

# The Quarterly Journal



THE NEWSLETTER PUBLICATION OF PERSONAL FREEDOM OUTREACH

VOL. 31, NO. 1

JANUARY-MARCH 2011

EDITOR: KEITH A. MORSE

## The Steady Drift from Evangelicalism Inside the “Insider Movement” and More

by Gary E. Gilley with M. Kurt Goedelman

In the 1970s, there was a consensus among Evangelicals that Roman Catholicism taught a false gospel and therefore those within the Church of Rome (at least those believing Catholic doctrine) were in need of evangelism. Some mission organizations focused much, if not all, of their efforts on Roman Catholic countries throughout the world. The idea that Catholics were not truly Christians began to erode as various evangelical leaders stepped up to challenge this view and as others actually defected from their Protestant roots to Roman or Eastern Orthodoxy.

This was followed by a major shift, at least in the minds of many, when in 1994 Charles Colson and Father John Neuhaus united. These leaders from both traditions formulated their now famous *Evangelicals and Catholics Together* document which, in essence, stated

that while differences remained between the two branches of Christendom, it was time that we recog-

nized one another as brothers and sisters in Christ. Author and professor James White emphasizes its appeal and stresses its danger:

*“Evangelicals and Catholics Together* seeks to provide a common ground for united social action by Roman Catholics and Protestants. Everyone can agree that we live in a decadent society and that all who share a common morality have a special bond on that level. But I have to ask: What is the greatest power available to Christians? Is it a ‘moral consensus,’ or is it as  
(continues on page 12)



### Inside this Issue:

IT SEEMS SO VERY OBVIOUS .....	PAGE 2
CONTROVERSIAL THEOLOGIAN DIES .....	PAGE 3
COLOSSIANS: TODAY'S HANDBOOK ON HERESY .....	PAGE 4

---

---

# Editorials

---

---

## IT SEEMS SO VERY OBVIOUS

What used to be very obvious to Christians in general is no longer so. The Christian world is permeated by political correctness and a false sense of tolerance to such a degree that biblical mandates are being ignored all over the place.

It used to be obvious that false teaching was to be questioned. It used to be obvious that suspicious or aberrant beliefs were to be critiqued, evaluated, and warned against. It was all too obvious because the Bible mandated it. It was obvious because the prophets of the Old Testament railed at error and then Jesus and the New Testament writers stood up to error as they rebuked and corrected it (Matthew 23, 1 Timothy 4, 2 Peter 2, the book of Jude). Not so today!

The bizarre thing is that true Christianity can be beaten up, bloodied, maligned, and laughed at, but true believers are not supposed to speak out against error and heresy.

We cannot risk speaking the truth in love today lest we be called bigots, intolerant, shrill, nay-sayers, and a host of other things. Or we can risk it. Charismatic extremists fearing the loss of coin and constituency threaten detractors with spiritual machine guns, curses, and a flood of nasty names such as "heresy hunters." Apologists are feared more than the devil.

Whoever thought there would be a heavy price to pay for discernment? Whoever thought that Bereans would be seen as the enemy? Paul commended the Bereans' questions in Acts 17 as they compared his teachings to Scriptures. They were noble. The first few centuries of the Church gave birth to premier apologists. And later the Reformation was born from a willingness to investigate religious claims and test them alongside the Bible. Who would have ever thought that the mainstream Church would turn on those who wish to be discerning? "Here I stand" may now be "Here I stand — alone."

One of the biggest guns that is used today is the statement, "Didn't Jesus say don't judge in Matthew 7:1." The big gun turns out to be a pop-gun when examined in its context. The context is crystal clear and shows that Jesus is saying that we cannot be judgmental and make judgments *without first taking the log out of our own eye* (vv. 2-4). Once we perform self-examination we will see clearly to evaluate others as verse 5 says. Then Jesus goes on to say that we must judge, evaluate, and discern between dogs, swine, and those who are genuine. As well, Jesus warns against "false prophets" in verses 15-16. This certainly takes judging. Realize also that to criticize or condemn one for judging is in fact a judgment!

The larger context of the entire New Testament shows us that discernment, evaluation, and even critiquing of false teachings is always in. Jesus commanded us to

(continues on page 20)

### 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		

© 2011 – 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.

## CONTROVERSIAL THEOLOGIAN DIES

Clark Pinnock, the once stalwart proponent for biblical inerrancy who was more recently branded as a heretic by some, died Aug. 15, 2010, of a heart attack. He was 73.

Pinnock taught at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary from 1965 until 1969, and served an important role in restoring a conservative framework within the Southern Baptist Convention. Included among his students were Paige Patterson, Adrian Rogers, and Jerry Vines, all of whom became key players for the “conservative resurgence” of the denomination. In 1967, Pinnock’s first book, *A Defense of Biblical Infallibility* was published. The following year he wrote *New Reformation: A Challenge to Southern Baptists* in which he encouraged a “new reformation” to take place in the sect.

Following his years at NOBTS, Pinnock moved on to teach at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Ill., from 1969 until 1974, and then at Regent College in Vancouver, B.C., from 1974 until 1977. It was during this time that his view of Scripture began to deteriorate from the strong position he once held. His longest tenure was at McMaster Divinity College in Hamilton, Ontario, where he taught from 1977 until 2002 as the school’s professor of systematic theology.

Pinnock moved away from his Calvinistic point of view and became one of the contemporary advocates of “open theism,” the belief that God is finite or limited in His knowing of the future. *Christianity Today* magazine noted that Pinnock “argued that God could be surprised by events and persuaded to change a decision.” Theologians including Norman Geisler, R.C. Sproul, and J.I. Packer began to denounce Pinnock. The Southern Baptist Convention also denounced open theism in its 2000 *Baptist Faith and Message*. Some viewed Pinnock’s 2001 book, *Most Moved Mover: A Theology of God’s Openness*, as his response, a volume in which his neotheistic beliefs were further expressed. In 2002, an attempt was made to have Pinnock expelled from the Evangelical Theological Society, an organized group of academic professionals. The effort failed with a vote of 388 to 231 to keep him as a member of the group.

The controversial theologian also evolved into and adopted other unorthodox beliefs including annihilationism — the denial of eternal punishment, and inclusivism — the teaching that the unevangelized are saved apart from knowing and embracing the Gospel.

Pinnock apparently facilitated his early views by maintaining the “Southern Baptists’ approach to the Bible was really not inerrancy but rather a ‘simple Biblicism,’ and that the ‘inerrancy controversy’ was invented as a political weapon,” *The Baptist Standard* reported.

Less than six months before his unexpected death, Pinnock “announced he was withdrawing from public life and revealed that he was battling Alzheimer’s disease,” *Christianity Today* disclosed. Last March, Pinnock wrote to colleagues saying he was retiring from active theological work. In his letter, he said, “I want to inform you that I am now middle stage Alzheimer’s. I will not be able to do my writing etc. I am 73 years now, and I’ve enjoyed my biblical three score and ten. I am not bitter. I have had a good life.”

In its obituary of Pinnock, *The Baptist Standard* said, “Assessing Pinnock’s sometimes-contradictory legacy, Russell Moore, theology dean at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, said conservative evangelicals owe him a debt of gratitude.”

—MKG

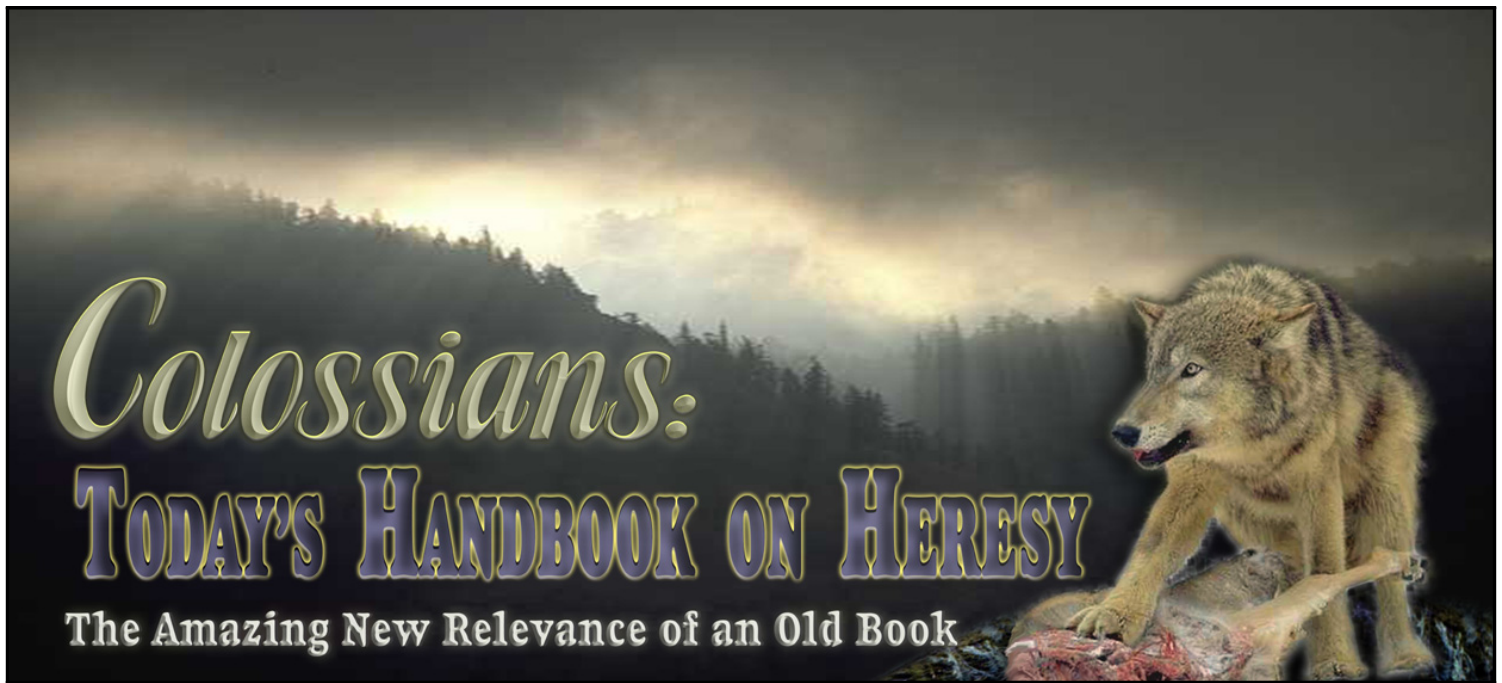
## NEW AD CAMPAIGN INTRODUCED BY MORMONS

For several decades the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has been on a mission. Its objective has been to shed the label of being a cult and to appear as just another Christian church down the street. Throughout the years, millions of dollars have been spent on magazine, radio, and television ad campaigns, along with the distribution of free videos and King James Bibles.

Last summer, a new television ad campaign was launched in nine test market cities which presents Mormons as regular folks. In the St. Louis market, two of the 30-second commercials ran back-to-back. Each of the ads features an individual who offers a biographical vignette, such as an artist, a musician, or a short-term medical missionary. They conclude their personal sketch by giving their name and then saying, “And I’m a Mormon.” A Website address is provided for further information.

Billboards along Interstate highways and bus stop placards in the metropolitan test markets are also part of the massive blitz.

(continues on page 21)



Author and professor Ronald Enroth wrote “that there is indeed nothing new about ‘new’ Christian movements.”<sup>1</sup> His observation transcends times and seasons.

The Bible is always relevant because it is God’s truth. Unfortunately, some do not know that or do not care and thus neglect it. The book of Colossians is especially relevant to apologetics and those dealing with error and heresy. The Apostle Paul uses the language and terminology of the heretics themselves (and by extension the currently rising cults) to refute and correct them. It is amazing to realize how right-now Colossians is. We could call it the “handbook against modern heresies.” Extremist Charismatics want a “now word.” This is it. Colossians is a powerful current Word. Reading it every day for a month would be a life-changing event and a discernment-booster.

We don’t know if Paul ever visited Colosse, but most scholars believe and agree that this church in Asia Minor was founded in the early 50s A.D. by Epaphras (Colossians 1:7 and 4:12). A marble altar was discovered in Laodicea (not far from Colosse) that bears the name “Epaphras.” Some believe it refers to the biblical Epaphras. Immediately following

by **G. Richard Fisher**

A.D. 60, Paul sent this letter from prison to the Christians at Colosse. According to one source, the location of Colosse has been verified as “Numerous ruins at Colossae [sic] were in evidence up to the nineteenth century A.D. (W.J. Hamilton saw them in 1835).”<sup>2</sup> It was a strong Christian city until the eighth century when it was abandoned, possibly because of the expansion of Islam throughout Asia.

Colosse was in the Roman province of Asia and was situated in the Lycos Valley. The city was a market town between the two major cities of Laodicea and Hierapolis. Both of these cities are mentioned in Colossians 4:13. This geographical situation ensured a constant exchange of travelers and merchants through Colosse and the surrounding cities and also kept many weird religious ideas circulating among the people of Colosse and the surrounding area. The church could easily be affected by these ideas and so Paul wrote to warn them. We could call it the “heads-up epistle.”

Cults have always been a major threat to the Church. The alert pastor and good apologist will sound warnings even at the risk of being called a

“heresy-hunter” and a “judgmental nay-sayer.” Those who compare religious teaching with the Bible are simply doing what the Apostle Paul commanded us to do (Acts 20:28-32, 1 Thessalonians 5:21). He also wrote: “For what have I to do with judging those also who are outside? *Do you not judge those who are inside?*” (1 Corinthians 5:12, emphasis added). It is every believer’s job, but unfortunately so many Christians are missing in action on this front.

#### DEFINITION, PLEASE

The late cult expert Walter Martin described cults this way:

“A cult, then, is a group of people polarized around someone’s interpretation of the Bible and is characterized by major deviations from orthodox Christianity relative to the cardinal doctrines of the Christian faith, particularly the fact that God became man in Jesus Christ.”<sup>3</sup>

Apologist Ron Rhodes enhances the description:

“A cult is a religious group that derives from a parent religion (such as Christianity) but departs from that parent religion by denying some of its essential

doctrines. ... Most cults have similar doctrinal characteristics. ... Many cult leaders claim to receive new revelations and have their own holy writings. ... Cults espouse a distorted view of God. Some deny the Trinity."<sup>4</sup>

Cults distort biblical words and create a salvation by works. Some cults claim that humans can be equal with God and yet unfortunately make Jesus much less than God.

Swirling all around Asia Minor were philosophies and spiritual ideas such as mysticism, preoccupation with angels, Jewish legalism, Gnosticism, and asceticism along with a defective Christology. Paul, inspired by God's Spirit in writing his letter to the Colossian church, wanted his readers to know that Christ was enough and the truth of His Word was enough. Being "in Him" was all that they needed for acceptance before God and a place in His family. The major theme of the book of Colossians is Christ's sufficiency. The book of Colossians presents Christ as supreme, Christianity as superior, and our life in Christ as down-to-earth and practical. Paul saw Christ and Christianity as exclusive in its doctrinal content.

In the first chapter, Paul explains our wealth in Christ. In the second chapter Paul warns against false teachings. And in the final two chapters (3 and 4), Paul expounds on our walk in Christ.

Dave Breese's words from 35 years ago sound current:

"We demand new fascinations to feed our ever-shortening spans of interest. This demand for new fascinations has led many to try to move beyond the faith once delivered to the saints to something newer (and therefore presumably truer) and more exciting. ... Christianity should not be thought of as a stone wall behind which we cannot get. It is rather the highest mountaintop beyond which it is downhill no matter

which way one goes. There is nothing greater, nothing higher, and certainly nothing more magnificent than the mountaintop of divine revelation in Scripture and in Jesus Christ. To move beyond that mountaintop in the pursuit of something better is to lose oneself in the crags and crevices of the slopes that fall away from real Christianity. And beyond the crevices of heresy are the fever swamps of the cults, where the serpents and the scorpions wait. Beyond rationality is insanity, beyond medicine is poison, beyond sex is perversion, beyond fascination is addiction, beyond love is lust, beyond reality is fantasy."<sup>5</sup>

### NOTHING NEW UNDER THE SUN

There really are no new heresies. Anything we see today regarding false beliefs and spiritual errors are simply old heresies in new garb. Nothing has changed but the window dressing. A study of the first three centuries of the Church shows us, as we say today, "Been there, done that."

The Bible anticipates every false teaching that will ever arise and Colossians anticipates a significant number of them. Satan has nothing new. He can only retry the same old errors. Truth stays current and error never leaves us. Author Harry Ironside knew this:

"Every modern erroneous cult is just some old Satanic heresy revived, and each is designed to misrepresent some aspect of revealed truth in regard to Christ and His redemptive work."<sup>6</sup>

Griffith Thomas understood this as well:

"The Epistle to the Colossians, moreover, has a direct bearing on the various heresies of our day, because it is concerned with the positive presentation of the antidote to every form of intellectual poison."<sup>7</sup>

Paul alerts us to poisonous beliefs by:

1. *Confronting Gnosticism*. The Apostle Paul warned:

"Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world and not according to Christ. For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power" (Colossians 2:8-10).

This certainly refers to an ancient heresy called Gnosticism. Gnosticism has enjoyed a revival in our time. This is what books such as *The Da Vinci Code* and authors such as Bart Ehrman and Elaine Pagels are all about.

Gnosticism presents definite ideas about the makeup of the spiritual and material world, but it is not Christian or biblical in its view. Peter Jones warned us nearly two decades ago about the current revival of Gnosticism in his book, *The Gnostic Empire Strikes Back*.<sup>8</sup> The subtitle of his book called Gnosticism "an old heresy for the new age."

But one might ask how those verses (Colossians 2:8-10) counter Gnosticism. If one is unfamiliar with the language and the background of Gnosticism, Paul's intent can easily be missed.

We must first understand that the word "Gnosticism" comes from a Greek root *gnosis*, meaning "knowledge." In Colossians it was not Bible knowledge being refuted, but rather the Gnostics' brand of knowledge. They taught that if one could grasp this secret knowledge of Gnosticism, it could lead to a salvation of sorts. Soul salvation did not figure into the Gnostic system and one was saved only from mental error and false perceptions by being indoctrinated in the Gnostic system of religious information. According to Gnostics it was right knowledge, not Jesus Christ, that would bring deliverance. Paul was

not interested in the false wisdom of Gnostic pseudo-intellectualism, but pointed believers to Christ as our wisdom (Colossians 1:9, 2:3, 3:16).

To further explain that Gnosticism was not Bible knowledge (that is, Bible *gnosis*), historian Philip Schaff wrote:

“The false gnosis, on the contrary, against which Paul warns Timothy, and which he censures in the Corinthians and Colossians, is a morbid pride of wisdom, an arrogant, self-conceited, ambitious knowledge, which puffs up, instead of edifying, runs into idle subtleties and disputes.”<sup>9</sup>

In a simplified version of Gnostic belief, the Gnostics asserted that God was largely unknowable but could be somewhat grasped by spiritual emanations that manifested themselves as angels. These emissions or emanations filtering out from this god source were our only hope. One of these emanations was none other than Jesus. Jesus was on an angelic plane and only slightly higher than mankind.

The largely unknowable essence or force called god along with all the emanations together were called “pleroma” or fullness. Paul says, in effect, *not so* — but rather in Christ we find all the fullness, literally pleroma, of the Godhead bodily or in bodily form (Colossians 2:9). Jesus Himself is the full pleroma (Colossians 1:19). In fact, Paul adds that Jesus is Creator. He made the world and all that is in it (Colossians 1:15-17). The God we worship is known and knowable.

Modern Gnostics, and Charismatic extremists by their mystical pursuits, certainly imply that Jesus and the Bible are not enough. We need something more, something deeper, and something far more mystical. They must delve into the unseen world and produce extrabiblical revelations to tickle the ears and the fancies of hard-core followers.

## DIVISIONS AMONG KNOW-NOTHINGS

We must also realize that Gnosticism was not unified but instead hopelessly divided. Some believed God was more feminine than masculine, more of a goddess. Names such as Sophia were attributed to the goddess. Some Gnostics believed that Jesus came in the body, while others said His body was only an illusion. The flesh of Jesus was not real so His suffering and death meant nothing. They said He was not truly human. These deniers of Christ’s real humanity were called Docetics. The word means to “appear,” meaning Jesus only appeared to be human but was not. Certainly the epistles, 1 John and 2 John, strongly refute this heretical view. Later in Church history, a highly nuanced version of this would show up in the teachings of the Monophysites (meaning “one nature”), who over-emphasized Jesus’ divine nature to the exclusion of His human nature. The Apostles Paul and John, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, were way ahead of the curve.

The bottom line is that Gnostics’ teachings and their cosmology seem directly referred to by the words, “basic principles of the world” (Colossians 2:8). William Kelly wrote:

“There is the deepest possible necessity for these warnings. Speculation about the origin of things, or about the eternity of matter, for instance, in which the Orientals, Gnostics, etc., delighted, might not have seemed directly dangerous.”<sup>10</sup>

Guy King concurs:

“...the A.B.C. of the world’s ‘vain’, empty, account of things. Beware, says the apostle, of being made captive (‘spoil’) by any such system of thought. The down-grading of God’s creative activity, as taught by the Gnosticism of the time, against which this Epistle is, in part, written as an antidote, is a signal example of such puerile vanity.”<sup>11</sup>

The New Testament book of Colossians roughly compares with the Old Testament book of Joshua. God’s people were delivered and now had to go into the land and not only conquer it, but keep it. There was ground to take. There was an enemy to face, fight, and be put to flight. God’s people alone carried the banner of the true and living God.

Paul, in saying that Jesus created all “principalities or powers” (Colossians 1:16), was clearly saying that Christ was superior to all beings human and angelic. Any other kind of philosophy or so-called knowledge was wrong. The Gnostics may have identified angels as emanations, but Paul says they are spirit beings created by God.

The Gnostics thought of their teachings as great mysteries that could only be understood by initiates into their private system. It was a secret, closed religious labyrinth that could not be readily or easily grasped. These very elaborate Gnostic mysteries could not be enjoyed by ignorant outsiders. It was limited to a small number of enlightened ones. Paul says that as deep as the truths of salvation are, God has been pleased to reveal them not to select initiates, but to any and all who will embrace Jesus Christ. “To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Colossians 1:27). Biblical mysteries (from the Greek root *musterion*) have to do with truths being publicly revealed and proclaimed (Romans 11:25, 1 Corinthians 15:51, Ephesians 3:3, Revelation 17:7). Biblical mysteries, we could say, are open secrets. The book of Titus reminds us, “For the grace of God that brings salvation has *appeared* to all men” (Titus 2:11, emphasis added). The truths of the Bible are there for all to see and potentially available to everyone. Nothing is secret and nothing is hidden.

It is easy to see how Paul made a stark comparison and contrast. Ironside tells us, “The Gnostics made much of the mysteries of their systems. The Christian mysteries are in

vivid contrast to these dreams of insubject men."<sup>12</sup>

## CHURCH FATHERS CONTINUED THE BATTLE

In addition to being disaffirmed by the apostles and New Testament writers, early in Church history the Gnostics were further confronted and refuted head on.<sup>13</sup> Fully developed Gnosticism was called out for what it was. Justin Martyr would not accept that Gnostics were Christians of any kind and Irenaeus took them on in his treatise, *Against All Heresies*.

The Gnostics tried to write what they called "gospels," but these so-called gospels were merely camouflage for their heretical teaching. The Gnostic religion died out and most of its writings were lost to time until these curiosities were unearthed by archaeologists in 1945 at Nag Hammadi, Egypt.<sup>14</sup>

These Gnostic books from Nag Hammadi were written in two Coptic dialects (Coptic is the Egyptian language written with Greek letters) long after the time of the apostles and showed the wide range of belief and false teaching promoted by these early apostates. They drew from many corrupt streams and served up a variety of errors.

Psychologist Carl Jung, who lived from 1875 until 1961, continually referred to the Gnostics in his writings and said that these teachings were far superior to anything the Church had in terms of intellectual content.<sup>15</sup> Jung is hardly a reliable source because he was a spiritist who was dependent upon a spirit guide named Philemon. Jung claimed that Philemon was a Gnostic guru who gave him the secrets of the ages.<sup>16</sup> Jung turned constantly to Gnostic heresies.<sup>17</sup> There are psychologists and psychiatrists who are Jungians and who practice Jungian therapy and "Christian" counselors who employ Jung's techniques.

## NOT EVEN THE RED LETTER EDITION

Ever since the Jesus Seminar in the 1980s, the *Gospel of Thomas* has been

revered by liberals as almost a fifth Gospel — even to the point of being more reliable than the other four. The Jesus Seminar consisted of a group of liberal scholars who were going to make the final determination on which words of Jesus in the four Gospels were true sayings of our Savior and which words were later added by the Church at large. It was a subjective guessing game. Though the scholars were divided on which sayings were authentic, it was agreed that very little of what Jesus said and was recorded by the Gospel writers was accepted as genuine.<sup>18</sup> Indeed, the Gnostic empire is striking back, but long ago, Paul warned the Colossians — and us — about this. We have a sufficient Christ and a sufficient Bible. No wonder Paul advised believers to "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom" (Colossians 3:16).

Then Paul helps us by:

2. *Combating Jewish legalism.* The warning is clear in Colossians 2:16-17, "So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ."

Paul discussed food and drink, that is, dietary laws. He listed festivals and new moons, clearly referring to special days on the Jewish lunar calendar. He touched on the Sabbath and Sabbath days meaning the weekly Saturday legislation (and special days referred to as Sabbaths). There can be no doubt at all that this meant Jewish practices. Paul said they are only a shadow or a forecast of Jesus. The word "shadow" (Greek, *skia*) is an outline or image projected by something or someone. Imagine waiting for a friend on a sunny day. The friend comes around the corner and casts a shadow as he rounds the corner. One doesn't greet the shadow but the friend. Shadows are fleeting and passing things. Christ and New Testament truths are the substance and reality that the Old Testament shadow forecast. These New Testament truths are the reality foretold by

the long shadow. All Jewish feasts, ordinances, and paraphernalia (the tabernacle, for instance) pointed to Jesus. This is eloquently described in the book of Hebrews. Paul was clear as he wrote to the Corinthians that the Law engraved on stones has been superseded by grace and the indwelling Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:6-9).

We have to question mandated or legislated fasting. No one can act as judge or orchestrator of our food or drink. We cannot program another person's spirituality as cults try to do. A very good question to consider is: Can we judge anyone who decides to voluntarily fast? We would never have to if they adhered to Jesus' words to never appear before men as if they were fasting (Matthew 6:17-18). No one should know that we are fasting if we do it in accord with Jesus' command. It is to be a private matter between the person and God. As well, no one should judge me if I do not fast. If I did or did not fast, no one should know it anyway from what Jesus and Paul said. The decision to fast or not to fast is private and not to be programmed or paraded. In the new dispensation of grace it is no longer like Judaism where a group or nation is told to fast at certain times. These are things to seriously ponder.

Cults often require fasting and some messiah figure or guru spells out legislated fasting times and manipulates food intake.

## MY ONLY DAY OFF

Then, regarding Sabbath keeping, we are told that no one can judge us on that issue as well. There are groups, the Seventh-day Adventists for instance, that make Sabbath keeping either a part of salvation or a major aspect of sanctification. The SDAs who trace their beginnings back to the 1840s<sup>19</sup> say that Sabbath keeping is mandated as part of the Christian life. There are also a number of Seventh Day Baptist groups.<sup>20</sup>

Regarding these verses in Colossians and the combating of Jewish legalism, one commentary tells us:

“As a result believers are delivered from these evil powers which inspire legalistic rules about foods and festivals. No one should **judge you by what you eat or drink** because Christians are free from the Law’s legalistic requirements (such as those in Lev. 11; 17; Deut. 14). God does not condemn those who eat everything (Rom. 14:1-4). In fact, God says that all foods may be eaten since they were ‘created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and who know the truth’ (1 Tim. 4:3). The teaching that forbids this, Paul wrote, is ‘taught by demons’ (1 Tim. 4:1) whom Christ has disarmed (Col. 2:15). This liberation of believers pertains also to festivals such as a **New Moon celebration or a Sabbath Day** (cf. Gal. 4:10). Those who would bring Christians under the bondage of the Law make artificial distinctions between the ‘ceremonial’ and ‘moral’ law, and so they say the Sabbath has not passed away. That this is false can be seen from the following: (1) The Sabbath command is the only one of the Ten Commandments not repeated in the New Testament. (2) The early believers, following Christ’s resurrection and appearance on Sunday (Mark 16:1; John 20:1), met on Sundays (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2). (3) The Bible nowhere distinguishes between the so-called ‘moral’ and ‘ceremonial’ laws (this distinction was not made before the 13th century A.D.) (4) This Colossian passage explicitly condemns those who command Sabbath obedience. (5) As Paul put it, the Old Testament Law (including the Sabbath) was only a **shadow of the things that were to come. The reality or ‘substance’ (soma, lit., ‘body’), however, is to be found in Christ** (cf. Heb. 8:5; 10:1).”<sup>21</sup>

Still further Paul takes on another error and begins by:

3. *Correcting mysticism and angel obsession.* Paul confronts the challenge of mysticism:

“Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in false humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind” (Colossians 2:18).

We do not need any other mediators. Paul addresses this clearly in 1 Timothy 2:5, “For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus.”

Paul’s phrases are instructive as we think about them. Note that mystically poking into the spirit realm and covering it with “I saw and spoke to angels” is not a sign of spirituality, but rather an exposure of “false humility” (Colossians 2:18). The word in this verse used by Paul and translated “worship” is the Greek word *threskeia* and which carries the idea of external reverence. It is sometimes translated as “religion.” So we are not to make a religion out of interaction with angels. We need not make the seeking of angels part of our religious practice. We can go directly to and through Jesus Himself.

### FAKERS

Note also that preoccupation with angels is an “intruding” (Colossians 2:18). An intrusion is going into a place we are not supposed to. It is forcing our way into an area that is off limits for believers. Those claiming to spot angels are not to be applauded, but rather rebuked and rejected.

The inspired Apostle says they are “vainly puffed up” because of their own “fleshly mind” (Colossians 2:18). While they thought they were on solid ground, they were treading on water with the possibility of drowning quickly. Linguist Kenneth Weust quotes from Marvin Vincent, who observed:

“The teachers boasted that they were guided by the higher *reason*. Paul describes their higher reason as *carnal*.”<sup>22</sup>

There are bloated deceivers pretending to be humble with inside secrets from the other world. We see them every day on the Trinity Broadcasting Network (and other so-called God television channels), on the shelves of Christian bookstores, and within the pages of such magazines as *Charisma*. It seems like when we are left to the devices of the human mind we will always select other inferior mediators rather than Jesus and then boast of our imagined superiority.

Those who know better know that Jesus is more than enough:

“The glory of Christianity is that it is the religion of direct access to God. This is the keynote in particular of the Epistle to the Hebrews, where believers are described by the significant phrase, ‘those who come right to God’ (Heb. 7:25, *Gr.*). The modern tendencies that answer to the error at Colosse are too evident and too prevalent to call for further reference here. Our safety lies continually in direct and immediate entrance ‘into the holiest in the blood of Jesus’ (Heb. 10:19).”<sup>23</sup>

With the demeaning of Jesus and the moving of our attention from His sufficiency, it would be easy to conclude that the angelic sightings have to do with fallen angels and the deceiving angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14).

### SO SUPERIOR A SALVATION

Hebrews 1 tells us that Jesus is “so much better than the angels” (v. 4), and then the writer lists for us all the reasons why. Hebrews 1:14 then reminds us that angels are “spirits” who minister. This says that they are not material, so why would we expect visible manifestations of the angels because we have something — and someone — so much better. The rare appearances of angels (as men) in the Bible had a specific purpose and were for a specific time.

Hebrews 1:14 also tells us that these angelic spirits in some fashion “minis-

ter” or serve “those that will inherit salvation.” The exact nature, however, of that ministry is left undefined by the text. It is clear that it is a spiritual service by spirits. The Word of God tells us all we need to know for life and living and the Holy Spirit lives in us to seal, illumine, guide, and comfort us. So we must be careful not to assign to angels the functions and ministries of the Word or the Holy Spirit. His place cannot be usurped or the Word of God undermined so we claim a sanctified agnosticism as far as the full meaning of Hebrews 1:14. It has been suggested that the words in the Hebrews passage, “who will inherit salvation,” may refer to physical protection by angels of potential believers. In other words, protection and what might be called “narrow escapes” prior to the conversion of those who will “inherit salvation.” Or perhaps the words refer to what we call preparation for initial salvation. Or they may refer to ongoing salvation that we call sanctification. Yet none of these interpretive options justifies a preoccupation with angels.

During the Intertestamental period (between Malachi and Matthew) the Jewish people developed a sophisticated and extrabiblical preoccupation with angels. They even gave names to angels. This was, for the most part, borrowed from pagan Persia and the Persian Diaspora.<sup>24</sup>

If anyone doubts that the angel mania of the first century is still rife today, one only needs to read Ron Rhodes’ book *Angels Among Us*, specifically his first three chapters on the current angel quackery.<sup>25</sup>

Controversial healing evangelist Benny Hinn tries to impress his followers with his bizarre and brazen angel stories:

“I’m telling you the truth, you could literally sit there in total shock. ... If you think I’m crazy, go on. Angels would appear in my bedroom at night and just stand and look at me. I would wake up to see angels in my bedroom. All sizes. Call me crazy

but I would even see little boys in my bedroom with beautiful white robes. Like, little, they almost looked like girls but they were male. You say, ‘Do you mean there are little angels?’ I believe that ‘cause I saw them. ... There must be little angels in heaven. I think so.”<sup>26</sup>

Finally, Paul does not shy back from:

4. *Criticizing asceticism.* Paul emphasized to the believers at Colosse:

“Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations — ‘Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle,’ which all concern things which perish with the using — according to the commandments and doctrines of men? These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh” (Colossians 2:20-23).

Paul also instructed Timothy:

“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” (1 Timothy 4:1-3).

There certainly are dos and don’ts in the Bible. Paul is not talking about these clear negative and positive commands given in Scripture for our protection. But the above verses from Colossians describe a severe and unbiblical asceticism. Asceticism is rigorous self-imposed self-discipline. It goes far beyond the Scriptures in binding on people impossible reli-

gious practices and stringent requirements.

These stringent requirements are viewed as meritorious, that is, they gain favor with God or make us more acceptable to God. Paul, in the 1 Timothy passage, says that the Holy Spirit is very clear in warning of these aberrations. Likewise, Hebrews 13:4 tells us that marriage and marriage relationships are good, honorable, and right. Religious asceticism tells us that imposed celibacy is better even though the Bible would not agree. Denying oneself the joys of marriage and family are harsh disciplines that are elevated in asceticism in spite of the Bible’s teachings against such things. Mandated and legalized celibacy is, in fact, a demonic doctrine that Paul warned us about in 1 Timothy 4. Celibacy in and of itself does not give one a superior standing with God. One may wish to remain single, but that is a personal choice not to be imposed. And it does not give one a higher and special spiritual rank.

Cult groups such as the Shakers imposed sexual abstinence on their married followers. Catholicism forbids its priests and nuns to marry. In A.D. 1079, Pope Gregory VII decided to forbid marriage for priests. It was affirmed by later councils and is still Canon Law today. Some believe that the homosexuality and pedophilia among the priests, at least in part, is an outgrowth of this enforced and unnatural lifestyle.

Within Hinduism and Buddhism there are small groups that impose celibacy upon their practitioners. When there is an overturning of marriage, the skewing of sexuality, and the imposition of dietary laws it is a sure sign that people are off track scripturally.

Thank God for open Bibles to warn us. Ironside explains:

“...we read of certain manifest signs that help us to identify the persons whom the Spirit of God has in mind when He speaks so solemnly here. ‘Forbidding to marry, and commanding to ab-

stain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth.' Here are two outward things which would make it very easy for anyone to understand, when the time came, who and of what the Apostle Paul was speaking as he wrote by inspiration of the Holy Spirit. It was during these dark ages that an apostate church arose which taught that a celibate priest or monk was a holier person than the Christian father or husband, and an unmarried nun was on a higher moral plane than a godly wife or mother, and so certain ones were forbidden to marry. Now Scripture maintains that there are occasions when it is better to remain unmarried; for instance, if Christian workers are exposed to great dangers it is far better not to think of marrying and dragging wives and possibly children into such circumstances. But God Himself instituted marriage for a holy purpose. Men attempting to be wiser than God put the ban upon marriage, so that certain persons who were separated from the world as nuns, monks, and priests had to take a vow not to marry. By this we may see to whom the Apostle was referring here. Then observe the next mark: 'Commanding to abstain from meats.' Now our Lord Jesus Christ Himself told us, 'Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which commeth out of the mouth, this defileth a man' (Matt. 15:11). But there soon grew up in the professing Church the notion that the eating of meat on certain days should be refrained from, because by so doing one could better master the desires of the flesh; a theory which has proven to be false. Men are still as sinful as before. Vegetarianism has never worked for greater holiness than the ordinary method of nourishing the body, which is according to

God's own order. But men cannot seem to get away from this outward thing, which is the teaching of demons."<sup>27</sup>

### WAY OFF THE DEEP END

It did not take long to show how right Paul was. Very early on in Church history, unbalanced ascetics were elevated as heroes and superstars to be emulated. Philip Jenkins tells us:

"The thousands who abandoned worldly society — the monks and hermits — became the heroes and role models for those who could not bear to make the full sacrifice. ... Even the imperial family now aspired to goals of world rejection and celibacy, and they listened carefully to the pronouncements of saints and visionaries. ... By the fifth century, the growing horrors of the secular world were encouraging mass defections into the spiritual life, as monasticism offered a whole alternative society. In the language of the time, monks and ascetics were holy warriors, engaged in constant religious combat, or else spiritual athletes. It was exactly in this period that celebrity saints took to living atop pillars, their food lifted to them daily by faithful disciples. Around 420, Simeon Stylites began occupying the pillar top where he would remain for some thirty incredible years. For the Christian public, rich and poor, such absolute devotion proved beyond doubt that a man like Simeon was close to God, and they anxiously sought his advice. The amazing popular devotion that such figures attracted shows the prevailing distrust of the material world, and especially of sexuality; true holiness must involve an absolute rejection of these seductive temptations. From this point of view, the ideal Christian was not only celibate, but must reject as far as possible any form of material comfort,

including any food beyond what was absolutely necessary to keep the person alive. They were to be 'tombless corpses,' dead men walking. Ascetics had a charismatic power far greater than that of any secular figure, and the best that a lay Christian could do was try and copy them."<sup>28</sup>

These were days when rejecting family was the in thing to do. Biblical values were overthrown for self-imposed religion and the neglect of the body. In the year A.D. 512, the Bishop of Antioch dismissed his cooks so that he could live on a much reduced diet and destroyed the baths. Jenkins further observes:

"What place did the vanity of bodily hygiene have in a proper Christian regime? Cleanliness was very far from godliness. He was just as horrified to learn that earlier bishops had even slept in beds, and that practice, too, had to change. Instead, 'he practiced lying down on the earth, refraining from washing, performing the offices with long psalmody, eating vegetables.'"<sup>29</sup>

Several years ago, *Leadership* journal published an article on its Website extolling an ascetic monk named Pachomius (A.D. 315).<sup>30</sup> Pachomius' life was not an example of the healthy Christian life. He renounced family, lived in the desert, and depended on visions, dreams, voices, and what he thought to be angelic messages. He lived a deluded and unnatural life of rigorous self-denial.<sup>31</sup> The point of the *Leadership* article was that he joined with other hermits and that was a good thing. Pachomius, in joining more people like himself, did not correct his faulty foundation of asceticism. It was a joint travesty. Given what the audible voices produced for Pachomius we could easily believe that the voices had a dark source. The Pachomius model is exactly what Paul is condemning in Colossians 2:20-23.

The urgent question which must be asked is this: Is living in a monastery spiritually healthy and is it biblical?

History bears out that living in religious isolation even with others (corporate isolation) produces: 1. Spiritual elitism. 2. An unbalanced introspection when our focus should be "those things which are above" (Colossians 3:1). 3. A rejection of the world and society which is supposed to be our place of witness according to the Great Commission. 4. A poor example to others. 5. A personal rejection of marriage, which is seen as a higher state.

Some would mistakenly assert that asceticism is a denial of self. Properly understood the denying of self is denying to oneself anything that is unscriptural or contrary to the clear teaching of the Scriptures. Asceticism then is the worst form of self-indulgence. It is self-doing what God condemns.

Cults or cult-like groups continue to impose unbiblical rules on devoted followers with the promise of spiritual merit. That we are justified, that is, declared righteous, by grace, through faith in our Lord Jesus (Romans 5:1, Ephesians 2:8-10) is passed over and never understood. Such groups impose their own man-made rules on their devotees. As John Walvoord and Roy Zuck point out:

"A concomitant of legalism and mysticism is asceticism. It is the pseudo-spiritual position that revels in rules of physical self-denial. **Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!** ... Asceticism is a man-made system of rules (often taken out of context from God's Law) **based on human commands and teachings.** ... Living by **such regulations** or self-made religion has a certain **appearance of wisdom** ... but it has absolutely no **value in restraining sensual indulgence.** 'Sensual indulgence' is literally 'the flesh' (*sarkos*; cf. 2:11, 18). For denying the body its desires merely arouses them, as is well known by many who have tried to lose weight by sticking to rigid diets. Neglecting the body, Paul

argued, does not nourish the spirit."<sup>32</sup>

### LOOKING UNTO HIM

A legalistic asceticism is not the route to either salvation or sanctification. Ironside instructs:

"... you will find holiness in the same Christ in whom you found salvation. As you cease from self-occupation and look up in faith to Him you will be transformed into His own glorious image; you will become like Him as you gaze on His wonderful face. There is no other way by which the flesh may be subdued and your life become one of triumph over the power of sin. Asceticism is but a vain will-o'-the-wisp which, while it promises you victory, will plunge you into the morass of disappointment and defeat. But occupation with Christ risen at God's right hand is the sure way to overcome the lusts of the flesh and to become like Him."<sup>33</sup>

We have all that we need in Jesus. We have been made "partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light" and God, through Christ, has "delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love" (Colossians 1:12-13). As well the Lord Jesus has given us "redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins" (v. 14).

One writer observed:

"Jeremiah denounced the greedy prophets and priests of his day who 'healed the hurt of [God's] people slightly, saying 'Peace, peace!' when there is no peace' (Jer. 6:14). They could neither change themselves nor lead the people to spiritual transformation. So the Lord called the people to follow His way: 'Stand in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where the good way is, and walk in it; then you will find rest for your souls' (v.16)."<sup>34</sup>

### SMALL DEVIATIONS AND CRASH LANDINGS

The actress Carole Lombard was a household name in the 1930s and into the early 1940s, especially because she was married to Clark Gable. Her death in 1942 at age 34 was a national shock. How did this tragedy occur? Lombard boarded a plane after a war bond fund raiser in Indianapolis. After refueling in Las Vegas the small twin engine DC-3 took off. Though flying at the right altitude for some reason the pilot was 13 degrees off course. The plane plowed into a mountain 23 minutes southwest of take off and all 22 passengers were killed instantly.

Heresy does not usually start with a nose dive or a sudden fall, but is more of a drifting by small degrees. At times it is incremental and is an almost undetectable moving off course. The end though is always tragedy and loss. The Bible may scream, "Course correction!" but that is ignored. Truth is being sacrificed and lost. Scripture is our instrument check. It gives us our bearings and keeps us on course. It adjusts us back into proper alignment with truth and with God. It gives us all that is needed for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16). If one is going to aspire to be a Berean and a good apologist, a thorough knowledge of the book of Colossians is a must. We should read it often. This little book takes on many old heresies that anticipate even current mutations of the old error. It is a wonderful preventative and amazingly relevant. As Benny Hinn once wrongly wished for a "Holy Ghost machine gun" to blow off his enemies' heads, Colossians is a weapon for the apologist's arsenal. It will take down not people, but aberrational teachings and false beliefs.

#### Endnotes:

1. Ronald M. Enroth, *Churches That Abuse*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992, pg. 72.
2. Gonzalo Baez-Camargo, *Archaeological Commentary On The Bible*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Company, 1984, pg. 256.

3. Walter Martin, *Rise of the Cults*. Santa Ana, Calif.: Vision House, 1980, pg. 12.
4. Ron Rhodes, *5-Minute Apologetics for Today*. Eugene, Ore.: Harvest House, 2010, Day 68 and 69.
5. Dave Breese, *Know The Marks of Cults*. Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1975, pp. 10-11.
6. Harry A. Ironside, *Lectures on the Epistle to the Colossians*. New York: Loizeaux Brothers, Inc., 1960, pg. 12.
7. Griffith Thomas, *Studies in Colossians and Philemon*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1973, pg. 20.
8. Peter Jones, *The Gnostic Empire Strikes Back*. Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R Publishing, 1992.
9. Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1992, Vol. 2, pg. 445.
10. William Kelly, *Lectures on Philippians and Colossians*. Orange, Calif.: The Ralph E. Welch Foundation, no date, pg. 115.
11. Guy H. King, *Crossing the Border, An Expositional Study of Colossians*. Fort Washington, Pa.: Christian Literature Crusade, 1964, pg. 59.
12. *Lectures on the Epistle to the Colossians*, op. cit., pg. 58.
13. For numerous sample quotations from early Church Fathers, see David Bercolt, *A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs*. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1998, "Gnostics."
14. See James Robinson, *The Nag Hammadi Library*. San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1988; and Philip Jenkins, *Hidden Gospels*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001.
15. *The Nag Hammadi Library*, op. cit., pg. 538.
16. Richard Noll, *The Aryan Christ, The Secret Life of Carl Jung*. New York: Random House, 1997, pp. 3-4.
17. *Ibid.*, pg. 160.
18. See Ben Witherington III, *The Jesus Quest*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1997, pp. 42-45.
19. Frank Mead, *Handbook of Denominations*. New York: Abingdon Press, 1951, pg. 20.
20. *Ibid.*, pp. 51-52.
21. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, Editors, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*. Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1983, pg. 678, bold type and italic in original.
22. Vincent cited in Kenneth Weust, *Weust's Word Studies From the Greek New Testament*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1973, Vol. 1, "Ephesians and Colossians," pg. 212, italics in original.
23. *Studies in Colossians and Philemon*, op. cit., pg. 97, italic in original.
24. See Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Com-

- pany, Vol. 2, Appendix XIII, pp. 748-763.
25. Ron Rhodes, *Angels Among Us*. Eugene, Ore.: Harvest House Publishers, 1994.
26. Benny Hinn, "Personal Testimony Benny Hinn," Orlando Christian Center, Orlando, Fla., July 19, 1987. Tape #A071987, tape on file.
27. Harry A. Ironside, *Timothy Titus and Philemon*. Neptune, N.J.: Loizeaux Brothers, 1964, pp. 97-98.
28. Philip Jenkins, *Jesus Wars*. New York: Harper, 2010, pp. 28, 110-111.
29. *Ibid.*, pg. 111.
30. Marshall Shelley, "From the Editors - Developing spiritual fruit requires being around people — ordinary, ornery people," *Leadership Journal*, posted Jan. 1, 1993. Document available at: [www.christianitytoday.com/le/1993/winter/9314003.html](http://www.christianitytoday.com/le/1993/winter/9314003.html).
31. See Derwas Chitty, *The Desert a City*. Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1999, pp. 1-2, 7-11, 17-19, 31-33, 37-45.
32. *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, op. cit., pg. 679, bold type and italic in original.
33. *Lectures on the Epistle to the Colossians*, op. cit., pg. 116.
34. David McCasland, "Expert Repair," *Our Daily Bread*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Radio Bible Class, July-September 2010, entry for July 28, brackets in original.



## STEADY DRIFT

(continued from page 1)

Paul says of the Gospel, 'It is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes' (Romans 1:16). What is to be gained, then, by trading our greatest source of power — a power that can change our very hearts — for political unity? I am not saying this was the motivation of the signers of *ECT*. I know neither their hearts nor their intentions. But the document compromises the very heart of the biblical doctrine of justification by obviously leaving out the one word that *would* provide a basis for unity between us. Its ambiguity, I fear, is purposeful. While the ability to compromise may be of great benefit in the political world, those who continue to stubbornly believe that God has revealed His truth and His

Gospel see the spiritual damage compromise on this point will bring."<sup>1</sup>

Despite such spiritual liability, well-respected evangelical leaders such as J.I. Packer and Bill Bright began lending support to *ECT*. The floodgate was opened to recognize Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox adherents as fellow Christians.

Colson is the former Nixon White House counsel and Watergate figure. Neuhaus was the son of a Lutheran pastor, and was himself a Lutheran clergyman for 30 years before converting to Catholicism in 1990. He died in January 2009 and was hailed as "an eminent Catholic intellectual." *Time* magazine, in 2005, named him as one of America's 25 most influential Evangelicals. The repercussions of his and Colson's *ECT* movement are significant within evangelical camps.

Since then there has been a steady drift from evangelism targeting

Catholic and Orthodox individuals, especially in missions. Mission organizations are now pointing their big guns at the so-called 10-40 window, which is populated primarily by Muslims. While the Gospel in the last century has found fertile soil in predominately Catholic nations, Muslim countries have proven highly resistant. And while no one would argue against the need for a solid Gospel presence in Muslim nations, that presence must not be at the expense of outreach to Roman Catholics, especially under the mistaken notion that they are already part of the family of God and need no evangelism.

Although such false understanding must be fought, this is already water under the bridge. Today, similar attitudes are being adopted toward other religious groups that are reminiscent of the earlier dialogue between Roman Catholic leaders and Evangelicals.

## MORMONS: JUST ANOTHER CHURCH DOWN THE STREET?

Decades ago, the idea that conservative Protestants would sit down with Roman Catholics to try to find enough common ground to declare one another brothers would have been incredible. It's likely that the next group to be rolled into the fold will be the Latter-day Saints or Mormons. This comment still elicits widespread skepticism, but preliminary dialogue has been taking place since the beginning of the previous decade and some type of formal acceptance is looking increasingly likely.

In 1997, evangelical publisher InterVarsity Press published what author and professor Ron Enroth labeled, "a landmark book." The publication was said to be a conversation between a Mormon and an Evangelical and was entitled, *How Wide the Divide?* The authors were Stephen E. Robinson, professor of ancient Scripture at Brigham Young University and Craig L. Blomberg, professor of New Testament at Denver Seminary. Regretfully, after reading the book, one is left with the impression that the divide is really not that wide after all.<sup>2</sup>

In their book, Robinson and Blomberg offered this petition:

"Might we look forward to the day when youth groups or adult Sunday-school classes from Mormon and Evangelical churches in the same neighborhoods would gather periodically to share their beliefs with each other in love and for the sake of understanding, not proselytizing? (This has already happened in some places.)"<sup>3</sup>

Blomberg, a well-respected New Testament scholar, gave the Mormons incredible and uncritical sanction, maintaining that most Evangelicals received information about Mormons from three sources, and further stated that "None of these sources provide thorough, balanced knowledge of the LDS."<sup>4</sup> He went on to weaken the very foundation of Scripture by argu-

ing in a joint conclusion with Robinson that the Bible has been subject to the same genre of alterations as *The Book of Mormon* and the Mormons' other scriptures:

"We judge that changes or corrections in successive copies and editions of the LDS Scriptures are not a sufficient reason to judge those Scriptures inauthentic, since the biblical texts themselves were subjected to a similar process."<sup>5</sup>

It was little wonder why apologist Don Veinot concluded:

"InterVarsity Press has produced one of the best evangelistic tools the Mormon church has had in a while. When an Evangelical tells a Mormon missionary at his door that Mormonism is not true Christianity, but is a different faith altogether, the missionary will be able to pull from his bag of materials a book by an Evangelical publisher which says on page 195, '...we jointly and sincerely affirm the following foundational propositions of the Christian gospel as we both understand it.'"<sup>6</sup>

More recently the divide continued to narrow as *Christianity Today* published an article in December 2009, stating that Robert Millet, professor at Brigham Young University, has led scholarly teams of Mormons in seventeen closed-door discussions with evangelical teams led by Richard Mouw, president of Fuller Theological Seminary.

While such dialogues are not officially sanctioned by Mormon top leadership, it is of interest that LDS president Thomas Monson permitted 90 evangelical churches in Utah to use the Salt Lake City Tabernacle for revival services in September 2009. At the services Mormons and Evangelicals "enjoyed gospel songs and prayed together."<sup>7</sup> Gregory Johnson, a Conservative Baptist minister and emcee at the revival (called Standing Together), has developed a friendship with Jeffrey R. Holland, who is on the

LDS Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. In addition, he has met in 58 public dialogues with Millet and has helped "broker meetings between evangelical and Mormon college students and initiate the scholarly dialogues involving such evangelical stalwarts as *Christianity Today* editor in chief David Neff, Biola University apologetics professor Craig Hazen, and Denver Seminary New Testament professor Craig Blomberg."<sup>8</sup>

No evangelical leader is ready to proclaim Mormonism as Christian yet, but some have come dangerously close.

### AN UNLIKELY MORMON

Consider what has been said about popular political commentator Glenn Beck and the various venues afforded him from prominent Christian leaders. Beck, who titles his conversion story *An Unlikely Mormon*, was raised Roman Catholic, but prior to his marriage to his second wife, Tania, converted to the Mormon faith in 1999. One biography about Beck says:

"Beck cites the influence of many Mormon friends throughout his life as one of the primary reasons he joined the Mormon Church. His wife, Tania, also told Glenn that she wanted them to share a faith before they were married. At the time, neither Tania nor Glenn were active in any faith, despite Glenn's upbringing in the Catholic Church. At that point, Glenn and Tania went on a 'church tour' to find the faith that they could share as a family. An old friend, Pat Gray, invited Beck to visit the Mormon Church. Despite hesitations, Glenn visited soon after, resulting in he and the family immediately becoming interested. However, Beck struggled with the decision to join the Church — telling God he didn't want to be a 'Mormon', as he describes it. After earnest study and prayer, Glenn knew that he wanted to be baptized and requested that his best friend Pat Gray baptize him."<sup>9</sup>

Beck's political rallies have drawn thousands, but the discouraging aspect is who he is attracting to stand with him to endorse not only his political views, but sanction his spirituality. James Garlow, pastor of the Skyline Wesleyan Church in La Mesa, Calif., said of Beck:

"I have listened and watched very carefully regarding clues to Glenn's spiritual condition. I have interviewed several people who have been with him and have talked very specifically with him regarding his own personal salvation. Glenn has said unequivocally that that he relies on the atonement of Jesus on the cross for forgiveness for his sins, and those are almost the exact words. Few people use the term atonement. Glenn did. On one of his TV shows about a month ago, he laid out the gospel, using his well known blackboard, in the clearest explanation of the crucifixion and the resurrection that I have ever heard on national TV. I called James Robison, and asked, 'Did you hear that?' James said, 'Richard Land [Southern Baptist] just called me and said he never expected to hear the Gospel so clear on secular television.' It was quite remarkable. A few days ago, Glenn laid out America's problems and then concluded, 'We need God!' I have interviewed persons who have talked specifically with Glenn about his personal salvation - persons extremely well known in Christianity - and they have affirmed (using language evangelicals understand), 'Glenn is saved.' He understands receiving Christ as savior. (Note: I have never discussed with Glenn this topic.)"<sup>10</sup>

What Garlow, Robison, and former Southern Baptist Convention president Land fail to take into consideration is what the late cult expert, Walter Martin, labeled, "the language barrier." Martin advises:

"The student of cultism then, must be prepared to scale the

language barrier of terminology. First, he must recognize that it does exist, and second, he must acknowledge the very real fact that unless terms are defined when one is either speaking or reading cult theology, the semantic jungle which the cults have created will envelop him, making difficult, if not impossible, a proper contrast between the teachings of the cults and those of orthodox Christianity."<sup>11</sup>

Beck may be using the right words and terms, but he is merely using "the subtle art of redefinition in the realm of biblical theology."<sup>12</sup> Chrystal Whitt, of the online discernment ministry Slaughter of the Sheep, calls attention to the result of one failing to seek a precise definition of orthodox terminology:

"Garlow pronounces Beck saved just because he uses the right buzz words and says the right things, despite the fact that Mormonism is not Christianity, and the Jesus of Mormonism is not Jesus, the Son of God from Scripture. The Jesus of Mormonism is Lucifer's brother who has no power to atone or save. The Mormon Jesus is a false Jesus. ... Does this mean that Garlow believes there is salvation in the Mormon doctrine? He may not realize it, but this is exactly what he's saying. If Glenn Beck is saved, then anyone in the Mormon church is saved and the Mormon church is just another 'Christian' denomination, it's just a *little off*. See how fast this can snowball?"<sup>13</sup>

Last spring Beck was invited to address the 2010 graduating class at Liberty University's Commencement Ceremony held May 15. If selecting Beck to address the students was not incomprehensible enough, what occurred at the event was even more outrageous. *The Christian Post* reported:

"Conservative radio and TV host Glenn Beck received an honorary

Doctorate of Humanities degree from Liberty University on Saturday just moments before he was to deliver a keynote address to the school's graduating class. The bestowing of the degree by Chancellor Jerry Falwell, Jr., 'kinda wreck[ed]' the opening remarks of the surprised and notably moved Beck, who had gone to college for only one semester. ... Though Beck is a devout Mormon, Liberty leaders decided to tap the popular conservative to speak at Saturday's commencement ceremony because of his 'positive impact on society' — a move that Beck thanked the evangelical school and its chancellor for. 'I understand the courage that it took to invite me to speak for a myriad of reasons — my faith just being one of them,' Beck said. 'And I want you to know that I understand that the invitation to speak today is not meant as an endorsement of my faith. But I also want you to understand that my agreeing to speak here today is an endorsement of your faith.'"<sup>14</sup>

Whether deliberate or not, Beck's influence within Christian circles could be seen as one small step for syncretism, another giant leap for Mormonism. Thus, the once wide divide of Mormonism is becoming even narrower, and just as with Roman Catholics, all the giving is on the side of the Evangelicals. According to the *Christianity Today* article:

"Hush-hush chats occurred between ranking LDS authorities and nationally prominent evangelicals in 2004, 2007, and earlier in 2009, though those familiar with the meetings won't name names. Participants hope for a publicly known conference between leaders, perhaps as early as next year [2010]."<sup>15</sup>

Other factors that are facilitating this cozier relationship with the Latter-day Saint church include Evangelicals promoting Mitt Rom-

ney's run for the presidency (2007-2008) and the so-called ecumenism-in-the-trenches. As Mormons and Evangelicals (and Catholics, for that matter) unite over moral issues such as abortion, they have gained new respect for one another in promoting moral causes in America. David French, who leads the Alliance Defense Fund's Campus Religious Freedom Project, says, "The LDS commitment to core values is one that betters our country, without question."<sup>16</sup> But conservative believers must never confuse morality for biblical Christianity.

While it is pleasing that some who do not know Christ hold moral stances that are consistent with Scripture, one must remember that the Pharisees were highly moral people who led the charge to crucify Jesus. And Satan will promote morality if in doing so the person and work of Christ is perverted or obscured.

One other interesting feature found in the *Christianity Today* article is a survey of various Christian groups responding to the question, "Are Mormons Christians?" Of evangelical Protestants 45% say no, 15% are uncertain and a whopping 40% say yes.<sup>17</sup>

Recognizing that the term "evangelical" is imprecise, and that many Evangelicals (whatever that might mean today) know almost nothing about LDS teachings, and little about their own, the fact that 4 out of 10 Evangelicals see Mormons as Christians is alarming to say the least. Add to this that some evangelical leaders are working hard to bring Mormonism under the Christian flag and the day can't be far behind in which evangelism to Mormons will be seen as it is to Roman Catholics today — unnecessary.

### ISLAMIC VISIONS AND EVANGELISM

An interesting phenomenon of late is the reports of dreams and visions among unbelievers, predominately the Muslims. The Muslim culture has long placed great credence in dreams

and supernatural appearances of angels and genies (just take a look at *The Arabian Nights*), but not Allah, who distances himself from the everyday affairs of this world. In a recent edition of the official magazine for Avant, a conservative evangelical mission, a short article substantiates the mission's support of such visions. The author, Shanna DiPaolo, writes about mission work among Muslims in Central Asia:

"The people of the Dust Valley are in tune with their dream life and they believe that God speaks to them through dreams. Less than one percent of the Central Asian population is Christian; of that slim percentage, team leader Miles believes a spiritual dream factors into nearly every believer's testimony. 'As the team has processed through their conversations with Central Asian believers, we have found that there have been dreams involved in every one of the conversion experiences,' he said. The team has experienced God using dreams in the lives of Central Asians whom they know personally, and they are praying expectantly for more."<sup>18</sup>

The following story is apparently representative:

"[An Islamic woman] was standing at the back of a large crowd of people, all facing a figure who was emanating a brilliant light. She realized the bright figure was Jesus, and watched as He wrapped His arms around the entire crowd. Suddenly, she felt a hand on her back, and startled, she realized that He had included her in His arms. Finding the courage was easy after that. The dream was a clear indicator that Jesus was God's son, and she accepted Him wholeheartedly. She woke up and believed."<sup>19</sup>

As a result of accounts such as these "Team Central Asia continues to pray for more dreams." The author states,

"Only Jesus can call people and convict them of their need for Him. One of the primary ways he does that in the Muslim world is through a dream."<sup>20</sup>

First, let us not be too quick to accept the supposed experiences of anyone with a story. As PFO director Richard Fisher tells us:

"Stories of miraculous conversions of Muslims become a little easier to understand when one remembers the propensity in Arab culture for certain kinds of deception. Lying to maintain the subjective idea of honor is common. In fact, telling untruths under such circumstances is not considered lying. This is not to say that all Arabs are dishonest, but the pressure for a dramatic story accompanied by a material inducement or perks may inspire the storyteller to embellish events. Add to this a propensity for overstatement and a need for acceptance, and one has the recipe for a wild tale."<sup>21</sup>

Additionally, the Christian community has often been embarrassed by promotion of sensational stories that later prove to be phony. Fisher sounds this further warning:

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

baby sacrifices. She was exposed as a habitual liar and pathological attention-seeker. Later, she changed her image and claimed to be a Jewish survivor of the Nazi Holocaust. All of these frauds raked in large amounts of money from book sales and donations. Some continue to do so even though their deception has been exposed."<sup>22</sup>

It is wise to document any such assertion carefully before accepting it as genuine. When relaying such stories one often finds that someone knows someone who knows someone who knows someone who allegedly had a vision. Such reports are impossible to verify and Christians who desire to stand for truth should not be guilty of spreading such yarns as it undermines our credibility as ambassadors for Christ.

Of course debate on the validity of experiences is ultimately a dead-end. Personal experiences can neither be proven nor disproven. When asked to explain such experiences, a biblical response would be to say, "I cannot explain your experiences, but I can show you what the Word of God says on the subject." The Christian faith is not based upon experience or feeling. It is an objective, not subjective, faith based upon fact — the fact of Jesus Christ and His Word. In other words, the Christian faith is based upon observable facts, including the resurrection of Jesus. While our personal experiences may confirm Christianity, historical evidence proves it.

Another problem is the issue of interpretation. Everyone has had dreams that were vivid and sometimes disturbing. It is not so much what we dreamed, but how we interpret our dream that matters. Usually we dismiss dreams as too much pizza or just a random collection of incoherent thoughts. At other times dreams might be a strange reflection of what is on our minds during the day. But to determine that dreams are a revelation from God is a step of interpretation, not of reality. And if someone decided that in fact God had spoken

through a dream, then comes the task of trying to figure out exactly what God is saying. Without the direct aid of the Lord this can be a difficult, if not impossible, assignment. Just ask Daniel.

And while some, when faced with the scriptural evidence about experiences and dreams, will say that God can do anything He wants to do, we can reply, "Yes, but we expect Him to do the things He says He will do."

We find in the Bible what God says He will do and it is vital that we take a look at what God reveals to us there. The biblical picture, both by practice and precept, is that evangelism takes place through the natural means of communication by human beings. The apostles, and others, traveled throughout the known first century world spreading the Gospel through normal conversation and proclamation.

At no place mentioned in the New Testament (concerning the Church age) did the Lord choose to use angels, visions, dreams, or other supernatural means to preach the Gospel. Nor did Paul, or the other evangelists, come across individuals whose hearts had been prepared in advance for the good news through dreams. Whole nations were introduced to Jesus Christ by the direct and normative means of communication without any hint of visions and dreams playing a role.

There are two possible exceptions to this pattern. First is Paul's Damascus Road experience in which Jesus Christ actually appeared to Paul. At any rate, Jesus never proclaims the Gospel to Paul but sends him to Ananias, who apparently does.<sup>23</sup> The second is in reference to Cornelius in Acts 10. In verses three through six, Cornelius, an unsaved Gentile, is given a vision of an angel telling him to send for Peter who would ultimately lay out the Gospel for him.

Visions and dreams occasionally were given to prophetic individuals and the apostles who served as the foundation of the Church (Ephesians

2:20) and the inspired authors of the New Testament. Yet even these visitations were extremely rare, with only thirteen found in all of the book of Acts, eight of which were to Paul or Peter. This leaves only five other individuals in the entire book of Acts who are recorded as having some form of vision from the Lord. Four of those are believers who receive some form of direct communication from God or angels: Philip, Ananias, Agabus, and the Church at Antioch. The only unregenerate person receiving a vision is Cornelius.

There simply does not exist a New Testament model in which the unsaved are hearing from God in a supernatural form. And in this one example an angel does not present the Gospel; salvation is effected later through the witness of a mortal man, not through a vision or dream. Therefore the present-day testimonies concerning dreams and visions in which the Gospel is being shared are without biblical warrant or precept. Even the one example of Cornelius hardly opens the floodgates for the multitude of reports that is being generated.

More importantly, however, is the direct teaching of the New Testament on the proclamation of the Gospel. Not only is there no instance in the New Testament of the Gospel being given through dreams and visions, through the mediation of angels, or through the ascended Lord Jesus Christ Himself, but the Scriptures are clear that the Gospel witness was to be through the mediation of humans.

Romans 10:14-17 lays out the case — no one can call upon the name of the Lord (and thus be saved) if they do not believe in Him. They cannot believe in Him if they have never heard of Him, and they cannot hear without a preacher. That this is a mortal preacher, not an angelic one, is confirmed by the fact that the Lord blesses the feet ("how beautiful") of those who bring the good news. It is not inconsequential that Christ commanded men to travel the globe to make disciples and teach them to

observe His teachings (Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 1:8). Nor is preparatory work (pre-evangelism) to be effected through visions and dreams.

The task of evangelizing and developing disciples is given to the followers of Christ, not to angels. It is accomplished through the proclamation of the good news and instruction through the Word — and this through the ministry of human beings. Paul, in his discourse to the Romans, commands the sending forth of preachers for the proclamation of the Gospel message. Moreover, if Muslims could be converted through dreams and visions, then Christians ought to pray toward that end, call home all our missionaries, get them out of harm's way, and invest our mission dollars elsewhere.

When we couple the direct teaching of the New Testament with the indisputable examples found throughout, one is hard-pressed to make a valid case for the dreams being reported in the Muslim world today. One need not be a cessationist — one who believes that revelation for today has ceased — to see the problems with these supposed dreams. There is virtually no warrant in Scripture for such dreams and visions.

The Muslim world is filled with a belief in supernatural dreams. The Christian will recognize that most of these dreams have no basis in reality, especially because most would be interpreted in relation to an Islamic worldview, which is anti-Christ. But if a Muslim individual claims to have dreamed of Jesus and is now interested in what Jesus has to say, a Christian needs to respond.

One Jordanian missionary gave wise counsel. While he does not believe that Muslims are actually being given supernatural dreams that emanate from God, he treats this as a non-issue. Rather than being sidetracked by a debate over dreams, he uses what they think has taken place as a springboard to give the Gospel. The matter of revelation in general, and dreams and visions in particular,

can wait until a later date. The important subject at that moment is Jesus Christ, not dreams and visions.

But if some of these visions are leading to conversions, one has to wonder if they are indeed coming from God. Again, Scripture provides a clue. Deuteronomy 13:1-5 describes just such a scenario in which a false prophet or dreamer's sign comes true. The Lord tells them to ignore his words for He is testing them to see if they will follow Him or the dreamer. While the current situation may be somewhat different, it could be that Satan is more than willing to give a little ground now if in doing so he will win a bigger battle later.

In this case he might be willing to concede the salvation of a few Muslims if he can convince the evangelical world that God is communicating today apart from the Revelation of Scripture. Once this door is opened he will be able to bring about greater deceptions than if Evangelicals embrace *sola scriptura*.

### THE INSIDER MOVEMENT

On a somewhat related topic, there is much discussion lately among missiologists concerning the "Insider Movement." Once again, most of the attention is focused on the Muslim community and the debate centers on whether Muslims can continue in their customs, and even religion, and yet be true followers of Jesus Christ.

The argument goes something like this: If Jewish believers can stay connected with their Jewish roots, even calling themselves Messianic Jews rather than Christians, why can't Muslims who have trusted in Christ do the same thing?

This question of whether a Jewish believer should consider himself a Messianic Jew rather than a Christian, and stay connected with his Jewish form of worship, is a matter to discuss on another occasion. Nevertheless, for decades such has been seen as acceptable, even preferred, in many evangelical circles and ministries. Now the question has been

extended to Muslims who proclaim Christ.

### CONTEXTUALIZATION

The so-called "Insider Movement(s)" is an important discussion taking place among those attempting to take the Gospel globally. On the table is what level of separation from former pagan religions is required of those who would be disciples of Christ? Can a Buddhist who has professed belief in Jesus Christ retain certain features of Buddhism? If so, which features and how much?

Can he still chant at the Buddhist temples? Can he still reference Buddhist teachings? Can he continue to believe in pantheism or the Noble Eightfold Plan? Most Christians would recognize that there is a cut-off point at which a former Buddhist, now professing Christ, must separate himself from his former religion, but just where is that point? In other words, how far "inside" Buddhism can an individual be and yet still claim to be a Christian?

Complicating all of this is the issue of contextualization, a term first introduced in the early 1970s by the World Council of Churches. Missiologists have long discussed how to proclaim the Gospel of Christ and the Word of God within the context of particular cultures.

Primitive tribal people, for example, who have no concept of monotheism, a loving deity, grace, or faith, need to have the good news and biblical truth explained to them in such a way that they can comprehend it. How the message is explained to such people most likely will be different from that explained to people from a Western Judeo-Christian background. (In more recent years the principles of contextualization have been applied to Western culture as well, as a generation has arisen which is almost completely biblically illiterate and possesses a postmodern worldview.)

There have been two distinct approaches to contextualization in the ensuing years, one controlled by

Scripture and the other by culture. A biblically acceptable form of contextualization retains the authority of Scripture, seeking to understand what the Word teaches and then applying it to a cultural context.

An extreme backlash to this approach sees the culture as final authority, even to the extent of rewriting theology to accommodate religious understandings in a given culture. In the first approach, the Bible is interpreted in its original context and then communicated through appropriate means so as to be understandable in whatever culture it is being taught. In the second approach the Bible is being reinterpreted according to the culture in which it is being presented.

Using the second approach to contextualization, the Buddhist who wants to become a Christian might then be encouraged to retain his Buddhist practices with certain adjustments such as adding a personal God to his system, but not abandoning his pantheism altogether. He might continue his chants, but do so in the name of Jesus. He might worship in a Buddhist temple, but attempt to worship God there. He might try to blend the teachings of Jesus with those of Buddha. In between these two polar-opposite understandings of contextualization is where the debate takes place. And nowhere is that debate hotter than among those reaching out to Islamic people.

### MESSIANIC MUSLIMS

Just as with the Messianic Jews, some so-called Messianic Muslims desire to honor Christ, but in the context of the Islamic community. Critics have been quick to point out, however, that unlike the Jews, who have a common background with Christians, revere the Old Testament as revelation from Yahweh, and worship the same God, these things are not true of the Muslims.

How can a believer in Christ stay in a religious system that worships a different god, believes in different Scriptures (they do recognize the Old Testament but not to the same degree

that Christians or Jews do), and practice religious traditions that would be contrary to the teachings of the Bible? It is not surprising then that, even among those who believe there is a place for Messianic Muslims in the body of Christ, there is wide difference of opinion as to what this actually would look like.

Those sympathetic with Muslim Christians staying within some aspect of the Muslim faith have aligned themselves with one of six categories which describe “various Christ-centered communities (Cs) with which the Muslim-background believers in Jesus (MBBS) identify, and the ways they understand their identity.”<sup>24</sup>

It should be recognizable to the reader that the degree the culture controls the contextual process increases as the C levels increase. Joseph Cumming, in a *Christianity Today* article, describes these six categories as such:

“C1: MBBS in churches radically different from their own culture, where worship is in a language other than their mother tongue.”<sup>25</sup>

These would include not only Protestant and evangelical churches, but Roman Catholic and Orthodox as well. Cumming adds:

“C2: Same as C1, but worship is in the MBBS’ mother tongue.”<sup>26</sup>

“C3: MBBS in culturally indigenous Christian churches that avoid cultural forms seen as ‘Islamic.’”<sup>27</sup>

“C4: MBBS in culturally indigenous congregations that retain biblically permissible Islamic forms (e.g., prostrating in prayer),<sup>28</sup> investing these with biblical meaning. They may call themselves something other than Christians (e.g., ‘followers of Jesus’), but do not see themselves as Muslims.”<sup>29</sup>

This C4 grouping calls themselves followers of Isa, the Qur’an’s name for Jesus.

“C5: Muslims who follow Jesus as Lord and Savior in fellowships of like-minded believers within the Muslim community, continuing to identify culturally and officially as Muslims.”<sup>30</sup>

Chet Plimpton tells us that the “primary difference” with this group from the C4s is that “C5 believers identify themselves as ‘Muslim followers of Jesus.’”<sup>31</sup> Plimpton also writes, “In C5, believers remain legally and socially within Islam. Islamic theology which is thought to be incompatible with the Christian faith is supposedly rejected, or reinterpreted.”<sup>32</sup>

However, some C5s embrace all the teachings of Muhammad and will even repeat the *Shahadah*, “There is no God but God (Allah) and Muhammad is his prophet.”<sup>33</sup>

Cumming concludes his MBBS groups with:

“C6: Secret/underground believers.”<sup>34</sup>

Plimpton further informs us that:

“Supposedly many come to Christ through dreams, visions, and miracles, as well as through radio broadcasts, tracts, Christian witness while abroad, or by reading the Bible. C6 believers are seen as Muslims by the Muslim community and see themselves as Muslims as well.”<sup>35</sup>

Most of the attention swirls around C4 and C5. C4s are basically imitating the pattern of Messianic Jews as they follow Christ, but try to do so as cultural Muslims. This is problematic due to the wide disconnect between the teachings of Christ and the Islamic faith, but at least they no longer view themselves as Muslims. However, the C5s want to retain all (or most) aspects of Islamic culture and religion and at the same time proclaim Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

The name of the game here is syncretism — combining the truth of Christ and His Word with the false teachings of other religions. Syncre-

tism is vastly popular in a pluralistic world and gaining favor among not only smorgasbord Americans (who pick and choose from a variety of religions and philosophies to create their own personalized belief systems), but also among Africans who are happy to add Jesus to their tribal traditions and Asians (such as South Koreans) who infuse Jesus into their Buddhist worldview. In each situation Jesus is embraced as a means to an end, but false gods and religious traditions contrary to the Scriptures are not being abandoned.

One would have to wonder if the outcome should have been different when Elijah called out the prophets of Baal in 1 Kings 18. Elijah, if you recall, did not have compromise in his makeup. If the LORD is God, serve Him, Elijah challenged, but if Baal is God then serve him. It was time to choose. When all the dust had settled there was little question who the real God was, but Elijah was in no mood to call a conference and see if the prophets of Baal would be at least willing to add Yahweh to their pantheon. He saw them as dangerous enemies of Yahweh and ordered their execution.

Of course, no one is calling for the execution of the leaders of false religions today, but Christians could at least draw a line in the sand. Maybe John the Baptist would be a better model for us to emulate. He practiced the same basic faith as the Pharisees of his day, but when he saw their perversion of truth he demanded repentance. Jesus did the same. If the Jews were to follow Jesus Christ it meant leaving behind what they had trusted in before for belief in Christ (Luke 9:23-26). Then there was Paul who preached everywhere the necessity of turning from idols and turning to the true Lord and Savior (Acts 26:18-20). There is never a hint in the Word that it is acceptable to add God or Christ to a false religious system.

Following Christ did not always mean that one had to abandon all former customs and traditions, for some of those matter very little (see

Romans 14). But there was never any question that to follow Christ meant separation from former belief systems. Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 6:15-17:

“And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. ... Therefore ‘Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord.’”

Some of the areas of perceived compromise on the part of the C5s include:

**Scripture:** C5s may add a new reverence to the Bible, but they continue to read and venerate the Qur’an as well. Some are claiming that the Qur’an can be interpreted in ways that do not contradict the teaching of the Bible, but a great deal of imagination would have to be used to come to that conclusion.

**Evangelism:** No doubt much of the motivation behind C5 methodology stems from the resistance of Muslim people to the Gospel. Because historically so few have come to Christ from an Islamic background sincere believers are searching for new means of reaching this community.

One method gaining popularity is to invite Muslims to read the Qur’an together about Jesus. Known as the Camel Method (because of Arab tradition that states the camel knows a secret name for God and the Christian witness is revealing Jesus as that name), it relies totally on the Qur’an rather than Scripture. This is problematic at best, for it turns from God’s revealed Scriptures to a sourcebook of a false religion. Yet the Bible claims faith comes through hearing the Word of God (Romans 10:17). This method also, directly or indirectly, places the Qur’an on equal footing with the Bible.

**God:** While Christians and Jews can agree on the inspiration of the Old Testament and that Yahweh is the one and only God, C5s would have to

equate Allah with Yahweh. Neither the historical origin of Allah nor the teachings of Islam would allow for such identity.

**Christ:** The essential divide between Christianity and Old Testament Judaism is the Messianic claim of Christ. Similarly, Islam recognizes Jesus as a great prophet, but not the Messiah and certainly not God. How the C5s can hope to continue in the Muslim faith with its false view of Christ is a mystery.

**Muhammad:** For the Islamic people, Muhammad as their great prophet is non-negotiable. For C5 believers to accept the false teachings of Muhammad is heresy and for them to attempt to reinterpret his role in the Islamic faith is deceitful.

## CONCLUSION

There are wide differences of definition and application within the Insider Movements; the above has merely been an introduction to the discussion. At stake, however, is whether and to what degree an individual can remain within his former false religion and still legitimately be considered a disciple of Christ. While certain cultural and traditional practices can be viewed as neutral, certainly the core issues such as the Gospel, Scripture, the identity of God, and the person and work of Christ cannot be compromised.

## Endnotes:

1. James R. White, *The Roman Catholic Controversy*. Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1996, pg. 223, italics in original.
2. For a further review of *How Wide the Divide*, see Stephen F. Cannon, “Still Wide the Divide - A Critical Analysis of a Mormon and an Evangelical in Dialogue,” *The Quarterly Journal*, October-December 1997, pp. 1, 12-18.
3. Craig L. Blomberg and Stephen E. Robinson, *How Wide the Divide?* Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1997, pg. 191.
4. *Ibid.*, pg. 22.
5. *Ibid.*, pg. 75.
6. L.L. (Don) Veinot, “Why the Divide?,” *Midwest Christian Outreach, Inc. Journal*, July/August 1997, pg. 9, ellipsis in original.

7. Richard N. Ostling, "Most Improbable Dialogue," *Christianity Today* magazine online edition, 10/30/09. Document available at: [www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2009/november/11.23.html](http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2009/november/11.23.html).
8. Ibid.
9. Webpage, "Is Glenn Beck Mormon?" Document available at: [www.glennbeckmormon.com/](http://www.glennbeckmormon.com/). Also see "Glenn Beck" from Wikipedia. Document available at: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glenn\\_Beck](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glenn_Beck).
10. Jim Garlow, "Evangelicals and Glenn Beck," brackets in original. Document available at: [www.onenewsnow.com/Perspectives/Default.aspx?id=1144072](http://www.onenewsnow.com/Perspectives/Default.aspx?id=1144072).
11. Walter R. Martin, *The Kingdom of the Cults*. Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, Inc., Publishers, 1965, pg. 18.
12. Ibid., pg. 19.
13. Chrystal Whitt, "Evangelicals and Glenn Beck," August 28, 2010, italics in original. Document available at: [www.slaughteringthesheep.wordpress.com/2010/08/28/evangelicals-and-glenn-beck/](http://www.slaughteringthesheep.wordpress.com/2010/08/28/evangelicals-and-glenn-beck/).
14. Eric Young, "Liberty U Bestows Honorary Degree on Glenn Beck," *The Christian Post*, May 17, 2010. Document available at: [www.christianpost.com/article/20100517/liberty-u-bestows-glenn-beck-with-honorary-degree](http://www.christianpost.com/article/20100517/liberty-u-bestows-glenn-beck-with-honorary-degree).
15. "Most Improbable Dialogue," op. cit.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid.
18. Shanna DiPaolo, "Dreams Over the Dust Valley," *Avant* magazine, Spring 2009, pg. 15.
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid.
21. G. Richard Fisher, "Don't You Believe It," *The Quarterly Journal*, January-March 2008, pg. 2.
22. Ibid.
23. Some may cite Galatians 1:12 to the contrary. I believe this is a reference to what God taught Paul during the three years in Arabia (Galatians 1:17-18), which of course included the details of the Gospel. But at Paul's conversion we have no indication that the Lord ever gave him the Gospel at that point.
24. Joseph Cumming, "Muslim Followers of Jesus?," *Christianity Today*, December 2009, pg. 34. This article also available online at: [www.christianitytoday.com/globalconversation/december2009/index.html](http://www.christianitytoday.com/globalconversation/december2009/index.html).
25. Ibid., bold type in original.
26. Ibid., bold type in original.
27. Ibid., bold type in original.
28. Other Islamic forms would include keeping the fast, avoiding pork and alcohol, washing before prayer, and not keeping dogs as pets.
29. "Muslim Followers of Jesus?," op. cit., pg. 34, bold type in original.
30. Ibid., bold type in original.
31. Taken from a very helpful unpublished paper, "Synopsis — Insider Movements," written by Chet Plimpton for New Tribes Missions, pg. 6. Copy on file.
32. Ibid.
33. Ibid., pg. 7.
34. "Muslim Followers of Jesus?," op. cit., pg. 34, bold type in original.
35. "Synopsis — Insider Movements," op. cit., pg. 6.



## EDITORIALS

(continued from page 2)

judge in a righteous way (that is, after having done self judgment and having all the facts) when he says, "judge with righteous judgment" in John 7:24. Jesus applauded the Ephesian church because they tested false teachers and would not put up with those who were evil (Revelation 2:2). On the other hand, the church at Pergamum was chided and warned because its members would not judge false doctrine (Revelation 2:15-16).

Paul could not have been clearer when it came to religious teaching and behavior within the Church: "For what have I to do with judging those also who are outside? *Do you not judge those who are inside?*" (1 Corinthians 5:12, emphasis added). He is saying that we had better judge or the Church will become corrupt. Judge now or God will judge us later.

The Apostle Paul says that this judging, evaluating, and discerning is every believer's job as he commands, "Test all things; hold fast what is good" (1 Thessalonians 5:21).

We don't have to be mean and strident to be Bereans. We can carry on the work of discernment in a loving and compassionate way as we test error and lay out truth. Members of other religions are quick to criticize Christianity. They deny biblical truth with impunity and their brashness is ignored.

On the Temple Mount in Jerusalem is one of the most recognized buildings in the world. The octagonal struc-

ture is called the Dome of the Rock (built in A.D. 691) and it is a gold domed memorial to Mohammed's fabled flight to heaven on his winged steed Barak (or Baruk). I have been inside the Dome of the Rock probably twenty times and have researched the very obvious writing around the interior of the dome. Around the inside band are gold letters written in Cufic (Arabic calligraphy) and referring to Jesus Christ. It is not flattering and is an anti-Trinitarian rant: "The Messiah Jesus is only the son of Mary, the ambassador of God, and his Word which he deposited in Mary. Believe then in God and his ambassador, and do not maintain there are three. If you refrain from this it will be better for you. God is one, and far be it from him that he should have a son. ... and he is all-sufficient within himself. ... God is not so constituted that he could have a son; be that far from him" (Karl Baedeker, *Palestine and Syria, Handbook For Travelers*, pg. 55). Here then is an obvious criticism against the very foundation of Christianity, that is, the deity of Jesus. No voices are heard and no one is correcting this intolerance. The political correctness seems to only work one way.

So what used to be obvious is no longer obvious. The unsung heroes are really the apologists and Bereans of today. They may be ignored, marginalized, and criticized, but their voices will never be silent. They really care. They care for God's truth. They care for God's people. They care because they know the destruction that error and false teachings bring. What may not be obvious now will one day be obvious when the Lord issues the "well done" to those who have cared for His truth.

—GRF

The Website also has available hundreds of other testimonials by individual Mormons, as well as allows visitors to engage in an online chat with an LDS missionary, locate a local Mormon congregation, or read more about what the church believes.

Scott Swofford, the director of mormon.org, says, "We hope the spots portray Mormons as diverse people who



*Billboards such as the one pictured here along high traffic areas supplement the mormon.org television media campaign.*

are united in their belief in Jesus Christ. ... We hope [Americans] see that Mormons are friendly, charitable, giving to others." Swofford said after the advertisements began airing, their Website experienced "huge traffic jumps."

Pittsburgh was another city chosen as a test site. While Pittsburgh has a very low percentage of Latter-day Saints, according to Swofford the city was targeted because the television market was small enough to be economically feasible, but large enough to be able to study the impact of the advertisements.

A few specifics about the latest ad campaign are strange — especially by Mormon standards. First, each of the TV testimonials speaks of God in very general terms. The references to God are vague and more at home with a "higher power" concept of deity. One testimony even allows for diverse opinions as to one's understanding of God. Additionally, no mention of Jesus — even the Mormon version of Christ — is presented. Another oddity is the commercial which introduces a Kansas mother of three who comments, "I believe a woman's place is actually not in the kitchen because, in this family, the dad is a far better cook." Such a remark is foreign to the fundamental teachings of Mormonism which, despite its renouncing polygamy, remains male-dominated and clearly oppressive to women.

The ads are emphatic in their proclamation, "And I'm a Mormon." Throughout the close of the 20th century and

into the new millennium, Latter-day Saints have tried in earnest to dispose of the Mormon nickname. Missionaries, when formerly asked if they were Mormons, would most often reply, "No, we are Christians," or "No, we are Latter-day Saints." The new ad campaign appears to be reversing the effort to rid the Mormon moniker.

Joanna Brooks, a Latter-day Saint from San Diego, says that church-based Websites may become an alternative to the traditional Mormon missionary. "Those missionaries who have gone door to door in white shirts and ties since the 1950s have been a remarkably effective way to brand ourselves. But we have outgrown that brand," she told the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. However, according to Mr. Swofford, the Internet and electronic media will assist current Mormon missionaries, not replace them.

—MKG

## CRYSTAL CATHEDRAL SEEKS BANKRUPTCY PROTECTION

Following months of struggling to prevail over a mounting debt estimated to be in excess of \$43 million, the Crystal Cathedral filed for bankruptcy under Chapter 11. The 10,000 member megachurch, founded in 1955 by the Rev. Robert H. Schuller, filed for the legal protection against its creditors in a Southern California court last October.

Reports indicate that in addition to a \$36 million mortgage, \$7.5 million is still owed to hundreds of vendors who had provided supplies and services for its annual Easter and Christmas pageants. Because of the massive debt owed to these merchants, the church was forced to cancel the 2010 installment of its "Glory of Easter" pageant. However, at the time the bankruptcy announcement was made, tickets were being sold online for the 2010 "Glory of Christmas" pageant.

According to the Associated Press, "The church was negotiating a repayment plan with vendors, but several filed lawsuits seeking quicker payment, which prompted a coalition formed by creditors to fall apart, church officials said."

The church currently receives nearly \$2 million in monthly donations and support. It is now limiting itself to spend only the amount it receives, thereby avoiding credit and further adding to its debt. A spokesman for the church said that they still hope to repay in full all the monies owed the numerous vendors.

Leaders for the Crystal Cathedral said that its weekly Sunday services, along with its television broadcast, "Hour of Power," will continue while in bankruptcy.

In June 2009, Schuller turned the leadership of the church over to his eldest daughter, Sheila Schuller

Coleman. He had earlier installed his son, Robert A., to the leadership role, but in October 2008, Schuller removed his son as a result of a family rift citing a “lack of shared vision” for the ministry.

—MKG

## **BICKLE'S MINISTRY HIT WITH TRADEMARK LAWSUIT**

The hyper-Charismatic prophetic ministry founded by Mike Bickle, originally known as Kansas City Fellowship, has identified itself by a number of different names, including Metro Vineyard Fellowship, Metro Christian Fellowship, and IHOP (International House of Prayer). However, that latter designation, which has been used for the past ten years, has now landed the church in a legal battle.

In September, the International House of Pancakes, based in Glendale, Calif., and which created the IHOP logo, filed a lawsuit for trademark dilution and infringement in U.S. District Court in Los Angeles against the Kansas City-based church. The restaurant chain has 1,476 restaurants across the United States and has been using the IHOP acronym since 1973. The lawsuit argues that the church's use of IHOP causes “great and irreparable injury and confuses the public” and that the church also seeks to draw from the stature and success of the restaurant chain.

Patrick Lenow, a spokesman for the IHOP restaurants, said the lawsuit was filed after several requests made to the church to stop using the acronym trademark were ignored. The litigation is only seeking a termination of the church's use of the IHOP acronym, and to recover attorney fees and court costs. It is not seeking monetary damages. Lenow said that the reason that the restaurant chain has moved forward with a lawsuit is because the church is expanding — including locations in California — and now some of the branches are serving food.

—MKG

## **WASHINGTON TIMES SAVED FROM EXTINCTION**

Several recent news reports have divulged that the children of the Rev. Sun Myung Moon have been vying for control of the various commercial enterprises owned by the aging Unification Church leader, including real estate and his fishing businesses.

The family strife gained national attention last August when Moon took back control of the *Washington Times*,

the conservative newspaper in our nation's capital which he founded in 1982. In 2006, the aging Moon turned control of the newspaper over to his eldest son, Preston Moon (also known as Hyun Jin Nim).

According to an article in the *Washington Post*, a battle between Preston and his younger brother, Justin Moon (also known as Kook Jin Nim), erupted in 2008. “Preston tried to gain control of another church-supported company, UCI, which has about \$3 billion in real estate and fishing assets. In retaliation, Justin, who runs many of the family's businesses in South Korea and Japan, slashed the Times' annual \$35 million subsidy, forcing the paper into a series of layoffs. The newspaper has lost hundreds of millions of dollars since its founding, according to former Times executives,” the *Post* reported. Recent rumors as to the fate of the publication appeared to have better circulation than the newspaper itself.

Following a year of extreme hardship for the newspaper, including escalating financial debt, staff cuts of more than 50 percent, the ousting of key executives, and a severe decline in circulation, the publication staved off extinction when it was revealed that friends of Moon “agreed to acquire the paper for just \$1 and assumption of most of its debt.” *U.S. News & World Report* attributed the information about the sale of the paper to an internal memo and further stated the memo contradicted rumors that Moon was spending tens of millions of dollars to buy back and regain control of the *Washington Times*.

The newspaper sold to News World Media Development, a company headed by Douglas M. Joo. Joo was the former *Times* chairman who was ousted in late 2009 by Preston Moon.

—MKG

## **MASTERS' FOUNDATION DENIED CHURCH STATUS**

According to the Internal Revenue Service, worship services conducted by ministries solely via radio or the Internet does not allow for church status. A U.S. Circuit Court agrees.

Roy Masters and his Foundation of Human Understanding challenged an IRS decision that the organization failed to meet the legal definition of a church. The U.S. Court of Federal Claims concurred with the IRS opinion, and then in August, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit unanimously upheld the lower court's ruling. It agreed that the Foundation's “electronic ministry” does not meet the standards which define an organized church.

According to Federal Circuit Judge William Bryson, “The fact that all the listeners simultaneously received

the Foundation's message over the radio or Internet does not mean that those members associated with each other and worshiped communally."

The Foundation of Human Understanding was granted tax-exempt status by the IRS as a non-profit organization in 1965. In 1983, the Foundation first made an application to be identified as a church. That initial request was denied by the IRS, but later overruled by a U.S. Tax Court, which ruled that the Foundation provided "regular religious services for established congregations."

In the 1980s, Masters' group was holding regular services in ministry-owned buildings in Los Angeles and Grants Pass, Ore. A decade later, those buildings were sold and the Foundation began using radio and the Internet to reach its followers. In 2001, the Foundation was investigated by the IRS, and while it was allowed to keep its tax-exempt status, it was prohibited from being classified as a church. Tax-exempt organizations must file annual reports with the IRS and operate under more strict regulations than churches.

Masters established the Foundation of Human Understanding in 1963. The organization is said to be "based upon Judeo-Christian beliefs and the doctrine and teachings of its founder." Critics see Masters and his Foundation as cultivating an attitude that disowns Christianity and claims to help man connect with his inner self to solve his problems.

—MKG

## BOOKS IN REVIEW

(continued from page 24)

into this world with corrupt and defiled hearts (Mark 7:21-23). We do evil things because we are evil, unclean, and unpurified. We do what we do because we are what we are — corrupt and defiled within (Eph. 2:3)" (pg. 88).

Each chapter concludes with a series of questions for application and discussion. These questions serve as a recapitulation of the important concepts stated in the chapter. A challenge for Scripture memorization is also stressed within these summary questions.

The book starts well, remains engaging, and concludes powerfully. The chapter which addresses that God's absolute justice (His judgment of sin) necessitates hell speaks against annihilationists and speaks to just how awful sin is. The final chapter is an excellent analysis of the Apostle Peter's failure (Matthew 26) and a strong admonition against neglect of a vigorous prayer life.

Wayne and Joshua Mack won't find themselves being invited as guests on Oprah. While the talk show superstar likes to discuss all sorts of life's problems and then suggests all sorts of causes and solutions for these problems, sin is never a reason she offers. Apathy toward sin is never an option, but for the Christian it is a matter which should daily be in their crosshairs with an aim to killing the sin within. This book will enlighten and enable the believer with a biblical approach to this goal.

—MKG

### PERSONAL FREEDOM OUTREACH — STATEMENT OF BELIEF

- I. THE BIBLE AS THE DIVINELY INSPIRED, INERRANT WORD OF GOD: IT IS IN ITS ENTIRETY THE SOLE AUTHORITY FOR ALL MATTERS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF AND PRACTICE.
- II. THE ONE TRUE GOD. IN THE ONE TRUE GOD THERE EXIST THREE PERSONS, BEING: THE FATHER, THE SON JESUS CHRIST, AND THE HOLY SPIRIT.
- III. JESUS CHRIST: HIS DEITY, HUMANITY, VIRGIN BIRTH, SINLESSNESS, DEATH AND BODILY RESURRECTION; WHO WILL PERSONALLY AND VISIBLY RETURN AGAIN TO EARTH.
- IV. THE PERSONALITY AND DEITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.
- V. THE EXISTENCE AND PERSONALITY OF SATAN, HIS TOTAL OPPOSITION TO GOD, AND HIS POWER OVER THE UNREGENERATE.
- VI. THE COMPLETE AND TOTAL DEPRAVITY OF ALL MEN WHICH MAKES THEM HOPELESSLY LOST WITHOUT THE NEW BIRTH OBTAINABLE THROUGH FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST.
- VII. THE FINAL ESTATE OF MAN: FOR THE SAVED, EVERLASTING LIFE IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD AND FOR THE UNSAVED, EVERLASTING PUNISHMENT BECAUSE OF THEIR UNBELIEF.
- VIII. THE GOSPEL BY WHICH WE ARE SAVED BEING SUMMED IN THE DEATH, BURIAL AND RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.
- IX. THE CHURCH BEING THE BODY OF CHRIST, UNITED IN THE HOLY SPIRIT, CONSISTING OF THOSE WHO HAVE RECEIVED JESUS CHRIST AS SAVIOR. A LOCAL CHURCH IS AN ORGANIZED ASSEMBLY OF BELIEVERS UNITED FOR THE PURPOSE OF CARRYING OUT THE GREAT COMMISSION OF CHRIST.
- X. THE GREAT COMMISSION OF CHRIST BEING TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO ALL MEN, BAPTIZING AND DISCIPLING THOSE WHO HAVE BELIEVED.



# Books in Review

## ONE-MINUTE ANSWERS TO SKEPTICS

by Charlie H. Campbell

Harvest House Publishers, 122 pages, \$10.99

This volume is a pithy collection of responses to many of the difficult questions about the Christian faith posed by unbelievers, inquisitors, skeptics, and critics. It contains 40 questions and their respective answers to a variety of subjects, including Scripture, the exclusivism of Christianity, world religions, social issues, and evolution.

Campbell writes in his Introduction:

“What follows in this book are examples of ways you can answer a variety of questions in less than a minute. When someone asks me, ‘What evidence do you have that the Bible is actually true?’ I do not attempt to walk them through a whole pile of evidence (‘The *eighth* reason is...’). I try to answer their question in less than a minute or two. Frankly, that is all the time people often have before their cell phone rings, the baby starts crying, or they have to get back to work” (pg. 16).

Each of the 40 questions is answered in two pages or less. And nearly all entries also conclude with a supplemental quotation or two germane to the subject. These excerpts draw from a variety of perspectives, from Scripture verses to popular apologists and scholars to scientists to even critics themselves. While these citations are relevant and make for interesting reading, one may question a few who are quoted. For example, on page 56 Peter Kreeft is favorably cited. Kreeft is a Roman Catholic who promotes a quasi-Universalism.

The active Bible student may well be familiar with most of the arguments set forth in the book. However, that should not be a deterrent as even the seasoned apologist can develop and learn from the quick and easy style Campbell sets forth.

The simplicity of the book is a real advantage. Many of the volumes published and currently available which deal with answering critics and skeptics can be complicated and esoteric. As one reviewer said of this volume,

“A simple answer that you can remember is more useful than a complex answer that you can’t quite recall.”

The book can easily be read in a single sitting in less than two hours. So skip that movie or television program and invest the time to hone your apologetic and evangelism skills by reading *One-Minute Answers to Skeptics*.

—MKG

## A FIGHT TO THE DEATH

by Wayne A. Mack with Joshua Mack

P&R Publishing, 176 pages, \$10.99

This book is a tremendous resource to help the believer in the area of progressive biblical sanctification. A proper understanding of sin is not only crucial, but essential for the Christian. As Wayne Mack and his son, Joshua, point out, the Bible will be a confusing book if we do not understand sin. Likewise, most problems in our churches arise because of a wrong assessment of sin. Ignorance is not bliss, the Macks write, when it comes to sin.

The first section of the book examines “Why Fight Sin?” while the second, longer section, outlines “How to Fight Sin.” It is both practical and, most importantly, *biblical*. Sin is defined and described, as well as the tragic results that occur when one becomes a slave to sin. Yet it is a book with tremendous hope.

Paramount, the Macks tell us, is the Holy Spirit working in us which makes our efforts at mortifying the flesh successful. We are told what putting sin to death is, what it is not, and what it means to “walk in the Spirit.”

In today’s Christian circles misinformation about sin, rather than sound biblical teaching, is prevalent. Resources which offer quick fix strategies in response to sin often monopolize book sales. Also many believers think superficially about their sin. The Church has become an assembly of men and women who are desensitized to sin. Yet the Christian life is an ongoing, life and death struggle against the world, the flesh, and the devil.

The Macks speak against prevailing views when they write “that the corruption of sin goes far beyond our actions; it goes to our very hearts. We are defiled by what is already in us, not by what happens around us. Evil propensities come from within because we come

(continues on page 23)

**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.