

# The Quarterly Journal



THE NEWSLETTER PUBLICATION OF PERSONAL FREEDOM OUTREACH

VOL. 32, NO. 2

APRIL-JUNE 2012

EDITOR: KEITH A. MORSE

## When Grace Is No Longer Amazing The Tragic Life and Legacy of Brennan Manning

by G. Richard Fisher

The Apostle Paul instructed his convert and helper, Titus: "They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work" (Titus 1:16).

Brennan Manning was born in Brooklyn, N.Y., on April 24, 1934. He was baptized into the Roman Catholic Church as Richard Francis Xavier Manning. He says he was a disappointment to his mother, who wanted a girl. He continued in his adult life to hold onto and be driven by that unhealthy impression. Manning was ordained a Franciscan priest in 1963. He emerged as a very prolific writer, but to many he was an enigma. He has lived a long and tortured life, the agony of which was brought on mainly by no one but himself.

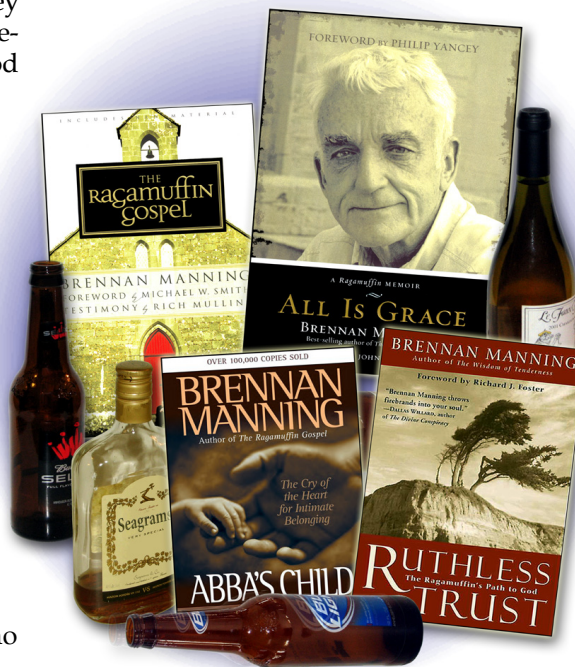
Manning's writings are popular because he writes well and can turn a phrase, but over the years many have criticized his aberrant views.<sup>1</sup> But not all within the evangelical camp express caution about Manning. For example, popular author and speaker

Beth Moore tells her followers that Manning "minister[s] to us out of his wealth of experience" and that "What God has used Manning to bring to the mixed bag of our generation of believers may be a gift without parallel."<sup>2</sup>

Manning often seems indifferent about gross sins and too often comes across as a lone ranger. He may have written well, but he has lived horribly and sinfully with no apparent concern for his shameful conduct.

He is now a defunct Roman Catholic priest who also had a broken marriage which ended in divorce. As an ex-priest he has a love/hate relationship with the Catholic Church. It can be added to all that a lifetime of admitted alcohol addiction, wildly skewed beliefs, and his distorted understanding of

(continues on page 11)



### Inside this Issue:

THE MADNESS AND MUDDLE OF MYSTICISM .....	PAGE 2
NEW ATHEISM'S HITCHENS DIES .....	PAGE 3
THE BIG LIE: MEN AND THEIR CLAIMS OF DEITY .....	PAGE 4

---

---

# Editorials

---

---

## THE MADNESS AND MUDDLE OF MYSTICISM

No one can deny that we are living in an age of feelings. Perhaps it could be said that the new "11th Commandment" is "Thou shalt feel good at all times."

And that feeling orientation — at least within the Church — can easily become mysticism. René Descartes, the 17th-century French philosopher, said, "I think, therefore I am." But today's mystics might well say, "I feel, therefore I am."

The contemporary emblem for the average Christian could be the roller coaster: up one instance, down the next. Churches today have adopted the method of the Athenians (found in Acts 17:21), constantly hearing of and telling about new fads to generate new feelings.

This mind-set often draws charlatans who impose old gags with new twists on naive thrill-seekers. Instead of really praying, the flock is preyed upon. Discernment is exchanged for tingles.

Truth to a mystic is not objective. It is rather what is happening to me now. What happens now is the only thing that matters and the only thing that is true. Mysticism is sensual, rather than cognitive. It is emotional, rather than thoughtful. It wants emotions, not biblical precision. It wants a spiritual Disney World, not doctrine. It cares little for biblical truth and feelings that

may follow from truth, but wants feelings written large and leading out in front — truth aside.

Truth is no longer the judge of feelings in mysticism, but the reverse. And so there are multitudes of conflicting private revelations abounding in the Church today longing to be the latest fad or book trend. Mystics mistake imagination for revelation and an individual's feelings become God to them. We hear the constant banter of people saying, "God told me," or "God led me," or "God spoke to me," all because something made them feel good. Their delusions are often mistaken for the voice of God. They confuse impressions for divine insight.

There are no parameters or limits for mysticism, so in the Middle Ages mystical pursuits degenerated into madness and in the practice of passion — or suffering — mysticism. This was the belief that feeling pain, and not pleasure, was the highest goal. The mystics believed one could achieve spirituality through starvation and the worst forms of self-torture and mutilation. Inflicting pain and hurting oneself was seen as the epitome of spirituality. "Feel" was still the operative word at that time, but feeling bad was good!

This period of passion mysticism is well documented by church historians such as Philip Schaff. (See, for example, Schaff's *History of the Christian Church*, Volume 6, and *The Desert a City* by Derwas Chitty. Chitty, a

(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		

© 2012 – 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.

## NEW ATHEISM'S HITCHENS DIES

One of the protagonists of the new atheism movement has died. Journalist and polemicist Christopher Hitchens died of pneumonia on Dec. 15 in Houston, at the age of 62. Hitchens had been diagnosed with esophageal cancer in 2010.

The Christian community gained a greater awareness of Hitchens in 2007 upon the publication of his book, *God Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything*. Yet it was not just the Christian faith that he targeted. Hitchens saw the radical elements of Islam as a mortal danger, and was an unapologetic supporter of the Iraq war. The socialist-turned-Marxist took aim at what he saw as abusers of political power, including Bill Clinton and Henry Kissinger.

Hitchens' criticisms knew no bounds as, according to his friend and *Vanity Fair* magazine editor Graydon Carter, Mother Teresa was "at the top of the list" of "the things that Christopher has taken on." Hitchens, in 1994, co-authored and narrated a documentary about the Roman Catholic saint calling her *Hell's Angel*. More recently, in a 2007 *Newsweek* article, he labeled her a "troubled and miserable lady." He was also a persistent advocate for the Palestinian cause.

Years of alcohol and heavy tobacco use apparently took its toll in the summer of 2010 when he was diagnosed with esophageal cancer. Despite his imminent appointment with death, "He gave early notice that there would be no deathbed conversion to religion. If we ever hear of such a thing, he advised, we should attribute it to sickness, dementia or drugs," the online version of the British publication *The Guardian* reported.

—MKG

Crystal Cathedral for \$57.5 million. It apparently was the buyer Schuller wanted. A *USA Today* article, citing the *Los Angeles Times*, stated that Schuller sent a letter to the court in which he "said he could not abide the thought that Chapman University, which had tried to buy the 40-acre facility, might someday use the cathedral for non-religious purposes."

The church's board had on two separate occasions selected Chapman University as its preferred buyer. The evening prior to the judge's ruling, the board altered its previous plan, because board members became "uncomfortable with Chapman's lease terms and its future plans for the campus," according to *The Orange County Register*. The university, which is associated with the Disciples of Christ denomination, offered as much as \$59 million according to reports.

Some members of the Crystal Cathedral also are not exhibiting much positive thinking. One member said, "The cathedral's administration and the board have really stripped us of our ministry. In the end, it was all about the money. The congregants have lost their ministry." Another member called the developments "the death of the church," saying a "mass exodus" will follow. The *Register* report noted, "Congregants, who left the courthouse tearful and disappointed, said they felt betrayed."

Under arrangement with the diocese, Schuller's church will continue at its present site — at least into the immediate future. The ministry can obtain a three-year lease of the main buildings, which includes both the cathedral and the Tower of Hope, at a cost of \$100,000 a month for the first year, and then \$150,000 per month during the following two years.

—MKG

## CATHOLIC DIOCESE BUYS CRYSTAL CATHEDRAL

The optimistic thinking of Robert Schuller hasn't yielded him many positive results these past few years. Family and church strife, along with financial disaster and bankruptcy, have plagued the 86-year-old minister and the church he founded over a half century ago.

But if there was a positive note, it was that a federal bankruptcy judge ruled that the Roman Catholic Diocese of Orange would be allowed to purchase Schuller's

## HERITAGE TOWER STILL A HURDLE FOR JOYNER

Superman may have been able to leap tall buildings in a single bound, but super-prophet Rick Joyner just can't seem to get over his Heritage Tower. Neighbors of Joyner and his MorningStar Ministries have grown weary of what they call an "eyesore." For years, residents in the Fort Mill, S.C., community have sought the attention and action of state and local government officials to deal with the vacant and deteriorated 21-story structure originally built by televangelist Jim Bakker 25 years ago.

(continues on page 21)

# “And I Shall Be As God”

## The Big Lie: Men and Their Claims of Deity

by G. Richard Fisher

A. W. Tozer observed, “What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.”<sup>1</sup>

The late cult apologist, Walter Martin, refashioning the Four Spiritual Laws made popular by Campus Crusade for Christ, had his Two Spiritual Laws: 1) There is only one God, and 2) You’re not Him. To most, it is a logical proposition. No human is timeless and eternal with the ability to create from nothing. No human controls the universe. All humans are mortal and passing. The Bible is very clear that all of us are simply the “offspring of God” (Acts 17:28-29), meaning we are just creatures created by Him and that each one of us is part of the human family. We are mortal and only God Himself is eternal and immortal.

However, some people have made the claim that they are indeed God on earth.

What is more startling and unbelievable is that these “God” players garner followers because the fallen human mind is attracted to lies. Adolph Hitler in his 1925 book, *Mein Kampf*, proposed that people will believe the big lie more than they will small lies. As hard as that may seem, Hitler wrote, the bigger the lie the more believable:

“All this was inspired by the principle — which is quite true within itself — that in the **big lie** there is always a certain force of credibility; because the broad masses of a nation are always more easily corrupted in the deeper strata of their emotional nature than consciously or voluntarily; and thus in the primitive simplicity of their minds they more readily fall victims to the **big lie** than the small lie, since they themselves often tell small lies in little matters but would be ashamed to resort to large-scale falsehoods. It would never come into their heads to fabricate colossal untruths, and they would not believe that others could have the impudence to distort the truth so infamously. Even though the facts which prove this to be so may be brought clearly to their minds, they will still doubt and waver and will continue to think that there may be some other explanation. For the grossly impudent lie always leaves traces behind it, even after it has been nailed down, a fact which is known to all expert liars in this world and to all who conspire together in the art of lying.”<sup>2</sup>

There are many who have believed the “big lie” that a human could be

God. Those who practice lying, along with those who follow liars and lies, should tremble at the Apostle John’s words: “But outside are dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie” (Revelation 22:15).

### TALES OF ANCIENT AND MODERN “GODS”

In ancient Egypt, some Pharaohs promoted themselves as gods and some Mesopotamian kings did the same. Chinese and Japanese emperors were sometimes seen as gods.

Eastern mystics claim that we are all divine. Wicca teaches that humans and objects of nature are all supposed to be gods or goddesses. We could look at Joseph Smith Jr., who taught that faithful Mormons will become “Gods.” Smith proclaimed:

“Here, then, is eternal life — to know the only wise and true God; and you have got to learn how to be Gods yourselves.”<sup>3</sup>

And Smith further taught:

“God himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man, and sits enthroned in yonder heavens! ... We have imagined and supposed that God was God from all eternity. I will refute that idea, and

take away the veil, so that you may see."<sup>4</sup>

While some current LDS leaders try to sidestep these theological declarations,<sup>5</sup> such remain as the bedrock of other Mormon teachings, including their elaborate temple rituals. Mormons also teach that both Jesus and the Holy Ghost are separate and distinct Gods from the Father. Jesus is said to be the first and literal offspring of the Father and that the Holy Ghost is a "Spirit Person" or "Spirit Man."<sup>6</sup> This is an ancient heresy called Tritheism.

Then there are men like Rev. Ike (Frederick J. Eikerenkoetter) who died in 2009 of a stroke at age 74. Despite his own mortality, his theological repertoire would repeatedly address the god in all of us. Ike was a New Thought advocate who created catchy phrases like, "You can't lose with the stuff I use." He often referred to money as "green power" and was a materialist. He, like many of the "God" players, mutated Acts 3:6 to read, "Silver and gold I have much."

### LITTLE GODS?

Then there are the Word-Faith protagonists with their assertions that we are all "little gods." Michael Moriarty writes:

"The fact that certain charismatic preachers are openly teaching that they are gods or little gods is shocking. Faith teachers and positive confession charismatics speak about Christians as being in 'God's class' or 'incarnations of God.' Other influential charismatic leaders, such as [Earl] Paulk, refer to believers as 'little gods.' Not too long ago these claims would have gotten a minister fired, or at the very least would have stirred up a group of concerned parishioners to challenge these teachings and encourage their preacher to seek professional counseling. Times have certainly changed. Today's average Christian is very vulnerable to false teaching. The fact that so many different winds of doctrine blow through the church on a regular basis is proof

enough. But to think that Christians are actually welcoming teaching into their ranks that espouse that they are gods is very frightening."<sup>7</sup>

Mystics and Word-Faith teachers dispense deity without respect of persons and it seems everyone is allowed to join the parade of gods and goddesses. This is a polytheism not seen in even extreme forms of ancient paganism where gods remained separate from humans.

Popular televangelist Benny Hinn is a prime example of trying to make his followers into gods simply by his pronouncement. His statements are widely known:

"So, I'm Benny Jehovah."<sup>8</sup>

"The new creation is just like God. May I say it like this? You are the little god on earth running around."<sup>9</sup>

hear me, I am not part of Him, I am Him! The Word has become flesh in me!"<sup>12</sup>

"God came to earth and touched a piece of dust and turned it into a god. ... Are you a child of God? Then you're divine! Then you're not dust anymore. Are you a child of God? Then you're not human! ... I [Jesus] loved you enough to become one of ya! And I love you enough to make you one of me!"<sup>13</sup>

While Hinn may not be making such declarations any more, he has never publicly disavowed or repented of these heretical teachings. For many years, Hinn pushed the little-god teaching. Hinn was right when he said such teaching is "a shocking revelation" — heresy is shocking. While Hinn claimed that the Hebrew language backed his "little Messiah" teaching, it does not.

---

---

**It has been said, in cliché, that  
"God made man in His image and  
man has returned the favor."**

---

---

"Say after me: 'Within me, is a God-Man.' Say it again: 'Within me, is a God-Man.' Now let's say [it] even better than that. Let's say, 'I am a God-Man.' ... This Spirit-Man within me is God — is a — is a God-Man. Say after me: 'He's born of heaven. He's a super being.'"<sup>10</sup>

"When you say, 'I am saved,' what are you saying? You're saying, 'I am a Christian.' ... When you say, 'I am a Christian,' you are saying, 'I am Messiah' in the Hebrew. I am a little Messiah walking on earth in other words. That's a shocking revelation."<sup>11</sup>

"When I stand in Christ — I am one with Him; united to Him; one spirit with Him. I am not,

It has been said, in cliché, that "God made man in His image and man has returned the favor." It seems like there is a propensity in humanity to make God into man's image and likeness.

### FATHER WHO?

There are many who have put themselves on the throne of Deity as being the one and only God. This article will mention three in particular. The first God-pretender was a man who gave himself the name of Father Divine. Father Divine was born in 1876. At the apex of his fame, it was claimed that he had a million followers. Less than 50 years after his death in 1965, he and his International Peace Mission Movement are largely unknown.

Father Divine originally called himself Reverend Major Divine, but most historians believe he was born George Baker in Georgia. By all accounts his first claims to be the Eternal Father began as early as 1912. He took such meticulous care in his appearance that he was referred to as “the well-dressed God.” Appearance meant everything to Father Divine. Following his declaration of godhood he personally ascribed Exodus 34:14 which says, “For the LORD whose name is Jealous, is a Jealous God,” and began calling himself Reverend Major Jealous Divine. The verse, of course, means that Yahweh would tolerate no rivals and that He was zealous for His Name. Father Divine used it far differently. The verse actually condemns people such as Father Divine who brutalize the Scriptures and take divine titles.

Father Divine was arrested numerous times in the 1930s. He also established communities in New York and Philadelphia. In 1946, Father Divine, who was black, married his second wife, Edna Rose Ritchings, a 21-year-old white Canadian woman. He named her Mother Divine. According to teaching within the cult, Mother Divine was the reincarnation of Father Divine’s first wife. Father Divine was willed a luxurious 72-acre estate and mansion called Woodmont in Gladwyne, Pennsylvania. His aging widow (now in her late 80s) still resides there.

Mother Divine believes that God, coming to earth as a black man, raised the self-esteem and self-worth of the black community and in turn humbled the white community. It was, according to Mother Divine, kind of a stroke of genius for God to do it this way. The elevation of the black soul and the humbling of whites is the “apologetic” she still presents publicly.

A variety of video clips with Father and Mother Divine can be viewed on YouTube.<sup>14</sup> But it must be stressed regarding Father Divine, that the truth is, “God is dead,” or more correctly we could say “the God pretender is dead.” Woodmont is open to the public on Sunday after-

noons throughout April-October of the year. Woodmont is a museum to the dead “God.” Because Father Divine is buried there, it is a mausoleum to a faker.

Jack Mitchell comments on Father Divine’s unique combination of heresies:

“Father Divine’s words were transcribed and published in the magazine *New Day* as sacred scripture. He taught that heaven was now on earth; holy communion was celebrated at banquets with God himself; the church age and water baptism were obsolete; and there was no clergy-laity separation. Sin, sickness, and death were consequences of unbelief, for true victory and holiness were possible in this life.”<sup>15</sup>

Father Divine’s view of the obsolescence of the Church and Communion is shared by disgraced doomsday prophet Harold Camping. On those subjects the false “God” and false prophet agree.

### THEOLOGY BENT AND BROKEN

Another more current and sinister fraud claiming to be God is Wayne Bent, also known as Michael Travesser. Bent (or Travesser) is a former Seventh-day Adventist who formed a religious community called “Strong City” in Union County, N.M. Bent was bold in his claim as he stated, “I am the embodiment of God. I am divinity and humanity combined.”<sup>16</sup>

National Geographic produced a feature documentary on Bent and Strong City during the time that this “God-man” was being tried in court for molestation of very young followers. On Dec. 18, 2008, Bent was convicted of criminal sexual contact with a minor. He was sentenced to eight years in prison. This actually played well with followers as Bent compared his circumstances to the betrayal, sufferings, and death of Jesus. His sentence is currently under appeal.

Yet another candidate for God was Wallace Fard. Fard is the actual

founder of The Nation of Islam, known as the Black Muslims. He was very elusive and has been called by some the mystery man. Most researchers think that Fard was born in Oregon to Hawaiian immigrants in 1891, while another historian says Fard was born in New Zealand in 1893. The FBI reports that he allegedly used 58 aliases during his lifetime. Originally Fard made no direct claim to deity, however that changed over time. Apologist and professor Steven Tsoukalas informs:

“There are two phases to Fard’s doctrine of God. At first Fard taught that God is Allah and that he was on a divine mission from Allah. There was no hint in his theology that he himself was God. In fact, he claimed less — he was the reincarnation of Noble Drew Ali. Later, with Elijah Muhammad’s encouragement, Fard began to see himself as Allah in the flesh. ... In Fard’s later teachings we see his direct claim to deity as well as Elijah Muhammad’s recognition that he was God in the flesh.”<sup>17</sup>

Fard referred to himself loftily as “Supreme Ruler of the Universe.”<sup>18</sup> The most well known representative of the Black Muslim group today is Louis Farrakhan, also known as Louis Eugene Walcott.

In a side-by-side chart titled, *Christianity, Cults & Religions*, produced by Rose Publishing, it is stated concerning the God of the Nation of Islam:

“Officially, there is one God, Allah, as described in the Qur’an. But Elijah Muhammad’s teachings are also true: God is a black man, millions of Allahs have lived and died since creation, collectively the black race is God, and Master Fard is the Supreme Allah and Savior.”<sup>19</sup>

This elusive self-proclaimed God-man taught that 6,000 years ago a black scientist by the name of Yakub was involved with experiments in genetic manipulation. The white race was the awful result of a genetic experiment gone terribly wrong. The

inferior whites were extremely immoral and violent and, in time, were somehow able to conquer and enslave the black people. Fard mysteriously disappeared in 1934. Noted Nation of Islam authority and author Karl Evanzz reports "that Wallace D. Fard died in Chicago in 1971 at the age of 78."<sup>20</sup>

Fard had many conflicting doctrines. Tsoukalas also reveals:

"Fard's use of theologically contradicting sources (the Qur'an, the Bible, Baptist theology, Jehovah's Witnesses' theology, and Freemasonry) evidences not only his attempt to meld all these into one but also Fard's unschooled theological mind leading other unschooled theological minds into believing his spiritual homogenization."<sup>21</sup>

We could refer to Fard as the really mixed-up "God." It is interesting to note that Fard and Father Divine were dueling gods claiming to be the one and only true God at the same time.

Father Divine, Wayne Bent, and Wallace Fard are just three of the many God pretenders and are a picture of all who went before them and all who will come after them with their preposterous and blasphemous claims. Three so-called Gods could not agree on what to believe. They should serve as a cautionary tale. The Apostle Peter says they are reserved under punishment for the day of judgment "especially those who walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness and despise authority. They are presumptuous, self-willed. ... having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin, enticing unstable souls. They have a heart trained in covetous practices, and are accursed children" (2 Peter 2:10, 14).

### MORE CONFUSION

Throughout the history of the Church there have been variations on the godhood theme. Some, like Father Divine and those mentioned above, have proclaimed themselves God the Father while others declared themselves God the Son, or some variation of the Second Coming of Christ. Still

others have promoted themselves as the Holy Spirit. Some have combined variations of the three. Ann Lee (1736-1784), founder of the Shaker cult, was believed to be "the second coming of Christ in female form."<sup>22</sup> Another more modern contender is Puerto Rican Jose Luis De Jesus who goes by the name "The Man Christ Jesus."<sup>23</sup> In spite of the nuances regarding the persons of the Trinity, the blasphemy is the same.

A fringe category of these perverted ideas would be myth maker and Roman Catholic philosopher Peter Kreeft, who articulates his church's doctrine that an object is actually God and worthy of worship. This is a step into animism (a belief that inanimate objects possess divine life). In a flight of religious and superstitious fervor and fancy, Kreeft alleges, "we move from Christ to the Eucharist — again, to the even more concrete. We see Christ as *Eucharistic*, Christ in the *Eucharist*; but we see *Christ* in the Eucharist. We worship the Eucharist because it is *Christ*."<sup>24</sup>

So, according to Kreeft and Catholicism, we should worship a piece of bread because that bread is Jesus Christ. This is mystical frenzy and not reality. To put Christ into bread and make bread into Christ is to take Him off of His throne of intercession and multiply Him into thousands, if not millions, of pieces of bread wherever hosts are "consecrated" around the world.

### CAN GOD HAVE HUNDREDS OF RIGHT HANDS?

Another subplot of playing God is perpetuating the fraud that a particular person is the next best thing to God. These are God's right hand men — or so they would like us to believe. They claim they are elite and the "right hand" of God Himself with special insights, powers, and abilities. Suicide cult leaders Jim Jones — who was greatly influenced by Father Divine — and David Koresh are prime examples. Both brought a reign of terror and death on their followers.

Jesus is at the right hand of God, meaning that He is, in all reverence,

God's exclusive "right hand Man," as we are told in Hebrews 1:1-4. Even angels cannot share that honor.

It would take an encyclopedia to chronicle the Charismatic extremists and cult leaders who present themselves as God's special prophet, God's anointed, or God's unique voice on the earth. Other "right hand" men are the self-proclaimed super-apostles, men like C. Peter Wagner,<sup>25</sup> who claim to be on the same level and maybe even higher than the biblical prophets and apostles.

These false prophets bludgeon and control their followers and propose to silence their critics with their favorite verse, "touch not the Lord's anointed," as if they truly are the Lord's anointed. Using that verse (1 Chronicles 16:22) in such a way as to avoid accountability conveys manipulation and control. Looking at the field of players who often disagree with one another as to what God is saying, we can easily conclude that God's right hands are contradicting one another and sending mixed messages. God cannot be in any of that because He is "not the author of confusion" (1 Corinthians 14:33). The pope of Rome, along with the bishops, is a group who claim to fit into this category of special anointed rulers. *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, as it speaks to the governance of the organization, alleges that "Christ governs her through Peter and the other apostles, who are present in their successors, the Pope and the college of bishops."<sup>26</sup>

Also in this category are groups with individual leaders who claim to be a Bible character. The favorite ones over the years seem to be John the Baptist or Elijah. Alexander Dowie (1847-1907) in a lofty claim put himself out there as Elijah,<sup>27</sup> as did William Branham (1909-1965). Branham, who was a Pentecostal superstar-turned-heretic, also declared himself to be God's final prophet to the Church. At the height of his career he dispensed numerous false prophecies and claimed to be the living fulfillment of Malachi 4:5-6, thereby taking on the role of Elijah or an Elijah-like figure.<sup>28</sup>

## WHY DO THEY DO IT?

Scripture tells us of the divine judgment upon one who accepts the profane flattery (Acts 12:21-23) of being called Deity. Bible commentator Matthew Henry writes:

“Many heathen princes claimed and received Divine honours, but it was far more horrible impiety in Herod, who knew the word and worship of the living God, to accept such idolatrous honours without rebuking the blasphemy. And such men as Herod, when puffed with pride and vanity, are ripening fast for signal vengeance. God is very jealous for his own honour, and will be

because he was the chief speaker” (vv. 11-12).

Luke goes on to reveal that Paul and Barnabas were deeply troubled at such a suggestion:

“But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard this, they tore their clothes and ran in among the multitude, crying out and saying, ‘Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men with the same nature as you, and preach to you that you should turn from these useless things to the living God, who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all things that are in them’ (vv. 14-15).

Kathryn Lindskoog has surveyed the field and notes just from human observation that there is a bent in humans toward “The Pinocchio Syndrome.”<sup>30</sup>

The Pinocchio Syndrome is the inclination for people to lie or present themselves as better than they really are. There are some who make a career out of self-exaltation even to the point of criminality. Christians cannot seem to wrap their minds around the fact that churches are ideal places in which to lie and perpetuate fraud. The average Christian is trusting and tends not to question or judge. Lindskoog notes:

“The reason that spiritually evil people are often found in churches and other respectable institutions is not that churches breed liars; it is that churches attract liars. Many evil people go to churches for protective covering, for an aura of godliness.”<sup>31</sup>

Behind the mask of all God fakers is the reflection and emulation of Satan himself. The context of Isaiah 14 is judgment on Babylon and its king. As Isaiah discloses the evils of the king of Babylon and declares judgment on him and his nation, we are shown the one who is the power behind the throne. Isaiah reveals that Lucifer, Son of the morning, is the one really driving the leader of Babylon (Isaiah 14:12). The prophet shows that the prime motivation of Lucifer (or Satan) is to try to take God off the throne of the universe and usurp that very throne for himself:

“For you have said in your heart: ‘I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High’ (Isaiah 14:13-14).

However, the Lord has one reply to these outrageous and vast fantasies: “Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol, to the lowest depths of the Pit” (v. 15). Satan’s primary sin was the

---

---

**Christians cannot seem to wrap their minds around the fact that churches are ideal places in which to lie and perpetuate fraud. The average Christian is trusting and tends not to question or judge.**

---

---

glorified upon those whom he is not glorified by.”<sup>29</sup>

Likewise, Scripture tells us of the Christian response by those to whom such commendation was bestowed. That very thing happened to the apostles Paul and Barnabas in Acts 14 and they were horrified and shocked by it. God used Paul to heal a man at Lystra, and in the wake of this miracle, Luke tells of the people’s response toward Paul and Barnabas:

“Now when the people saw what Paul had done, they raised their voices, saying in the Lycaonian language, ‘The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!’ And Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul, Hermes,

The tearing of their clothes was a sign of deep grief, distress, and sadness and was an obvious display of intense rejection of this pagan act of blasphemy. Historians indicate that those in mourning would tear at and around the neckline of the outer clothing. It was an external show of intense shock and emotion.

Those who claim divinity might believe it themselves or simply know what sells. Power, prestige, and financial rewards can also be a motivation in a society that is impressed by celebrity and drawn to extravagant claims. Those who claim to be divine might also be under a strong delusion or demonic control. But the “why” is not as important as the “what” of a Christian’s response.

sin of pride. Is it any wonder that those who imitate Satan by trying to imitate God are caught in so many moral and financial scandals because pride goes before a fall? (Proverbs 16:18, 29:23)

## NO MYSTERY AS TO WHERE IT ALL STARTED

The accounts in the Old Testament are for our instruction and a warning (Romans 15:4, 1 Corinthians 10:6). The very first sin committed by a human was in this exact area. Eve thought she could not resist when Satan promised her that by listening to him rather than God she could be just like God (Genesis 3:5). In other words, Satan was telling Eve that God did not want her to be like Himself. Then Satan added that Eve could be just like God by listening to him. Bible commentators C.F. Keil and Franz Delitzsch, speaking of the situation with Eve, label this "A truly satanic *double entendre*, in which a certain agreement between truth and untruth is secured!"<sup>32</sup> It was Satan who boastingly said to Jesus, "fall down and worship me" (Matthew 4:9). Satan longs to be worshipped and to help cultivate that same longing, in one way or another, into the hearts of people. It is the height of arrogance and pride to declare oneself as being worthy of worship.

## REGAINING OUR FOCUS

In recent years there has been a revolution in the ability to read ancient inscriptions. Bruce Zuckerman wrote in a recent *Biblical Archaeology Review*:

"One of these new technologies, called Reflectance Transformation Imaging (RTI), allows for unprecedented control of how an image is displayed, especially in terms of the play of light so crucial to bringing out hidden details that are often the key to proper interpretation. For the first time, control of the light has been placed in the hands of the viewer rather than the photographer. In fact, an RTI image is almost like seeing the real thing — only it's better. ... It involves

taking a series of successive images all around an object with the light for each picture situated at a different angle and height but always from about the same distance."<sup>33</sup>

The intensity and drive of scholars to study inscriptions on rocks should put us to shame and drive us to be more intense in our doctrinal studies. The Church at large needs to re-engage itself in a serious look at the biblical doctrine of God. God is not a limited human being. He is Spirit and those who want to worship Him must do so in spirit and in truth (John 4:24). He is limitless and all humans are limited. We can only truly worship God on the basis of His truth or we are in self-delusion and worshipping our fantasies. Certain men for evil and nefarious reasons have bitten into the fruit of trying to be God or declaring themselves God. Whether deluded or knowingly, they have pawned themselves off as something they are not, nor ever could be.

## GOD LIKE NO OTHER

God is wholly other. He is outside of time and space, and cannot be contained. He truly is the great I Am. William Evans was one of the foremost Bible teachers in America. Evans, while laying out arguments for the existence of God, never believed we could prove the existence of God to those who did not want to be convinced. Philosophical arguments were not enough. Evans laid out the typical arguments from first cause, from morality, from congruity (the facts fit), from universality of belief, and so forth, but taught these logical arguments were *probable* evidences, somewhat valuable but not absolute.

Evans wrote:

"It does not seem to have occurred to any of the writers of either the Old or the New Testaments to attempt to prove or to argue for the existence of God. Everywhere and at all times it is a fact taken for granted. 'A God capable of proof would be no God at all' (Jacobi). He is the self-existent One (Exod. 3:14) and

the Source of all life (John 5:26). The sublime opening of the Scriptures announces the fact of God and His existence: 'In the beginning God' (Gen. 1:1). Nor is the rise or dawn of the idea of God in the mind of man depicted. Psa. 14:1: 'The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God,' indicates not a disbelief in the existence, but rather in the active interest of God in the affairs of men — He seemed to hide Himself from the affairs of men (See Job 22:12-14). The Scriptures further recognize that men not only know of the existence of God, but have also a certain circle of ideas as to who and what He is (Rom. 1:18, 19). No one but a 'fool' will deny the fact of God."<sup>34</sup>

It could be added that an even greater "fool" says he is in fact God, for that one is under great condemnation. If he believes it, he is deluded and if he says it and does not really believe it, he is a fraud of the first order.

Like all standard books on doctrine or systematic theology, Evans lays out the natural attributes of God. Those attributes include His omniscience or all-knowingness (God exhaustively knowing past, present, and future), His omnipotence or all power, His omnipresence (God being everywhere present at once), and His immutability or unchangeableness and eternity (God always was and always will be and ever remains the same). Only in fantasy, delusion, or science fiction could a human ever possess these attributes. What is extremely helpful is that Evans, in his book on doctrine, buttresses every attribute with multiple Scripture verses. Truly, the True and Living God is unlike any other — and He has told us so.

Many years ago there was a song by The Platters titled, "The Great Pretender." It told of one who said he was "adrift in a world of my own." It is easy to think that of all the past and present *contenders* for the office of God deep down really know they are only *pretenders*. They are perpetuating

the big lie and are counterfeit make-believe gods. If they do not know that, they are horribly deluded and have seared consciences. The Apostle Paul spoke of those who had defiled minds and consciences (Titus 1:15). It is possible for a person to lie to and deceive himself to the point that he actually believes his own lies (2 Thessalonians 2:10-11). Sadly, many naive and undiscerning people have followed the God pretenders. Even more sadly, they have accepted their leader's eternal fate as declared by the prophet in Isaiah 14:15.

### WHAT TO DO AND PERSEVERE IN DOING

Big lies that promise the follower inside knowledge or added powers can be attractive to the fallen mind. In light of these things, we need to pray for those under the influence of these evil men, as well as pray for and support apologetics ministries attempting to reach out by literature, audio visuals, testimony, and conferences. Paul told Titus that false teachers must be stopped (Titus 1:11). Individuals need to plead with the leaders of their local church to introduce biblical studies on the doctrines of God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, as well as studies on the Trinitarian doctrine of God. Extremes begin with small detours. A small detour from the biblical doctrine of God and we are on our way to full-blown heresy. If we are wrong about God, we will be wrong about everything else. Concern for apologetic ministries and team effort with those ministries will be used by the true and living God to slice through the darkness promoted by those trying to wear a "God" mask and a "God" costume and proclaim their own deification. It is, after all, what Tozer concluded, "What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us." We need to get with it and stay with it.

#### Endnotes:

1. A.W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy*. Harrisburg, Pa.: Christian Publications, Inc., 1961, pg. 9.
2. This quotation is taken from James Murphy's translation of *Mein Kampf*, Volume 1, chapter 10, cited in "Big Lie"

- on Wikipedia, bold in original. Document accessed at: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Big\\_Lie](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Big_Lie).
3. Joseph Smith Jr., *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1976, pg. 346.
4. *Ibid.*, pg. 345, italics in original.
5. See, for example, statements by the late LDS president Gordon Hinckley in David Van Biema, S.C. Gwynne, and Richard N. Ostling, "Kingdom Come," *Time*, August 4, 1997, pg. 56.
6. Anonymous, *Gospel Principles*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1978, pg. 9; Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1966, pg. 359.
7. Michael Moriarty, *The New Charismatics*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992, pp. 327-328. See pages 106-108, 321-322, 327-338 in this volume for additional evaluation of the "little gods" teaching. Also for numerous first-hand quotations by Word-Faith teachers (contrasted with other worldviews) on our becoming gods, see "Claiming to be God - Quotes from false teachers and false prophets," Spiritual Research Network, Inc., Web site. Document accessed at: [www.spiritual-research-network.com/claimingtobegod.html](http://www.spiritual-research-network.com/claimingtobegod.html).
8. Benny Hinn, sermon given at the "Spiritual Warfare Seminar," Jubilee Christian Center, San Jose, Calif., May 2, 1990.
9. Benny Hinn, "Praise-A-Thon," Trinity Broadcasting Network, Nov. 6, 1990, originally broadcast live in April 1990. During this same discourse he refers to anyone who questions his teachings as "morons."
10. Benny Hinn, "God's Super Being," Orlando Christian Center broadcast, Trinity Broadcasting Network, Oct. 20, 1990.
11. "Praise-A-Thon," Nov. 6, 1990, op. cit.
12. Benny Hinn, *Our Position in Christ*, six tape audiocassette series, "Our Position in Christ," Part 1, Tape #A031190-1.
13. Benny Hinn, Orlando Christian Center broadcast, Trinity Broadcasting Network, Dec. 1, 1990.
14. See, for example, "Bygone History: Father Divine." Video accessed at: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=wtQzbYaAHcQ&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wtQzbYaAHcQ&feature=related).
15. Jack Mitchell in J.D. Douglas, Editor, *New 20th-Century Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1991, pg. 324.
16. Quotation from "Inside a Cult," National Geographic Documentary at 0:30 timemark. Video accessed at: <http://video.nationalgeographic.com/video/player/national-geographic-channel/all-videos/av-5991-6255/ngc-inside-a-cult.html>. Also cited in "Lord Our Righteousness Church" on Wikipedia. Document accessed at: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lord\\_Our\\_Righteousness\\_Church](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lord_Our_Righteousness_Church).

17. Steven Tsoukalas, *The Nation of Islam*. Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishers, 2001, pg. 41.
18. *Ibid.*, pg. 42.
19. *Christianity, Cults & Religions*. Torrance, Calif.: Rose Publishing, 2010, fanfold pamphlet, pg. 9.
20. See Kelli B. Kavanaugh, "Mystery man," March 5, 2003, metrotimes Web site. Document accessed at [www.metrotimes.com/editorial/story.asp?id=4650](http://www.metrotimes.com/editorial/story.asp?id=4650).
21. *The Nation of Islam*, op. cit., pg. 36.
22. See Daniel G. Reid, Robert D. Linder, Bruce L. Shelley, and Harry S. Stout, Editors, *Dictionary of Christianity in America*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1990, pg. 639.
23. See "Jose Luis De Jesus, The Man Christ Jesus," Ministerio Internacional Creciendo en Gracia (International Ministry Growing in Grace) Web site. Document accessed at: [www.cegenglish.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=19&Itemid=27](http://www.cegenglish.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=19&Itemid=27).
24. Peter Kreeft, *Ecumenical Jihad*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1996, pg. 162, italics in original.
25. For additional information on C. Peter Wagner, see G. Richard Fisher, "Mountaintops and Other Tall Tales - Examining the Fantasy World of Modern-day 'Apostle and Prophet' C. Peter Wagner," *The Quarterly Journal*, October-December 2011, pp. 4-11.
26. *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*. New York: Doubleday, 1994, pp. 250-251.
27. See Philip L. Cook, *Zion City, Illinois*. Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1996, pp. 57-58, 145-146.
28. C. Douglas Weaver, *The Healer Prophet, William Marrison Branham*. Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1987, pp. 128-129.
29. Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry Concise*. Electronic version by Epiphany Software, 1995, The Death of Herod, Acts 12:20-25. This is an abridged version of Henry's full six-volume work, *Matthew Henry Unabridged Commentary*.
30. Kathryn Lindskoog, *Fakes, Frauds & Other Malarkey*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing, 1993, pg. 258.
31. *Ibid.*, pg. 223.
32. Carl F. Keil and Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1985, Vol. 1, pg. 95, italics in original.
33. Bruce Zuckerman, "New Eyeballs on Ancient Texts," *Archaeological Views in Biblical Archaeology Review*, November/December 2011, pg. 28.
34. William Evans, *Great Doctrines of the Bible*. Chicago: The Bible Institute Colportage Association, 1912, pg. 13.



grace. His view of unconditional acceptance by God of just about anything he says or does moves him in extreme antinomianism (literally, lawlessness) and an unbiblical view of the Christian life.

Sanctification without improvement is far from the teaching of Scripture. Many would question any view of grace which leaves sinners unchanged or constantly defeated. True biblical sanctification results in growth in godliness. Occasional failure — sinning — and recovery is one thing, but living in or wallowing in sin is another. Grace accompanied by the Holy Spirit saves, empowers, and improves us. It never leaves us the same. God makes all grace abound to us to the end that we may be sufficient “for every good work” (2 Corinthians 9:8). We are after all, “*saved unto good works*” (Ephesians 2:10).

### MANNING NOT MANNING UP

Manning has not always been truthful to his wider audience. In 2005, he boasted in a *Christianity Today* magazine interview that he had helped numerous people in New Orleans in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Just four days later, the online publication added an “Editor’s Note” to the interview, reporting that Manning had helped no one and that he called and left a voice message with the magazine saying, “The essential truth: I lied.”<sup>3</sup> Perhaps the thought that his deceit would be discovered caused him to be truthful about his lies.

Following the Katrina lie, one can ask what else he has said and written that may also be a lie. As a “Christian” author he should take seriously Colossians 3:9. In that verse, believers are commanded to “not lie to one another.” The Apostle Paul urged believers to move away from any kind of sinful living, things like those which he detailed in chapter 2 of 2 Timothy: “Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter [sins], he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master,

prepared for every good work” (v. 21, insertion and emphasis added).

Manning has written more than 20 books. Among them are *Ruthless Trust*, *Abba’s Child*, and *Rabbi’s Heartbeat*. He clearly sets himself up as a religious expert and mentor, but from an evangelical perspective, he is far from it. The most widely known and best-selling of his books is titled, *The Ragamuffin Gospel*. It has been called a spiritual classic. Rich Mullen named his band based on that title. One critical review of *The Ragamuffin Gospel* offers the following:

“*The Ragamuffin Gospel* promotes the heresy of license. In his epistle to the Romans, Paul asks, ‘Are we to continue in sin that grace might increase? May it never be’ (Rom. 6:1-2), is his answer. But, Brennan Manning’s view of the gospel is devoid of the teaching of sanctification, whereby a believer is conformed into the image of Christ, turning from sin to serve the Savior. Manning excuses sin as human weakness that his gospel of love will cover regardless of whether the sinner is repentant or not. He attempts to demonstrate from the Bible that Jesus was not concerned about sin. Referring to the woman caught in adultery on page 173, he writes, ‘He [Jesus] didn’t seem too concerned that she might dash back into the arms of her lover.’ Yet we know from scripture that Jesus told her to go and sin no more. ... Manning’s inspiration for *Ragamuffin* is clearly seen by the experts he cites. These include humanist philosophers, heretics and mystics. Without apology or disclaimers, he quotes such noted new age leaders as Joseph Campbell, inner healers such as Francis MacNutt, heretical mystics like Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, humanist occultists like Carl Jung and false teachers like Morton Kelsey. He also appeals to Zen philosophy and other humanistic writings. These he attempts to harmonize with the Bible, but they just don’t mesh. His teach-

ing on meditation cannot be distinguished from the Eastern/New Age style of mind emptying. He instructs the readers to repeat an eight-word mantra for ten minutes while visualizing one’s idea of what Jesus might have looked like — something that cannot be done accurately. ... Elsewhere he uses a lot of vulgarity to get his point across.”<sup>4</sup>

### THE CURTAIN PULLED ASIDE

An inside overview of Manning’s life can be seen for the first time with last year’s release of his autobiography and memoirs, entitled, *All Is Grace, A Ragamuffin Memoir*<sup>5</sup> by Christian publisher David C. Cook. The book is endorsed by Philip Yancey, Michael Card, Larry Crabb, Max Lucado, Karen Zacharias, and several other notable Christians. One might ask if all those iconic endorsements, along with the book’s foreword by Yancey, make Manning a trustworthy luminary — or at least acceptable. His publisher may wish that is the case. However, Jesus said, “For by *your* words you will be justified, and by *your* words you will be condemned” (Matthew 12:37, emphasis added). In the end, Manning’s own words will either justify or condemn his life and teaching when held up to Scripture. High praises and endorsements for the one who has been called the “Wizard of Spirituality” are not the final arbiter. Glowing endorsements do not make truth. Manning readily admits and gives fair warning that he constantly obfuscates and is not truthful. For example, he acknowledges:

“Although I have always given the appearance of speaking openly about my alcoholism, rest assured it has always been only what I wanted the listener or reader to know, nothing more.”<sup>6</sup>

That statement tells more about Manning than he realizes. It also puts his honesty in question once again.

As Manning parades a lifetime of lies, pretensions, and prolonged continued lapses into drunkenness, one has to wonder if it is some kind of bid for pity or some weird cathartic exer-

cise because of his constant failure and hypocrisy. This is not just anyone with a drinking problem. This is supposed to be a spiritual leader, a revered author, and a man who wants to preach to all of us about grace.

### THE KEY TO MANNING'S CONFUSION

Many normally astute people — including those who endorse his books — do not really understand where Manning is coming from; neither do they understand the basic flaw in his thinking. As noted above, Manning's book, *All Is Grace*, has a foreword by Philip Yancey. Following the foreword there is a section of readers' testimonies. It is here that speaker and author Sharon Hersh divulges:

"Initially I was confused, wondering how Brennan could preach a powerful message of grace but live a powerless life of chronic alcoholism. The stories, at first, made me mad — mad at Brennan for being the winsome ragamuffin who relentlessly preached that *'God loves us unconditionally, as we are and not as we should be'* while living as the reeking-of-vomit drunken ragamuffin who was definitely not as he should be."<sup>7</sup>

Hersh just does not get it. It is because of Manning's unbiblical view that grace is simply tolerance of sin, nothing more. Manning's teaching is that God tolerates anything he says or does because God likes him.

Here then at the very beginning of *All Is Grace* is an important statement that lays the groundwork for understanding Manning and his erroneous view of the Christian life. The foundation of Manning's understanding is that in grace God accepts us as we are and then leaves us as we are. Grace is there to accept us, but seems to have nothing to do with what we "should be." It is crucial that we see this and understand it, as it answers all the so-called paradoxes, contradictions, and confusion that readers see in Manning. His idea of grace means an unconditional acceptance that creates

no substantial change or deliverance of any kind — or at least very little. Teaching that grace is just all acceptance and tolerance with no grace-empowered and Spirit-empowered responsibility is a perversion of the Christian life. It should be emphasized that it is the same error addressed by the Apostle Paul in Romans 6:1-2:

"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?"

For God's grace to be available at all Jesus had to suffer, bear the wrath of sin, and pay for the enmity with His own life. This in turn satisfied the holiness and justice of God. Manning's view appears to be that grace is then given to all whether they realize it or not or even want it. This is why his life changed so little. He has missed the element that links us to grace and that element is faith:

"... grace must be acknowledged for what it is and accepted with humble and joyful gratitude. This human decision, involving acknowledgment and acceptance, is the faith which corresponds to God's grace."<sup>8</sup>

We cannot separate grace from its effects once it is received:

"It is the reasonable demand for a life corresponding to the transformation which God hath already wrought in the believer through His saving grace."<sup>9</sup>

When we personally embrace Christ by faith, God's grace then becomes operative in our lives. Scripture is clear in Ephesians 2:10 that the same grace that saves, then empowers and enables change and good works which are ordained by God. Theologian Charles Ryrie comments that "Works cannot save (Eph. 2:9), but good works always accompany salvation (v. 10; Jas. 2:17)."<sup>10</sup> God loves us too much to leave us as a "reeking-of-vomit drunken ragamuffin." We are called to walk in light, not wallow in vomit.

God calls us and enables us to say "no" to sin and "yes" to our calling in Christ. A redemption that does not clean us up should be questioned. While the Scriptures do not promise perfection, they do promise reform. It's called progressive biblical sanctification. A life marked by defeat, abuse, betrayal, and addiction is not, in any biblical sense, to be gloried in and seen as a grace-filled life. It is foolish to think so. It would mean redemption redeems nothing. If someone is living continually in gross sin it reveals, according to the Scripture, an absence of grace (Galatians 5:19-21; 6:7-8). The Apostle John warns that "if we say we have fellowship with Him and walk in darkness we lie and do not practice the truth" (1 John 1:6).

Scripture records many instances of God giving a new name to people who followed Him. The change anticipated what they should be and God enables them by grace and His own presence to be all that they should be. To miss this is to miss a vital part of what redemption and deliverance is all about. We never read that the prodigal son went on preaching tours between stays in the pig pen, still reeking of pig refuse as he traveled. Neither do we read that after returning to his father he kept going back to the far country and jumping back into the pig pen. He may not have been a perfect son, but by all indications he stayed in the right place and far away from his past. His father's love, mercy, and grace constrained him. Applying Manning's life discipline to the prodigal son would have the father constantly going to the pig pen to assure the son that it was no big deal if he stayed there and that everything was fine, but offering him no way of escape and change.

### GRACE OR SOMETHING ELSE?

Manning has never really demonstrated a life of grace, but rather a life *without* grace. His words confirm that fact as he describes himself:

"This book is by the one who thought he'd be farther along by now, but he's not. It is by the inmate who promised the parole board he'd be good, but he

wasn't. It is by the dim-eyed who showed the path to others but kept losing his way. It is by the wet-brained who believed if a little wine is good for the stomach, then a lot is great. It is by the liar, tramp, and thief; otherwise known as the priest, speaker, and author. ... all is grace."<sup>11</sup>

Manning prefers wallowing to winning and then pretending that grace is his justification for shoddy and sinful living. He is not talking of an occasional lapse, repentance, and recovery, but rather a lifetime of constant drunkenness and failure.

Manning's life is a self-created tragedy. He speaks of his "bedraggled, beat-up, and burnt-out life. ... a crooked path filled with thorns and crows and vodka. ... Amazed crowds one night and lied to friends the next. Drunk for years, sober for a season, then drunk again."<sup>12</sup> He then speaks of his being battered by God's "tender fury."<sup>13</sup> Here he seems to blame God somewhat for his misery, but in fact his own sin and constant waywardness created the consequences he continually brought on himself. Glaringly absent from Manning's book is a conversion story. There is no time when he repents, receives Christ, and finds deliverance to become a new creature in Christ. For all the God talk and grace talk there does not seem to be a born-again experience.

James tells us that when we truly humble ourselves before God He will give us grace and "lift us up" (James 4:10). In James 4:7-10 there are ten commands which call for decisive action on our part in breaking away from the old way of life. Ryrie informs:

"There are 10 verbs, all commands, in these verses, in a tense which indicates the need for a decisive and urgent break with the old life."<sup>14</sup>

God's commands are God's enablement. He will not tell us to do anything He will not equip us to do. Manning's litany, on the other hand, seems to be: *I'm a drunk, I plan to stay*

*that way, grace covers it and everything is fine.* In fact, Manning says that he is a "poster child" for grace.<sup>15</sup> More honestly, he could be a "poster child" for the liquor industry. Many would say he has lived a lifetime of selfish denial and "grace" is the perfect cover — at least in his mind. Denial is simply lying to oneself about one's true condition.

## NOT FORGETTING WHAT LIES BEHIND

Manning describes his mother and father at length as cold, austere disciplinarians who offered him no love.<sup>16</sup> Keeping these memories and nursing them certainly is unhealthy. This kind of thinking and mental rehearsing only disrupted his life further. It must also be underscored that Manning's parents are dead and we have only his side of the story (Proverbs 18:17). Many people have had a tough upbringing and have made the decision to leave the past behind and make their lives totally different. With Christ in our lives we are redeemed and released from the vain habit patterns of our parents according to 1 Peter 1:18.

Those who did not have an ideal childhood gain no advantage in detailing all their parents' faults. We should not allow the sins of our parents to determine us. All of that is in God's hands. For the Christian, love keeps no record of wrongs (1 Corinthians 13:5, NIV). Living by constantly looking back only gives us — and makes us — pains in the neck.

In Ezekiel's day, the Israelites were moving into a mind-set of not taking personal responsibility for their sins and blaming their parents for the consequences. The prophet declared:

"The word of the LORD came to me again, saying, 'What do you mean when you use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying: "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge"?' 'As I live,' says the Lord GOD, 'you shall no longer use this proverb in Israel.' ... 'The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear

the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself'" (Ezekiel 18:1-3, 20).

Manning tells of his time in the care of a psychologist.<sup>17</sup> Many psychologists are trained to take people on an excursion into their childhood, dredging up old memories rather than focusing on current responsibilities, opportunities, and blessings. This type of mental archaeology can bog down and ruin a life. Apparently this is the technique employed with Manning. Around age 8, Manning remembers, he confronted his mother and told her he hated her for loving his brother more than she did him. In his description of the event, his mother snapped and began to pummel him severely. It was his grandmother who told her to stop the beating. The psychologist's interpretation was that this experience had muzzled Manning's emotions.<sup>18</sup> A biblical counselor would have concluded that Manning should own his part in disrespecting and dishonoring his mother, while the psychologist just gave him more grist and more excuses for his irresponsibility. What happens to us is not as important as the interpretation we place on what happened. Such things, looked at properly, do not ruin us. They can teach us to be better parents.

## MOMMY DEAREST MADE ME DO IT

Manning took a negative approach and says of his recollection about his mother:

"For days, I sat with that memory in the beauty of Colorado, trying to refeel it and grieve it as best I could. ... Mine was a childhood of repeated rejection and punishment or the threat of it."<sup>19</sup>

We could call this nursing bitterness. Manning concludes he is just stuck in some kind of generational determinism when he says, "But the dragon doesn't die easily, so the

shame just kept passing down the generations. I fear I've passed it along as well."<sup>20</sup> Manning's sycophants need to give him a wake-up call rather than humor him. For one who is always talking about grace, this shows his low view of grace. Grace is bigger than our past, our hurts, and even the poor example of our parents. We are conquerors and winners in Christ (Romans 8:37). Manning's thinking just does not line up with Philippians 4:8:

"Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, what-

his guilt and bitterness were so great he sought comfort in a bottle.

Manning also claims that at age 8, he started to live the life of "the impostor" because his mother did not like the Christmas gift he gave her.<sup>22</sup> Manning points to his mother as the reason he goes into his "impostor" mode, not a sinful child handling life poorly. Manning is now approaching 80, but still acting as if he were 8. Manning then provides bullet points "of how the impostor functions":

- The impostor lives in fear.
- The impostor is consumed with a need for acceptance and approval.

be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you *put on* the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness. Therefore, *putting away* lying, 'Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor,' for we are members of one another" (Ephesians 4:22-25).

Manning took the other route and remained the impostor while claiming that grace made it acceptable.

Manning started drinking heavily at 16, because it gave him confidence.<sup>24</sup> He confesses, "At age eighteen I experienced my first alcohol-induced blackout at the hand of Seagram's. ... By the age of twenty I had acquired the nickname 'Funnel.'"<sup>25</sup> Manning discovered he could still function even with hangovers. When he began attending college he found out that he could speak well before others. He dropped out of college in his second year to join the Marines.<sup>26</sup> While in the service he was eventually transferred to the newspaper office where he began to hone his writing skills. After a discharge in 1955, he returned to college to study journalism.<sup>27</sup> Manning again dropped out of college to attend a Franciscan seminary in Loretto, Pa., looking for more. "More what?" he writes, "I wasn't exactly sure."<sup>28</sup>

### WHAT REALLY HAPPENED?

Manning recounts that while in seminary chapel, kneeling at the twelfth station of the cross, he lapsed into a blackout or mystical trance for three hours. He labels those lost three hours "the Golden World."<sup>29</sup> While in that mystical state, he writes that Jesus called him by name, gave him secret information that he has never revealed, and provided him with a secret name. Manning says of the experience that "I was battered by wave after wave of the theology of delight, that God not only loves me but also likes me."<sup>30</sup>

If this is supposed to be Manning's "conversion" experience there are a few components that are at odds with Scripture. The first is the absence of repentance and his seeking of forgive-

---

---

## For all his talk of unconditional grace, Manning himself is harsh, judgmental, and unforgiving.

---

---

ever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy — meditate on these things."

Manning's lifelong pattern of nursing negative thinking and the absence of biblical thinking has only aggravated his misery and given him an excuse to keep drinking heavily.

In page after page of his autobiography, he recounts his mother's transgressions. The biblical mandates of "love your enemy" or "pray for those who despitefully use you" seem to be foreign to Manning. And it must be asked, why isn't grace providing those things for him? For all his talk of unconditional grace, Manning himself is harsh, judgmental, and unforgiving. With regard to his mother, he even writes that when she died in 1993 in Belmar, N.J., he ensconced himself in a motel, drank himself into a blackout, and did not attend her funeral.<sup>21</sup> Some would conclude that

- The impostor is codependent; in other words, out of touch with his or her own feelings.
- The impostor's life is a herky-jerky existence of elation and depression. The impostor is what he or she does.
- The impostor demands to be noticed.
- The impostor cannot experience intimacy in any relationship.
- And last but not least, the impostor is a liar."<sup>23</sup>

The answer to this is that God and the true reception of grace changes impostors and enables them to be genuine. The Apostle Paul tells us to "put off" and "put on." For example, he instructs believers:

"that you *put off*, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and

ness. On the day of Pentecost Peter confronted unbelieving Jews and said, "Repent" (Acts 2:38). That repentance was to be followed by believer's baptism. Acts 5:31 says that God exalted Jesus to "give repentance to Israel and the forgiveness of sins." Then in Acts 11:18, the Jews of Jerusalem rejoiced that "God has granted the Gentiles repentance to life." In Acts 20:21, Paul declares that he testified to "Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." Paul's continuing message was "that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance" (Acts 26:20).

Repentance is turning from sin and self to Jesus as the only hope of forgiveness and salvation. True repentance abandons any hope of self-effort for eternal life and clings only to the Savior. Manning's mystical experience is devoid of repentance and he says that Jesus really liked him just the way he was with no change on his part. It implies that Jesus was not concerned with the way Manning lived, only that he knew he was liked. It is really the misunderstanding and manipulation of grace turning it into license. Those who have truly responded to Christ and grace have the desire and the empowerment to "put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts" (Ephesians 4:22). Manning has vigorously fed "the old man" and called it grace.

The second aspect of his testimony that clashes with Scripture is the claim of secret information and a secret name. These claims conflict directly with Jesus' own words: "I spoke openly to the world. I always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where the Jews always meet, and in secret I have said nothing" (John 18:20).

Perhaps Manning's idea of a secret name came out of a faulty and skewed interpretation of Revelation 3:12. In that verse Jesus speaks of a future event in which He will bestow honor upon those who overcome: "I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God." Another of the things

yet ahead is, "I will write on him My new name." However, there is obviously no mystical trance in this verse and it says that this name (whatever it is) will be written on all overcomers one day in the New Jerusalem.

The pillar speaks of giving someone honor as it refers "to the custom of honoring a magistrate by placing a pillar in his name."<sup>31</sup>

The idea of a new name is also found in Revelation 2:17 and 14:1. The breastplate of the High Priest contained twelve stones, one for each of the tribes of Israel. On each stone the tribe's name was inscribed. The name written on the stone and held on the High Priest's heart spoke of acceptance, belonging, and intimacy.

The new name in Revelation speaks of a future intimacy of believers with Christ that really cannot be explained fully unless experienced. It will be a new kind of intimacy never before experienced in this life. The hymn writer tried to capture it in these words: "Face to face— what will it be, When with rapture I behold Him, Jesus Christ who died for me?"<sup>32</sup> With new, glorified bodies like Jesus' there will be an intimacy and identification that cannot be described in this realm.

The "new name" of Revelation 3:12 also echoes the fact that all through the Bible the Lord Himself changed the names of individuals as a token of what they would become in the future. God knew the potential of those whom he called. We will only know that new name spoken of in the book of Revelation in eternity when we have full and unbroken fellowship with Christ and finally become all that God intended. Meanwhile, true believers are always moving in that direction as they seek by grace to be more like Jesus.

### WANTING MORE — NEVER SATISFIED

Manning's loss of time during his three-hour "Golden World" experience might be explained any number of ways: alcohol, a vivid imagination, his admitted casual relationship with the truth,<sup>33</sup> or even spiritual decep-

tion. Whatever the case may be, Manning says this experience spurred him to become a priest. He was ordained on May 18, 1963, and celebrated his first Mass. At ordination Franciscans take a new name. Manning selected the name Brennan, but he says that nothing else changed.

Manning began to lose motivation and desire for the Franciscan priesthood because the Pope wanted them to be more educated. Manning wanted a simpler and less responsible existence. He put in a request to be moved to a more cloistered life with a fraternity called the Little Brothers of Jesus. He was told to wait a year, after which he made the move to France in 1967, to involve himself with the Little Brothers.<sup>34</sup>

Manning grew restless. Once again he says he thought, "*There's got to be more.*"<sup>35</sup> Manning concluded that his whole life was ugly and "vitiating with pride."<sup>36</sup> He saw himself as worthless and completely useless. Perhaps it could be proposed that he was finally experiencing the conviction of the Holy Spirit as to his true state without a vital connection to and relationship with Jesus Christ. However, Manning's reaction was:

"I determined to commit spiritual suicide, cut myself off from God and the church and the Brothers, turn my back on it all. I didn't know what else I could do."<sup>37</sup>

The biblical response, of course, would have been to turn to God and cry out for forgiveness.

With the assistance of a fellow priest and a Scripture verse (Matthew 5:3), Manning was led to conclude that he was poor in spirit. He did not see that he was experiencing his true sinful state so that he might cry out for a Savior from his sin, but rather thought that he was really okay to feel this way and that "it's okay not to be okay."<sup>38</sup> Someone truly poor in spirit would know that it is not okay to glibly declare himself fine in the sight of God. Manning may have also forgotten Matthew 5:6, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be

filled." One trustworthy commentator shares this in regard to those poor in spirit:

"These are the men and women who recognize the fact that they have no spiritual assets. They confess their lost condition and so rely upon divine grace."<sup>39</sup>

Manning appears disdainful of passionate and aggressive evangelistic preaching:

"I've met many people who've told me that the doorway to salvation was a hellfire preacher pounding John 3:16. But that's not how it was for me."<sup>40</sup>

Of course, Manning is creating an extreme and a caricature. In no way does John 3:16 have to be pounded, but by framing it this way Manning tries to avoid this biblical imperative.

Despite Manning's twist on being "poor in spirit," he progressed very little as he confesses his ongoing inconsistent nature and dissatisfied spirit:

"You see me here one moment about to commit spiritual harakiri and the next moment acting like someone who could[n't] care less about the ways of God. When I wrote once about 'the inconsistent, unsteady disciples whose cheese is falling off their cracker,' I was talking about myself."<sup>41</sup>

### ON THE ROAD — AGAIN!

Manning became restless after only two years with the Brothers, moving from France to Ohio to become a chaplain at a Franciscan University. He said his "primary responsibility was to organize liturgies, prayer meetings, and weekend retreats."<sup>42</sup> It was also there where he became part of the Cursillo Movement. This new fad stressed Catholicism, the Eucharist, and the Charismatic Movement. At this point, Manning believed this was part of the "more" he had been searching for.<sup>43</sup> But after another two years he was on the move again, transferring to Alabama to establish an experimental community. He landed a job working on shrimp boats.<sup>44</sup> On Friday nights, he and his

co-workers would host the Eucharist in an innovative folk Mass, along with wine and cheese parties, which were a big draw to the locals. Combining work and play, this certainly cast Manning as a friend of the community, all the while he continued with his alcohol addiction. Two years later, the Franciscan hierarchy deemed the experiment a failure.<sup>45</sup>

That failure was followed by a move to Fort Lauderdale, Fla., as a campus minister at Broward Community College. Manning says of his job there:

"I learned what was expected of me and learned what I could get away with. To say 'I was spending time in prayer' was sometimes true but other times merely a spiritual facade to cover my laziness."<sup>46</sup>

Manning further divulges the horrific and devastating effects of his lifetime of alcohol abuse and addiction. He discusses the toll alcohol took on his brain:

"The medical name for it is Wernicke-Korsakoff syndrome; I know it as 'wet brain.' It has to do with a thiamine deficiency brought about by poor nutritional habits; in other words, the person replaces food with alcohol. Over time this deficit causes significant brain-cell death. One of the telling signs of this syndrome is mental confusion, sometimes to the point of insisting upon events that did not happen."<sup>47</sup>

This could be another clue to his "Golden World" experience.

When Manning speaks of the times he stopped drinking he really means he drank less. He was always having "a few beers with friends or wine with meals" and admits, "it wasn't that I had ever really stopped drinking."<sup>48</sup> These all were a prelude to Florida where Manning says that he began to drink so heavily it reminded him of the times "when my nickname was Funnel."<sup>49</sup>

Manning would try to sober up on weekends when he had speaking

engagements. However, he wound up at Hazelden, a rehab center in Minnesota. He recalls his leaving the facility resistant to any tough love they dispensed:

"I would love to tell you that one day in Hazelden I was on my knees in the center of the room sobbing hysterically, owning up to my drinking and lies. But that never happened. Max [a co-patient] left the treatment center a broken man but also a changed man. I left the center known as 'a tough nut to crack.' I was clean and sober but far from honest."<sup>50</sup>

### FOR BETTER OR WORSE, BUT NOT FOR LONG

Manning was ready to move on again, this time to New Orleans where he met with success on a speaking circuit as an alcoholic priest. It was in Louisiana where he met and then developed a relationship with Roslyn, a lady whom he would eventually marry.<sup>51</sup> Manning recounts how in the 1960s, a Roman Catholic Church council called Vatican II was developed by Pope John XXIII.<sup>52</sup> This allowed more open expression in the Catholic Church and Manning, along with many others, began questioning priestly celibacy and the denial of marriage for priests. He resigned from the priesthood in 1982 and then was married. Francis MacNutt, another former, now married, Catholic priest performed the ceremony.<sup>53</sup>

The wedlock led to the withdrawal of his future speaking engagements; and also led to the alienation of family and friends. Manning became father to his wife's two daughters by a prior marriage and he confesses, "I had no idea what I was supposed to do."<sup>54</sup> Manning and his wife began to fall on hard financial times even when speaking invitations began to come in again. One of those invitations came from the late Mike Yaconelli of Youth Specialties, a recognized leader in the emergent church movement.<sup>55</sup>

Manning acknowledges closeting himself in motels and drinking for days.<sup>56</sup> He once disappeared for nine days.<sup>57</sup> He was doing all of this while he was teaching hundreds how to live

life. His wife at times would beg him to come home. He would have to try to sober up.

After 16 years, Manning and Roslyn separated. Two years later, in 2000, their divorce was final. Once again, Manning stumbled. What is truly shocking is that Manning, now a divorced drunk, flourished in his new persona as a Christian writer, dispenser of godly wisdom, and conference speaker.

Manning had developed a small group which he called the Notorious Sinners, who met annually for get-togethers. He boasts:

“It’s probably helpful to know that one of the rules of the Sinners has always been ‘There are no rules.’”<sup>58</sup>

That does mark his life. He reminisces how he and a friend “would get drunk and talk about God for hours and hours.”<sup>59</sup> This kind of sinful boasting comes from a depraved mind and is perverse. In Proverbs 23 we see God’s attitude of drunkenness:

“Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has contentions? Who has complaints? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? Those who linger long at the wine, those who go in search of mixed wine. Do not look on the wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it swirls around smoothly; at the last it bites like a serpent, and stings like a viper. Your eyes will see strange things, and your heart will utter perverse things. ... ‘They have struck me, but I was not hurt; they have beaten me, but I did not feel it. When shall I awake, that I may seek another drink?’” (Proverbs 23:29-33, 35)

Manning’s name could be inscribed on these verses. So could many others were it not for the true grace of God that delivered them. Salvation in Christ can change all that. In the end, Manning’s book may be a tutorial for blossoming drunkards on how to blame-shift and scapegoat through

life, deny that it is sin and then mask it under the heading of grace. The Scriptures, however, have a contrary view: “Woe to men mighty at drinking wine. Woe to men valiant for mixing intoxicating drink” (Isaiah 5:22).

One of the untold tragedies of alcohol addiction is the squandering of money which could have been used for nobler purposes.

Thinking back on the Proverbs verse, the phrase “your eyes will see strange things, and your heart will utter perverse things,” takes us to another otherworldly experience which Manning claims to have had in 2003. He alleges to have seen his mother as a six-year-old orphan, and then as an aged woman. Her message to him: “You know, I messed up a lot when you were a kid. But you turned out okay.”<sup>60</sup>

In this section of his book, Manning claims to have forgiven his mother. However, when God forgives us, he buries our sins and leaves no grave markers. He does not bring our confessed sins to mind. Manning’s forgiveness sounds rather hollow because he has used page after page after page vividly chronicling his mother’s sins and failures; all of which he claims to have forgiven. Here he has created a permanent record of her transgressions for all to ponder. Is this forgiveness, or is it really being disingenuous? Realistically, it is just more confusion and lack of a clear understanding on Manning’s part making himself look like the hero.

It is unbiblical to say we forgive someone and then dredge up their sins and chronicle them in a book. Biblical counselor Jay Adams tells us:

“What one must do is to commit himself to the *hard* task of promising not to raise the matter of the offense again. That is the essence of granting forgiveness. When one sincerely avoids mentioning the offense to his brother, when he refuses to discuss it with anyone else, and when he puts it out of his own mind by

declining to think and dwell upon it in resentment or self-pity, the *feelings* of forgiveness soon will accompany the promise and commitment.”<sup>61</sup>

Similarly, Christian lawyer and author Ken Sande informs as to the dynamics of biblical forgiveness and what that means:

“We must release the person who has wronged us from the penalty of being separated from us. We must not hold wrongs against others, not think about the wrongs, and not punish others for them. Therefore, forgiveness may be described as a decision to make four promises: ‘I will not dwell on this incident.’ ‘I will not bring up this incident again and use it against you.’ ‘I will not talk to others about this incident.’ ‘I will not let this incident stand between us or hinder our personal relationship.’”<sup>62</sup>

### VIBRANT GRACE, NOT VULGAR GRACE

Manning’s book is a sad read. It is not about honesty, but sheer hypocrisy and arrogance. Manning has spent his life marketing his sins under the guise of grace. He lived the life of a defensive drunkard in lying, evading, and in denial. His cover up is a distortion of grace. Some, over the years, questioned Manning about his sinful and evil lifestyle while he claimed grace. Rather than agree that such a question was valid, he characterized their inquiry as a “loaded pharisaical grenade,”<sup>63</sup> when, in reality, he was the perfect Pharisee and hypocrite. His stock answer for his horrendous lifestyle is smug and evasive. He says, “These things happen.”<sup>64</sup> Maybe some things do happen, but when those things are sins and they keep on happening for years on end, someone is to blame. Manning has to face the unintended consequences of the sinful choices he has made.

Manning, an approaching octogenarian, is living a reclusive life in Belmar, N.J. He is beset by physical problems and severe mental lapses

because of a life of alcohol abuse, needing daily assistance from a care giver. The consequences of the alcohol and “wet brain” are slowly taking their final sad toll. Manning broke all the rules and in the end the rules broke him.

It is not difficult to understand why Manning creates confusion and why some would think he might be some kind of slightly mutant Evangelical. Like many alcoholics, he has the gift of gab. He can talk about grace, spiced with a bit of evangelical seasoning and terminology; but his interpretations and rationalizations are never true to the Gospel. He believes that the human family is also automatically God’s spiritual family, but they really do not know it yet. Here again he errs biblically. He misapplies many Scriptures, those which belong to born-again believers, applying them instead to the lost. His use of Ephesians 4:6, that God is “Father of all and in you all” is an example of his faulty exegesis. The passage addresses those who are in Christ, and not to all as Manning supposes.<sup>65</sup>

In his memoirs Manning says he no longer cares that people accuse him of “cheap grace.”<sup>66</sup> He has picked up another term coined by an Episcopal priest, Robert Farrar Capon: “vulgar grace.”<sup>67</sup> This means, according to Capon, “that in him, every last person on earth is already home free ... The entire show has been set to rights in the Mystery of Christ — even though nobody can see a single improvement.”<sup>68</sup> This idea turns the grace of God into license and lewdness.

Brennan Manning’s life was a horrible mess even by the world’s standards. His distorted view of grace, gratuitously applied to all, produced in his own life the by-product of a man mired in gross sinful habits, drunkenness, and broken commitments. He is a man who was always seeking something more, but never seemed to find it. He is a man who thought that God and grace always accepted anything he wished to do and anyway he wished to live. Manning is totally self-centered and does not care for others or he would not be

living in violation of Romans 14:12-13, being a constant stumbling block to the weak.

No one is perfect, but the true believer, enabled by grace and God’s indwelling Spirit, seeks to have failures less and less and few and far between. Even in failure there is to be remorse over the failure, repentance, and recovery (1 John 1), not celebration and contentment. It is heresy to say grace sets me free, and then go on sinning cavalierly. The Christian life is not about perfection, but it certainly is about direction. Sincere Christians know as well if they lose their way and start in the wrong direction they will experience God’s loving hand of chastisement (Hebrews 12:1-14) as God’s way of calling them back to righteous living. Truly understanding grace creates thanksgiving and desire for God’s ways, not loose living.

Brennan Manning is a man who talks a lot about grace. Yet he does not seem to understand that grace not only saves, but that it also enables us and equips us to live above constant and unbroken habit patterns of sin and failure. The Bible teaches this clearly and explicitly:

“For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, *teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age*” (Titus 2:11-12, emphasis added).

Grace teaches us to reject sin, not embrace it and flaunt it. Grace gives us the want-to and empowers us to deny sin and lusts. It is a perversion to live in gross sin and then claim that grace makes it all right. Grace living is not to merit anything, but is simply the result of a recognized acceptance through a relationship with Jesus and the new birth.

It is jarring to read at the end of Manning’s book:

“If you asked me whether what I have done in my life defines my life, I would answer, ‘No.’”<sup>69</sup>

If our lifestyle and habits do not define us, then what does?

We know by Manning’s own words what defined him. He goes on to say that his “calling” has been to “a life filled with family and friends and alcohol and Jesus and Roslyn.”<sup>70</sup> These are startling words. How would Roslyn and her family answer that when they know what really filled his life? More importantly, how would Jesus answer that?

## THE SAD END OF THE ROAD

Christ saves us where we are, as we are, *but does not leave us that way*. To sing “Just as I Am” does not mean “Leave me as I am” (1 Corinthians 6:9-13). Manning never seemed to understand that redemption means a setting free from the grinding, binding penalty and power of sin over our daily lives. Yes, there is struggle and temptation and, yes, this is a progressive work of God. That means that where grace and the Holy Spirit are truly active there is progress. The Apostle Paul tells the Thessalonians of his desire that they progress in holiness. He tells them to “stand fast” or to hold fast to all the things he taught them. As he does, he ties together the wonderful concepts of God’s love, consolation, hope, and *grace*, and he desires that these things not only comfort their hearts but also “*establish you in every good word and work*” (2 Thessalonians 2:16-17, emphasis added). G.H. Lang wrote:

“None more firmly than Paul rejected works, before or after conversion, as a ground of salvation; none more firmly demanded good works as a consequence of salvation.”<sup>71</sup>

The theme of the book of Titus is the practice of maintaining good works after one comes to salvation (Titus 2:1-15; 3:8, 14).

Manning is a man lost at sea in a storm. When thrown a life saver he stayed in the dark, murky, alcohol-filled waters and told others who were dying around him that they were all okay. He was satisfied to refuse the life preserver while he kept on treading water. A life preserver is of no value unless one commits himself to it and allows himself to be

pulled to safety. Grace believed is not the same as grace received and Christ believed is not the same as Christ received. One can only hope and pray that Manning will abandon his false message and cast himself upon God's grace and the only "lifesaver" — Jesus Christ.

For those who say this is a judgmental article, we respond by pointing them to the Apostle Paul who gives his judgment when he said, "do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:18). What is dramatic is the hard literal meaning of the English word dissipation. The Greek word *asotia* literally means *no salvation*. It is viewed as squandering and dissipating of all and every resource. This is the judgment of Paul regarding those who make alcohol their god.

Manning found a way to assuage his guilt and justify his lifestyle. He simply created a god who went along with anything he wanted to do and kept assuring him that he was okay. Pagans have been creating gods in their image for centuries. Followers of the god Bacchus, both in Greece and Rome, often drank themselves into drunken stupors with Bacchus' approval. Manning's manufactured god even goes along with his distorted redefining of grace.

The book of Jude warns against the danger of turning God's grace into lewdness (v. 4). James B. De Young's commentary on 1 John 1:6-10 speaks to false claims answered by contrasting genuine truths:

"The first false claim (1:6) is to have fellowship with God while continuing to 'walk' (live) in 'darkness' (sin). ... John's response is two-fold: we lie and we do not live (practice) the truth. ... We contradict the truth by words and by deeds."<sup>72</sup>

So God's grace and God's Spirit lead us to take sin seriously and deal with it biblically. The Apostle Paul always struggled to keep his conscience clean and clear before God (Acts 23:1; 24:16), and as a result he could tell other believers to follow

him (2 Thessalonians 3:7, 9). Brennan Manning could never say that. He is to be pitied, not published; refuted, not applauded.

This article was written with a deep sense of sadness that one man could be so deceived and influence so many — and sadness over the misuse of God's precious grace. Manning's brand of grace has not taught his heart to fear, neither has it brought him safe thus far. And saddest of all, it is grace which will not lead him home.

### Endnotes:

1. See Ray Yungen, *A Time of Departing*. Silverton, Ore.: Lighthouse Trails Publishing Company, 2002, pp. 78-85, 93, 131-133, 136.
2. Beth Moore, *When Godly People Do Ungodly Things*. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2002, pp. 72-73.
3. Agnieszka Tennant, "A 'Coward' Who Stayed to Help," *Christianity Today*, interview posted 10/06/2005, Editor's Note added 10/10/2005. Document accessed at: [www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2005/140/42.0.html](http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2005/140/42.0.html).
4. Jackie Alnor, "The Ragamuffin Gospel," book review posted on Protestant Apologetics and Theology Web site, no posting date, brackets in original. Document accessed at: [www.ovrind.com/Universalism/RagaGospel.html](http://www.ovrind.com/Universalism/RagaGospel.html).
5. Brennan Manning with John Blase, *All Is Grace, A Ragamuffin Memoir*. Colorado Springs, Co.: David C. Cook, 2011.
6. *Ibid.*, pg. 118.
7. *Ibid.*, pp. 19-20, italics in original.
8. T.H.L. Parker in Everett F. Harrison, Editor-in-chief, *Baker's Dictionary of Theology*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1960, pg. 258.
9. Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Grace*. Findley, Ohio: Dunham Publishing Company, 1947, pg. 25.
10. Charles Ryrie, *The Ryrie Study Bible*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1976, note on Ephesians 2:8, pg. 1781.
11. *All Is Grace*, op. cit., pp. 26-27.
12. *Ibid.*, pg. 31.
13. *Ibid.*
14. *The Ryrie Study Bible*, op. cit., note on James 4:7-10, pg. 1861.
15. *All Is Grace*, op. cit., pg. 33.
16. *Ibid.*, pp. 38-47.
17. *Ibid.*, pg. 52.
18. *Ibid.*, pg. 53.
19. *Ibid.*
20. *Ibid.*, pg. 55.
21. *Ibid.*, pp. 176-177.
22. *Ibid.*, pp. 56-58.
23. *Ibid.*, pp. 56-57.
24. *Ibid.*, pp. 75-76.
25. *Ibid.*, pg. 76.

26. *Ibid.*, pg. 81.
27. *Ibid.*, pg. 87.
28. *Ibid.*, pg. 89.
29. *Ibid.*, pg. 91.
30. *Ibid.*
31. *The Ryrie Study Bible*, op. cit., note on Revelation 3:12, pg. 1899.
32. Carrie E. Breck, "Face to Face," *The Celebrational Hymnal*. No city: Word Music/Integrity Music, 1997, Hymn 781.
33. *All Is Grace*, op. cit., pg. 118.
34. *Ibid.*, pp. 97-99.
35. *Ibid.*, pg. 101, italics in original.
36. *Ibid.*, pg. 102.
37. *Ibid.*
38. *Ibid.*, pg. 103.
39. Harry A. Ironside, *Expository Notes on the Gospel of Matthew*. New York: Loizeaux Brothers, 1948, pg. 45.
40. *All Is Grace*, op. cit., pg. 103.
41. *Ibid.*
42. *Ibid.*, pg. 110.
43. *Ibid.*, pg. 111.
44. *Ibid.*, pg. 112.
45. *Ibid.*, pg. 113.
46. *Ibid.*, pg. 117.
47. *Ibid.*, pp. 115-116.
48. *Ibid.*, pg. 117.
49. *Ibid.*, pg. 118.
50. *Ibid.*, pg. 120.
51. *Ibid.*, pp. 126-136.
52. *Ibid.*, pp. 130-131.
53. *Ibid.*, pg. 136.
54. *Ibid.*, pg. 138.
55. *Ibid.*, pg. 140.
56. *Ibid.*, pg. 146.
57. *Ibid.*, pg. 147.
58. *Ibid.*, pg. 159.
59. *Ibid.*, pg. 161.
60. *Ibid.*, pg. 196.
61. Jay E. Adams, *The Christian Counselor's Manual*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1973, pg. 70, italics in original.
62. Ken Sande, *The Peacemaker*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 2004, pg. 209, emphasis added.
63. *All Is Grace*, op. cit., pg. 177.
64. *Ibid.*, pg. 178.
65. Manning's book, *The Wisdom of Tenderness* (San Francisco: Harper, 2002), clearly teaches throughout an application of tenderness and grace to all, simply because they are human. This is a subtle form of universalism.
66. *All Is Grace*, op. cit., pg. 192.
67. *Ibid.*
68. *Ibid.*, pg. 193.
69. *Ibid.*, pg. 183.
70. *Ibid.*, pp. 183-184.
71. G.H. Lang quoted in F.F. Bruce, *Commentary on the Book of Acts*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1955, pg. 493.
72. James B. De Young in Walter A. Elwell, Editor, *Evangelical Commentary on the Bible*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1989, pg. 1179.



Roman Catholic historian, objectively details early Catholic monasticism.)

Feelings, after all, are affected by the fall just like every other part of man. Feelings are tainted and twisted by sin and need the guidance and correction of Scripture. Feelings can be tossed around by conflicting emotions and so make a terrible guide. The first couple — even in their perfect, sinless condition — was deceived by their feelings.

There is no limit to the creativity and corruption of human feelings. There were times in the Dark Ages that things spiraled down into sensual and erotic mysticism with those like Teresa of Avila claiming a marriage to Jesus along with details too weird and tasteless to mention. (See, for example, *Teresa of Avila* by Cathleen Medwick.) In her imagination, Teresa constructed seven chambers of intimacy with Jesus with the seventh being the most intimate. The intimacies were often described not sparing any sensual details. However, even being “married to Christ” did not insulate Teresa from runaway feelings and she claimed to have had visions of seeing herself in hell.

While the secular version of the feel-good orientation happens to be alcohol and drugs, today’s Christian — who has an aversion to feeling bad — seeks the form of mindless mysticism to lift emotions — at least for awhile. They have no awareness as to where all this led in the past. Modern man is a “lover of pleasure” and too much into self-love and self-esteem to ever deny himself anything. Instant gratification is “in” and delayed gratification requires effort and therefore is “out.” As D.A. Carson warns us, we can be attracted to an individualism that “can easily become a factor that reinforces narcissism, self-indulgence, instant gratification, self-promotion, and greed” (*Gagging of God*, pg. 47). Mysticism is a broad avenue to such individualism.

The practitioner of mysticism tries to bypass the mind and any other means, including the Bible, to gain inner emotional intimacy with God. It is all in the realm of feelings, emotions, and imaginations. There is no direct support for this from Scripture.

John MacArthur explains what mysticism in today’s Church is all about:

“Mysticism is a system of belief that attempts to perceive spiritual reality apart from objective, verifiable facts. It seeks truth through feelings, intuition, and other internal senses. Objective data is usually discounted, so mysticism derives its authority from within. Spontaneous feeling becomes more significant than objective fact. Intuition outweighs reason. An internal awareness supersedes external reality.

As we shall see shortly, mysticism is at the heart of modern existentialism, humanism, and even many forms of paganism — most notably Hinduism and its close ally, New Age philosophy. ... There are only two basic approaches to biblical truth. One is the historical objective approach, which emphasizes God’s action toward men and women as taught in Scripture. The other is the personal, subjective approach, which emphasizes the human experience of God. How should we build our theology? Should we go to the Bible — or to the experiences of thousands of people? If we go to the people, we will have as many views as there are individuals” (*Charismatic Chaos*, pp. 31-32).

What is downright misleading and deceptive about modern mysticism and its proponents is that they hide it under buzz words and euphemisms such as “spiritual formation” and “meditation” or like-sounding spiritual words. What is passed off as a deeply spiritual, “still small voice” is in fact horribly shallow human imagination that lacks correspondence to the truth of Scripture.

Many modern mystics say they have seen Jesus or at least seek such visions and encourage others to seek them as well. Benny Hinn, over two decades ago, made the claim that the face of Jesus appeared on the wall of his Orlando church, and more recently offered assurances that Jesus would personally and physically appear on the platform at one of his healing crusades. Documentation or verification should be easy in a day of video cameras, but none was ever presented. Hinn seems to have missed a verse that many modern mystics either do not know or ignore. That verse is 1 Peter 1:8 which says of Jesus: “whom having not seen you love. Though *now you do not see Him*, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory” (emphasis added). Those of us who expect to see Jesus, at either death or the Rapture, are not second-class citizens, but have obtained the “like precious faith” or literally, faith of the same value, as Peter (2 Peter 1:1).

Another verse which is ignored by mystics is found in the Gospel of John: “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed” (20:29). Modern mystics are more like doubting Thomas than solid Christians. Paul’s exhortation, “For we walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Corinthians 5:7), appears extinct. We could also add, “For we walk by faith and not by feelings.”

MacArthur tells of one individual who was constantly bouncing from one experience to another. It illustrates the dead end of living in mysticism rather than the rock solid foundation of Scripture. The man, in frustration, confessed to MacArthur: “You spend the rest of your life trying to find another experience” (ibid., pg. 36). In the end many experience seekers burn out or flat out quit in discouragement feeling something is wrong with them. They need to get back to 1 Peter 1:8, John 20:29, and 2 Corinthians 5:7 and begin to rest in their riches in Christ which are described in so many portions of God’s

Word. A re-reading of 2 Corinthians would cure thrill seekers with the reality of the ups and downs of life. We all have to decide whether it will be for us madness and muddle, fantasy and fads, or the never-changing assurance of biblical promises.

The old hymn says it well: "How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord, Is laid for your faith in His excellent Word! What more can He say than to you He hath said, To you who for refuge to Jesus have fled?"

—GRF

## WHERE'S WALDO?

Most people are familiar with the "Where's Waldo?" cartoons. They are expansive pictures which are a hoarder's delight. And somewhere within the panorama is Waldo, a tall thin character dressed in a red-striped shirt. Usually the drawings are cluttered with objects and people; some red and white to throw off the observer who must search the picture to try to find Waldo.

Finding truth today is something like that. We have to constantly ask, "Where's Truth?"

Walk into a bookstore that is advertised as being a "Christian bookstore" and what do you find? There will be a jumble of books and publications that run the gamut from New Age to hyper-Charismatic, and from heretical to semi-evangelical.

There are the self-help publications stacked among the books on pop psychology. There are claimed visitations to heaven, trips to hell, angelic appearances, UFO abductions, dated predictions for the rapture, and a surfeit of purported Holy Ghost-given revelations. There are instruction manuals on "breaking strongholds" and ancestral bondage. There are books about signs and wonders, including people rising from the dead and end-time revival reports.

Then there are all the books on sowing your financial seed and multiplying money a hundredfold by sending the author a "seed faith" offering. One wonders why he does not send money to his readers so that his seed can be multiplied.

There will also be books on Jesus' teenage trips to India. Or was it Mongolia, or Egypt, or maybe somewhere else where He learned ancient wisdom? And, oh yes, the section on dream interpretation and the book on "What Would Jesus Eat," along with other biblical diet books.

Then there are books by Joyce Meyer, Benny Hinn, Miles Munroe, T.D. Jakes, and a flock of other "Major League Charismatic Players," all vying for the book buyer's cash. And on and on it goes and where it stops nobody knows. As you stagger out of the bookstore in a daze, a question occurs to you — "Where's truth?"

One of the more recent charlatans on the minor league parade of extremist Charismatics is John Crowder.

Crowder knows that there is a hard-core audience that has been so jaded by past emotional "revivals" (slaying in the Spirit, laughing revivals, animal noises, violent head shaking, and even being kicked and wrestled to the ground) that experience seekers will put up with anything — the wilder and freakier the better. Insanity and total loss of control is now one of the premier marks of the Holy Spirit which you know if you watch the Trinity Broadcasting Network or read *Charisma* magazine.

On Crowder's Sons of Thunder Web site and on the myriad of "sermons" and reports posted all over YouTube, he claims to smoke the Holy Spirit like pot and get wasted. He claims people have weight loss in his meetings. (Of course, Crowder provides no documented evidence for the biggest loser.) He boasts of levitations and spirit travel. In the occult world spirit travel is called astral travel, but to his followers who cares. There are things that Crowder speaks about that are too inappropriate and vile to mention. Crowder arrogantly goes to places others like him have feared to tread. He not only pushes the envelope, he shreds it. Anyone with any discernment wants to scream — "Where's truth?" It is certainly not with John Crowder.

Despite all of the above, the Berean is neither discouraged nor does he lose heart. It is interesting that once you spot Waldo in a picture you know exactly where to look next time. Bereans have to become adept at knowing truth as it is found in Scripture. Truth, in fact, is not hard to spot. It is where it has always been, which is in the Bible. God is truth and His Word is truth. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Truth. Truth is actually in plain sight and not hard to find at all. Go to the Word, and stay safe by listening to preachers who are trustworthy and faithful to the truth. It is also important to commit to a church where truth is honored and proclaimed, and error is exposed and false teachers named (as Paul did). Above all, get grounded in doctrinal truth.

Next time you happen to see a "Where's Waldo?" cartoon, remember where you must look to find truth. Don't be misled by the religious clutter and heretical diversions that are everywhere.

—GRF

---

## NEWS UPDATES

(continued from page 3)

Years after Bakker's publicly exposed moral failure, financial improprieties, and downfall, Joyner and his ministry began purchasing the portion of PTL network property known as Heritage USA. In 2005, MorningStar acquired the failed hotel tower building with the intent to renovate the facility and then sell what it termed as "life leases" of age-restricted apartments. In the fall of 2008, it was announced that a \$40 million redevelopment of the structure, yielding 215 units, would begin the

following January, with residents moving in by mid-2010. As that projected occupancy date arrived, the tower still sat vacant and unrepaired. The York County Council found MorningStar “in default” of their agreement and since that time “the county and MorningStar have been going back and forth in legal battles,” according to a WBTV Channel 3 local television news report.

Fort Mill residents are now hoping that a loophole in a county ordinance will be the key to bringing down the curtain on Joyner’s failed project. The ordinance says that unfit dwellings are unlawful if found in dilapidation or are unsafe to residents of the county. Once this designation is made, and if the owner is unable to repair the property, the county is allowed to demolish it. Residents have filed a petition to this end. This new plan, however, could result in years of legal wrangling.

Joyner is part of a movement of modern-day prophets and apostles and associates with other self-appointed prophets such as Mike Bickle, Paul Cain, and Todd Bentley.

—MKG

## HOWARD-BROWNE ACCUSED OF MORMON-BASHING

Some people think politics and religion are two subjects better left unspoken. But when the two are united and expressed, conflict and contempt are sure to ensue.

Pentecostal pastor Rodney Howard-Browne received some negative press when, following a political event for Republican presidential candidate Newt Gingrich, he expressed to reporters “grave reservations” about rival candidate Mitt Romney and his Mormon faith. “Mormonism is a cult and that’s the problem,” Howard-Browne was reported to have said according to an online article by *The Daily Mail*, a British publication. The article further cited Howard-Browne as saying, “Mormonism, if you study the whole history of it, and I’m not trying to create a problem, but they had death squads that would go around kill[ing] everybody that wasn’t a Mormon.”

Another online article reporting Howard-Browne’s statements prefaced its story by saying, “At least he’s being creative. The latest anti-Mormon comments from a pastor backing one of Mitt Romney’s primary opponents.”

The rally for Gingrich was held on the grounds of Howard-Browne’s The River at Tampa Bay church on Jan. 23.

Howard-Browne’s comments did not create a stir comparable to one created last fall by prominent Baptist minister, Dr. Robert Jeffress. Jeffress, senior pastor of

First Baptist Church of Dallas, stated that Mormonism was a non-Christian cult and that evangelical voters “ought to give preference to a Christian instead of someone who doesn’t embrace historical Christianity.”

Other news outlets have offered a more shrewd response to the negative comments about Mitt Romney and Mormonism. At the same time Howard-Browne’s comments were being reported, *The Salt Lake City Tribune* intoned that “True Christians don’t demonize Mormons.” The article stated, “Mark DeMoss has a message for his fellow evangelicals: You can’t attack and demean Mormons or President Barack Obama and still consider yourself a follower of Jesus Christ.” DeMoss made his remarks during a devotional given at Brigham Young University.

DeMoss heads up a faith-based public-relations firm in Atlanta and has, for the past five years, been an unpaid adviser to Romney’s presidential campaign. He also told the *Tribune* in a telephone interview that he “believes that any question about whether Mormons are Christians is ‘irrelevant to me in the context of choosing a president.’”

In the 1990s, Howard-Browne rose as a major celebrity within Charismatic “signs and wonders” circles promoting the “laughing in the Spirit” phenomenon. He labeled himself a “Holy Ghost bartender” and “laughing evangelist.” As the laughing spectacle ran its course and the novelty waned, Howard-Browne settled into the role as a Tampa pastor.

—MKG

## ROBERTS ARRESTED ON DUI, SPEEDING CHARGES

Televangelist Richard Roberts has attracted the attention of the national media, but not for a reason he would like. In January, the former president of Oral Roberts University in Tulsa and son of late faith healer Oral Roberts was arrested on suspicion of driving under the influence of alcohol and speeding. The arrest report, complete with a mug shot, was picked up not only by Tulsa-area television and newspapers, but also by national outlets including CNN and CBN News.

The arrest report stated that Roberts, 63, was pulled over in his Mercedes-Benz sedan just after midnight on Jan. 24 by an Oklahoma Highway Patrol after the trooper “checked the vehicle’s speed at 93 MPH in a 65 MPH zone.” The report also stated that upon contact with Roberts, the police officer “immediately detected the strong odor of an alcoholic beverage about Roberts’ breath and person.”

According to a *Tulsa News* article, “Roberts was unable to complete two field sobriety tests and was taken to the Jenks Police Department to determine his blood-alcohol

level." The test showed Roberts' blood-alcohol level at .11%, which is higher than the .08% legal limit for intoxication in Oklahoma.

A few hours after being booked into a Tulsa jail, Roberts posted \$1,100 bond and was released.

In 2007, Roberts was forced from his position as president of the university founded by his father as the institution experienced ongoing and mounting fiscal deficits along with charges of financial malfeasance against Roberts. Roberts was later voted "president emeritus," a title without board voting privileges.

Roberts' father, Oral, died Dec. 15, 2009, at age 91.

—MKG

## MORE REALITY TV FOR HAGGARD

Ted Haggard just seems to have an insatiable appetite to be in the public eye. In January, the disgraced and fallen pastor was featured on ABC's premiere episode of *Celebrity Wife Swap*. But according to news reports of the reality program, the real star was Haggard's wife, Gayle. "She clearly kept things together through turmoil that would tear most families apart. Rarely do reality TV shows humanize people, but 'Celebrity Wife Swap' certainly does that for the Haggard family," according to an article in *The Gazette*, a newspaper in Haggard's hometown of Colorado Springs.

The program is another instance of the sins and failings of Haggard being paraded before the public. "Viewers are treated to a husband who focuses a little too much on his job, kids who would like to spend more one-on-one time with their father, and a strong wife who is the foundation of a clan," *The Gazette* reported.

And, in actuality, it's not really a "wife swap." Also appearing on the broadcast were actor Gary Busey and his fiancée, Steffanie Sampson.

According to the online publication, *The Christian Post*, "The two couples make an interesting religious combination. The Haggards are evangelical Christians who currently lead Saint James Church and the Buseys follow New Age philosophies, including reincarnation. Busey and Sampson believe they are married in spirit and are currently in their 32nd lifetime together."

*The Post* also cited Haggard as saying that he thought the program would be "insightful for judgmental Christians."

In 2006, Haggard forfeited his roles as pastor of the New Life Church and leader of the National Association of Evangelicals when details of his relationship with a male prostitute and illegal drug use were revealed. Leaving Colorado in humiliation, he returned to the state less than two years later. In 2009 he appeared on another reality program, *Divorce Court*, along with other broadcasts including *Larry King Live*. Then, in 2010, he returned to the pastorate, launching Saint James Church in Colorado Springs.

—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

## 7 TOXIC IDEAS POLLUTING YOUR MIND

by Anthony Selvaggio

P&R Publishing, 126 pages, \$11.99

In a day in which we are inundated with inaccurate and distorted interpretations of the “strongholds” which Paul metaphorically instructs believers to pull down (2 Corinthians 10:4), it is refreshing to read a sound exposition of the apostle’s prescript. Far too often — by popular and best-selling authors — we are told these strongholds are any evil and every sin (from immorality to drunkenness to unrighteous anger). Anthony Selvaggio’s book combats seven critical concepts which exalt themselves against the knowledge of God.

The seven “toxic ideas” which Selvaggio addresses are *technoploy*, the lure of modern technology; *neophilia*, the passion for new and innovative goods and ideas; *egalitarianism*, the desire for equality (by repudiating authority, hierarchy, and order); *individualism*, the idol of a self-absorbed life; *materialism*, the presupposition of naturalism or the reduction of humanity to a soulless entity (a view espoused by the new atheists); *consumerism*, attaining personal happiness at any cost; and *relativism*, the belief that morality and truth are subjective and relative to the people who embrace them. These distinctive, yet at times amalgamated, ideas tear at the fabric of culture, but more importantly, stifle the church and the mind of the Christian. “These seven ideas,” Selvaggio says, “are akin to the golden calf that Israel crafted in the wilderness. They are opportunities for idolatry” (pg. 14).

While these concepts are to be expected to be disseminated from government chambers, university lecterns, and the media, the tragedy is that they are being spread from pulpits and into the lives of Christians. Therefore, as Selvaggio tells us, believers must be aggressive, not passive, in their struggle. We cannot underestimate our enemy for he is “crafty” and he has a “tremendous foothold on the mind-set of this world” (pg. 15).

In the chapter on *neophilia*, we are instructed that progress is moving us away from a biblical worldview and from the preservation of the faith once entrusted to the saints. This danger is prevalent and germinates

within the soil of postmodernism. Here Selvaggio informs that “neophilia has had a profound negative impact ... in the realm of education” (pg. 44). And the extreme danger, we are told, is “The neophilia that runs rampant in modern education is a powerful tool in the hands of our adversary because it involves our children. Just as a lion searches through a herd of antelope for the youngest among the herd, so our adversary seeks to prey on our children” (pg. 45).

And Selvaggio warns, “The church has not been immune to the pernicious power of unbridled neophilia. The church also seems to have an insatiable passion for the new. The church in our day is not enamored of the faith once entrusted to the saints; rather, it is more interested in being culturally relevant and genuine. Nowhere can the present power of neophilia be seen more clearly than in the emerging-church movement” (pp. 45-46).

The chapter on *individualism* dramatically spells out the methods and effects of how the church and its authority are severely crippled by self-indulgent narcissism. “The focus of the church is undermined by individualism because it has led church members into believing that the reason the church exists is to meet their individual needs and desires” (pg. 77). This mind-set also affects both music and preaching: “Much of contemporary worship music is riddled with first-person pronouns. We sing much more about ourselves than we do about God. ... Many sermons are devoid of objective truth about God and instead are filled with subjective points meant to demonstrate personal relevance to the listener” (ibid.). This individualism also plays out in the matter of church discipline: “In the face of correction from a church body, many choose to simply leave and find another church rather than submit to the correction of their elders” (pg. 76).

The book’s back cover says discussion questions are included to identify and deal with these toxic ideas in the reader’s own mind. These questions are absent and would have been useful. Nonetheless, it’s a very helpful volume that is insightful and penetrating. The book is quickly read and easily perceived. It unmasks the worldliness that perilously takes captive the minds of believers and ends up shaping their behavior. But reader beware: If you’re compulsive about the latest high-tech gadgetry or invest far too much time social networking, you may not make it past the first few chapters.

—MKG

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