaches that God views accountability and discipline as an act of love and an important means to restore his wandering sheep and protect his people from being led astray by sinful examples. ... At the same time, it sends a message that willful sin will not be casually overlooked, which encour-

ages others in the church to work out their problems in a biblically faithful manner."⁵⁰

But Moore is not without Scripture to back her conviction. She cites Luke 23:34 and maintains:

"Through the infused power of His own Spirit, forgive like Christ forgave when He said, 'Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.'"⁵¹

However, Moore errs in her use of this text by presenting a misinterpretation of our Lord's words recorded by Luke. She interprets Jesus' words as a statement of forgiveness. They are not. His words were a prayer for forgiveness. Donald Whitney observes:

"But biblical forgiveness is never given or required where there is no repentance. Although Jesus prayed immediately after they nailed Him to a cross, 'Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do' (Luke 23:34), this wasn't an unconditional forgiveness. Otherwise these people would be forgiven of their sins without repenting and believing in the gospel — a heretical notion."⁵²

Jay Adams makes even clearer this important distinction:

"On the cross, Jesus did not forgive; He prayed. The same is true of Stephen. If forgiveness is unconditional, Jesus, Stephen, and others would have *forgiven* their murderers rather than use what, if true, would be a round-about way to do so. ... Jesus' prayer was answered in the response to the preaching of Peter and the apostles on the day of Pentecost, and on those other occasions when thousands of Jews repented and believed the Gospel (Acts 2:37-38; 3:17-19; 4:4). They were not forgiven the sin of crucifying the Saviour apart from believing that He was dying for their sins, but precisely by doing so in response to the

faithful preaching of the Gospel in Jerusalem."⁵³

The fallacy of interpreting Luke 23:34 to mean that Jesus spoke forgiveness rather than the potential for forgiveness is shown by examining the account mentioned by Adams above — the response to the preaching of Peter on Pentecost. Take careful note of Acts 2:23, also written by Luke, where Peter charged:

"Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, *you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death*" (emphasis added).

Peter, under the inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit would not have brought up this matter and lay this charge against the Jews if they already had been forgiven. Consider further the text's narration of the people's response in verse 37, "Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?'" Peter's reply, "Repent" (v. 38), provides for us the proper biblical understanding that they were not already forgiven and that forgiveness is a transaction.

Likewise, consider Stephen's words as he was being stoned to death:

"Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, 'Lord do not charge them with this sin.' And when he had said this, he fell asleep" (Acts 7:59).

Here again, as Adams notes, is a prayer for — not a statement of — forgiveness. If one takes careful note of the very next verse (8:1) and then considers the events which Luke recorded in chapter 9 (verses 1-19), one will gain a clear picture of how — just as Jesus' prayer was answered on the day of Pentecost — Stephen's prayer was answered in the days following his death.

It would be wrong to argue that it takes an esoteric, isolated, or obscure interpretation of Scripture to arrive at the understanding that forgiveness need be sought and is therefore a transaction. One need only carefully reflect and weigh the whole counsel

of God. A writer for *Reader's Digest* reveals that a proper interpretation is not beyond undue expectation. His article was written following the December 1997 high school shooting in West Paducah, Ky., which left three teen-age girls dead. Fellow classmates erected a banner which said, "We forgive you, Mike!" It referred to Michael Carneal, the 14-year-old responsible for the shootings. Talk-show radio host Dennis Prager responded to the students' action:

"Though I am a Jew, I believe that a vibrant Christianity is essential if America's moral decline is to be reversed. ... And I am appalled and frightened by this feel-good doctrine of automatic forgiveness. This doctrine advances the amoral notion that no matter how much you hurt others, millions of your fellow citizens will forgive you. It destroys Christianity's central moral tenets about forgiveness. Even by God, forgiveness is contingent on the sinner repenting, and it can be given only by the one sinned against. ... These days one often hears that 'It is the Christian's duty to forgive, just as Jesus forgave those who crucified him.' ... Some people have a more sophisticated defense of the forgive-everyone-everything doctrine: doing so is psychologically healthy. It brings 'closure.' This is therapy masquerading as idealism: 'I forgive you because I want to feel better.'"⁵⁴

Donald Whitney provides for us the healthy and biblical course to follow when a Christian wants to forgive, but the one who has offended refuses to seek forgiveness:

"What Christians should always do, as Jesus exemplified in His prayer, is be *ready* to forgive. And then, when forgiveness is sought, forgiveness can be extended. Yes, we ought to release our sinful bitterness and hatred whether the offender ever seeks forgiveness. Some equate this decision with forgiveness itself. In reality though, this is only getting ready, being willing to for-

give. Then if the offender repents, we are prepared to complete the process by saying, 'I forgive you.' The one who announces forgiveness where it hasn't been sought not only discounts the importance of repentance, he also misunderstands the requirement of Scripture. But the one who is not willing to forgive is contradicting the Scripture, and for the moment at least, is putting the reality of his salvation to the test."⁵⁵

To this, biblical counselor Craig Rowe adds:

"The Bible never says, 'Forgive and forget.' ... But what you can do, you can live enough life this side of the offense so when you look at it, in the horizon of your life, it's only a speck. It's not a dominating feature. ... Hatred will tie you to a person just like love will tie you to a person. Only hatred is like being connected to a sewer system and all the sewage is flooding into your mind. Love sets up a filter and it says, 'I will not allow that garbage in my mind.' ... A change of my heart and a change of perspective heals."⁵⁶

As one seeks to be liberated from the sinful anger, bitterness, hatred, and a desire for vengeance, he must replace it with something else — kindness, love, blessing. For just as when we were in sin and an unrepentant state, it was God's goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering that led us to repentance (Romans 2:4). For some, a daily dose — reading, personally praying, and applying the admonishments — of Romans 12 is a wonderful prescription to overcoming the pangs of bitterness, malice, and anger.

PUT OFF, THEN WHAT?

Scripture itself is more than just a book which tells us how to get saved. It instructs us in all of life and how to live once we are saved. Peter tells us that God, in His Word, provides for us all we need for life and godliness (2 Peter 1:2-3). Likewise, Paul explains that through the Scripture the man of

God may be complete, not lacking anything (2 Timothy 3:17). One central element repeatedly expressed is the need for change and how to bring about the necessary change.

Drawing from Ephesians 4, Jay Adams labels the practice as "dehabitation and rehabilitation" and describes the biblical process:

"The key fact here is that Paul does not only say 'put off' the old man (i.e., the old life style), but also says 'put on' the new man (i.e., the Christian life style). *Change is a two-factored process.* These two factors always must be present in order to effect genuine change. Putting off will not be permanent without putting on. Putting on is hypocritical as well as temporary, unless it is accompanied by putting off."⁵⁷

But when it comes to the practice of "dehabitation and rehabilitation," here again, Moore falls short of delivering the biblical methodology. She, at best, only skirts the edges of how the Christian's new lifestyle is acquired:

"I know for a fact that you can be completely set free from every sin that rules over you. Then and only then will you and I possess the kind of innocence possible for Homo sapiens still inhaling terrestrial air. To get there, we not only need some deep repentance (in essence, a change of mind resulting in a change of direction), we need some marrow-deep healing, or we'll simply change right back."⁵⁸

Further into the book, she alludes to rehabilitation when she writes:

"It fills me with joy to know that God is giving voice to a growing number of teachers and preachers willing to trek the length and breadth of Scripture to help deeply stuck people find healing and form new habits. My hope is to follow suit and offer some practical page-to-the-pavement answers."⁵⁹

Moore disappoints in her hope as she fails to go into the slightest biblical exposition of the putting off-

putting on practice. Reading her book, the best one could determine is that following "deep repentance," we are to experience "some marrow-deep healing" lest we "simply change right back." Moore, herself, seems aware of such unsuccessful efforts:

"The most self-disciplined among us may walk in victory for a few weeks out of our need to do the right thing, but it will rarely carry us to the finish line. Each of us will ultimately do what we want to do."⁶⁰

This is so because Moore's prescription is devoid of instruction regarding putting on or rehabilitation. As her readers wait for some inner-healing experience, they will simply remain stuck in the very pit from which she claims to be delivering them. Change is hard and many times the ruts and roots of sin can run very deep. That makes it even more essential to have a proper biblical framework in order to put off the old sinful way of life and put on the new godly way of life.

Moore also minimizes the difficulty of altering behavior patterns by introducing what she labels, "one-second wonders." She describes this lot as, "One moment they were in the throes of habitual sin, and the next moment they were free as birds."⁶¹ While Moore says she, herself, can't ever remember experiencing such "an instantaneous deliverance,"⁶² she holds out the possibility of such an occurrence. And she cites the details of one such incident complete with mystical underpinnings.⁶³

Moore's readers are further deprived in that while she asserts that "God is giving voice to a growing number of teachers and preachers" who will help in the rehabilitation process, she never identifies who these helpful individuals are. Perhaps that is best because of her propensity to cite more teachers who are off the orthodox charts than those who are on them.⁶⁴

COLORFUL, BUT FUTILE?

There is little doubt that Moore is gifted in that she is able to describe in vivid detail her life experiences and

the particulars of her own pit-dwelling. Unfortunately, at times, her narratives are meaningless banter, but they nonetheless allure her readers with at least an appearance of vulnerability, transparency, and chattiness. For example:

“Right about now I wish we were sitting across from one another at the IHOP sharing stories. I’d get lemon crepes with a side of ham, and you could get the country omelet like Keith if you want to make me feel at home. But we’d hold off on ordering the coffee. It tends to be weak there, and there’s a Starbucks next door. Once at Starbucks, we’d talk till lunch, then we’d transfer our conversation to a nearby hole in the wall that serves the best cheese enchiladas in Houston. I bet you could widen my world considerably ... and I yours. Not about food. About *pits*. But we’ll do that some other time.”⁶⁵

Another facet of Moore’s writing is that she slips in elaborate examples of her “spirituality.” She adorns them with cute clichés and entertaining descriptions — under a cloak of humility. But one has to wonder if Moore’s real intent is that she wants her readers to know just how deeply spiritual she is. Consider this example:

“I awakened before sunup that morning and headed out to the back porch where I have my morning prayer time. I do my best praying outside. There’s just something about not having a roof between God and me. I realize He is as present indoors as out, but I love looking straight up into the morning stars and talking to their Maker and mine. After a while, just like clockwork, God orders them offstage and raises the curtain on the rising sun. Once again, the sun comes up on brand new mercies He’s set aside just for me. Boy, am I going to need them. I especially needed them that morning. Painfully aware of my shortcomings and having that nagging feeling

that God was saying, ‘I didn’t raise you to act like this,’ I didn’t even wait for my coffee to drip. I’m not sure I closed the door behind me. I think my knees were already buckling when I stepped over the threshold. I sprawled out prostate right then and there on the patio. (I have to put the dogs up when I’m that demonstrative. It upsets them and they sniff my hair a lot. I don’t know why. I think to see if I’m dead.) After I got up off the ground, I resumed a regular prayer time at my porch table and let God reassure me with His love and instruct me with His Word. It wasn’t until later that I realized I had specks of gravel stuck on my forehead. I nearly laughed out loud. Some of us, especially yours truly, would be wise to start our day with our foreheads on the floor and live the rest of the day with the floor on our foreheads.”⁶⁶

Publicly parading one’s piety, as Moore does, is itself a “pit” that should be avoided at all costs. Scripture has a lot to say about promoting oneself:

“It is not good to eat much honey; So to seek one’s own glory is not glory” (Proverbs 25:27).

“Let another man praise you, and not your own mouth; A stranger, and not your own lips” (Proverbs 27:2).

“And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly” (Matthew 6:5-6).

Of course, we can get others to boast about our piety as well. Moore’s husband Keith tells us in the book’s

Foreword that Beth “knows these Scriptures up and down, backward and forward. Most of all, I love the way the Holy Spirit and she join up to teach and inspire people to take up the sword (see Ephesians 6:17) and get back into the battle of life.”⁶⁷

While Solomon wrote, as cited above, to let another praise you, it is safe to argue that putting her husband’s accolades within the book’s opening pages is not what the wise king had in mind.

Moore has some more boasting of her own. In a later chapter, she paints a mystical hue to a hospital visit she made, saying, “I know this sounds weird but, as we talked, it was as if I could see Scripture hand-written by God on the walls. He seemed to transport that sterile, blank hospital room to a secret place behind the Veil for the briefest moment.”⁶⁸ She goes on to describe how God “seemed to open her [friend’s] ears for a time to hear the music of heaven.”⁶⁹ Working off her theme of the “songs of heaven,” Moore cites Psalm 32:7 and then boasts:

“...some of those very songs are playing right now. In fact, according to that Scripture, this whole book and every other one like it must be set to music we can’t hear.”⁷⁰

HEY, MISS PRISS

Additionally, Moore doesn’t just stop with her subtle self-aggrandizement. She opens her book with a domestic travelogue of staying at motels where:

“The shampoo comes in a small single-serving pouch I have to open with my teeth. I spit out what gets in my mouth and quickly lather the rest of it on my head. I have a mass of hair so, understandably, I can’t spare a drop. Keith ends up having to use the generic white bar soap on his hair. It tends to leave a film, but it’s a small price for him to pay for my hair. Particularly small compared to what he pays for me to maintain my high-lights.”⁷¹

POOR FOR MOORE

The book closes with another Moore travelogue involving conferences in South Africa with “a few days on safari” tacked on. She remarks, “it’s time to go home. Especially since the U.S. Department of Homeland Security just banned all liquids and gels from passenger carry-ons in view of recent terrorist threats.”⁷² One has to question what the banning of liquids and gels has to do with her need to go home. But Moore answers that question and provides her rationale:

“...for now, the ban includes cosmetics. Which includes — let me take a deep breath — lipstick. For me that means leaving behind all eight tubes of varying shades of pink that I go virtually nowhere without and haven’t since I was fourteen years old. Go ahead and call me prissy. I don’t care.”⁷³

The Apostle Paul was content no matter what the circumstance (Philippians 4:11) and was willing to be in need and suffering for the sake of the Gospel (1 Corinthians 4:11). The Apostle Peter also underscores that spiritual qualities are greater importance than outward appearance:

“Do not let your adornment be merely outward — arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel — rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God” (1 Peter 3:3-4).

And contemplate the warning of one experienced in campus ministry work:

“When girls focus on outward appearance, they usually neglect inner character. They are less likely to serve God and more likely to be self-absorbed.”⁷⁴

Perhaps Moore may think she’s pretty in pink and her above comments were just a vain attempt to be amusing and entertaining. Yet they are self-serving and unhealthy at best, and could be an open invitation to a pit of pride and excess in one’s outward appearance.

Much more could be — and should be — written about Moore’s questionable and unfortunate theology and her handling of God’s Word. While space prohibits an exhaustive response, a few additional examples will be briefly noted.

Poor Scripture Exegesis: While Moore, at times, disappoints in drawing full meaning and application from the Scripture she cites, there are other examples of when she is just plain guilty of eisegesis (reading into Scripture what is not there). One example is her commentary and instruction concerning Romans 10:17:

“I want you to learn to cry out, confess, and consent using God’s Word. And to do so, when at all possible, *out loud*. Volume is not the point. All you need is to have your own ears hear it. Why? I feel so strongly about this concept that I’m almost standing up at the keyboard to write it. Listen, beloved, ‘Faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ’ (Romans 10:17 NASB). Your faith will be built by hearing your own voice speak the words of Christ.”⁷⁵

On the next page, she instructs, “Let God use your mouth to build up your faith.”⁷⁶

Faith comes and is strengthened, as Paul writes and Moore echoes, through the Word of God. Yet it is disingenuous to suggest that there is something exclusive or extraordinary about “hearing your own voice speak the words of Christ.” One’s faith can be strengthened by God’s Word being proclaimed during a Sunday school lesson or worship service. Moreover, the context from which Moore draws her premise is illogical as Paul is defining the sovereign plan of God to send out preachers who preach unto hearers who hear, with some embracing the message thereby leading to salvation.

Another example is her citation of Paul’s letter to the Ephesians:

“In Ephesians 4:18-19, the apostle Paul issued a strong warning to

believers to no longer be like those who are ‘darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more.’”⁷⁷

Moore then instructs her readers to “Glance at the Scripture again, because you don’t want to miss the fact that it all started with ignorance.”⁷⁸ However, if one does exactly what Moore instructs, they will see that the darkness and separation experienced by unbelievers is not a result of — or started with — their ignorance, but rather it is “due to the hardening of their hearts.”

Moore’s eisegesis can also be subtle. In her discourse on what she calls generational influences, she remarks:

“To make the point, in fact, Scripture tells us that a thousand generations can reap the benefits of God’s gracious favor over one who loved Him and followed Him feverishly and obediently (Exodus 20:6).”⁷⁹

Scripture never makes such a statement or promise that if “one” is faithful, “thousands” of generations will reap benefits from God. Moore has substituted the word “one” for the word “those” in the verse. One need only survey the Old Testament Scriptures, with Israel’s repeated suffering, exile, and near-extinction, reaped from the adversity of its own conduct, rather than reaping the benefits of a former generation.

In another citation, Moore, in discussing relationships, grossly misapplies Galatians 3:3 to make a point:

“I don’t know about you, but I’ve done exactly what the apostle Paul accused the Galatians of doing. I’ve started relationships in the spirit that somewhere along the way veered into the flesh.”⁸⁰

Paul, in this passage and the context of its surrounding verses, is discuss-

ing that salvation and sanctification are the works of the Spirit. He is addressing trying to achieve righteousness by one's work, including circumcision — not relationships that started in the spirit and veered into the flesh.

Poor Concepts of God: Moore makes several descriptions of God which cause concern for their lack of respect. She labels God as "a drama King"⁸¹ and "a control freak."⁸² In defense of the latter designation, she argues:

"Oh, come on; don't act so shocked. Be honest. Isn't that what we sometimes think? Mind you, God can do whatever He wants."⁸³

God can do whatever He wants because He is God; but to use terms like "drama King" and "control freak" display irreverence and frivolousness.

Another statement made by Moore either speaks to an imprecise theology or a failure to elucidate exactly what she means (this by either Moore herself or her editor). Moore informs her readers:

"God left a lot of questions unanswered — primarily, I imagine, because 'without faith it is impossible to please God' (Hebrews 11:6). I think He also happens to like surprises."⁸⁴

It is this last sentence which is alarming. If Moore is asserting that God is limited in or restricts His knowing of what lies ahead, her premise has grave implications. If she is trying to say that God, like Santa Claus on Christmas morning, tries to surprise us, she is being ambiguous.

Moore then employs a questionable interpretation of Genesis 18:25 when she writes:

"Yet in His tender mercy, God lets us ask the same nagging question that Abraham posed: 'Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?' Maybe we ask it using different words, such as, 'Can we really be sure that God always has our best interests at heart?'"⁸⁵

Abraham's question expresses the positive thought that God will do what is right. In view of God's infinite wisdom, His transcendent love, holiness, and righteousness, and His omnipotence, we are constrained to say He cannot and will not do wrong. We must not question otherwise. To suggest, encourage, or allow her readers to make such an inquiry, undermines a proper understanding of the character of God.

Poor Illustrations and Examples: Moore is also found wanting in detailing her own personal life encounters and illustrations. In one report, she says:

"I've knelt with too many weeping women at the altar of my church sanctuary only to learn that they needed prayer over feelings deeply hurt by someone sitting elsewhere in that room. We can sustain an offense from a friend or mentor that cuts as deep as any offense our own flesh and blood could render."⁸⁶

There is much that goes unanswered in Moore's story from her church's altar. Like the earlier cited example of how, when Moore tried to help a loved one, they both ended in shambles, this episode lacks any disclosure of proper biblical peacemaking steps.

MOORE MAY NOT BE BETTER

We have seen Moore's faulty biblical interpretations, her inadequate scriptural exposition, her lack of competency to counsel, her poor theology, her subtle and not-so-subtle attempts at self-aggrandizement, and her weak application. While Moore's recent book does not contain overt mysticism — although subtle examples may be found — and the citations of questionable and unorthodox teachers in her previous works, it nevertheless is a work to be seriously scrutinized or avoided altogether.

Get Out of That Pit lacks the substance and instruction needed for vibrant and robust sanctification. Moore's writing may be likened to cotton candy: It looks like a lot, is colorful, and may be sweet-tasting,

but in the end it dissolves quickly and the person is left with a momentary pleasant taste, but with no lasting nourishment. In a conversation Moore had with her mother, she said, "Mom, people are hurting so badly. They don't need another motivational speech. They need freedom from countless abuses and addictions."⁸⁷ Yet considering Moore's lack of "how to," that is just what she again delivers, another motivational speech.

Endnotes:

1. Beth Moore, *Get Out of That Pit*. Nashville: Integrity Publishers, 2007, pg. iii.
2. *Ibid.*, pg. 28.
3. *Ibid.*, pg. 12, italic in original.
4. *Ibid.*, pg. 17, italic in original.
5. *Ibid.*, pg. 19.
6. *Ibid.*, pg. 161.
7. *Ibid.*, pg. 163.
8. *Ibid.*, pg. 164.
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 62. *Ibid.*, pg. 148.
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 80. *Ibid.*, pg. 179.
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MINUTES IN HEAVEN

(continued from page 1)

Surprisingly, Piper's purported trip to the other side makes up only about a quarter of the book. The rest of the publication gives all the vivid details about the nearly four-month hospital stay and rehabilitation after his auto accident. He details information about his surgeries, his deep depression, his bed sores, his therapy, and even his bowel movements.² He then goes on to narrate in detail his long rehabilitation at home.³

Piper chronicles how he began to open up and share his experiences with others and eventually at churches. Then, while appearing on *The 700 Club*, he added a detail not given earlier about an angel gripping his hand in the wrecked car.⁴ He then recounts more of his recollections and experiences through his long convalescence.⁵

Piper also visits the issue of Near Death Experiences (NDEs) and medical research in fewer than four pages.⁶

He then dismisses any medical or scientific explanation by stating, "I have no intention of trying to solve this debate. I can only relate what happened to me. No matter what researchers may or may not try to tell me, I *know* I went to heaven."⁷ Yet he does divulge the fact that "near-death experiences will continue to be a matter of faith, or at the very least, conjecture."⁸

So the reader must decide if he will have faith in Piper's experience — or at least his description and interpretation of his experience — when it contradicts Scripture. A good working definition of Christian faith is not faith in anyone or everyone and their claims, but faith and trust in God, His Word, and His only Savior.

IS IT REALLY IN THE BOOK?

The Apostle Paul made a celestial trip but was forbidden to speak of what he saw (2 Corinthians 12:4). It is, therefore, wise to take that silence as the paradigm. Of all the biblical accounts of people rising from the dead, none contains a report of what

was on the "other side." It is as if God gave them divine amnesia.

It must be emphasized that Paul's life experiences — being stricken at conversion on the Damascus road, experiencing a personal appearance of Jesus, being blinded for three days, having scales miraculously removed from his eyes (Acts 9) — were all unique. As an apostle, he was given direct revelation and allowed to write Scripture. So we just cannot accept a suggestion that what Paul experienced, we too can experience. Also, the Apostle John provided a great degree of information about the future, Christ's reign, and heaven, but what he wrote came from direct divine revelation *and he didn't die, but stayed quite alive*.

Some bring up Matthew 27:52-53, where people rose from the dead during Jesus' crucifixion. However, these were resuscitated bodies like that of Lazarus', brought back miraculously for testimony to Christ, and they brought back no recorded report of the other side. As well, no one is

currently doing the Lazarus test: staying dead for four or more days and coming back.

If these people are not seeing heaven, then they must be attention-seekers, fabricators, deceivers, or deluded. We cannot be absent from the body and present with the Lord for a few minutes or hours, according to 2 Corinthians 5:1-10. Paul also says, "thus we shall *always* be with the Lord" (1 Thessalonians 4:17, emphasis added).

Ancient mystics, deprived of sleep and food, claimed to heaven-hop and converse with the Virgin Mary, the saints, and even Jesus. They conjured up aberrant doctrines and claimed to verify the existence of purgatory. German nun Anne Catherine Emmerich (1774-1824) also claimed to time travel back to the events of Holy Week and to observe the crucifixion of Christ, which she embellished with extrabiblical details.⁹

BEEN THERE, DONE THAT, WROTE A BOOK

Surveying the landscape of the contemporary Church, we find numerous celestial voyagers. None of them is giving away their revelation; they're writing and selling books.

A decade ago, researcher and author Bill Alnor provided an important work in his careful investigation, cataloging, and evaluating purported visits to heaven in his book, *Heaven Can't Wait*.¹⁰ His 160-page book is but a sampling.

The popular current trend started in 1975 with a publication by Dr. Raymond Moody. His book, *Life After Life*, described Near Death Experiences and so-called Out of Body Experiences (OBEs). Moody coined the term "Near Death Experience." These subjective experiences crossed all religious and even non-religious lines. None of Moody's examples passed the Lazarus test. His NDEs and OBEs all took place within minutes or hours of death, not days.

Charismatic extremism was quick to jump on the success of these reports. Roberts Liardon conveyed in his

book, *I Saw Heaven*, that he actually had a "water fight" with Jesus in the "River of Life."¹¹ His is a silly, boyish heaven. It certainly lacks the beauty, awe, and reverence which the Bible conveys.

Not to be outdone, Peter Popoff also claims a visit to heaven in his book, *7 Hours in Heaven!*¹² Popoff was exposed as a fraud when his "divine gift" of intimate knowledge of people's personal information was uncovered as deception accomplished by having details from prior interviews being sent to him via a small wireless earpiece receiver. Revelation 21:8 emphasizes that those who lie will not enter heaven. It is easy to conclude Popoff had not been there.

Medical doctor Gerald Landrey reported on *The 700 Club* that he saw a Jewish Jesus on the other side.¹³ We already knew Jesus was Jewish.

South Korean megapastor David (Paul) Yonggi Cho claimed that his commission to preach came from a dead missionary he met on the other side.¹⁴ This used to be called necromancy and mediumship.

The late Kenneth Hagin boasted of OBEs with visits to heaven and hell.¹⁵ When he died Sept. 19, 2003, at the age of 86, he didn't return with any more tales.

Morris Cerullo encountered a six-foot Godhead on his purported trip to heaven.¹⁶

Jesse Duplantis says he got sucked through the ceiling and even encountered blond angels and harp-playing children when he left the earth. Once in heaven, King David showed him what would be Duplantis' future lavish mansion.¹⁷ A little-known fact, documented by Discernment Ministries International, is that Duplantis plagiarized Elwood Scott's 1909 edition of *Paradise the Holy City and the Glory of the Throne*.¹⁸ Apologist Robert Liichow, in the DMI newsletter, also establishes that Scott was a modern Gnostic.

People have long forgotten Charismatic darling Betty Malz. Her book, *My Glimpse of Eternity*, was all the

rage beginning in 1977. She appeared at various Pentecostal venues around the country and was presented as the ultimate proof of heaven's existence — apparently Jesus and the Bible weren't quite enough. More skeptical folk began noticing contradictions between different retellings of her story.¹⁹ In the early 1990s, investigations of Malz's hospital records exposed her story as a hoax.

Richard Eby is another celestial traveler, but his book, *Caught Up into Paradise*, is full of many obvious contradictions.²⁰

Gwen Shaw and her End Time Handmaidens circulate heavenly reports by a number of authors with one claiming that in heaven, black people will become white.²¹

Percy Collett's heaven was an amalgamation of the San Diego Zoo, Atlantic City, and the Sci-fi Channel. His account is the most bizarre of all with horses that praise God, dogs that do not bark, and God with feathers on His hand.²²

Betty Eadie, author of *Embraced by the Light*, would not give the name of her hospital or doctors or produce any medical records for her story. Her attitude was, "If you want to believe, then fine. If not, then that's fine too." Eadie tried to hide her membership in the Latter-day Saints church, but her "heaven" seemed very Mormon.²³

Mary Baxter entered the competition in 1993, with the release of *A Divine Revelation of Hell*, telling us "Time Is Running Out!" Then, in 1999, she added *A Divine Revelation of Heaven*.²⁴ The details are sometimes grotesque and clearly extrabiblical. That is decidedly unthinkable according to Revelation 22:18-19.

There are many more, including the so-called Kansas City Prophets Mike Bickle and Bob Jones.²⁵

NO EXCLUSIVITY HERE

Many of these experiences and reports closely parallel the demonic. Accounts like these are reported in all religions. Even the late founder of Scientology, L. Ron Hubbard, had his journeys to the outer limits.²⁶

Hubbard would not identify himself as an evangelical Christian, that is certain. It is almost like everyone is saying, "Anything you can do, I can do better."

It seems logical to conclude that if heaven-hoppers are only bringing back Bible information, then we do not need their reports because the Bible verifies itself and needs no added proof. If the reports are unscriptural (and most clearly are) they need to be rejected and refuted strongly. Undocumented claims, without the strong biblical backing of two or three witnesses, are not to be accepted in any way. Extraordinary claims need extraordinary proof.

QUESTIONABLE ENDORSEMENT

This brings us back to Don Piper. Part of the success of his book is that it was endorsed and promoted by the late D. James Kennedy. With this patronage comes the Coral Ridge Ministries Seal of Approval. Kennedy's name recognition ensured wide circulation and brisk sales. Yet for all of Kennedy's noble qualities, he seemed to experience occasional lapses in discernment. Additionally, Kennedy made appearances on the Trinity Broadcasting Network and bantered with Paul Crouch for the sake of endorsing one another's publications. Sadly, Kennedy justified this indiscriminate networking.²⁷

More disturbing is the fact that Kennedy also taught the unbiblical notion that Jesus went to hell (*Hades*) after his death on the cross where He was beset upon by demons with fangs and claws. He also says that Jesus "became the greatest sinner that ever lived" while on the cross and that Jesus was cast as the "arch criminal of the universe."²⁸

Kennedy also taught and promoted the offbeat "Gospel in the Stars" aberration. His book on cassette, *The Real Meaning of the Zodiac*, was promoted in this way:

"God intended the stars to foretell the future of the world. Discover what Dr. Kennedy calls

Biblical astrology or the Gospel in the stars."²⁹

POLISHING PIPER

Piper says he struggled to write his book; enter biographer Cecil Murphey, who perhaps provided the literary flair and drama.

There is no denying that the Prologue grabs your attention:

"I died on January 18, 1989. Paramedics reached the scene of the accident within minutes. They found no pulse and declared me dead. They covered me with a tarp so that onlookers wouldn't stare at me while they attended to the injuries of the others. I was completely unaware of the paramedics or anyone else around me. Immediately after I died, I went straight to heaven."³⁰

Piper describes the events leading up to his crash: He left an annual Statewide Baptist Conference meeting to drive back to Houston when an 18-wheeler hit him head on while driving over a bridge. "Someone examined me, found no pulse, and declared that I had been killed instantly," he writes.³¹ The person who took his pulse is not identified. Piper does not remember the accident. Thus, his recounting had to come from those at the scene.

He remembers only driving onto the bridge and, "In my next moment of awareness, I was standing in heaven. ... I became aware of a large crowd of people."³² Piper then says he was greeted first by his grandfather. He also encountered an old school friend who had been killed in a car wreck.³³ Like on earth, Piper writes, people were of a "wide variety of ages — old and young and every age in-between."³⁴

DENTAL PLAN AND OTHER BENEFITS

Piper also encountered his great-grandmother who had false teeth on earth, but "in heaven, her teeth sparkled. I knew they were her own."³⁵ He also seems to suggest our heavenly age as the age at which we

die.³⁶ This is — like the teeth issue — clearly extrabiblical.

Piper's heaven is dramatically and decidedly physical. Perhaps he is confusing heaven with the resurrection of the body. Romans 8:23 tells us that we are waiting for the resurrection of our body, and 1 Corinthians 15 says that resurrection will give us a celestial body that is raised in incorruption (vv. 40-42). There will be continuity as far as personality, but with vast changes. In His resurrected body, Jesus had supernatural ability to appear at will and was not limited by material obstructions. He ate in His resurrected body, not because He had to, but to convey the forgiveness and reconciliation that a Semitic meal conveyed.

Scripture tells us that upon death we are "absent from our body" (2 Corinthians 5:8, emphasis added). The writer of Hebrews tells us that the occupants on the other side are "spirits of just men made perfect" (Hebrews 12:23, emphasis added). To speak in physical terms, as Piper does, is a total confusion of the corporeal and the non-corporeal. Scripture never confuses the two and is very consistent. The intermediate state (in heaven awaiting a resurrected body) is a spiritual state of existence.

Piper's confusion is also obviously demonstrated when he insists that "words are totally inadequate"³⁷ and "I get frustrated describing what heaven was like, because I can't begin to put into words what it looked like, sounded like, and felt like. ... My words are too feeble to describe what took place."³⁸ Yet he uses words and a 205-page book to describe his story.

Piper shares that a kind of music "played in and through my body."³⁹ He is unclear here as to whether his body was on the bridge back in Texas or in heaven.

A FEW MINOR MISTAKES

Piper does not explain why everyone in heaven either speaks or sings in English.⁴⁰ At least he seems to be hearing everything in English. Perhaps he meant that in heaven we all will hear in our own language.

Perhaps one should not inquire about these kinds of oddities, but the heaven described seems shaped by Piper and not by who God is or what the Bible says about heaven.

Another peculiarity is Piper's insistence that certain songs will not be sung in heaven:

"As I stood before the gate, I didn't think of it, but later I realized that I didn't hear such songs as 'The Old Rugged Cross' or 'The Nail-Scarred Hand.' None of the hymns that filled the air were about Jesus' sacrifice or death. I heard no sad songs and instinctively knew that there are no sad songs in heaven."⁴¹

Here is where Piper should have trusted the Bible, not his instincts, as his instincts are clearly in error. The Apostle John, under divine inspiration, was given a glimpse of the songs of heaven. He informs us that, "they sang a new song, saying: 'You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open the seals; for *you were slain*, and have redeemed us to God *by your blood* out of every tribe and tongue and nation" (Revelation 5:9, emphasis added). Christ's loving sacrifice will not be forgotten in heaven. Also, "The Old Rugged Cross" is not a sad song. To sing of clinging to the old rugged cross and exchanging it one day for a crown is certainly a song of victory, not sadness. We will not want to forget the nail-scarred hands in heaven. Appreciating them will be one reason for eternal praise.

STOPPED AT THE GATE

In the book, Piper admits he really did not get into heaven — only to the gate:

"I've heard people talk about going inside and coming back out the gate. That didn't happen to me. I saw only a bright iridescence. I peered through the gate, yearning to see what lay beyond. ... For me, just to reach the gates was amazing."⁴²

The book should have been called *90 Minutes at the Gate* or *Denied Entry*.

While peering through the gate, Piper observed:

"It was like a city with paved streets. To my amazement, they had been constructed of literal gold. If you imagine a street paved with gold bricks, that's as close as I can come to describing what lay inside the gate."⁴³

Piper's description comes out of a distorted understanding of Revelation 21:9-27. His closed gate is in opposition with John's statement that "its gates shall not be shut" (Revelation 21:25). Piper's gold bricks are not quite what Scripture describes. The Bible does not speak of a "street paved with gold bricks" but rather, "the street of the city was *pure gold*, like transparent glass" (Revelation 21:21, emphasis added). Some might argue that such criticism is being too fussy, but Piper appears to be giving us clarifications and additions to Scripture. It seems Piper is paraphrasing verses he has partially remembered.

CITY OR NOT?

Another bit of muddling on Piper's part is the unintentional mixing of heaven with the city called the New Jerusalem or the Holy City, which has the golden street. What Piper describes as heaven, the Apostle John describes as "the holy city, New Jerusalem, *coming down out of heaven* from God" (Revelation 21:2, emphasis added). This event is again repeated in verse 10, "the great city, the holy Jerusalem, *descending out of heaven* from God" (emphasis added). If the city is coming down out of heaven, it cannot be heaven. From the verses cited above, it is clear that heaven and the city are distinct and separate. A dispensationalist would certainly accuse Piper of botching things.

Trying to tell about a palatial mansion by describing only one room is grossly insufficient. It would be even worse to mistake that one room for the entire house. According to Scripture, it appears that the Holy City is but one small part of a vast and incomprehensible heaven. Charles Ryrie has this to say:

"...*new Jerusalem*. This heavenly city will be the abode of all the saints (Heb. 12:22-24), the bride of Christ (Rev. 21:9-10), and the place Christ is preparing for His people (John 14:2). During the millennium the new Jerusalem (described in detail in Rev. 21:9-22:5) apparently will be suspended over the earth, and it will be the dwelling place of all believers during eternity (as is emphasized in 21:1-8)."⁴⁴

It appears that by merging heaven with the New Jerusalem, Piper has revised the Bible or overturned the dispensational view. Perhaps Piper can revise upcoming editions and say he mistook the New Jerusalem for heaven. While any one item is a small issue, when all are taken cumulatively it gives a careful reader pause.

KIND OF DEAD?

Piper's account continues and he reports that at 1:15 p.m. (90 minutes after the accident occurred) an EMT took his pulse again and he reported that Piper "was still dead."⁴⁵ He also discloses that there was no coroner in that county and so he was never really declared clinically or legally dead by anyone qualified to do so. All we can know for sure is that Piper declared himself dead and no doubt believes it. In the midst of the chaos on the bridge, a pastor reached the car and began to sing and pray. It was then that Piper reports he came back to life.⁴⁶ No doubt Piper understands that everything stands or falls on people believing his subjective claim about his death. He does not seem overly interested in establishing his death through any medical criteria. That he makes very clear:

"I don't have to defend my experience. I know what happened to me. For those of us whose faith is in the reality of heaven, no amount of evidence is necessary. *I know what I experienced.*"⁴⁷

To say "I know what I experienced" may not be as cut and dried as we think. Our experiences need to be interpreted. For any experience there

may be a number of explanations, none of which, if true, can contradict Scripture. We must face the fact that, at times, accurate interpretations of subjective experiences can be elusive.

We may never know what Piper experienced. But what we do know is that 2 Corinthians 5:8 says, "We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord." That is not exactly what Piper testifies to. He says he was absent from the body and *not* present with the Lord because he only made it to the gate. Recall his earlier statement where he said that going inside the gate "did not happen to me," and that he expressed his disappointment and said he only "peered through the gate, yearning to see what was beyond."

According to Piper's own words, when compared with Scripture, it seems like there was not the actual separation of soul (or spirit) from the body because he was not "present with Lord." Ecclesiastes 12:7 reminds us that, "Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it."

The doctrine of brief visits to heaven and the idea of a temporary heaven for the purpose of bringing back reports is a modern aberration. Christ spoke of one who, from his torment in *Hades*, pleaded for just such a messenger, "I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him to my father's house. ... if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent" (Luke 16:27, 30). The stern answer, Jesus told us, was, "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them" (v. 29). Emphatically, the Word of God with all its incredible teaching about heaven and the afterlife is *enough*.

In the latter part of his book, Piper shares stories of the numerous opportunities he has had to minister to fellow sufferers. From these reports, three observations ring clear:

1. Apart from the heaven issue, Piper's accident and difficult recovery — along with the continuing physical

difficulties he describes — have all opened many doors of ministry for him.

2. There is reluctance by many to question his "heaven claim" out of respect and sympathy for all he has gone through. However, the two issues (the accident with the long painful recovery and the claim of going to the gate) can be separated and should be. His suffering is clearly opening the doors to ministry and the two issues do not have to be coupled.

3. The tragedy and his suffering qualify him to minister to the hurting, but do not automatically establish the heaven claim.

Piper could be taking his experience on the bridge and interpreting it in a spiritual way because that is what he would like it to be. Probably no one would accuse Piper of fabricating, but he could be sincerely misled about his experience. The medical field pretty much universally says that NDEs and OBEs can be explained adequately by chemical processes in the brain. Like dreams, they seem extremely vivid and real. Piper has looked into the medical field about the issues of NDEs and OBEs, but dismisses the studies as out-of-hand as we saw. His faith is in his *interpretation* of his experience, even though it does not even come close to passing the Lazarus test.

OTHERS: NO! — ME: YES!

Piper is also critical of the claims of other people going to heaven. His judgment is that their "ordeals often seem too rehearsed and disturbingly similar, as if one person copied the story of the last. ... Despite my skepticism — even today — of many of their testimonies, I have never questioned my own death."⁴⁸ The contradiction is glaring here. Piper's "proof" of his story is "I have had an experience." However, when it comes to the same "proof" from others, he is skeptical. Of one heavenly story, he says that its reported details "don't measure up with the Bible."⁴⁹ His testimony suffers the same fate. This illustrates the tangle when experi-

ences become the first line of defense and not the Bible alone.

IT'S ALL IN YOUR HEAD

Recent studies in Britain and other places help us to see some important issues. NDEs and OBEs can be created in a laboratory. Piper may be unaware of these recent studies, but they certainly help us see that we should not confuse human chemical processes in the brain with spiritual realities. In near-death experiences, a meeting with people we know or loved ones is stereotypical. One's religious affiliation usually colors the events as well.

In 2003, scientists began experiments and started to collate data that, in some instances, was not even sought:

"Scientists have devised an experiment to test whether out-of-body experiences close to death are a real phenomenon or just a trick being played by the brain. Many patients whose hearts have stopped beating claim to have hovered above their bodies and looked down on themselves as others worked to resuscitate them. Mainstream scientists believe these visions are a fabrication of the mind. ... Swiss doctors have previously managed to trigger out-of-body visions by stimulating the brain. The researchers used electrodes to excite the angular gyrus in the right cortex of a patient. The doctors did not set out to achieve the effect - it occurred when they were treating a woman for epilepsy."⁵⁰

Professor Christopher French of Goldsmith College in London is a skeptical inquirer into the paranormal and he calls NDEs "life reviews":

"The life review can be caused by the brain firing in unusual ways as a result of a lack of oxygen or too much carbon dioxide in the blood stream. Endorphins released during times of stress can create a sense of peace and the tunnel of light could

reflect abnormal patterns of firing in the visual cortex. 'I think it will be a long time before we fully understand the NDE,' says Professor French, 'but it's an incredibly fascinating and profound experience for the people that have it and it would certainly be a mistake for science to close its eyes towards those kinds of experience.'⁵¹

Then we consider yet another study; this from Manchester University which reveals that OBEs may be linked in some way to an individual's body perception, and at other times to drugs or chemicals:

"About one in 10 people claim to have had an OBE at some time, typically involving a sensation of floating and seeing the physical body from outside. For some, the phenomenon occurred spontaneously, while for others it was linked to dangerous circumstances, a near-death experience, a dream-like state or use of alcohol or drugs. Dr. David Wilde and his team plan to find out more by studying the experiences of a large number of people. ... 'There were early theories which looked at whether something actually physically left the body, like consciousness, but there's no real scientific evidence for that. Other theories over the years have looked at whether OBE is a psychological defense mechanism in response to a perceived threat to the body in some way. Others have wondered whether it is a visual hallucination. But what has connected all of the theories is the fact that they all start from a feeling of loss of input from the body — a loss of conductive information coming from the legs, the arms, the trunk and so on.'⁵²

MAKING IT HAPPEN

Even more recent research and experimentation have led to the ability to actually recreate OBEs in a laboratory. This is the strongest indicator that we are dealing with the flesh, not

the spirit; and with brain chemistry, not real trips to the other side. In still another *BBC News* report we find the following:

"The experiments, described in the *Science* journal, offer a scientific explanation for a phenomenon experienced by one in 10 people. Two teams used virtual reality goggles to con the brain into thinking the body was located elsewhere. The visual illusion plus the feel of their real bodies being touched made volunteers sense that they had moved outside of their physical bodies. ... But the two teams, from University College London, UK, and the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Lausanne, believe there is a neurological explanation. Their work suggests a disconnection between the brain circuits that process visual and touch sensory information may thus be responsible for some OBEs."⁵³

The doctors drew some conclusions from all the above that are important to note:

"Dr. Susan Blackmore, psychologist and visiting lecturer at the University of the West of England, said: 'This has at last brought OBEs into the lab and tested one of the main theories of how they occur. Scientists have long suspected that the clue to these extraordinary, and sometimes life-changing, experiences lies in disrupting our normal illusion of being a self behind our eyes, and replacing it with a new viewpoint from above or beyond.'⁵⁴

CONCLUSIONS AND A SUGGESTION

Piper's book can be summarized in this way:

1. Piper missed just enough of the Scriptures and was inaccurate just enough to persuade Bereans that there is another explanation for his 90-minute experience on the bridge. By his own criteria, his experience does not measure up to the Bible.

There is a more mundane and physical (medical) explanation.

2. Piper's book title is misleading and sensationalistic. He writes that he only got to the gate, yet throughout the book he talks of when he went to heaven. Perhaps we are supposed to understand that he means he got close to heaven, or because the gate is part of heaven, we are supposed to understand that too. He could have been clearer. Absent from the body and present at the gate just does not do it.

3. Even without the claim of going to the other side, Piper has a compelling story of beating the odds. He can be a great resource to many sufferers and the recovery from the accident can stand on its own. If he had left out the first part, he could have appealed to a wider audience and have been even a greater blessing. The OBE is so questionable on many grounds (even though he may believe it) and may limit his appeal to some. His story of rehabilitation and overcoming is the most potent part.

4. Christians need to be well-acquainted with the doctrine of heaven. However, they need to build that doctrine from good biblical sources and writers who stay with Scripture. There are topical Bibles for the verses alone. There are wonderful books with text and comments such as *Heaven, The Undiscovered Country* by Ron Rhodes, *Heaven* by W.A. Criswell and Paige Patterson, and *The Great Doctrines of the Bible* by William Evans. In addition, heaven can be researched in legitimate Bible dictionaries and Bible encyclopedias. The biblical information on heaven is vast, reverent, and awesome. It is wide-ranging, consistent, and comforting. It often stimulates our thinking and emotions by reminding us of what is *not* in heaven — there is no more pain, sickness, suffering, sorrow, separation, or grieving.

It can also be suggested that these volumes are far more beneficial than reading all the contradictory, and sometimes silly books advertising alleged heavenly trips. Instead ninety minutes a week of Bible memoriza-

tion would revolutionize not only our personal lives, but also our churches.

Endnotes:

1. Don Piper with Cecil Murphey, *90 Minutes in Heaven*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Revell, 2004.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 45-108.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 109-122.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 133-136.
5. *Ibid.*, pp. 137-199.
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 199-202.
7. *Ibid.*, pg. 201, italic in original.
8. *Ibid.*, pg. 202.
9. See further, G. Richard Fisher, "Their Blood Cries Out? The History and Histronics of Stigmata," *The Quarterly Journal*, April-June 2005, pp. 4-5.
10. William M. Alnor, *Heaven Can't Wait*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1996.
11. Roberts Liardon, *I Saw Heaven*. Tulsa: Albury Publishing, 1983, pg. 38.
12. Peter Popoff, *7 Hours in Heaven!* Upland, Calif.: People United for Christ, Inc., 1993.
13. Cited in *Heaven Can't Wait*, op. cit., pp. 35-36.
14. Cited in *ibid.*, pg. 36.
15. Kenneth E. Hagin, *I Believe in Visions*. Tulsa: Faith Library Publications, 1984, pp. 44-45; Kenneth E. Hagin, *I Went to Hell*. Tulsa: Faith Library Publications, 1982, pp. 6-8.
16. Cited in *Heaven Can't Wait*, op. cit., pg. 38.

17. Cited in *ibid.*, pg. 39.
18. Robert S. Liichow, "A Double Dose of Delusion," *Truth Matters*, Discernment Ministries International, November 2005, pp. 1-13.
19. See further, *Heaven Can't Wait*, op. cit., pp. 45-46.
20. Cited in *ibid.*, pp. 46-50.
21. Cited in *ibid.*, pp. 52-54.
22. See further, G. Richard Fisher, "Heaven Hopping... Spirituality, Sensationalism or Spiritism?," *Personal Freedom Outreach Newsletter*, October-December 1985, pp. 4, 6.
23. See further, G. Richard Fisher with M. Kurt Goedelman, "Embraced By The Darkness - Betty Eadie's Old Errors in New Age Dress," *The Quarterly Journal*, April-June 1994, pp. 1, 10-13.
24. See further, G. Richard Fisher, "Mary Baxter's Vision of Hell," *The Quarterly Journal*, October-December 1995, pp. 1, 14-16; and G. Richard Fisher, "The 'Heavenly Hash' of Mary K. Baxter," *The Quarterly Journal*, January-March 1999, pp. 1, 17-21.
25. See further, *Heaven Can't Wait*, op. cit., pp. 133-135.
26. See further, *ibid.*, pp. 142-145.
27. See further, G. Richard Fisher, "The Protestant College of Cardinals," *The Quarterly Journal*, July-September 2003, pg. 21.
28. D. James Kennedy, "Christ's Bitter Cup," *Truths That Transform* radio broadcast, April 13, 1990.
29. Advertisement appearing in *Charisma*, November 1991, pg. 57. The Sept. 17, 2007,

- edition of *Christian News* has an excellent rebuttal of Kennedy's Gospel in the Stars ("Kennedy and The Zodiac" by Dr. Gregory Jackson, pg. 9).
30. *90 Minutes in Heaven*, op. cit., pg. 13.
31. *Ibid.*, pg. 20.
32. *Ibid.*, pg. 21.
33. *Ibid.*, pg. 23.
34. *Ibid.*, pg. 24.
35. *Ibid.*, pg. 26.
36. *Ibid.*, pg. 27.
37. *Ibid.*
38. *Ibid.*, pg. 33.
39. *Ibid.*, pg. 30.
40. *Ibid.*, pg. 31.
41. *Ibid.*
42. *Ibid.*, pg. 33. However, Piper here contradicts his earlier statement, "I moved inside the gates" (pg. 31).
43. *Ibid.*, pp. 34-35.
44. Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *The Ryrie Study Bible*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1976, note on Revelation 21:2, pg. 1920.
45. *90 Minutes in Heaven*, op. cit., pg. 37.
46. *Ibid.*, pp. 41-44.
47. *Ibid.*, pg. 205, italics in original.
48. *Ibid.*, pg. 200.
49. *Ibid.*
50. Jonathan Amos, "Test for near-death visions," *BBC News*, Sept. 10, 2003.
51. Amanda Hancox, "Show me heaven," *BBC News*, Jan. 26, 2004.
52. No byline, "Out-of-body experiences 'probed'," *BBC News*, Aug. 27, 2005.
53. No byline, "Out-of-body experience recreated," *BBC News*, Aug. 24, 2007.
54. *Ibid.*

EDITORIALS

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This is illustrated well by an incident some years ago when a Charismatic ministry in Israel headed by Gerald Derstine was hoodwinked by Muslim Arab villagers in Israel. The attention and perks were too much for the villagers to resist and so they fabricated tales of appearances by Jesus, complete with miracles. It all turned out to be nonsense. David Sisler reported in the Sept. 16, 1995, *Augusta Chronicle*:

"For seven years Derstine inspired his followers with sensational accounts of miracles, mass conversions and subsequent martyrdoms among Arab Muslims in Israel and the West Bank. Supporters contributed almost \$3 million last year alone, including \$500,000 for the 'First Church of the Martyrs,' a structure which would give shelter to the widows and children of some 35 new believers violently killed for leaving Islam. Derstine's regional ministry leader now acknowledges that there were no martyrs and no sincere Muslim converts associated with the ministry. The reports were all

fabricated. In one pamphlet published by Gospel Crusade, Mohammed Rawidan, the ministry's first 'convert' claimed that the body of a martyred infant turned into dust in his hands, and then into a large white bird, which flew to heaven. A copy of the infant's death certificate showed she had died from Sudden Infant Death Syndrome and was buried. In the light of these and other revelations, Gospel Crusade suspended two top officials and withdrew from circulation literature, videotapes and the religious best-seller, 'Fire Over Israel.' Evangelical leaders in Israel repeatedly warned Derstine that the reports were false, but Derstine said he published the reports 'without any inkling it was (all) a lie.'"

Snopes.com is a web site devoted to tracking internet claims and myths. Snopes looked into "Buried Treasures," a story coming from Egypt where a Muslim man supposedly killed his wife and buried her. The report adds that he also buried alive his infant baby and 8-year-old daughter in the grave. Then, as the story goes, they were compacted under perhaps a ton of sand. Two weeks later another family member died. When they opened the family grave to bury him, they found the

little girls under the sand alive. When the 8-year-old was asked how she survived for two weeks under the sand, she said, "A man wearing shiny white clothes, with bleeding wounds in his hands, came every day to feed us. He woke up my mom so she could nurse my sister."

The story goes on to say that the little girl was interviewed on Egyptian television, and the Muslim woman news anchor acknowledged that this truly was Jesus and that He was indeed crucified — a fact that most Moslems deny. We are left to believe that she made this statement and suffered no repercussions. The broadcast supposedly aired in 2004, but no one reports seeing it. The story has surfaced as "Murder Miracle in Egypt," "News from Egypt," and "Miracle in Egypt" during the past three years.

Rich Buhler operates a Christian web site on which he monitors e-hoaxes and validates any that can be authenticated. On his web site (truthorfiction.com), Buhler labels the "Miracle in Egypt?" story an "eRumor." He says that some versions say the story was reported in an Egyptian newspaper. However, no one can produce the paper. Buhler adds, "There is no substantiation for this story. We have not found any evidence of a Muslim man who killed his wife and buried his children alive with her. It has all the evidence of being a fabricated story." There is a pattern here, and it's that every time a Muslim miracle story is checked out, it turns out to be a hoax.

Before believing all the miracle reports on the internet, it is beneficial to read *The Cost of Deception* by John Williams and take the time to learn about urban legends. Also worthwhile is *Selling Fear* by Greg Camp, *Too Good To Be True - The Colossal Book of Urban Legends* by Jan Harold Brunvand, and *Everything is Under Control - Conspiracies, Cults, and Cover-ups* by Robert Anton Wilson.

Let's ask how the Egypt story really originated and ask whether it simply was fable and myth. Second Timothy 4:4 warns about those who turn to fables. The Snopes investigation turned up the origin of the story. They discovered that a woman married to a pastor who runs a Muslim outreach program in the U.S. first launched the story. The pastor is only identified as Victor. There is no claim whatsoever by Victor or his wife of a visit to Egypt.

According to e-mails written by his wife, Victor talked with a family in Egypt who gave him the details. Thus the wife's report was at least third-hand and there apparently was no checking on primary documentation. Victor got it from an unnamed source. Even that source might have had a source or sources far removed.

What is interesting is the bias that is brought to these miracle stories, depending on who is doing the telling. Usually within the extremist Charismatic camp, the stories carry the idea of conversions by visions and dreams apart from Gospel preaching. A man in a white robe and nail prints shows up and conversions happen. With those who are more Evangelical, the stories circulate with the general theme of the vision directing the Muslim to a missionary or a Gospel presentation.

Evangelicals commit to the stories not because they have hard evidence, but because they sound more plausible compared to the more Charismatic way of telling them. So now it becomes who tells the story best.

Gordon Franz has written an insightful piece called *Tabloid Archaeology*. Franz, an archaeologist, wanted to check out the fantastic claim that the skull of Goliath had been discovered along with his oversized skeleton. The first clue that something was amiss was the assertion that the skull (with a big rock in it) was uncovered in the Valley of Elah, miles west of Jerusalem. However, 1 Samuel 17:54 states that David brought the skull up to Jerusalem. Make no bones about it, something sounded wrong.

Franz first sought documentation in a peer review publication because the claim was made that the skull and bones were tested and found to be 3,000 years old. When there was no review to be found he concluded rightly, "There is not a shred of evidence for any of these bogus claims." After much searching, it turned out that the information came from the *Weekly World News*. Even the publication's nameplate sounded impressive, but when Franz finally was able to get his hands on the *Weekly World News*, he found it to be a crazy spoof tabloid also reporting Elvis sightings and Hillary Clinton adopting an alien baby. It claimed also that the Garden of Eden was discovered in Colorado.

Franz's conclusions are extremely helpful as he asks, "What can we learn from this story?," and then answers, "First, we should do a thorough search, check out the facts, and find out what the original source of a story was ... One should look for material that has been published in a scientific peer review publication." In other words, get the facts, get the documentation, and get the proof. Most are too lazy.

There is a wonderful fact that is often missed in the tenth and eleventh chapters of Acts. Most know the story of Peter and his sharing the Gospel with the Gentile Cornelius. For the Jews, to even imagine Gentile acceptance by God was unthinkable. Peter had to be forced by God to make the journey from Joppa to Caesarea. What is missed by most is that Peter took six other men with him. Why? Was this contingent of seven (Peter and six) arbitrary? Why does Peter so emphatically say, "Moreover these six brethren accompanied me, and we entered the man's house" (Acts 11:12)?

Dramatic claims (convincing Jews that Gentiles could be accepted by God) require dramatic evidence. Archaeologist and author Jim Fleming, who instructs Israeli guides and resided in Jerusalem for many years, reminds us that ancient courts required seven witnesses to judge serious cases. So Peter goes well beyond establishment by two or three witnesses and puts forth seven.

Jesus' resurrection may have had no ring of truth at all to His enemies. But Paul emphasizes that *500 witnesses* established the claim of the resurrection beside others (1 Corinthians 15:5-7). *Heavy verification is God's idea.*

Extraordinary claims require extraordinary proof. Ask for it — demand it — accept no less. Doing this is not being faithless or skeptical, rather it is being biblical. Don't believe it without examining the evidence. Anything less is less than biblical and less than Christian.

—GRF

NEWS UPDATES

(continued from page 3)

Following the charges of his malfeasance, Roberts used various media outlets to respond to the lawsuit, which he said "is about intimidation, blackmail and extortion." Appearing on *Larry King Live*, he said, "I have not done anything wrong," and offered a rebuttal to the various charges. He said the trip to the Bahamas "was not a senior trip," but rather a "preaching trip," and his daughter and her friends accompanied him "to help recruit students to ORU." He added that, "the jet is not owned by the university" and that it was "a leased plane."

Despite Roberts' claims of innocence, just two weeks after the lawsuit was announced, he asked for and was granted by the ORU Board of Regents a leave of absence in his role as the university's president. He will continue to function as chairman and chief executive of Oral Roberts Ministries. The Rev. Billy Joe Daugherty will serve as president during Roberts' hiatus. Daugherty is senior pastor of Victory Christian Center, which sits adjacent to the ORU campus.

—MKG

WHITES ANNOUNCE DIVORCE

The ink had not even dried on the pages of the last issue of *The Quarterly Journal*, where it was stated that rumors were circulating that Paula and Randy White, co-pastors of one the nation's largest and fastest-growing churches, were headed for divorce when the couple confirmed that they indeed were splitting up. In May, Randy told the *Tampa Tribune*, "No one can predict the future," when asked if he and Paula were contemplating divorce. Three months later, in August, the pair told the congregation of their Tampa-based Without Walls International Church that they were ending their marriage of nearly 18 years.

During a Thursday evening service, Randy, with Paula by his side, made public the plan to divorce and told the audience that he was "going to pastor this church and focus on being a great dad." Paula said she would come back often to preach at the church. The couple assured that the breakup was not due to any infidelity.

In recent months, a ministry association between Paula and Bishop Rick Hawkins developed. In 1993, Hawkins founded Family Praise Center in San Antonio, Texas. Just prior to the divorce announcement, Paula had been leading worship at the Family Praise Center on a regular basis, and Hawkins is listed as a board member of Paula's newly formed non-profit organization, PWM Life Center, Inc. Hawkins' son Dustin is identified as the church's pastor. Both men were themselves divorced in February 2007. Paula is said to serve as the "spiritual overseer" or "oversight pastor" to Dustin.

Also in August, it was reported that Paula had purchased a \$681,000 home on a 3.7-acre plot with a pool, guest house, and three-car garage, just north of San Antonio. However, according to the *Tampa Tribune*, Paula will "remain based in Tampa, with satellite operations in California, New York City and San Antonio."

—MKG

A SHATTERED GLASS SLIPPER?

What started as a "Cinderella" wedding for "prophetess" and televangelist Juanita Bynum is ending amidst charges that her husband, "Bishop" Thomas W. Weeks III, physically assaulted her. Bynum filed for divorce in September following an August altercation outside an Atlanta hotel where Weeks is said to have beaten, stomped, choked, and threatened to kill her. Weeks was arrested on charges of aggravated assault and terroristic threats. He spent about six hours in jail before being released on bond.

Following a private wedding in July 2002, which the couple kept secret for three months, Bynum and Weeks remarried in April 2003 during a lavish, \$1 million ceremony at New York City's Regent Wall Street Hotel. The wedding party consisted of more than 80 men, women, and children and a 10-piece orchestra. About 900 guests attended. One guest said, "Juanita's wedding was fit for a queen." Weeks presented Bynum with a 7.76-carat diamond ring during the ceremony, which was officiated by Weeks' pastor and assisted by the Rev. John Hagee. Trinity Broadcasting Network was on hand with an eight-member camera crew to record the ceremony, which was then aired several times over the network the following month.

Bynum is a favorite among TBN viewers and regularly appears on the network's semi-annual fund-raising broadcasts.

Bynum's attorney, Karla Walker, told the Associated Press, "She loved her husband. But she does feel it is necessary to stop domestic violence and go on with the divorce." Both Bynum and Weeks had been previously married.

—MKG



Books in Review

YOGA AND THE BODY OF CHRIST

by Dave Hunt

The Berean Call, 176 pages, \$9.99

Dave Hunt provides for his readers a wealth of information in his book, *Yoga and the Body of Christ*. This little volume is concise, to the point, and is bursting with ample and meticulous documentation with anywhere from 16-29 endnotes per chapter.

People from all walks of life have become engrossed in the movement for fitness. With this craze, yoga has reformed how one exercises, relaxes, and meditates. During the past 20-30 years, the Church has also jumped on the bandwagon with an influx of yoga classes. Christians must realize that yoga is not “just exercise,” and must be informed as to its roots, intents, and consequences. It is crucial to understand that the practice of yoga is not just for physical fitness, but rather that it goes beyond being physically fit. Yoga is, more importantly, a religious practice.

Hunt cites Laurette Willis, a former New Age occultist and yoga practitioner, who makes a very important distinction: “Yoga wants to get students to the point of complete numbness in their minds. ... God, on the other hand, wants you to be transformed by the renewing of your mind through his Word” (pg. 35).

Yoga was introduced into the Western world through multiple means and promoted as a form of relaxation, physical fitness, or spiritual enlightenment. It gained popularity in the 1960s when contemporary musicians such as the Beatles dabbled in Eastern mysticism and received a boost as the New Age movement emerged in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

Some will argue that one could meditate on Christ instead of any Hindu deity while practicing yoga. This, however, is not what yoga is designed to do. If you already know that “Christian” yoga is wrong, this book will help you to defend your view with information which you likely never knew. Should you believe that yoga within the Church is acceptable, then, more than ever, you need this book.

—AMG

IS THAT YOU LORD?

by Gary E. Gilley

Evangelical Press, 96 pages, \$9.99

Recently a “Prayer Request Page” on a web site had as its very top entry a plea from a woman who wanted guidance from God because her pastor told her that her impending wedding may not be within the will of God. She explained that “this could be due to the fact that he is not a believer.” She then added, “This is the man that I want and I know that God would not forsake me at the end.” Such typifies the misguided pursuits of many Christians today and amplifies the necessity of a book like Gary Gilley’s *Is That You Lord?*

Gilley refers to a survey which stated that one in three American adults say that God speaks directly to them. For Christians, the critical question is not *if* God speaks, but *how* God speaks. Therein lies the value of this volume as it examines what God’s Word says about how He speaks to believers today.

Gilley begins by surveying pietism, describing its positives and negatives, but resolves, as said by George Gallup, that such spirituality “may give us misty eyes and warm hearts but it does not create Christians who know Christ in terms described by the Bible” (pg. 23). In subsequent chapters, he explores the contemporary view of New Testament prophecy, the inner voice, and impressions — all of which are purported as means of divine direction. Along the way, the reader will gain sound biblical instruction about knowing the will of God for their lives and how to make wise decisions that please and honor God — and just how much freedom we have in many of those choices. Gilley also devotes a chapter to stating and answering the most prevalent objections posed by mystics.

D.A. Carson once wrote about a friend who critiqued a book on prayer entitled, *Listening to God*. Carson’s friend said, “If anyone had written a book thirty years ago with that title, you would have expected it to be about Bible study, not about prayer” (cited by Gilley, pg. 26). This insightful observation shows how far removed from the doctrine of biblical sufficiency the Church has wandered in recent years due to the writings of Henry Blackaby, Beth Moore, and others. *Is That You Lord?* is a life preserver for those floating in a sea of subjectivism who are listening for God to speak in all the wrong ways.

—MKG

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