

The Quarterly Journal



THE NEWSLETTER PUBLICATION OF PERSONAL FREEDOM OUTREACH

VOL. 29, NO. 3

JULY-SEPTEMBER 2009

EDITOR: KEITH A. MORSE

Breaking Free from Faulty Strongholds The Haphazard Hermeneutics of Beth Moore

by G. Richard Fisher
with M. Kurt Goedelman

Popular author and Bible teacher Beth Moore unabashedly boasts, "I'm such a woman of overstatement and hyperbole."¹ Her admission may be more telling — and hazardous — than she realizes.

Moore's penchant for embellishment is especially grave when she repeatedly claims God has said something that He has not said. It is bad enough to bear false witness against one's neighbor (Exodus 20:16), but to bear false witness against God is far worse (Deuteronomy 18:20).

TEACHERS BEWARE

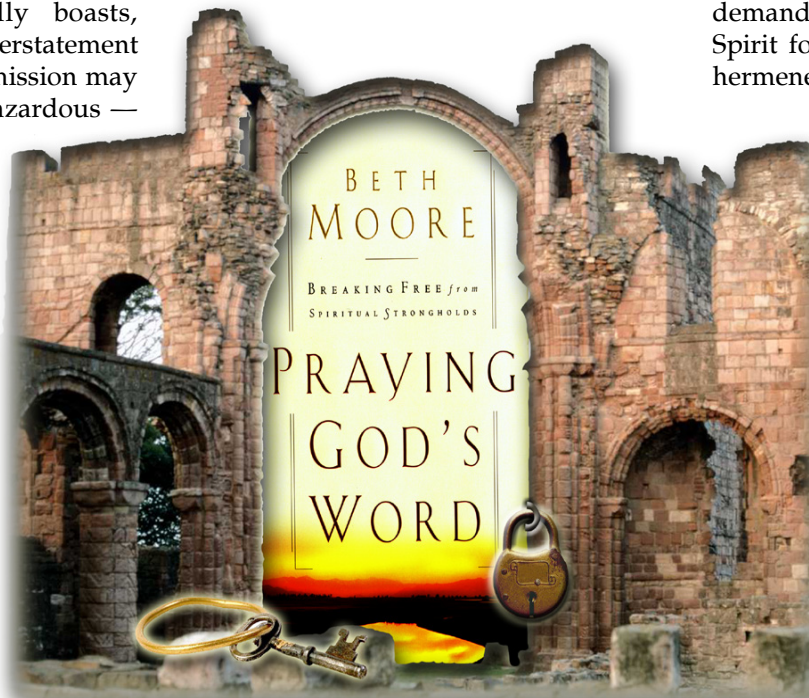
James warns, "My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment" (James 3:1). Therefore, we must use and apply the Bible responsibly and interpret it prayerfully and properly to the

best of our ability. Such a charge demands that we depend on the Holy Spirit for illumination and use sound hermeneutics.

Biblical hermeneutics is "The study of the interpretation of the biblical text, both what it meant to its original readers and what it means for modern readers."² So much of what is passed off as hermeneutics today is man-centered, subjective speculation. Rejecting hermeneutics is itself a failed hermeneutic.

Reformed theologian R.C. Sproul explains why hermeneutics is so important:

(continues on page 12)



Inside this Issue:

- ONE HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH OR MANY CATHOLICISMS? PAGE 2
- DAMAGE CONTROL FOR REVIVAL LEADER PAGE 3
- BRIAN McLAREN'S TRAGIC MYSTICAL DETOUR PAGE 4

Editorials

ONE HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH OR MANY CATHOLICISMS?

Not all Catholics are equal. Contrary to what many believe, the "Catholic Church" has many divisions and subdivisions. Proliferation is not just the profile of Protestants and their denominations. Those who saw Catholicism as a ghetto can no longer hold that view. Here are a few divisions.

- Catholics who, in spite of their church, have found a genuine relationship with Christ. They ignore a lot of the system and study Scripture, reject a "by works" salvation, but continue to align with Catholicism, hoping to win others. Some are slowly processing out. This is the story of not a few.

- Pentecostal and Charismatic Catholics who combine the saints, Mary, masses, and indulgences with speaking in tongues. They mingle these elements in varying degrees. Some would argue that one cannot possess the Holy Spirit and relentlessly hold on to false doctrine. That debate continues.

- Breakaway Catholics who make up more than one subdivision and seek to go back to pre-Vatican II and the era of Latin masses. They work outside the church with priests of like mind. One group even elects its own pope, believing the current pope to be an impostor. This

movement of wildcat parishes is called Conservative and Traditionalist Catholicism and, though unknown by many, is thoroughly investigated by Sociologist Michael Cuneo in his book, *Smoke of Satan* (Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1999).

- Smorgasbord Catholics who pick and choose what they will or will not abide by. They usually reject the ban on birth control, particular sacraments, and only observe what they want when they want.

- Mainstream, old-line Catholics who abide by most of the historical structures. They consistently practice all of the prescribed rituals. Some are unaware of the meanings of the rituals, but observe them by rote. They truly believe this will somehow help their acceptance with God. They would be afraid to do otherwise.

- Superstitious or mystical Catholics who may be obsessed with medieval mysticism or South American beliefs and practices such as Santeria or voodoo. These are a mix of superstitions with a Catholic veneer. In Europe, some Catholics mix in communism.

- Fringe Catholics who are born and baptized into the religion, but have no instruction in it. They carry the name, but have no idea what their church teaches.

One should always try to determine which type of Catholic one is dealing with to help facilitate a meaningful dialogue. Once a determination has been made as to

(continues on page 22)

PERSONAL FREEDOM OUTREACH

P.O. Box 26062 • Saint Louis, Missouri 63136-0062 • (314) 921-9800

Visit PFO's Website at: <http://www.pfo.org>

BOARD of DIRECTORS:

| | | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------|------------------|
| James Bjornstad | Cedarville, OH | Joan C. Cetnar | Kunkletown, PA |
| G. Richard Fisher | Dillsburg, PA | Gary E. Gilley | Springfield, IL |
| M. Kurt Goedelman | Saint Louis, MO | Robert L. Griffin | Gulf Shores, AL |
| Keith A. Morse | Denver, CO | David M. Tyler | Granite City, IL |

BOARD of REFERENCE:

| | | | |
|-----------------------|------------|-----------------------------|---------------|
| Dr. Jay E. Adams..... | Enoree, SC | Dr. Norman L. Geisler | Charlotte, NC |
| Dr. Ron Rhodes | | | Frisco, TX |

© 2009 – PFO. All rights reserved. ISSN: 1083-6853. These articles may not be stored on web pages or Internet sites without permission. *The Quarterly Journal* is the newsletter publication of PFO. Published by Personal Freedom Outreach, P.O. Box 26062, Saint Louis, MO 63136. PFO's *Journal* may also be obtained on CD-ROM in Portable Document Format (.PDF) for use with Adobe® Reader® software.

HAGGARD RECOUNTS MISDEEDS ON NATIONAL TV

Disgraced pastor Ted Haggard returned to the public spotlight in April when he and his wife Gayle were interviewed on the syndicated broadcast *Divorce Court*. Haggard toppled from the heights of evangelicalism in 2006 when it was revealed that he was having a relationship with a male prostitute and was using illegal drugs. At the time, Haggard was pastor of New Life Church in Colorado Springs, Colo., and president of the National Association of Evangelicals. The revelations led to his resigning both positions.

Haggard maintains that the male escort with whom he was involved “exaggerated” the details of the relationship, but admits “there was enough that I did wrong.”

The two-part *Divorce Court* appearance was one more in a series that has brought Haggard back into public view. In January, he began a series of interviews on such programs as *Larry King Live* and *Oprah* to promote an HBO documentary about his life in exile the past two years.

For the diligent Bible student, Haggard’s admissions on *Divorce Court* were revealing and alarming. He told the show’s presiding judge, Lynn Toler, that he advised his wife to divorce him in order “to be free” because he was “so toxic” and “so negative.” When asked about his hypocrisy in the leadership role at his church, he stated, “I never stood in front of that church and said, ‘I am your shepherd.’ I always said, ‘Hey look, I am a fellow sheep just like you.’”

Even more unbiblical was his adopted solution to his sinful lifestyle. He said during his struggles he “sought God with all his heart.” Then he negated that comment by saying, “Once I got into counseling, I learned so much about how the brain works. And every therapist I have, has said, ‘Oh we deal with this all the time. We can help you with this.’ And they were able to give me the solution that I wasn’t able to get in the process I was going in. Because I thought if I memorized Romans 6 one more time I would be okay. Or if I prayed and fasted, I would be okay. But this was a different thing.”

Notwithstanding organic disease of the brain, Jesus offered a different diagnosis: “For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies” (Matthew 15:19).

Prior to public exposure of his sin, Haggard said he went to all pastors who told him to just “pray about it.” Following the “crisis” he went to “Christians” at “secular counseling centers.”

Haggard describes himself as a “heterosexual with issues.” “I wasn’t born gay. My whole issue is the result of an experience I had when I was ... [in a] seventh grade play. ... That established compulsions that were trauma-based,” he told Toler. The counselors, he said, “dealt with the trauma and all of a sudden my prayers were answered.”

According to various news reports, the Haggards were paid an “undisclosed amount” for their interview on *Divorce Court*.

—MKG

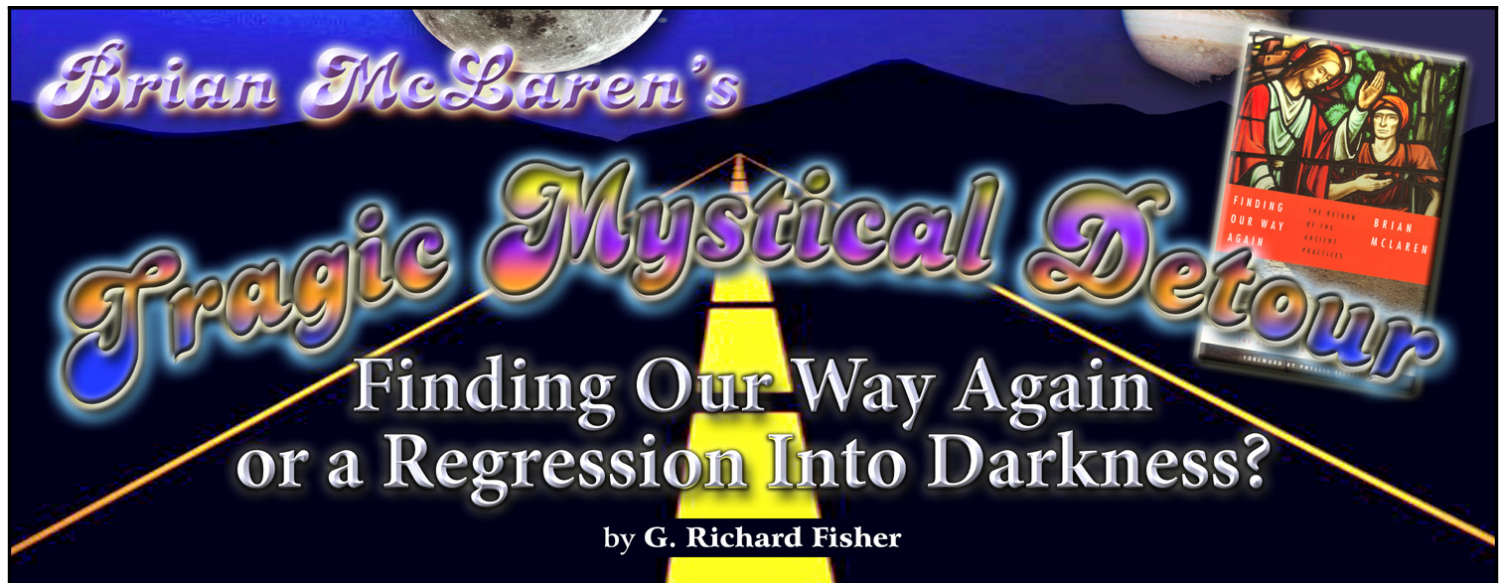
DAMAGE CONTROL FOR REVIVAL LEADER

It can be said that revival leader Todd Bentley went up like a rocket and came down like a rock. In April 2008, Bentley began an end-times healing revival in Lakeland, Fla., which ran for 100 consecutive nights and was drawing crowds estimated at 30,000 per week. PFO labeled the unconventional revivalist from Canada as “the pied piper of chaos.” (See *The Quarterly Journal*, January-March 2009.)

Bentley’s abrupt meltdown began when ABC’s *Nightline* disclosed that amid all the grandiose claims of healing and miracles — including numerous people being raised from the dead — not one documented healing could be substantiated. Following the July 2008 report, Bentley claimed God told him it was time to move on. Just a few weeks later, details began to emerge that Bentley was in a troubled marriage and was initiating a divorce. Within months of divorcing his wife, Shonnah, he married Jessa Hasbrook, a former intern for his ministry. Even prior to his divorce, Bentley acknowledged that his relationship with Hasbrook was “ongoing” and confessed to “adultery.” A board member for Bentley’s Canadian ministry also admitted that during the days of the revival services, alcohol consumption by Bentley had “crossed the line.”

What added to the debacle was that on the heels of the ABC News broadcast, and while the Bentleys’ marriage

(continues on page 22)



Ours is a land of selection and variety. As the old Burger King slogan goes, "Have it your way." And we do. Americans love to have choices and many of them. And those choices are not limited to cuisine. Many are adopting this approach to their religion. They have many choices, from this or that church, all put together any way they want. Thus, it's not surprising when emergent church leader Brian McLaren says:

"Perhaps you can best proceed by imagining yourself to be a young spiritual seeker who has just come into possession of a time machine. You have gone back to the Middle Ages on a spiritual quest."¹

And while McLaren offers a religious buffet, most of what he serves up is leftovers. In his recent book, *Finding Our Way Again*, McLaren tries to create and present an eclectic mix of religious systems. His effort is clearly not based on the Bible, but rather upon experimentation, subjectivism, and Church tradition. What he offers is a system with no name that appears to be whatever an individual wants it to be.

McLaren comes with some impressive credentials. According to his publisher:

"Brian D. McLaren is an author, speaker, pastor, and networker

among innovative Christian leaders, thinkers, and activists. Born in 1956, he graduated from the University of Maryland with degrees in English (BA, summa cum laude, 1978, and MA in 1981). ... In 2004, he was awarded a doctor of divinity degree (honoris causa) from Carey Theological Seminary in Vancouver, BC, Canada."²

A man's credentials may reveal little of what that man really believes. Many authors no longer believe what their schools believe or teach, or even what they themselves formerly believed or wrote about. For many, the credentials they have are often subservient to what they believe, what they read, and the sources they use. Other indicators would be the company they keep (Proverbs 13:20, 1 Corinthians 15:33).

EMERGENT, MYSTICS, CATHOLICS AND HINDUS

When it comes to friends, McLaren says he is indebted to a cadre of people, some of whom are marginally evangelical, if that. Others are clear-cut mystics. McLaren says:

"I am indebted in a special way to Dallas Willard, Richard Foster, Eugene Peterson, and Joan Chittister; their writings introduced me to the contemplative life and the idea of spiritual disciplines or

practices. I am similarly indebted to Tony Campolo, Jim Wallis, and Ron Sider; their works introduced me to the integration of the contemplative life and a life of social action."³

Richard Foster is a mystic who has promoted out of body experiences and altered states of consciousness.⁴ Tony Campolo has taken a sharp turn into New Age mysticism.⁵ Joan Chittister for many years has been advocating that Christians adopt rules that the monastic St. Benedict drew up between 530 and 560 A.D. McLaren refers to Chittister's book, *Wisdom Distilled from the Daily: Living the Rule of St. Benedict Today*.⁶ Yet those, like McLaren and his peers who want to go back to the past, have stopped short. If they would go back a few centuries further, they could get right back to the Bible and the apostles' doctrine (Acts 2:42).

EMERGING FROM WHAT TO WHAT?

McLaren is best known as a leading writer in what is called the emergent church movement. He is adored by those who think that he and they are on the cutting edge. However, this movement is a loosely aligned group of writers who really agree on very little. They ask a lot of questions to introduce doubt, but provide very few answers. What emergent church

writers readily agree on are the following broad ideas and philosophies that really fall apart when biblically scrutinized:

I. *Doctrinal precision is not all that important.* All doctrines of Scripture should be questioned. In their view, belonging is much more urgent than belief, and community takes precedent over convictions. Believing is not as pressing as belonging. Apologists are all negative opponents who stand in the way of peace and unity.

However, one would never get this from reading Paul's epistles, with their frequent references to doctrine. Nor would one get this from the description of the Bereans in Acts 17:31. Likewise, Jude urges us to contend for our beliefs (Jude 3). And Peter urges us to be ready with an answer as to what we believe (1 Peter 3:15). What is emerging with McLaren is an obvious choosing of ancient traditions over Scripture. *Sola Scriptura* is out and experimentation is in.

II. *The historic evangelical Church has failed miserably, according to emergent church writers.* The problems of the world with its divisions and chaos could not be attributed to sin and depravity and the fact that men love darkness rather than light (John 3:19). It could not be attributed to man's alienation from God. It could not be attributed to false teaching such as that in the emergent church movement. It is more likely due (they say) to failure by the historic Church. Emergent church writers do not really care about the line of historical orthodoxy and proper doctrine. They do want to return to ancient Catholic mysticism, but other than that they are orphans.

III. *The Church, her structure and practice must be revamped.* The movement has not provided the specifics of the proposed changes and has been vague on what the emergent church should look like — *until now.*

For a long time it was not obvious where McLaren was headed. He posed more questions than answers. Many wondered where he would

land because, after all, the Church was *emerging*. Now we have a better idea. What McLaren spells out very clearly in *Finding Our Way Again* is that he wants to take us back to the era of the second through seventh centuries A.D., and add a smattering of other Roman Catholic mystical practices from later eras. This should raise concern among those familiar with Patristics (the study of the early Church Fathers), as well as the counterclaims, contradictions, and even heresies of many of these men. It really was not a pristine age with uniformity of belief and practice at all. While the New Testament era did have its errors and confusion, those who lived during it took seriously the Scriptures and the writings of the apostles (Acts 2:42).

McLaren's new premise raises a number of questions. McLaren poses a great question in his book and that question could be asked of every page he writes:

"You can construct a great way ... a path, a road, a hallway, a passage ... but unless it leads to the right destination, what good is it?"⁷

Who says McLaren's decision to mire himself in a confused past era is the right approach? And if it is not, then what good is it? What is wrong with the Apostolic era? Why would we select something over that? It is time for Bible believers to start questioning the questioners. For all of their claims of relevance, the emergent church movement is really not with the times. It is stuck in the Dark Ages.

BACK INTO THE DARK — AND MORE

This is not the only place McLaren will try to take us. McLaren also confesses indebtedness to Peter Senge. He acknowledges that Senge's book, *The Fifth Discipline* had influenced my thinking as a pastor.⁸ Senge is unapologetic in regard to his dependence on Buddhism. He has sought to merge Buddhist philosophy into business practices. McLaren asked Senge

why books on Buddhism are more popular than books on Christianity. McLaren records Senge's reply:

"I think it's because Buddhism presents itself as a way of life, and Christianity presents itself as a system of belief. So I would want to get Christian ministers thinking about how to rediscover their own faith as a way of life, because that's what people are searching for today. That's what they need most."⁹

No serious believer thinks he needs to use Buddhism to rediscover Christianity as a way of life. The New Testament is full of information about behavior and faith. Each of Paul's epistles is almost evenly divided between passages on belief and on behavior. There is a balance of doctrine and duty. Suggesting we need Buddhism for anything clearly says the Bible is insufficient and defective. That premise needs to be soundly rejected.

It is true that some believers stress academic learning and make little application to life. However, the answer to that is getting more practical in the application of Scripture to life. Christians need to begin living the Bible, not seeking something in pagan religions. James talked about being doers of the Word as the practical answer (James 1:22). He did not suggest syncretism or ecumenism. Paul, in Philippians 4:8, urged living out the Christian life in practical ways. He never urged us to another religious system.

While we can agree with McLaren that "We need everyday sacredness,"¹⁰ we would have to question whether following the advice in his book is the way to get there, especially when we already have the Scriptures, which are able to make us wise unto salvation and able to equip us to live godly and instruct us for every good work (2 Timothy 3:15-17). McLaren's answer to everyday sacredness will be to take us into the quicksand of ancient mystical practices, which he labels as "the old religious tradi-

tions."¹¹ He calls it a "new focus,"¹² but it is not really new at all.

The traditions McLaren insists on include "fixed-hour prayer, fasting, Sabbath, the sacred meal, pilgrimage, observance of sacred seasons, and giving."¹³ These may sound somewhat benign, but when he gives the details, troubling issues arise. It is really hard to sanitize some of the heresies and gross immorality of the second to seventh centuries. Christianity early on picked up Greek Gnostic ideas. Objective Church historians have been honest in analyzing these times and documenting that they were not uniform or ideal times. McLaren plays an arbitrary pick-and-choose game.

Church historian Phillip Schaff says the era that followed Constantine (A.D. 325) carried ascetic practices "to the borders of fanaticism and brutish stupefaction."¹⁴ Not only was there the rise of papal supremacy during this age, but Schaff reminds us also that there was "all sorts of superstition and empty display" as well as "superstitious reliance upon a certain magical operation of outward rites" and "an extravagant veneration of martyrs and saints, which borders on idolatry, and often reminds us of the heathen hero-worship not yet uprooted from the general mind."¹⁵ Constantine himself had "confidence in the magic power of the sign of the cross."¹⁶ This is the extraordinary time, according to McLaren, that we should seek.

Another unpleasant issue during this era was the hatred of and persecution of Jews. This is an issue that the ancient and not-so-ancient Church has never come to grips with. Neither does McLaren. The fierce anti-Judaism of the early Catholic period, as well as the Monastic Middle Period, is well-documented.¹⁷ McLaren's selective memory and fantasy portrayal of a spiritually beautiful age gone by is illusionary, escapist, and revisionist. He either does not know Church history or is consciously distorting and dissembling it. Mysticism and monasticism did not protect those

involved from the ravages of immorality and other weaknesses of the flesh.¹⁸

TORTURING SCRIPTURE

Thus we have McLaren urging us back to a period of Church history that he says is the best place to be. His justification is a reference to Jeremiah 6:16 which rips the verse out of context and distorts its meaning. McLaren uses the New International Version, which renders the verse, "Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls." Jesus alludes to this verse in Matthew 11:29 when He says His yoke is easy and in taking up His yoke we would find rest for our souls.

In the New King James Version, "ancient paths" is rendered "old paths." We know in some sense the words can refer prophetically to Jesus and His way. But in the immediate context and in Jeremiah's time, the path referred to all of God's revelation to that point. Jeremiah's thrust is: "they have not heeded my words" (v. 19). To say this passage points to the second to seventh centuries A.D. is folly.

In Jeremiah 18:15, the prophet refers to *God's way* as "ancient paths." This refers to paths from the earliest times: the examples of the patriarchs. They were to look back into their ancient history and look at the examples of their forefathers. Linguists Keil and Delitzsch explain, "Thus the paths of the old time are here the ways in which Israel's godly ancestors have trod; meaning substantially, the patriarchs' manner of thinking and acting."¹⁹ In short, they were to seek biblical paths.

Also in the context of the verse, there is this:

"A national calamity is at hand. As prudent men ye will desire to avoid it. Make enquiries what paths led your ancestors to prosperity. Were they those of idolatry or of true religion and purity?"²⁰

DOCTRINES OF DEMONS

It is frightening to think that moving back to times of asceticism, mysticism, and formalized rituals may in fact be moving us into a very dark and dangerous detour. Applauding and encouraging unbiblical practices is a serious matter. Consider the warnings of the Apostle Paul:

"Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving" (1 Timothy 4:1-4).

McLaren says that his book is designed for character development.²¹ We will examine exactly what he suggests to develop our character and how it stacks up against the Scripture, which we believe is all we need for life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3).

One of the bywords for the emergent church movement is "spiritual formation." It can mean anything from character growth to altered states of consciousness and out of body experiences. It is taken from a phrase in Galatians 4:19. Here Paul says, "My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you." In its proper context, Paul is emphasizing not living in legalistic bondage to the Old Testament law (Galatians 4:20-5:4). It does not mean that every ritual or religious practice is helpful.

The clear context of Galatians has to do with renouncing sin (the fruit of the flesh) and living to develop the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:16-26). The emergent church folk try to make it a lot more mystical and impractical. McLaren says, "we should talk about

spiritual formation as being first and foremost about the experience of God."²² However, it is not even that simple, as he adds, "Perhaps the kind of person you are becoming determines how much of God you can experience — and maybe even which version of God you experience."²³

The Bible is clear that there is only one "version" of the true and living God. His true portrait is all over the Bible. McLaren never does explain what he means by his statement.

McLaren has a talent for making the easy difficult. W.E. Vine simplifies the word "formed" (Greek: *morphoo*) in Galatians 4:19 as he explains that it is "expressing the necessity of a change in character and conduct to correspond with inward spiritual condition, so that there may be moral conformity to Christ."²⁴ As we begin to live biblically, and more in line with who we are in Christ, we experience what it is to have Christ formed in us. Conformity to Christ by godly living is Paul's point in Galatians.

McLaren also presents his ideas regarding fixed-hour prayers. He uses Abraham, who was divinely called and directed by God to go to Canaan, as a justification for fixed-hour prayer and religious pilgrimages. This is an example of McLaren having an idea and then finding a Scripture to try to justify it. McLaren mischaracterizes pilgrimages by trying to make them into some intentional break from the daily routine when it has always carried the idea of a religious work to earn spiritual favor. Schaff tells us that those who made them "thought that by such journeys they made the salvation of their souls more sure."²⁵ He adds that, "Several of the most enlightened church fathers, who approved pilgrimages in themselves, felt it necessary to oppose a superstitious estimate of them, and to remind the people that religion might be practised in any place. Gregory of Nyssa shows that pilgrimages are nowhere enjoined in the Scriptures."²⁶

Schaff also observes:

"Protestantism has divested the visiting of remarkable places,

consecrated by great men or great events, of all meritoriousness and superstitious accessories, and has reduced it to a matter of commendable gratitude and devout curiosity."²⁷

In other words, if we are thinking biblically, we may be extremely grateful for the godly men of the past, but see no merit in visiting their grave sites. We may tour Israel to learn historical and archaeological information and appreciate the Bible more, but we do not gain points with God by going to special places.

WHERE DID HE SAY TO GO?

With McLaren, any old pilgrimage will do. He is so bold as to suggest:

"They interrupt their normal orientations — the familiar sights and sounds of daily life — by seeking the new, *unknown places God will show them*. Whether they're Jews visiting Jerusalem, Muslims on Hajj to Mecca, or Christians going to Bethlehem, Lourdes, Rome, a retreat center, a youth camp, or a conference, the pilgrimage becomes for them a revival, a new birth, a rite of literal passage."²⁸

It is hard to see how a trip to Lourdes to pray to the Virgin Mary can be "a new birth." McLaren asks us to believe that God is showing and directing people to go to Mecca and Lourdes. This thinking borders on Universalism.

While it is true that Jews made pilgrimages to Jerusalem and the temple on special days, that cannot be used as an incentive to deeper spirituality. Jesus quelled the idea of religious pilgrimages being important:

"...the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. ... But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in

spirit and in truth" (John 4:21, 23-24).

In regard to fasting, McLaren makes no attempt to construct a New Testament guide or justification, but appeals to tradition alone. He proposes, "Whether associated with Lent, Ramadan, or Yom Kippur, fasting is an exercise in extraordinary intentionality."²⁹

He uses the connection of Abraham and Melchizedek to suggest that we accept the religious practices of another's "faith."³⁰ This again is a misuse of Scripture and is clearly no justification for ecumenism or syncretism as McLaren implies. Both Abraham and Melchizedek were of the same faith and worshipped God Most High (Genesis 14:18-20). They were not of different religions and beliefs. Melchizedek, in fact, becomes a type of Jesus in the New Testament. These clear facts do not deter McLaren as he states that the meal shared by Abraham and Melchizedek "was a meal of peace and fellowship, bringing together two different people with their different religious traditions."³¹ According to McLaren, this all proves a community of inclusion.

Then McLaren makes another leap as he explains that the prayer of Melchizedek justifies a daily routine of "fixed-hour prayer"³² when he has no idea whether the prayer was formalized and not spontaneous. As far as tithing and resting one day in seven, no one would have a problem with that. However, the suggestion that all the above practices constitute a formulaic and fixed Abrahamic faith is not true at all. Most of these practices are rituals and traditions that piled up over the history of the Christian Church and have no direct relationship to Abraham.

The only straight line we have to Abraham is the example of his belief that justified him (Romans 4:1-5). There is no biblical directive to try to carry through every detail of Abraham's everyday life. His faith in God is the only abiding feature, as Romans 4 shows.

McLaren adds the thought of recognition and observance of the liturgical year.³³ For those unfamiliar with the liturgical year, the *Catholic Almanac* explains:

“The calendar of the Roman Church consists of an arrangement throughout the year of a series of liturgical seasons, commemorations of divine mysteries and commemorations of saints for purposes of worship. ... Recalling thus the mysteries of redemption, the Church opens to the faithful the riches of her Lord’s powers and merits, so that these are in some way made present at all times, and the faithful are enabled to lay hold of them and become filled with saving grace. ... In the various seasons of the year and according to her traditional discipline, the Church completes the formation of the faithful by means of pious practices for soul and body, by instruction, prayer, and works of penance and mercy.”³⁴

What follows in the *Catholic Almanac* is over a dozen pages of mind numbing rituals for almost every day of the year.

I AM IN CHARGE

It becomes clear that McLaren wants to be director in charge of what is called Ancient-Future Faith. His premise is that the Church keeps going off course and has to be called back by strong reformers. That premise is certainly borne out by history. The bigger issue is to what we are called back. McLaren explains his agenda:

“Christians have reached back, drawing from early church traditions; Orthodox, Catholic, Celtic, and monastic. Yet they aren’t simply traditionalists; they are innovators as well. They search for spiritual resources outside their parochial perimeters: Baptists learning from Catholics, Mennonites learning from Greek Orthodox, Pentecostals learning from Copts. ... So now we have

Baptists who practice the stations of the cross ... and Catholics who speak in tongues. ... Pentecostals learn the Jesus prayer ... and Episcopalians sometimes baptize by immersion.”³⁵

So, the answer is a religious buffet. McLaren calls it “open-source spirituality.”³⁶ Perhaps open-source spirituality is a term that says, “have no discernment and surrender your mind to McLaren.” It assumes that almost everything a religion practices is good. The question that McLaren is *not* asking is, “If there is poison on the buffet, who decides what gets put out on the table, and what gets swallowed?” In the end, this is not about constructing the Church and its practices on clear-cut biblical instructions, but rather religious experimentation with many non-biblical rituals and traditions. McLaren would have to be the final arbiter of what is “in” and what is “out.”

McLaren is clearly a man who has not yet found his way. He tells us he was a Plymouth Brethren, a Charismatic, a Calvinist, and admits to still being in transition. More recently he said he “converted to a different way of holding traditions.”³⁷ He says it is a time of “change and transition” for him,³⁸ so he has not really landed yet. He may just be in another holding pattern. He is an unstable and unsteady guide.

WHEN PRAYER ISN’T PRAYER

McLaren sings the praises of the medieval monk Brother Lawrence and his book, *Practicing the Presence of God*. Whatever Lawrence offers, McLaren endorses:

“I began doing it, and it has been one of the most important practices of my spiritual life.”³⁹

McLaren then aligns himself fully with what is called the contemplative prayer movement. Past articles in *The Quarterly Journal* have shown that contemplative prayer is not prayer at all.⁴⁰ McLaren writes that “the taproot of the Christian contemplative tradition goes deep into the writings of the

New Testament.”⁴¹ The contemplative movement does not go “deep into the writings of the New Testament” at all. It grows out of traditions that are not Christian, as McLaren seems to acknowledge when he says that “the contemplative and mystical traditions explore its full inscape, pushing to the frontier of the spiritually erotic and beyond — a daring characteristic that, by the way, the Christian contemplative tradition shares with the Sufi tradition in Islam.”⁴²

Take careful note of several of McLaren’s admissions: it is “tradition,” not really Bible; it is “erotic” or sensual; and it lines up with the Islamic Sufis. McLaren describes contemplative prayer as:

“...prayer that culminates in silent attentiveness to God, a prayer that is about listening and receiving rather than speaking and expressing.”⁴³

Check every word used in the New Testament for prayer and you will see that prayer that isn’t speaking and expressing words to God is *not prayer at all*. Examine the Lord’s Prayer; it is about speaking and not about listening. Introspection and silence are introspection and silence; they are not prayer. Prayer is always to God, it is not to ourselves.

CAN’T WE ALL JUST GET ALONG?

Later on in his book, McLaren offers what is clearly an ecumenical gospel. He says little or nothing about the doctrine of sin and the depravity of man, which is the bad news that makes the good news necessary. His simplistic and naïve view is that God is at work both inside and outside the Church, so by implication this means every church which calls itself Christian. Yes, God is at work everywhere, but this does not mean He blesses or approves of everything going on everywhere.

A reading of the second and third chapters of the book of Revelation shows clearly that for various reasons Jesus might remove the candlestick (a

church's witness, influence, and power) and not really be at work there at all. Nevertheless, McLaren indicates that the answer to the world's ills is simply for all churches within the orbit of Christendom to admit past failures and mistakes and just all work together. He does not insist they change past unbiblical practices. He provides handy grids and diagrams to show how the love and togetherness can all happen. He is so bold to say this is God's plan and purpose:

"Trying to stop people from learning, sharing, and loving is a losing game because it means working against God and the plotline of God's universe."⁴⁴

THE PLAN AND PROGRAM

The final third of his book is a primer on how to practice the ancient way with the use of Latin and Greek terms. It is ironic for a group of teachers in the emergent church movement to claim they are relevant, culturally in touch and current, and yet want to take everyone back to the Dark Ages and traditional Catholicism. They are the ones out of touch and stuck in the past.

McLaren's premise is that we are "moving forward by looking back."⁴⁵ But suppose one is looking back on all the wrong things and imitating the errors of the past. No one can drive while constantly looking in the rear-view mirror without eventually having an accident. Paul indicated that his past legalistic background was refuse and waste (Philippians 3:1-8). Looking back for him was unfavorable and unnecessary. McLaren locks us into a faulty premise and then tells us we should look back to the things he will tell us to look back upon. These will be questionable practices with funny names in foreign languages. McLaren says he will deliver us to the early centuries as the Church moved away from Scripture and into tradition. He wants to go back "before the Reformation, back before the Great Schism," where "we find that what became the Western church and

what became the Eastern church shared a common ancient treasure — a description of the Christian life as a life on the way."⁴⁶

Yes, it was an era that some historians would call "a life on the way down."

McLaren introduces his readers to "The *Via Purgativa* or *Katharsis* ... The *Via Illuminativa* or *Fotosis* ... [and] The *Via Unitiva* or *Theosis*."⁴⁷ The first has to do with self-examination, the second with enlightenment, but the third, *via unitiva* or *theosis*, is the most troubling.

McLaren explains *via purgativa* or *katharsis* as:

"... a 'vulnerability group,' where the members tried to admit to themselves and others how much power pride, greed, and lust have on them. They might be aided in this process through journaling, where they took time each day to write down anecdotes where the big three showed up in their thoughts, words, or behavior. Or they might take on special challenges — fastings, if you will — where they deprived themselves of things that reinforced the darkness in their souls by fortifying pride, greed, or lust."⁴⁸

He also suggests that we could "practice fasting from various pleasures, as one might do during Lent."⁴⁹

Though McLaren in the *katharsis* chapter says, "God forgives,"⁵⁰ he is unclear if this forgiveness is automatic as a result of doing the *katharsis*. He says nothing about confession of sin to God (Psalm 51). Having a group to pray for us, assist us, support us, and counsel us can be a fine idea, assuming that the group is Christian and the advice is biblical counsel. McLaren says nothing about the composition of the group. Psalm 1 mandates we are not to walk in the counsel of the ungodly. Where one receives advice and support is very important.

The *via illuminativa* or *fotosis* is, according to McLaren, "seeing every-

thing in the light of God."⁵¹ He also says it is about "letting the light of God into our souls."⁵² Absent is any instruction about Jesus being the Light of the world, but he says we can get the illumination through the Bible (so far so good), but also through "other spiritual literature."⁵³ Herein McLaren moves into the bizarre. "We want," he writes, "to smell it in the coffee or home-baked cookies" or welcome it "sitting on a plane or train" or even from "books, lectures, podcasts, and websites"⁵⁴ It is repugnant to think that these things can be placed on the same level as the Bible. McLaren continues as it can also come from "movies" or even the "taste of food."⁵⁵ Whatever this is, it makes you happy as "This is the delight of the *via illuminativa*. Practitioners of *fotosis* are often supremely happy people."⁵⁶

This, of course, does not rule out dark times or depression, according to McLaren. These negative experiences only help us to appreciate the light.⁵⁷ The practice of *fotosis* may include prayers at fixed times and even chanting,⁵⁸ but it is really all just preparation for the really big experience of *theosis*.⁵⁹

BE LIKE GOD?

To learn *theosis*, McLaren has us imagine we enter a monastery to be instructed by a nun. She shows us what she wishes to teach us by pulling a poker from a fire. The end of "the rod has begun to glow."⁶⁰ His point is that when the poker is left in the fire long enough, the fire is in the poker. The poker shares in or partakes of "the nature of fire until it becomes light and heat itself."⁶¹ In essence the two become one and the poker *becomes* fire. McLaren teaches that through certain procedures there will be "the union of our nature with the nature of God. As we place ourselves in the light and fire of God through the practices of *fotosis* or illumination, we are overpowered by the nature of God, and we begin to glow with God's radiance. We join God in being fire."⁶²

The language and illustration McLaren uses can only be understood

as us becoming what God is or literally becoming God. But McLaren seems to drive further this concept with his words, "the union of our nature with the nature of God." And he states it another way:

"Then we come to unification of our being with God, so that we are taken into God and God fills us. ... we become thoroughly infected with a 'strong case of God.'"63

If our being and nature are unified with God, it can only mean we somehow have been fused into the Godhead. This is extremely dangerous language.

McLaren pushes on, saying, "if we stay close enough to God for long enough, close enough to breathe God's breath, so to speak, then we will *catch* a case of God. The symptoms of what God has ... love, joy, peace, patience, justice, purity, strength, vitality ... will be transferred to us, and we will be infected. Theosis, in this sense, means being infected with God."64

One need only a cursory study of the lives of the medieval mystics to see that the delusion of theosis led many of them into altered states of consciousness and deep confusion. Some were driven into occultism and near insanity. Delusions of demons and hallucinations of the other world were common. Some of the women were clearly anorexic. They were creatures to be pitied. Some maimed and scarred themselves with self-imposed stigmata.⁶⁵ Some of the passion mystics, such as Anne Emmerich, tortured themselves relentlessly.⁶⁶ McLaren even admits:

"Saint Francis may have been a strange person in need of strong medication and pretty hard to live with. But I'd rather not know that, frankly."⁶⁷

If he was strange, hard to live with, and in need of medication, then a Christian would not want to emulate him. There certainly are better models to choose from, most notably Jesus (1 Peter 2:21). McLaren also instructs

that, in effect, the world is in a mess because we have not been good "CEOs of planet earth."⁶⁸ We are to accept that we and the planet upon which we live are perfectible if we will just get on board with his instructions for theosis. He suggests that genocide, refugees, poverty, hunger, slavery, and so forth could be eliminated if we would merely adopt theosis. He says, "we have withdrawn ourselves from the fire and lost the glow of glory."⁶⁹

EVE ALL OVER AGAIN

The deception with which Satan beguiled Eve was that of theosis. He promised Eve if she did it his way she "would be like God" (Genesis 3:5). He was not just promising that she would be *something like* God, because she already was created in God's image and likeness, sharing His communicable attributes. Satan suggested much more. Eve could be just like God *is* or at least have God's position. Remember Satan originally lusted after this and wanted to be "like the Most High" (Isaiah 14:13-14). Eve could be what God was by nature, or so she thought. In Genesis 3:22, the serpent also suggested that she would have immortality like God. She, in effect, would be a mini-God. Eve took the bait and bit hard. Commentators have recognized the force and direction of Satan's temptation. They realize Satan was saying, "He does not wish you to be like Himself."⁷⁰ Eve desired more than just fellowship with God, for the "illusory hope of being like God excited a longing for the forbidden fruit."⁷¹

Mysticism usually sways to pantheism, which obliterates the distinction between the creature and Creator. Pure pantheism makes the creation — and all that is in it — God. It makes God into a force that pervades every atom and molecule, making Him distant and impersonal. McLaren may insist that in theosis individuality is not lost because he knows there will be reactions to the idea of the union of our nature and being with God's, but it sounds rather hollow. Surely this is a quasi-pantheism and close to

what is known as pantheism. Nearly a century ago, Henry Sheldon, in his analysis of medieval mysticism, observed that the mystics have a habit of:

"... depicting union with God in essentially pantheistic terms. Whatever may have been the meaning put into the terms, there can be no denial that the terms employed were supremely adapted to suggest a pantheistic dissipation of the distinctions between God and man. ... its ill-chosen terms were more or less of an index of defective thinking. ... it stands in glaring contradiction with the consciousness of creaturely dependence and limitation which must be an abiding constituent of normal piety. ... we are obliged to infer that radical mysticism is exposed to temptation in the direction of pantheism. Once more, we find occasion to charge against mysticism, as it stands before us in history, a rather conspicuous tendency to schematize religious experience overmuch; in other words, to prescribe a fixed succession of stages for reaching the goal of perfect union with God."⁷²

Theosis is also referred to as deification and at other times as fusion or mystical merging. It is a strong delusion. It was taught in ancient Mithraism and continues to be taught in Buddhism. The idea of deification (being absorbed into God) slipped into the medieval Church via Neoplatonism. While it is true that the Greek Orthodox or Eastern Church taught theosis, it placed qualifiers around it. For the most part it was viewed as eschatological, that is, something that happened in future resurrection. In the resurrection we would be more like Jesus than we ever had been. In the resurrection we would have a fullness of glory like never before. However, it did not teach we would become like God in being, nature, and essence. The creature will always be ontologically different and separate from God.

Advocates of theosis, like McLaren, cannot appeal to 2 Peter 1:4 where it is said that we “may be partakers of the divine nature,” because this applies to *all* believers, not just a few who have reached theosis. The verse simply means “The believer shares in the life of God by means of Christ and the Spirit living in him.”⁷³

W. Stanford Reid offers some helpful insights showing the difference between the metaphysics of deification, or theosis, and biblical Christianity:

“The biblical point of view is radically different, since it takes seriously two fundamental facts: creation and fall. Man is the creature of God, which means that while made in God’s image, he is never eternal, autonomous nor self-sufficient as is God (John 5:26; Acts 7:25; Rom. 9:19; 11:33-34), but is mortal, spacially and temporally conditioned and dependent (Gen. 1:26-27; Job 33:4; Ps. 8:5; Isa. 64:8). There is thus a qualitative metaphysical difference between God and man. At the same time there is also an ethical separation, for although made in God’s own image, man by attempting to elevate himself to equality with God broke with him ethically by disobeying him (Gen. 3:5; Eccl. 7:29; Rom. 5:12). Thus man is now not only different, but also in conflict with God. The only unity, therefore, which man may have with God is through God’s action in reconciling man to himself through Christ. ... The elect from all eternity are by the divine will united with Christ in whom they died on Calvary (John 6:32-58; Gal. 2:20), and by whom they now live through the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit (John 15:1 ff.; 16:7-15; 16:21-23; Rom. 8:5-17; Col. 1:27). This becomes concrete in the symbolism of the Lord’s Supper (Matt. 26:26-28; 1 Cor. 11:23-26; Gal. 2:20). In principle, therefore, during this life they are united to God in

Christ so that ethically they strive to be one with him, but metaphysically they still remain creatures who even in eternity will never become divine.”⁷⁴

THE REAL BOTTOM LINE

In McLaren’s angry polemic against fundamentalism, he is not even honest enough to acknowledge what is known as historic, scholarly, Christian fundamentalism. There has been a vigorous fundamentalist scholarship since 1909, which has roots in the Reformation. Between 1909 and 1915, Lyman and Milton Stewart, the founders of The Bible Institute of Los Angeles (now Biola University) funded a 12-volume set of books called *The Fundamentals*. These books contained the finest Christian scholarship of the day on many biblical topics.

Gerhard Maier expresses his frustration with a willful ignorance of *The Fundamentals* and conservative theologians such as G. Campbell Morgan, H.C.G. Moule, James Orr, A.T. Pierson, R.A. Torrey, B.B. Warfield, James I. Packer, and others. Maier cites Gordon J. Wenham who writes:

“I suspect that if either you [a student] or your lecturers discover during your study that you are a Sabellian montanist or semipelagian gnostic, it will not cause over-much excitement. Such deviants are commonplace today and in this pluralistic society are usually accepted without much fuss. However should you be diagnosed as a fundamentalist your fate may be very different. In the modern theology faculty fundamentalism is the great heresy. It is regarded as nearly as dangerous as the HIV virus and is treated with similar fervour but with rather less tact and sympathy. Fundamentalists will find themselves denounced in lectures and tutorials.”⁷⁵

McLaren offers us many systems and traditions — the good, the bad, and the ugly. He offers everything but Bible doctrine. He offers us Latin

words; but no system cobbled together from tradition is going to be sound by scriptural standards. Almost every verse in Scripture regarding tradition is a condemnation (Matthew 15:6-9, Mark 7:6-10, Colossians 2:8).

It is impossible to know the real motives of another person unless they are clearly articulated. One cannot help but wonder what McLaren’s ultimate goal is. It does not seem that he wants us to bow the knee to the Pope, but just maybe smile in his direction to let him know we are all brothers. What is clear is that McLaren is asking for the reversal of the Reformation. It is clear that he believes *his* plan is “the plotline of God’s universe.” He seems awfully interested in orchestrating the spiritual lives of his readers, unless they want to be biblically based. This seems to be more about control than guidance, and more about steering than shepherding.

Whatever this is about, it is *not really about finding our way* at all, but getting lost in a maze of mysticism, rituals, and traditions. It is a detour that did not work in the Middle Ages and will not work today. Although he may pretend he does, McLaren does not know more than the Reformers knew, or more than the scholarly fundamentalists knew. Someone who has not found his way out of the Dark Ages has nothing to teach us.

Endnotes:

1. Brian McLaren, *Finding Our Way Again*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2008, pg. 148.
2. *Ibid.*, pg. 215.
3. *Ibid.*, pg. vii.
4. See further, Gary E. Gilley, “The Lure of Mysticism - A Path to Spiritual Growth or Road to Deception?,” *The Quarterly Journal*, October-December 2005, pp. 1, 13-23.
5. See further, G. Richard Fisher, “Shopping with Tony Campolo at His Religious Supermarket - A Marketplace of Ideas for Everyone,” *The Quarterly Journal*, April-June 2008, pp. 4-14.
6. *Finding Our Way Again*, op. cit., pg. 205.
7. *Ibid.*, pg. 123, ellipsis in original.
8. *Ibid.*, pg. 2.
9. *Ibid.*, pg. 3.
10. *Ibid.*, pg. 5.
11. *Ibid.*, pg. 6.

12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.
14. Phillip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1910, Vol. III, pg. 5.
15. Ibid., pg. 8.
16. Ibid., pg. 15.
17. See further, Barry Horner, *Future Israel*. Nashville: B&H Academic, no date, and Ronald E. Diprose, *Israel and the Church*. Waynesboro, Ga.: Authentic Media, 2004.
18. See further, Derwas Chitty, *The Desert a City*. Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1999.
19. C.F. Keil and Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1984, Vol. VIII, pg. 142.
20. J.R. Dummelow, Editor, *A Commentary on the Holy Bible*. New York: MacMillan Company, 1958, pg. 462.
21. *Finding Our Way Again*, op. cit., pg. 14.
22. Ibid., pg. 18.
23. Ibid.
24. W.E. Vine, *The Expanded Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*. Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1984, pp. 454-455.
25. *History of the Christian Church*, op. cit., Vol. III, pg. 467.
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid., pp. 468-469.
28. *Finding Our Way Again*, op. cit., pg. 24, emphasis added.
29. Ibid., pg. 25.
30. Ibid.
31. Ibid., pg. 26.
32. Ibid.
33. Ibid., pg. 28.
34. Matthew Bunson, Editor, *2004 Our Sunday Visitor's Catholic Almanac*. Huntington, Ind.: Our Sunday Visitor, 2003, pg. 157.
35. *Finding Our Way Again*, op. cit., pp. 54, 57.
36. Ibid., pg. 61.
37. Ibid., pg. 58.
38. Ibid.
39. Ibid., pg. 63.
40. See further, G. Richard Fisher, "What a Marriage! - Why Did Evangelicalism Marry Catholicism's Stepchild?," *The Quarterly Journal*, April-June 2005, pp. 1, 13-19; and Gary E. Gilley and Brian E. Gilley, "The New Mystic Youth: No Longer Just Pulp Fiction - Sorting Out the Mystical from the Biblical in Today's Youth Ministry," *The Quarterly Journal*, October-December 2007, pp. 4, 8-11.
41. *Finding Our Way Again*, op. cit., pg. 92.
42. Ibid.
43. Ibid., pg. 95.
44. Ibid., pp. 139-140.
45. Ibid., pg. 146.
46. Ibid.
47. Ibid., pg. 147, italics in original.
48. Ibid., pp. 154-155.
49. Ibid., pg. 156.
50. Ibid., pg. 155.
51. Ibid., pg. 160.
52. Ibid., pg. 161.
53. Ibid.
54. Ibid., pg. 162.
55. Ibid.
56. Ibid., pg. 163.
57. Ibid., pg. 164.
58. Ibid., pg. 166.
59. Ibid., pg. 167.
60. Ibid., pg. 170.
61. Ibid., pg. 171.
62. Ibid., pp. 171-172.
63. Ibid., pp. 147-148.
64. Ibid., pg. 174, italic and ellipsis in original.
65. See further, G. Richard Fisher, "Their Blood Cries Out? - The History and Histrionics of Stigmata," *The Quarterly Journal*, April-June 2005, pp. 4-12.
66. See further, G. Richard Fisher, "Mel Takes Anne to Hollywood - The Rediscovery of Anne Catherine Emmerich," *The Quarterly Journal*, July-September 2004, pp. 4, 7-14.
67. *Finding Our Way Again*, op. cit., pg. 191.
68. Ibid., pg. 175.
69. Ibid., pg. 176.
70. *Commentary on the Old Testament*, op. cit., Vol. I, pg. 95.
71. Ibid.
72. Henry C. Sheldon, *Pantheistic Dilemmas*. New York: The Methodist Book Concern, 1920, pp. 262-263, 264-265.
73. Charles Ryrie, *The Ryrie Study Bible*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1976, pg. 1873.
74. W. Stanford Reid in Everett F. Harrison, Editor, *Baker's Dictionary of Theology*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1973, pg. 537.
75. Gordon Wenham cited in Gerhard Maier, *Biblical Hermeneutics*. Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 1994, pg. 361.

BREAKING FREE

(continued from page 1)

"The purpose of hermeneutics is to establish guidelines and rules for interpretation. It is a well developed science that can become technical and complex. Any written document is subject to misinterpretation and thus we have developed rules to safeguard us from such misunderstanding."³

Truth be told, everyone is using a hermeneutic of some sort. Even cults have a hermeneutic that might include Scripture twisting, special revelations, and secret truths. Often the cultist makes the text mean whatever he or she wants. It could just as easily be called Scripture torturing.

FAULTY INTERPRETERS GO WAY BACK

Sometimes the reader imposes meanings on the text that never were intended. Origen (c. 185-254) had a propensity for ignoring the literal meaning of words and allegorizing the text through which he created all kinds of bizarre and fanciful meanings. At other times, Origen so spiritualized the text that it had virtually the opposite meaning from its intent.

The Apostle Peter warned us about subjective and haphazard hermeneutics. Peter acknowledged that some parts of Scripture — specifically Paul's writings — are hard to understand and that "untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of

the Scripture" (2 Peter 3:16). Gross error often starts not with a leap, but with a leaning. If an airline pilot left New York and was only one degree off in his heading for Los Angeles, by the time he reached the West Coast, he and his passengers would be many miles from their anticipated destination. Likewise, we should not read any book and then assign definitions that the author never intended to the words in the book. Such practices would make it unintelligible.

The need for hermeneutics to probe first-century culture is made clear by Ann Spangler and Lois Tverberg. They write:

"...the Jesus we meet in the Gospels is not always easy to understand. Partially, this is because we perceive his words at

the distance of many centuries, from an entirely different culture, and in a different language. ... Now consider the challenge of communicating across centuries and religious traditions as well as languages and cultures. No wonder we sometimes find it hard to grasp what Jesus is trying to tell us in the Gospels."⁴

It is possible to look at the way in which Jesus and the apostles handled Scripture and the interpretation in historical orthodoxy to see how Scripture should be handled. Good commentaries show us that pattern as well. Studies such as that of Gerhard Maier's *Biblical Hermeneutics* are extremely helpful. Another is *Living by the Book* by Howard Hendricks.⁵ Research into the history of hermeneutics, such as Bernard Ramm's *Protestant Biblical Interpretation, A Textbook of Hermeneutics for Conservative Protestants*, is also helpful.

Throughout Church history the Bible was revered. This led to a sober handling of the text in a way that was responsible and built on certain principles, such as the paradigm that the New Testament translates the Old. It also was recognized that revelation in Scripture is progressive, as Hebrews 1:1-4 establishes. God spoke in various ways in the Old Testament, but now in Christ has given us a full, final, and superior revelation.

Other important recognitions were that sentences have a primary propositional meaning and that the human authors have to be considered in their historical context. We cannot impose 21st century Western definitions on an ancient Semitic culture. This is true even with English Bible translations. Consider the King James rendering of James 5:11 where it is stated "that the Lord is very pitiful." Today one would not think of calling God "pitiful," for to do so would define Him as sad, pathetic, and wretched. But in their time, the KJV translators were expressing the thought that the Lord is full of pity or "is very compassionate" as currently rendered in the New King James Version. Even more mod-

ern illustrations are the words "cool" and "bad," which for a time came to mean "savvy" or "very good" or "excellent." Word meanings can change in just one generation or less, so we must know the word meanings of the generation we are studying. Expository dictionaries of New Testament words such as those by H.E. Vine or Gerhard Kittel are extremely helpful.

Geoffrey Grogan tells how responsible exegetes view and handle Scripture:

"Grammatico-historical interpretations must always be the first stage. The historical circumstances of writer and first readers, and the straightforward grammatical sense of the literature must be considered. Technical and nontechnical word usage, the use of analogy and symbolism, the way the book's message is conveyed (by narrative, visions, meditation, or dialog, for example), the literary genre, the place of the book within the literary output of the human author, the organization of particular passages within a book as a whole — these and many other matters occupy the exegete and are featured in exegetical commentaries. The Antiochenes and later the Reformers contended for the importance of such painstaking work. The purpose is to ascertain, as far as is possible, the meaning of the text for its original readers. In this way, the modern interpreter seeks to hear and feel the power of the Word of God from within its original setting."⁶

The Apostle Paul urged pastors and teachers to be "rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15). This surely suggests some kind of proper handling and sound interpretation of Scripture. Charles Ryrie comments that "*handling accurately*. I.e., correctly handling the Word of God, in both analysis and presentation — in contrast to the inane interpretations of false teachers."⁷

IS MOORE MORE OR LESS?

This brings us to Beth Moore and the manner in which she handles Scripture. By her own admission, she employs hyperbole and overstatement. And in some cases she ignores the historical, generational, and cultural setting, as well as the immediate context of the Bible. She makes up stories and meanings that are completely foreign to the text. Moreover, at times, she creates scenarios that are pure fiction, injecting fabricated information into the text. None of us would want someone saying that we said something we didn't say. Moore's fast and loose handling of Scripture often has God saying things that He didn't.

Moore, who heads up Living Proof Ministries in Houston, Texas, has no formal Bible training. On her ministry's website we are told:

"A love for the Word of God was embedded in Beth's life when she took a Bible doctrine class at her church. Her teacher was Buddy Walters, a former college football player who taught the Scriptures with tears streaming down his cheeks. She fervently prayed for such a passion for God's Word."⁸

Others, too, have expressed concern about Moore's teachings and her interpretation of the Scriptures:

"Beth Moore is a very popular woman speaker. Yet, there are some in evangelical churches who are concerned about her improper use of God's Word. In her book titled *Breaking Free* she teaches that Satan has 'strongholds' in a believer's life, and she calls that 'generational bondage' (Chapter 13). She teaches that we should retrace our family lineage to be set free in the present. Basically, she teaches that sins are passed on from one generation to another and we need to break that bondage. She also does quite a bit of allegorizing and spiritualizing. She doesn't seem to interpret the scriptures

using the literal, grammatical, historical method. Her writings and conferences sometimes reveal a bent toward mysticism and a psychological approach to sin issues.⁹

There is a huge difference if, on the one hand, we think our past determines us rather than only influences us. If our past determines us, then we are in bondage. If it only influences us, then by God's grace we can resist those influences and be transformed.

THE RELUCTANT COUNSELOR

One confusing issue that Moore repeats in her many resources is her resistance to being identified as a "counselor." In *Praying God's Word*, she writes, "I'm certainly no counselor, but I've lived enough of life to know that anything hurtful we do not deal with will sooner or later deal with us!"¹⁰ Elsewhere, when discussing the subject of depression, she writes, "I am neither a doctor nor a professional counselor."¹¹

Yet, despite her desire to avoid being called a counselor, that is exactly the role she has assigned herself. And the tragedy for her audience is that her counsel often lacks sound biblical instruction. Take, for example, her description of a friend who battled the "stronghold" of rejection:

"Both she and her husband were active members of a church in another city. They had been married twenty-five years when she learned that he was having an affair. He had no history of unfaithfulness but had allowed Satan to twist a friendship into an illicit relationship. To make matters worse, the husband confessed with tears that he was in love with the other woman. My friend was devastated — not for days or weeks but for months. Her husband agreed not to file for divorce, but he would not agree to cease all contact with the other woman."¹²

Moore says her friend stayed the course through the pain, suffering,

and rejection and "Over the course of the next four years, this man saw such inner strength and spiritual beauty overtake his wife that he fell in love with her all over again."¹³ While Moore provides her readers a happy ending to the story, she does so without providing biblical direction and application in several key areas — along with a godly conclusion.

First, the work of the couple's church is nowhere to be found in the story. Now perhaps the couple's church did follow the directive of Matthew 18:18 and it was Moore, in her retelling of the events, who omitted these details and action. But, if so, Moore then excluded some vital information. This man was certainly overtaken in a trespass and Galatians 6:1 needed to be implemented. From all her claims of "breaking free" from what she labels "spiritual strongholds," Moore has missed essential scriptural instruction of how to deal with blatant, continuing sin. Sin, in the extreme, which has not been challenged or biblically dealt with, is nothing short of a cancer to the local church body. It is an invitation for others to imitate (1 Corinthians 5:6). Therefore, any fellowship of believers placing themselves under the authority of God's Word must resolve to follow the commands of Scripture in applying and implementing church discipline toward an effort to bring healing and health.

Much biblical prescript is also missing from Moore's conclusion to the story. Moore writes that the husband's return to his wife resulted from falling back in love with her. So perhaps, after his four-year affair, this man came to recognize that sexual sin does not satisfy (John 4:17-18). And what Moore fails to specify is crucial: a confessing of his sin to God and to the appropriate people and a seeking of forgiveness on all accounts. If repentance is absent from the reconciliation process, this couple will never have the God-honoring marriage intended and the opportunity for further misfortune in the union will always be looming.

Elsewhere, Moore describes the testimony from another friend. This one is from a believer who, in rebellion against God and her parents, married an unbeliever. Moore writes, "I don't think I could overestimate the high cost of her decision. The marriage has lasted nearly twenty *hard* years."¹⁴ Moore's remarks, which then follow, offer readers confusing advice:

"My friend has never sensed the release to divorce her husband. She does not have biblical grounds and, although she knows God would have mercy on her and certainly forgive her, she is committed to doing the *hard thing*. She is in no physical danger, and she simply feels she lacks grounds for severance."¹⁵

What Moore offers is confusing and imprecise language. While she is correct in stating that her friend "does not have biblical grounds" for a divorce, this specific becomes clouded in subjectivism: sensing a release and feelings. We must never forget that feelings are cursed and tainted by sin. We must never forget that it is the old self, which is to be put off, that is feeling-oriented. The new self, which is to be put on, is Scripture-oriented.

Likewise confusing is Moore's proposal that "she knows God would have mercy on her and certainly forgive her." Such an unbiblical suggestion is one that should never have even been implied. Moore is on target when she writes, "According to Ephesians 5:22-32, God instituted marriage between one man and one woman to be the closest earthly representation of a much greater reality: Christ and the Church. ... [Satan] is seeking relentlessly to undermine and counterfeit the relationship that God ordained for the purpose of revealing a 'type' of Christ and His Bride."¹⁶ For this reason alone Moore should be ready to provide clear biblical counsel. As most biblical counselors know, they probably do more marriage counseling than anything else.

In another area of her book, Moore unfolds yet one more instance of

where she employs poor counseling skills:

"I had an appointment to meet with a woman from out of town who was also in ministry and had a background of childhood abuse. I believe with all my heart the Holy Spirit warned that I was ill-equipped to counsel this precious woman, but out of respect to the person who asked me to do him the favor, I foolishly agreed. While she was describing the graphic details of her abuse, I began to break out into a drenching sweat and ceased hearing anything she was saying. Somehow her descriptions triggered an excruciating string of memories of my own as if someone had thrown in a videotape recording every horrid detail of my childhood. Good things also happened in my childhood, but I assure you they weren't recorded on the 'tape.' As soon as I could excuse myself, I made my way to the car. I was so physically ill, I had to rest my head on the steering wheel until the terrible wave of nausea and trembling subsided enough to drive. My mind was spinning. This was only the beginning."¹⁷

After reading this, there is no wondering why Moore would want to avoid being labeled a "counselor." And with such a testimony, there is little doubt that her following would never want to counsel a fellow believer. Yet, Scripture repeatedly calls believers to do just that. Counseling — in the form of admonishing, instructing, and warning one another — is to be the norm for all the Church (Romans 15:14, Galatians 6:1, Colossians 1:28, 3:16, and 1 Thessalonians 5:14) — not just pastors, elders, and the spiritual elite. A biblical counselor is merely a person controlled by the Holy Spirit and concerned about the lives of fellow believers. He or she must be a gentle, humble, and responsible person who is willing to offer the hope and solace found in Scripture when another's burden becomes too much for him to bear.

Moore would meet those requirements. Thus we — Moore included — should never fear counseling because the Word is sufficient and effective. However, as has been shown in our previous critiques, Moore often fails in her counseling efforts because her energy is misplaced and she focuses on only the putting off.¹⁸ Biblical counselors deal with sin and then deal with the biblical response to the sin. It is not as difficult or frightening as Moore makes it appear.

CUNNINGLY DEvised FABLES

Moore's flawed system — if it can be called a system — of biblical interpretation consists of three basic things:

1. Her claim that "God spoke to me" or "God told me."
2. Her imparting into Scripture what is not there.
3. Her developing and unfolding an interpretation and/or application.

Of course, point one seals the deal for points two and three. After all, one cannot argue with God. While anyone can say, "God told me," such claims are in fact more one-upmanship and elitism than real fact. Moore describes one of her divine encounters:

"Never in all my life had I entered the Holy of Holies with God in such a powerful and sustained way. For months I met with Him from the time my children went to school until they walked back through the door. I didn't answer the phone. I didn't go to lunch. I met with God day in and day out. He revealed treasures to me that I could never have articulated in words in a mere ten-week study. At times I literally moved to the floor to record His revelations because I was overwhelmed by His Holy Presence."¹⁹

It's hard to know whether Moore really believes she has a pipeline to God, or that this is more of her hyperbole. The evidence certainly seems to validate the former. Survey-

ing even a sampling of her many resources, one is consistently bombarded with her claims, such as the one above, that God has spoken to her. Such a tactic is common practice of hyper-Charismatics who are always coming up with new sensationalistic ideas that they say have come from God. It is stock in trade for the televangelists. This ploy continues to infect an already undiscerning Church through modern day mystics such as Henry Blackaby, John Eldredge, and others.

In considering the second and third principles, one can see them in action as Moore magnifies the story in Mark 9:14-30. Moore takes the basics of the account and then fabricates what is going on by adding details that are neither present nor implied. The account in Mark (cross-referenced in Matthew 17:14-21) is straightforward. The apostles had no success in delivering a demon-possessed boy from his affliction. This resulted in a debate between the apostles, a large crowd, and some scribes. The question is asked by Jesus, "What are you discussing with them?" (v. 16) They tell Jesus how His followers were unsuccessful in delivering the boy. The apostles' lack of success was the big topic. The text is quite clear on that. The apostles are being assailed for their lack of ability because, after all, they were following one who claimed to be a miracle worker. Jesus rebukes this "faithless generation" (v. 19) and the father of the boy confesses his own "unbelief" (v. 24). In Matthew's Gospel the rebuke extends to a "faithless and perverse generation" (Matthew 17:17).

Later and in private, the apostles ask Jesus, "Why could we not cast it out?" (Mark 9:28) Jesus' response is clear: The apostles were trying to do this on their own without any spiritual preparation through prayer. This incident with the child with a demon occurred as Jesus was on His way down from the Mount of Transfiguration. And while there is some debate as to a textual variant of verse 29 (regarding fasting), all agree that Jesus' followers had not prayed or

made prayer part of their approach. And Jesus chided them for their lack of any kind of spiritual preparation. It all sounds — and is — simple enough until one hears Moore pontificate and provide fabricated information and details which she inserts into the text.

In a flight of fancy, Moore offers:

“Why couldn’t they do it? Why couldn’t they do it? What had happened right then? I want to suggest a couple of things before we close. For one thing, this happened right when Jesus was on the mountain with the other, with the three, and the nine were left down. Oh see, we get that self thing going. I mean it begins to rock our boat when we think, ‘Am I not chosen? Am I not as good as them? I can’t believe if I’m not as good, He didn’t take me up the mountain.’ So we got all that failure of faith right there. Can you just see it? Isn’t that us? We lose our confidence. He didn’t call me to do that. He didn’t call me. So do you see what’s happening already? And then look, when Christ comes and He says, ‘What are you arguing with them about?’ Do you know what they were doing? They had argued with those Pharisees and those teachers of the law until they had purely talked them out of their faith. Listen to me carefully. Do not argue with a Pharisee.”²⁰

All the above that is italicized is fiction. Moore has added to the Word of God, injected what is not there, and made the details up as she goes along. First of all, *no* Pharisees are specifically mentioned in the text — only scribes (or teachers of the law). And Scripture does not identify these scribes as Pharisees or by their religious party. Added to that, there is no failure of faith addressed to the apostles, but only the “faithless generation.” The clear failure in the text was the apostles’ failure to pray. Additionally, the disciples were not talked out of their faith at all. And there is not a hint in the biblical texts that there was contention between the nine apostles who did not accompany

Christ up the mountain and the three who did. Very little Moore says about this account is right.

Additionally, Moore misses the point. The scribes were not trying to talk the apostles out of their faith, but rather seeking to undermine the authority of Jesus. Bible expositor J.R. Dummelow remarks that, “The scribes had taken advantage of Christ’s absence to undermine His influence with the multitude, and their designs had been assisted by the failure of His disciples to heal a peculiarly severe case of epilepsy (Mk). The return of Jesus discomfited the scribes.”²¹

Moreover, it was the Pharisees who added things to Scripture. This is what Moore is doing by her fanciful additions. This helps us see where her kind of interpretation could lead us.

While some may paint this as nit-picking, Moore repeatedly has demonstrated a propensity for taking liberty with and distorting texts. We must not dismiss James’ warning that teachers of the Word will receive stricter judgment. A Sunday school teacher and even a pastor may make an occasional mistake, but Moore — despite her own contrived humility — is advertised as a world-renowned expert in the Bible and venerated by her thousands of adoring fans who look to her as having the last word on biblical matters. Additionally, we must not dismiss her oft-repeated claim that God is personally giving her the teaching.

PFO is not saying Moore does not teach *anything* that is right, only that she must be read and listened to discerningly. Many of her egregious errors have been pointed out in other articles by PFO.²²

A CHARISMATIC BY ANY OTHER NAME...

Moore’s background is Southern Baptist and while she makes no claim to being a Charismatic, she has referred humorously to herself as a “Baptical.” It is troubling at times to hear both allusion and direct pro-

nouncement of the extremist Charismatic position called positive confession or Word Faith (sometimes labeled “name it and claim it”) come from Moore. This view proposes that our spoken words have the power to alter or even create reality. It is unreality at its worst. It is the basis for such erroneous books as *The Secret*.²³ One author informs us:

“Those promulgating positive confession theology teach that believers can bring into existence what they state with their tongue, since faith is a confession and the tongue is a force. Many contemporary televangelists push this doctrine as a key to health, wealth, and happiness. The origin of positive confession teaching, or faith-formula theology as some call it, can be traced to the life and teachings of E.W. Kenyon, a controversial evangelist, pastor, and author.”²⁴

Certainly words can influence, but they cannot determine, and neither can they create, because God is the only Creator.

Moore probably would object to being linked with the positive confession camp, but her language indicates she has at least adopted its clichés. She has associations with acknowledged Charismatics such as James Robison, and was the “cover girl” for *Charisma* magazine in July 2003. Additionally, the continual production of new resources appear to be the result of the demand upon Moore by both her publishers and followers, possibly resulting in haste, imprecision, and lack of thought about what is being said. Or perhaps both she and her publishers want to be accepted by a wider audience, thereby using the necessary jargon.

Examples of the Word Faith and positive confession influence in Moore’s teachings include:

“Look carefully at what that verse is saying. He said, ‘And you can say to the mountain.’ For some reason, ordained by God alone, He tells us that when we

want something to move, we are to tell it to. That we are to open our mouths and say to the mountain, 'Move it! You are in my way!'"²⁵

And then her premise on renouncing sin is that "we've got to learn to renounce it. We've got to learn to renounce it. And renounce it involves speaking. Speaking it."²⁶ In truth, many have renounced sin with internal resolve or quiet prayer and confession. Renouncing does not always involve speaking, for if it did, it would exclude someone who is mute. Many parents know the experience of renouncing something in their child's behavior with just a stern look. David renounced sin in his heart in Psalm 4:4. David spoke truth in — and to — his heart in Psalm 15:2. In Psalm 19:14, David knew God could hear the meditations of his heart. One could go on and on in Psalms, and in other Scriptures, to show that intentions do not always have to be verbalized. They *can* be spoken, but this is not the only way it is done. Moore takes a biblical command which may be done in different ways and insists it can only be done in one way. There is no biblical balance here. This can create a legalism of "this way and no other!" It could also lead people by degrees into the positive confession camp.

GETTING IT DIRECT

Maybe to try to pre-empt any discussion or criticism, Moore claims that her teachings are right from the mouth of God. However, most students of the Bible would study and depend humbly on the Holy Spirit for illumination and then pray that God would lead them correctly and bless the fruit of their learning. In that process, most honest teachers would admit that self can slip into the process. If God was pleased to use the fruit of our labor, it would all be because of His mercy and grace.

Moore would have us believe that God has flirtatious nicknames for her such as "baby" and "honey."²⁷ This kind of frivolous familiarity is offensive and should be shocking to her readers and hearers. It is almost as if

God is simply a prop in Moore's play and she is the leading actress in her cosmic drama. God speaks to her like a lovesick suitor. The gravity of what Isaiah felt in the presence of God when he said, "Woe is me, for I am undone!" (Isaiah 6:5) is completely lacking in this kind of banter. It borders on the profane and sounds like a modern version of the erotic mysticism of the deluded female mystics of the Middle Ages. Even if Moore believed such a thing, she should be mature enough to keep it to herself.

Moore also would have us believe she gets her teachings directly from the throne room of heaven:

"I want to tell you something that God said to me today. It was the oddest thing. It caught me totally off guard. I was thinking through those mountains and calling them moved. And you know what God spoke to me? He spoke to me that sometimes the mountain has been moved, and the child has been moved around to the other side. But it's the child that won't move from the mountain. Somehow in our own self destructive personality, we hang onto that mountain ourselves."²⁸

For Moore, it is apparent that the days of direct and divine revelation are not over. Perhaps she doesn't realize the full extent of her claims, but her statement above makes her video resources and writings (where similar claims are purported) to be as inerrant Scripture. There are no other options if God really spoke His words to her. If she wants to discount her words, then she has borne false witness against God by claiming, "God said to me."

It is also clear in Moore's references to mountains and moving mountains that she has no idea what is being conveyed and taught by the Gospel writers.

Matthew 17:19-20 contains Jesus' words regarding moving mountains. This was a well-known expression

which had nothing to do with the power of words. The Jews of the first century understood "moving mountains" as facing any major difficulty or something that seemed impossible. J.R. Dummelow writes, "The rabbis, who could solve questions of great difficulty, were called 'rooters up of mountains' and it was said of a skillful teacher that 'he plucked up mountains and ground them one upon another.'"²⁹ So, a more legitimate meaning is that the rabbinical phrase was understood to be about those who had to face and overcome seemingly insurmountable difficulties or solve what were considered very difficult problems. In the apostles' case, it was facing demonic powers through the power of prayer.

Alfred Edersheim is considered an expert on first century manners and customs. He concurs that "the expression 'rooting up mountains' is in common Rabbinic use as a hyperbole for doing the impossible or the incredible."³⁰ Other commentaries agree with the above regarding moving mountains. Edward Valpy states, "In the Hebrew idiom, to be a *remover of mountains* implies being a doer of those things which are exceedingly difficult and beyond the power of nature to perform."³¹ Major difficulties and seeming impossibilities need to be faced with prayer.

Here again, Moore's approach is to make it up as she goes, put in what is not there, and then claim God said it. Matthew 17 is not talking about moving something with the power of spoken words.

MOORE'S FLOCK TAKES A HIT

Restating in a bit more systematic way, Moore's haphazard approach to hermeneutics can be characterized as her "HIT" method:

1. Hear directly from God.
2. Impose things on the text that are not there.
3. Twist and wring out of Scripture subjective and false interpretation, leading to poor application.

Once we understand Moore's method, it can be seen repeatedly in her writings and video presentations. For example, in her book, *Praying God's Word*, we can follow this pattern as Moore tells us:

"I am not content to keep to myself any hidden treasure I've discovered. What little I know, I want others to know. Before God tells me a secret, He knows up front I'm going to tell it! By and large, that's our 'deal.'"³²

Here we are to believe that sometime in the past Moore made a "deal" with God that she would disclose any "secret" He showed her. Again, this is the "hot line" factor, which can only be called direct divine revelation. Jesus said quite clearly about such things, "I spoke openly to the world. I always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where the Jews always meet, and in secret I have said nothing" (John 18:20). Likewise, Deuteronomy 29:29 says, "The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law."

Thus, what God has revealed He has given to all of us and our children. And those "secret things" belong to the Lord our God alone, not the Lord our God and Beth Moore — and those who buy her books and videos. As long as we have a Bible, we *all* have potentially *all* God wants us to know. It is one thing to say that God gives us understanding of the Scriptures, but another to say God gives special spiritual secrets to special people, which is what Moore is saying.

Many years ago, author Dave Breese warned about those who say, "I have found the secret!" Sometimes what is presented as spiritual discoveries and inside information is nothing more than merely imagination or religious fantasies. Breese further cautioned:

"The careful teacher of sound doctrine is rarely as electrifying

as the mysterious religious promoter who, usually for a price, will let us in on his 'secret.' Under the spell he casts, we are often tempted to forget that the best things in life are not only free, but they are usually obvious. ... What is the proper response to the claim of an individual to a new, divine discovery? His claim should be subjected to the biblical *rules of evidence* ... How different is the truth of Christianity! It is not dependent upon claims by private individuals to special discoveries. The fundamental characteristic of the faith of Christ is that it is based on *historical* fact. ... The secret is out! The Gospel is available to all. Jesus Christ has come in the flesh and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel. Faith in Him brings a discovery that is special indeed and available to all."³³

JUST WHAT IS A STRONGHOLD — REALLY?

We can often see Moore implementing her second step and imposing things on the text of Scripture that are false and misleading. For instance, the basis of her book, *Praying God's Word*, is to instruct her readers how to identify and demolish "strongholds."³⁴ While Moore asserts, "Please don't misunderstand my intentions and think I'm suggesting my own formula here. This is not my formula. With all my heart, I believe it is one of God's,"³⁵ more likely the truth is that it is a concept which she may have gleaned from Neil Anderson as she mentions him as a source,³⁶ even labeling his popular *The Bondage Breaker* an "excellent book."³⁷ Anderson believes that Christians can be demon possessed although he can offer no real biblical proof for this. He also believes he knows exactly where these demons reside in the body of a believer, but gives no evidence that he can see into the spiritual realm to determine that location.³⁸ Here Anderson is more Gnostic than Christian.

In her book, Moore offers formulaic and ritualistic prayers that are to be said to help her readers break free from fourteen different "strongholds." These have the danger of becoming vain repetitions. The questions that need to be asked are, "What is a stronghold and is it what Moore and Anderson say it is?" If it is not, it negates most of Moore's book — and Anderson's writings as well. Moore maintains:

"Based on my understanding of Scripture, anything that steals, kills, or destroys the abundant, fruitful life of a believer can be considered a stronghold of the enemy."³⁹

She also argues that "Strongholds can't be swept away with a spiritual broom. We can't fuss at them and make them flee. We can't ignore them until they disappear."⁴⁰ Considering this, we must ask if she is just smuggling in a meaning and imposing it on the text. If Moore is wrong about what strongholds are, then she is wrong in regard to what to do about them. It also means that the prayers in her book are misdirected and fruitless because they are based on a false premise.

Moore writes, "Up to my twenties and early thirties, I really didn't give the doctrines concerning warfare and the devil much thought. Oh, I *knew* the basics to some extent. But I'm not sure I really *believed*."⁴¹ Under scrutiny, Moore does not mimic precisely what Anderson says about strongholds, but she is still way off the biblical mark in her teaching.

The word "stronghold" is used but once in the entire New Testament. It appears in 2 Corinthians 10:4 where Paul states, "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds." Moore rarely gets deep into the context of the verses that she handles and this is dangerous. The larger context of 2 Corinthians is simply that Paul is standing against and refuting false apostles who are slandering him and questioning his authority. The strong-

holds happen to be their false teachings and false doctrines.

Moore further wrongly defines a stronghold as “anything that exalts itself in our minds, ‘pretending’ to be bigger or more powerful than our God. It steals much of our focus and causes us to feel overpowered. Controlled. Mastered.”⁴² She will go on to identify the stronghold as an “addiction” (such as alcohol and tobacco⁴³), “unforgiveness,” “despair,” or something that consumes us emotionally and mentally.⁴⁴ So in Moore’s view, a stronghold is something that happens *inside of us*. It is a subjective internal experience, an inner struggle, something that controls us. According to Moore, it has to do with inner struggles and inner battles. It is going on in our mind and emotions. In fact, those who do not buy her book may be stifled in breaking free from the many “strongholds” she describes. She asserts:

“Pride is a monumental boulder in the path toward breaking free. Ironically, it probably kept a few people from taking this book to the checkout counter of a store. After all, what might the cashier think? So I’d like to brag on you a moment. You wouldn’t be holding this book in your hands if you didn’t have enough humility to admit to the threat of a stronghold or two.”⁴⁵

Moore also interjects Satan into the picture,⁴⁶ even though Satan is not mentioned in the Corinthian text or its immediate context. It is another example of her imposing things into the text that are not there. The bulk of the book, *Praying God’s Word*, is premised on Moore’s view of and definition of strongholds; and if that view is wrong, then Scriptures will be twisted and her whole book filled with subjective, false interpretations, and applications.

STRONGHOLDS ACCORDING TO PAUL

Whether something is an internal or external foe makes a huge difference in our combat. In her book, Moore

neither offers a Greek word definition regarding strongholds, nor does she examine the immediate context to arrive at the precise scriptural meaning of the word. Paul, as we will see, explains strongholds within the context of 2 Corinthians 10 with different words and in a totally different way than does Moore.

The Greek word for stronghold is *ocuroma*. Paul, in verse 5, indicates it is “arguments” and false teachings that come at us. Thus, strongholds are heretical ideas that war against the true knowledge of God. They are wrong philosophies that try to assault our minds. They are external to us. They are outside of us and around us. Christians are to pull them down by refuting them, as Paul does with his letter to the Corinthians. These are external worldviews that are contrary to Christian thought.

Warren Wiersbe describes strongholds as “Reasonings that are opposed to the truth of God’s Word.”⁴⁷ H.W. Heidland explains it as “Greek modes of thought.”⁴⁸ Another commentary suggests “bringing down and subduing the vain reasonings and proud conceits of unbelief.”⁴⁹ Dummelow offers “Imaginations the false reasonings of his enemies.”⁵⁰ Ronald Ward calls them “strongholds of sophistry.”⁵¹ The New American Standard Bible uses the word “speculations” and speaks of “destroying” these reasonings. Some commentaries believe that Paul may be alluding to the story of the Tower of Babel, as the Septuagint translation calls the Tower of Babel a “stronghold.” It was not something inside of people, but rather a very external system of false belief that God judged. Moore, in presenting wrong ideas, is actually building strongholds that have to be addressed.

Opal Reddin, the late Professor Emeritus of Central Bible College in Springfield, Mo., appeals to sound hermeneutics in order to draw proper meaning and application:

“Can we know what Paul meant by ‘strongholds’? Not only can

we know, it is imperative that we know if we are going to use the term in our personal spiritual warfare and in our ministries. False doctrine is usually the result of flawed hermeneutics. Scripture is its own best interpreter. We are commanded to study to show ourselves ‘approved of God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth’ (2 Timothy 2:15). After ascertaining the plain meaning of any portion to the best of our ability, we then carefully and prayerfully study the context to gather further information, looking to the Holy Spirit for illumination.”⁵²

Reddin then observes how context is king:

“The ‘strongholds’ of 2 Corinthians 10:4 cannot refer to evil spirits, as study of the context will show clearly. In fact, the entire epistle does not have a single reference to evil spirits. It is basically a letter to bring the Church at Corinth back to their former allegiance to the ministry of the one who brought them the Gospel at first. Chapters 1-7 contain loving admonitions for the Church, along with the beginning of Paul’s defense of his ministry, which was being maligned. Chapters 8-9 encourage generous giving to spread the Gospel. Chapters 10-13 comprise Paul’s forceful defense of his apostleship and ministry against the vituperative attacks of ‘false apostles’ (11:13) who were spreading vicious lies about him (10:2,10; 11:6-7,15; 12:11-12). In their attempts to alienate the Corinthians from Paul, his enemies were accusing him: of having weak bodily presence (10:10), of poor speaking skill (11:6), of being inferior (11:16), of not really being an apostle (12:11-12), and of using fleshly methods for self-aggrandizement (10:3). With all that in mind, we can under-

stand Paul's appeal in chapter 10, including his usage of the term 'strongholds.'⁵³

Having set forth some of the "whys" and "hows" of sound biblical interpretation, Reddin brings it together and points out that Paul "defines the 'strongholds'; they are 'arguments (*logizmous*, imaginations)' against his ministry (5a), the 'high thing' (*hypsoma*, the prideful arrogance of his enemies) that exalts itself against the knowledge of God (5b); and the thoughts (*noema*) that are not obedient to Christ (5c). *Hypsoma*, 'high thing' can be used to refer to a spirit in Greek mythology, but in context here it refers to that which exalts itself above the Truth of the Gospel as preached by Paul."⁵⁴

Finally, Reddin cites Craig Keener, the professor of New Testament at Palmer Theological Seminary of Eastern University, who tells us:

"Greek sages sometimes described their battle against false ideas as a war, in terms similar to those Paul uses here. Like those sages, Paul claims to be doing battle with false ideas. 'Arguments' (NIV, NRSV, TEV) or 'speculations' (NASB) is a technical term for 'rhetorical or philosophical' reasonings; the prisoners of war in this extended metaphor are human thoughts. Cf. Proverbs 21:22."⁵⁵

REALLY QUESTIONABLE SOURCES

We are only as good as our sources. Moore's sources are suspect as we have seen with her appeal to Neil Anderson. Yet another astonishing source used by Moore is Francis Frangipane.⁵⁶ With such a direct hot line to God, one has to question why God did not reveal to Moore that Frangipane is not only a questionable teacher, but is considered fringe even among those in the Charismatic movement.

Among Frangipane's more egregious errors are:

- He claims he is thankful for the

Word Faith movement. He endorses it.

- He aligns with the Kansas City Prophets.
- He endorses Oneness Pentecostals such as Tommy Tenney.
- He speaks highly of the false territorial demon teaching.
- He falsely teaches that strongholds are demons.
- He boasts of visions and prophecies.
- He alleges God misses him when he is not in devotion time with the Lord.
- He spent seven years in The Walk, the cultic church of John Robert Stevens. Stevens thought of himself as a manifestation of the second coming of Christ.
- He blurs the line between creature and Creator, making the Church the near-literal body of Jesus.
- He gets prophecies and divines future direction from such items as license plates.
- He admits to his own false prophecies and prophetic failures.

In reality, if Moore were true to Scripture, she should be casting down Frangipane's "strongholds" of false teaching, not commending him. By quoting him she is embracing strongholds, not casting them down. Some may argue that Frangipane's statements, used by Moore, are benign. And while that may be true, quoting him at all gives him credibility. In Matthew 7:15-20, Jesus warned against false teachers, He did not quote them. Paul many times rebuked false teachers, but he did not quote them. Many who follow Moore blindly would surely think, "If Beth quotes him, he must be a good source. Certainly she would not promote a false teacher." Not everything taught by Benny Hinn, Kenneth Copeland, or Joyce Meyer is wrong. Occasionally cults such as the Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons get some things right. But that does not mean we should be quoting them.

And there is a whole lot more. Frangipane's errors are no secret and PFO has elaborated on them in the past.⁵⁷ It is inexcusable for Moore to quote him and by doing so, endorse him. The theology of Frangipane is one major "stronghold" that needs addressing.

PFO earlier observed that Moore appears to have a propensity to cite more teachers who are off the orthodox charts than those who are on them. That is a pattern which seems to remain consistent throughout Moore's many resources.

LESS OF MOORE IS MORE

Without a good and proper hermeneutic, one can only sink into a morass of subjectivism and wrong interpretation. There is a widespread subjectivism in the Christian world today, but words are not modeling clay to be shaped into any form we want. Words have meanings; thus the need for dictionaries. Having faulty hermeneutics would be like trashing our dictionaries. Lack of verbal precision allows cults and aberrational teachers of all kinds to flourish and deceive.

Several years ago, PFO published a feature article on hermeneutics. In this article, we stated:

"We need to get serious about properly handling God's Word with passion and intellectual honesty and understand the urgency of getting clear and precise teaching out to others while there is still time. 'Only one life twill soon be past' is more than a cliché. How many Christians in days to come will shed tears of regret and say, 'If only I had taken the Word of God more seriously. If only I had studied it more diligently. If only I had been more committed to rightly dividing the Word of Truth. If only I had applied the truth more personally to my own life. If only I had obeyed it more fully. If only I had done more for the cause of truth, more for my Savior, more for the Church of

Christ, more for the lost and confused. If only..., if only..., if only.' Don't wait. Be doing it now."⁵⁸

A rabbinic parable suggests that listeners should be like sieves that remove the chaff from the fine flour. Commenting on this, Ann Spangler and Lois Tverberg encourage:

"What great advice for Christians! It reminds us that we are not called to be parrots, unquestioningly repeating whatever we learn from a favorite teacher. Instead, we are to exercise wisdom and discernment, continually asking questions, weighing answers, seeking understanding, and grounding our beliefs within the context of God's Word and the wisdom of Christian tradition."⁵⁹

All of this lines up with biblical instruction as the Apostle Paul ordains that we "Test all things; hold fast what is good" (1 Thessalonians 5:21).

Those who read Beth Moore need to read cautiously, discerningly, and wisely, knowing that she claims to hear directly from heaven. She says she gets deep secrets directly from God, but often misses the obvious. She sometimes inserts ideas into the sacred text that are not there, setting forth subjective and arbitrary interpretations that are way off the mark. These "secrets" are not deep truths; they are not truths at all. She is often haphazard in her preparations and her presentations. Her sources are not always God or even the Bible, but sometimes are merely her own vivid imagination or false teachings. Moore and her publishers want her followers to think she offers more, but in fact she offers less because the more is often just subjective speculation.

Endnotes:

1. Beth Moore, *Believing God*. Nashville: LifeWay Church Resources, 2002, Session 7, "Believing God Has Been There All Along," 47:05. (Times provided for all video entries are rounded to the nearest five-second mark.)

2. Geoffrey W. Grogan in J.D. Douglas, Editor, *New 20th-Century Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1991, pg. 386.
3. R.C. Sproul, *Knowing Scripture*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1977, pg. 45.
4. Ann Spangler and Lois Tverberg, *Sitting at the Feet of Rabbi Jesus*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 2009, pp. 12, 13.
5. See also, G. Richard Fisher, "Hermen Who? - Bible Hermeneutics: An Excursion in Fantasy or Exercise in Discipline?" *The Quarterly Journal*, July-September 2002, pp. 1, 11-20.
6. *New 20th Century Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, op. cit., pg. 388.
7. Charles Ryrie, *The Ryrie Study Bible*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1976, pg. 1826, italics in original.
8. Living Proof ministries website, "About Beth Moore." Document available at: www.lproof.org/about_beth_moore.asp
9. Tony Capoccia, Bible Bulletin Board website. Document available at: www.biblebb.com/files/tonyqa/tc05-187.htm.
10. Beth Moore, *Praying God's Word*. Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2000, pg. 235.
11. *Ibid.*, pg. 249.
12. *Ibid.*, pp. 111-112.
13. *Ibid.*, pg. 112.
14. *Ibid.*, pg. 242, italic in original.
15. *Ibid.*, italics in original.
16. *Ibid.*, pg. 276.
17. *Ibid.*, pp. 304-305.
18. See M. Kurt Goedelman with G. Richard Fisher, "Get Out of That Pit-iful Theology," *The Quarterly Journal*, January-March 2008, pg. 11.
19. *Praying God's Word*, op. cit., pg. 252.
20. *Believing God*, op. cit., Session 3, "Believing God Can Do What He Says He Can Do," 59:15.
21. J.R. Dummelow, *A Commentary on the Holy Bible*. New York: Macmillan Company, 1958, pg. 684.
22. See further, M. Kurt Goedelman with G. Richard Fisher, "When Godly People Teach Ungodly Theology," *The Quarterly Journal*, July-September 2007, pp. 1, 18-26; "Get Out of That Pit-iful Theology," op. cit., pp. 4-15; and M. Kurt Goedelman and Glenn E. Chatfield, "Believing Beth About Believing God," *The Quarterly Journal*, January-March 2009, pp. 4-14.
23. See further, J. Greg Sheryl, "Do You Want to Know ... The Secret?" *The Quarterly Journal*, January-March 2007, pp. 1, 11-21.
24. Michael G. Moriarty, *The New Charismatics*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992, pg. 78.
25. *Believing God*, op. cit., Session 6, "Believing God's Word Is Alive and Active in You," 32:30.
26. *Ibid.*, 37:10.

27. *Ibid.*, Session 4, "Believing You Are Who God Says You Are," 58:50; Session 6, "Believing God's Word Is Alive and Active in You," 18:35, 19:10.
28. *Ibid.*, Session 7, "Believing God Has Been There All Along," 58:00.
29. *A Commentary on the Holy Bible*, op. cit., pg. 695.
30. Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1965, Vol. 2, pg. 376.
31. Edward Valpy, *The New Testament with English Notes*. London: A.J. Valpy, 1831, Vol. 1, pg. 120, italics in original.
32. *Praying God's Word*, op. cit., pg. 2.
33. Dave Breese, *Know the Marks of Cults*. Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1975, pp. 69, 72, 75, italics in original.
34. *Praying God's Word*, op. cit., Introduction, pp. 1-18.
35. *Ibid.*, pg. 9.
36. *Ibid.*, pp. 274, 288, 294, 331.
37. *Ibid.*, pg. 288.
38. See further, G. Richard Fisher, "Demons, Demons, Where Are the Demons?," *The Quarterly Journal*, July-September 1997, pp. 1, 14-17.
39. *Praying God's Word*, op. cit., pp. 14-15.
40. *Ibid.*, pg. 5.
41. *Ibid.*, pg. 301, italics in original.
42. *Ibid.*, pg. 3.
43. *Ibid.*, pg. 17.
44. *Ibid.*, pg. 3.
45. *Ibid.*, pp. 58-59.
46. *Ibid.*, pg. 4.
47. Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Encouraged*. Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1984, pg. 110.
48. H.W. Heidland in Gerhard Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979, Vol. 5, pg. 591.
49. *The New Testament with English Notes*, op. cit., Vol. 2, pg. 502.
50. *A Commentary on the Holy Bible*, op. cit., pg. 939.
51. Ronald A. Ward, *Hidden Meaning in the New Testament*. Old Tappan, N.J.: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1969, pg. 79.
52. Opal S. Reddin, "Pulling Down Strongholds." Document available at: http://newsletters.cephasministry.com/pulling_down_strongholds.html.
53. *Ibid.*
54. *Ibid.*, italic added to Greek words.
55. *Ibid.*
56. *Praying God's Word*, op. cit., pp. 81, 83, 264, 298, 313, 314, 319, 323, 325, 329.
57. G. Richard Fisher, "Walking in the Shadow of The Walk, The Prophetic Ministry and Visions of Francis Frangipane," *The Quarterly Journal*, January-March 2002, pp. 4-13.
58. "Hermen Who? - Bible Hermeneutics," op. cit., pg. 20, italic in original.
59. *Sitting at the Feet of Rabbi Jesus*, op. cit., pg. 31.

where an individual Catholic is on the spectrum, purposeful and pointed conversation — with the proper Scriptures — can be brought to bear.

As Nehemiah cleared away the rubble before he could build, we need to know what to clear and where the clearing needs to be done. An informed witness is an impressive witness.

—GRF

NEWS UPDATES

(continued from page 3)

was disintegrating, a group of lofty “apostles” came to Lakeland to “ordain” Bentley during one of his revival services. The maneuver demonstrated a genuine lack of discernment by men who see themselves as prophets and God’s elite for the latter days. The coalition included C. Peter Wagner, John Arnott, Che Ahn, Stacey Campbell, and others. Rick Joyner also attended the service, but said he is not part of the “Revival Alliance.” As revelation of the details of Bentley’s failures gained public attention, even more critics of the revival and its leader began to appear, some even from high profile Charismatics including J. Lee Grady, editor of *Charisma* magazine.

Bentley has entered into a “Restoration Process” under the supervision of Joyner and his MorningStar Ministries, based in Fort Mills, S.C. Joyner is no stranger to such a daunting task. Twenty years ago, after receiving what he said was a direct invitation from God, Joyner counseled Jim Bakker following the PTL Network founder and televangelist’s fall from grace. According to *Charisma*, “Bentley was scheduled to begin the restoration process last October, but Joyner said his relocation to Fort Mills was repeatedly delayed due to problems securing a permanent visa.” Pastors Jack Deere and Bill Johnson will also help in the process.

Present critics are skeptical of Bentley’s reconciliation strategy and fear he is attempting to make a fast track back to the revival stage. Joyner argues that that is not the case. In a statement posted on *Charisma*’s website, Joyner wrote, “Todd, more than most, does not want to jump back into ministry prematurely, even as much as he misses it in some ways.” Apparently that remark did not convince critics.

On April 3, Joyner and Bentley teamed up to issue a “Special Bulletin” video titled, “Apology to the Revival Alliance and the Church,” which was posted on MorningStar Ministries’ website. On the 10-minute video,

Joyner reiterated that Bentley is not back in ministry, but is going through the restoration process. But Joyner appears to be sending mixed signals, as a name for Bentley’s new ministry, “Fresh Fire USA,” has been established and donations for it are being solicited by Joyner.

Bentley used the “Special Bulletin” video to tout his past glory days at the revival, saying, “Lakeland was a genuine move of God” and was a “Kingdom work.” He also maintained, “My personal problems and my issues had nothing to do with [Lakeland] — that’s separate from what God was doing.”

Joyner, on the web video, sought to deflect criticism of his colleagues for their ill-advised ordination service. Joyner argued, “It was not Todd coming under and submitting to the Revival Alliance. That was never implied nor was it them taking responsibility for Lakeland. It was just them coming alongside to help defray a lot of the stuff that was coming at them. But also to help, if needed, to help align some things and bring correction when correction was needed. And also, but as equals and co-laborers. It was never Todd coming under them or them taking responsibility for Lakeland. So don’t blame those guys. They were, in my opinion, heroes in this whole thing.”

Critic Rick Hiebert, from the Canadian online news service *Western Standard*, wrote, “Amazingly, if you carefully parse what is said, it’s an apology that winds up being extremely non-apologetic.” But apology or no apology, Bentley will be back, Joyner is convinced of that. “He is going to be back in ministry, and we want to lay a solid foundation for that. There are partners who want to support his process. They want him restored and healthy. It’s just building an infrastructure,” he told *Charisma*.

—MKG

BYU NEWSPAPERS RECALLED OVER CAPTION BLOOPER

Typographical errors are the bane of newspaper editors. Typos in headlines and photo captions are especially embarrassing. The staff at *The Daily Universe*, the student newspaper at Brigham Young University, know this all too well.

On April 6, thousands of copies of its publication had to be pulled from newsstands when it was discovered that a caption beneath a photograph of members of the leadership of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints identified them as the “Quorum of the Twelve Apostates” instead of “Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.”

An apostate is one who has denied or forsaken his or her faith.

According to an Associated Press report, "The mistake happened when a copy editor was running a computer spell check and apostate was suggested as the replacement for a misspelling of apostle."

Once the error was realized, most of the 18,000 copies of the initial press run were recovered and sent to recycling. Within hours, 10,000 copies of the newspaper with the correct caption were printed and back on newsstands.

—MKG

PAULK LEAVES BEHIND A SCANDALOUS LEGACY

The scandal-ridden pastor of an Atlanta megachurch has died. Bishop Earl Paulk died March 29 after spending nearly three months in the hospital. He was 81. He was admitted to the Atlanta Medical Center on Jan. 1 for a blockage of his intestines. Paulk had been battling cancer for several years.

Paulk's career as a pastor was tainted with assorted sexual allegations that spanned nearly 50 years. Paulk admitted to having an affair in 1960 while pastoring what was then known as Hemphill Church of God (now Mount Paran Church of God) in Atlanta. He later left the Church of God denomination and co-founded the Cathedral at Chapel Hill in nearby Decatur.

In the 1980s and 1990s, Paulk was recognized as a distinguished leader among independent Charismatics. During that time his racially integrated church's membership peaked at nearly 10,000. Yet despite his fame and fortune, Paulk was repeatedly hounded by reports of sexual indiscretions, which led to a myriad of accusations and some lawsuits.

One of the more shocking disclosures came in 2007 when DNA testing proved that Paulk was the biological father of his brother's son, the Rev. D.E. Paulk, who is now pastor of the Decatur-based church. Don Paulk said he forgave Earl and that "the revelation that his son was fathered by his brother 'makes no difference in my love for my brother or my son,'" the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* reported.

Last year, Bishop Paulk was fined \$1,000 and placed on 10 years probation after pleading guilty to lying under oath when he denied having affairs with various women when he testified in a lawsuit by a former church employee against him.

As Paulk's misdeeds continued to receive public attention, his once vibrant congregation diminished.

Current membership is said to be down to 1,000 and last year church officials said that its campus is on the market for \$24.5 million.

—MKG

COURT VICTORY FOR JEHOVAH'S WITNESS WIDOW

The Wyoming Supreme Court in April ruled in favor of a Jehovah's Witness who was seeking workers compensation death benefits following the death of her husband who refused a blood transfusion. Sharon Williams was denied payment by the Wyoming Workers' Safety and Compensation, which contended that her husband, Howard W. Williams, turned down immediate and needed life-saving medical treatment. Williams had been injured in a work-related automobile accident.

In February 2006, Williams was severely injured when the car in which he was riding rolled numerous times after his wife lost control of the vehicle. Williams, who was a maintenance technician for Capital City Maintenance Inc., was on his way to a job site in Laramie when the accident occurred. Williams was taken by ambulance to a hospital in Cheyenne.

Williams was diagnosed with a ruptured spleen and abdominal bleeding by the attending physician. Dr. M. Whitney Parnell was told by the couple that a blood transfusion was not permitted because they were Jehovah's Witnesses. As an option, a "Cell Saver" transfusion was suggested. Cell Saver is a process whereby the patient's own blood is taken, cleaned, processed, and then transfused back into the patient. The couple said they would need to wait until their son arrived at the hospital to verify that the procedure was in agreement with Watchtower teaching.

The couple's son arrived, approved the treatment, and Williams underwent emergency surgery to have his spleen removed.

Williams had lost five liters of blood, and was able to receive back two liters through the Cell Saver process. Yet despite the procedure, along with other aggressive fluid resuscitation efforts, Williams' condition deteriorated and he died.

As the lawsuit went to the court, attorneys for the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York Inc. interceded in the case on behalf of Sharon Williams. The court decision was said to have been determined as a result of Dr. Parnell's testimony that she could not say with certainty that Williams would have survived even with a blood transfusion.

—MKG



Books in Review

RIGHT THINKING IN A WORLD GONE WRONG

by John MacArthur

Harvest House Publishers, 260 pages, \$14.99

It is difficult to maintain a biblical worldview while our society's moral fabric continues to decay. While some Christians have given in to the "thermometer" syndrome — taking on the temperature of their surroundings, most still desire to be a "thermostat" — influencing the temperature of their surroundings.

Yet despite their desire to be, do, and say the right things, many believers don't know how to respond biblically to the arguments presented by today's secular thinkers. Perhaps they know — or think they know — the Christian ethic to which they should adhere, but have become clouded and desensitized in a day and age of political correctness and cries of intolerance. *Right Thinking in a World Gone Wrong* is a great protection against the truth decay Christians fight each day.

Pastor and teacher John MacArthur heads up a team of a dozen men from the leadership of Grace Community Church in Sun Valley, Calif., in the writing of this much-needed volume. Some chapters are written by individuals, while others are co-written and presented as a "pastoral perspective."

The book is divided into four major parts: entertainment and leisure; morality and ethics; politics and activism; and tragedy and suffering. Each primary heading then is divided into five chapters of sub-topics relative to its central theme.

The entertainment section defines the role that Christian liberty plays in choosing forms of personal leisure activities. Other subjects examined in this section include video games and Internet dating.

The morals and ethics section contains some of the most critical evaluations of the book including divorce and remarriage, abortion, birth control, in vitro fertilization and surrogacy, homosexuality, euthanasia, suicide, and capital punishment. While each of these subjects

could have — and in most cases have — warranted a volume in and of itself, this study is a terrific synopsis of the critical issues.

Covered in the politics and activism section are such topics as involvement in governmental processes, global warming, racism, and illegal immigration and border control. The great thing about having a scriptural understanding of these particular subjects is that when such issues arise in conversation, the Christian will be able to respond biblically and use it as an opening to evangelize.

The final segment, tragedy and suffering, departs to a degree from the "hot button" issues of the previous chapters to examine divine providence and the problem of evil, along with developing into an evangelistic and biblical understanding of trials and hardships, why God can be trusted, and a presentation of the Gospel as mankind's only hope.

MacArthur and his team argue for the total sufficiency and authority of Scripture, and that's just what they deliver. The book also has a "Topical Reference Guide," which is a list of Scripture verses relevant to many of the subjects discussed in the book.

Why is it important to have a biblical worldview on these points? Because, as MacArthur explains, "an unbiblical tolerance (in the name of love) has weakened churches to the point where they are as soft on truth as they are on sin" (pg. 7). To that he adds, "Any ethic that starts outside of Scripture, or that does not have Scripture as its foundation, may not rightly be called a Christian ethic. Our response to moral questions is not determined by politics, economics, personal preference, popular opinion, or human reasoning. It is, instead, grounded in what God has told us is true about ourselves and our world" (pg. 13).

Believers who want to have right and biblical thinking will be greatly challenged, encouraged, and aided by this book. As Jay Adams once said, "Either the world will influence you, or you will influence the world. There is no question about it." *Right Thinking in a World Gone Wrong* will spur on believers to be an influence for Christ. The leadership team of Grace Community Church who contributed to this work should be applauded for such a helpful and important book.

—MKG

Editor's Note: The publications featured in PFO's *Books in Review* section are available from **Personal Freedom Outreach** (P.O. Box 26062, Saint Louis, Missouri 63136). Please add \$2.50 to the price listed for shipping and handling. Due to occasional price changes by the publishers, the retail amounts listed are subject to change without notice. These publications are also available to those who help to financially support the work of PFO. Please see our funds appeal flyer for details.