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EDITOR: KEITH A. MORSE

The Likeable Legalist Dr. Laura Is She a Much Needed Prophetess for Our Times?

by G. Richard Fisher

"Dr. Laura Schlessinger espouses what I would call a modified or theistic humanism," so says Tom Allen in his recent volume, *A Closer Look at Dr. Laura*.

There is a humorous witticism that states: "Give a woman an inch and she'll become a ruler!" That may be in jest but there is no doubt that Dr. Laura Schlessinger rules the airwaves these days. Her immensely popular call-in show is a mix of practical advice and pounding persuasion with doses of religion thrown in. She is a no nonsense advice giver who takes no prisoners.

Called "America's Mom," Dr. Laura is anti-abortion, pro-capital punishment, anti-drugs, anti-divorce, anti-adultery, anti-homosexual, pro-marriage and a children's advocate.¹ She upholds the Judeo-Christian view of morality and ultimate accountability to God. She is strongly against a couple living together outside of marriage. She is an advocate of James Dobson and the moral campaigns of his ministry. These are the things every believer wants to hear. Understandably, she is quite appealing to



the conservative Christian segment of our society. Her standard and stand for practical righteousness is to be applauded. She at least enforces one

primary use of the Old Testament Law, that is, the restraint of sin and the sinner. However, in spite of all the favorable, not all is well in "Laura-land."

Radio psychologist Laura Schlessinger is a 52-year-old Brooklyn-born Ph.D. (from the physiology Department of the Medical School of Columbia University in New York). She has Post Doctoral Certification in Marriage and Family Therapy from the University of Southern California.²

She is openly hostile to modern views of self-esteem and people who whine that they are victims. Herein lies a paradox in her advice. Self-esteem concepts and victimization are clear staples of modern psychology which makes it hard to understand how she at times can tell people that

(continues on page 13)

Inside this Issue:

- CHRISTIAN FORTUNE-TELLERS NEVER GET IT RIGHT, EITHER.. PAGE 2
- MIND CONTROL IN THE WAY INTERNATIONAL PAGE 4
- GOLD FILLINGS AND TRUTH DECAY IN TORONTO PAGE 5

Editorials

CHRISTIAN FORTUNE-TELLERS NEVER GET IT RIGHT, EITHER

In an editorial in the last issue of *The Quarterly Journal*, co-director G. Richard Fisher explored the world of tabloid prognosticators and how an undiscerning world is all too quick to "run after psychics and psychic predictions."

He also pointed out that an attraction for prophecy and future-telling, a longtime staple within Charismatic camps, has made inroads into Evangelical circles as well. Self-appointed prophets are cropping up everywhere.

There is even a "National School of the Prophets Conference," where for \$175 you can be trained in the art of "propheteering." C. Peter Wagner, Dutch Sheets, Rick Joyner, Cindy Jacobs, Mike Bickle, Ted Haggard and others can train us to be "prophets" (*Charisma* magazine, Dec. 1998). That magic word gives instant credibility in the mind of some.

Yet most Christians, both Charismatic and non-Charismatic alike, would balk at any implication of even the slightest involvement in the world of psychics and psychic phenomenon. "After all," they may further argue, "didn't faith healer Benny Hinn at one time ask for the donations from his faithful so that his daily telecasts could go head-to-head with the psychic hot

lines?" His aim, he said, was to air on the same secular cable and television networks that were carrying psychic advertising. Clearly Hinn was against Dionne Warwick and her crowd. His followers forget quickly that Hinn himself has made numerous false predictions.

A recent issue of *Charisma* magazine (April 1999) featured a full-page report that was nothing more than a "Christianized" version of what one might expect from the secular and godless supermarket tabloids. The *Charisma* article, entitled "Prophets Warn That United States Faces Threat of War, Islamic Terrorism," reported on a January "distress call" from "modern-day prophets." The band of 18 leaders, who met "behind closed doors," included Wagner, Joyner and Paul Cain. According to the magazine, this oracle of impending judgment was further endorsed by others in the prophetic movement, including Bickle (of Kansas City Fellowship fame), revivalist Tommy Tenney, and Vineyard pastor James Ryle.

The *Charisma* dispatch is just one more offering from an assembly of already-dubious revelators. Somehow, the Church just doesn't seem to get its fill of false and bizarre declarations of these self-proclaimed prophets. Tragically, the Church at large no longer seems to care about an erosion of discernment and a susceptibility to embrace entertainment rather than true spirituality.

Take for example Paul Cain. Hinn has elevated Cain to the distinction of super-prophet and told a Trinity
(continues on page 20)

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HINN ANNOUNCES MOVE WEST

In a move expected for some time by observers of Benny Hinn, the controversial faith healer has officially announced a personal move for he and his family to Southern California from Central Florida. The relocation will place the televangelist closer to his ministry's television production studio which was acquired in the mid-1990s.

The geographical move will not curtail Hinn's role as senior pastor of his World Outreach Church (formerly Orlando Christian Center) in Florida. He is expected to "continue to preach ... once a month" at WOC, a church spokesman stated. According to an *Orlando Sentinel* news article, "Hinn is expected to keep a house in Central Florida, though it is not known whether he will sell his Alaqua home, which he brought in 1990 for \$685,000." His television fund-raising and post-production operations, which employ 400 workers, will also remain in the Orlando area.

While "convenience" is being cited as the primary reason for the move, *Charisma* magazine noted that "a ministry spokesman admits the popular healing evangelist is hoping to dodge some of the media scrutiny that has plagued him in central Florida." In recent months, Hinn has had to endure several scandals exposed by the Orlando media, including a legal settlement, revelations of employee heroin abuse and a gag order imposed by the ministry on a former security chief.

—MKG

LDS TEMPLE PLANNED FOR NAUVOO

According to Gordon B. Hinckley, president of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the sect has announced plans for the rebuilding of its Nauvoo Temple. The surprise announcement came on Easter Sunday during the close of the church's annual General Conference.

The original Nauvoo Temple began construction in 1841 under the leadership of the sect's founder, Joseph Smith, Jr. It was dedicated in December 1845, prior to its completion and 18 months after Smith's death. The temple was abandoned a year later as the group migrated to Salt Lake City under the leadership of

Brigham Young. In 1848, the structure caught fire leaving only the walls standing. A subsequent tornado then demolished the burned-out remains.

The former Nauvoo Temple was Smith's second such edifice. However, it was the first temple in which his unique ceremonies — such as baptism for the dead and sealing of marriages for eternity — were performed. The sect's first temple was constructed in the 1830s in Kirtland, Ohio, prior to the evolution of Smith's peculiar doctrine and practice.

Hinckley also revealed that, "A member of the [LDS] church and his family have provided a very substantial contribution to make this possible." While no date for the temple's completion was given, Hinckley noted that, "It will be a while before it happens, but architects have begun their work."

The temple project reflects only one aspect of the LDS church's reverse-migration to Nauvoo. For several decades, the sect's presence has been felt in western Illinois due to the establishing and promoting of LDS historical sites. And just days after announcing its plans to rebuild the temple, the church disclosed that preparations are underway for Brigham Young University to open a formal study center in Nauvoo. The center will be housed in a former Catholic monastery and parochial school, which sits adjacent to the temple site. The facility, St. Mary's Monastery, was purchased by the LDS church last December. Eighty students will be housed at the newly created center, when the full-fledge program begins in the fall.

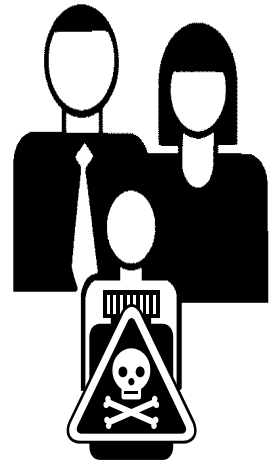
—MKG

JEHOVAH'S WITNESS ACTIVITY CONSIDERED BY MOSCOW COURT

Throughout its history, the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society has found itself in a variety of legal contests to win freedom for expression of its doctrine and practice. Court cases against local municipalities regarding door-to-door proselytizing by its members, national (and even international) encounters with the highest court in the land with respect to its anti-government stands, fights against judge-imposed blood transfusions for its members, and child custody battles between Jehovah's Witness and non-Jehovah's Witness parents have become

(continues on page 22)

The Poisoning of Families



MIND CONTROL IN THE WAY INTERNATIONAL

by John P. Juedes

MIND CONTROL

The adherents to some cults and new religions are under such firm control from their leaders that they seem to follow with an almost feverish, blind and irrational allegiance. It appears that no amount of personal pain, errors on the part of their leadership, family problems or valid criticisms of the group can sway their allegiance to the cult.

How can cult leadership exert such control on its followers? Clues can be found in the way one cult, The Way International, manipulates and controls its followers. These practices bring emotional damage into the lives of followers and cause great pain and turmoil in families. For example, one spouse will see the damage that the group causes and leave the group. Because such events can threaten the cult's control and even its existence, leaders often pressure the believing spouse into winning back the lost spouse or divorcing him or her.

People divorced under any circumstances have been known to try to turn their children against the ex-spouse. This problem is intensified when the divorce involves a parent who has left The Way International, because The Way typically poisons the children's minds in such a way that they reject and fear the non-Way parent. Because those in The Way believe they have theological reasons to attack their ex-spouses, the attacks are more intense and focused, and are seen as obedience to God.

One of the most damaging aspects of The Way is the ability of its leadership to control many of the thoughts and actions of its followers using tactics of mind control. This is not strictly speaking "brainwashing" (which uses physical abuse) but is the use of emotionally manipulative tactics to direct a person's attitudes and behavior. Steven Hassan, in his book, *Combating Mind Control*, describes several features common to groups which use such tactics of mental coercion, including:

- making followers *fearful* that terrible things will happen to them if they disobey leadership or leave the group. Way leaders say that if followers disobey, they will be "outside the protection of the household," and so they "will be a grease spot by midnight," that they will be involved in a terrible accident, and that they will destroy their relationship with God.
- requiring followers to *obey leadership strictly*, even on seemingly minor issues, and even when obedience damages the followers' lives. For instance, they are compelled to sell their homes if there is a mortgage of any size (even if rental rates are much higher than the mortgage payment), quit a job and move to a new city to be near leadership.

• inducing thought control by requiring recruits to use *only approved language* and jargon.

• causing followers to *block out all information from outside* the group. They are required to burn literature which was written by former followers of The Way who left it, even if the content of the books does not contradict current teachings of The Way. They are not allowed to read literature critical of The Way, are told not to read teaching by any religious group except The Way and are taught that even distributing the Bible without The Way's teaching will mislead people.

• *isolating* followers by requiring them to forsake all outside activities (including children's school activities) in order to devote long hours to group meetings and work.

• "*confronting*" errant followers by yelling, screaming, cursing, harranguing and verbally battering followers until they obey leadership.

• compelling youth, as well as parents, to "renew their minds" by submitting themselves to *constant indoctrination*, including The Way publications, classes, taped sermons, and so forth. They are compelled to attend Way meetings several nights a week,

(continues on page 12)



All That Glitters...

Gold Fillings and Truth Decay in Toronto

by G. Richard Fisher

"If we quit giving you new revelations, we're dead."¹

"I'm sick and tired of hearing about streets of gold [in heaven]. I don't need gold in heaven, I've got to have it now."²

Charismatic extremists keep reinventing God. Rodney Howard-Browne painted God as the divine comedian always ready to give His people belly laughs and hysteria.³

John Wimber pictured God as a sumo wrestler poised to knock His people around at a moment's notice.

Then there was the bunch from Brownsville Assembly of God in Pensacola, Fla., who recast God as a raging river ready to knock people off their feet, dribble them like a human basketball, and sweep them into trance states and memory loss.⁴ The field got crowded with competing claims.

Faith healer Benny Hinn also recently resurrected the old fire theme and claims this really is of God.⁵ So now its "God the fireman" — a celestial pyrotechnician, if you will.

At the Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship (formerly the Toronto Airport Vineyard church), at least for awhile, God was a heavenly zoo keeper who delighted in hearing the barks, grunts, roaring, crowing and howling of His people, or so we were

told.⁶ In his book, *The Father's Blessing*, Toronto pastor John Arnott devoted a whole chapter to animal noises and manifestations. He called it, "The Prophetic: Animal Sounds And Insights." How anyone could be straight-faced and shameless about these things is a mystery to me.

But the old scenarios get routine and threadbare and new drawing cards are needed. Some believe that John Arnott and the Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship leadership may have invented the latest draw in an attempt to bring waning crowds back to Canada and reestablish it as the undisputed Mecca and pilgrimage spot for sign-seekers and thrill-chasers. With Pensacola, Smithton (Mo.), and other "power centers" springing up, the competition is fierce.

Now Toronto has announced "the latest move of God." It has to do with claims that God is giving some fortunate people new gold fillings and gold crowns by miraculous means. However, the new "gold rush" is not so new, as we will see. It is an old scenario and has been linked to heresy, con artists and false teaching in the past. It is heartless for anyone to be involved with such tacky claims.

IS IT WORTH THE TRIP?

Think of it. Wouldn't you travel a few hundred miles to get a free dental plan? Wouldn't it be worth the trip

even if there was a 50/50 chance that it could happen to you? How far would you go to get free dental assistance? This certainly is a notch above Atlantic City or Las Vegas — a more lucrative return with better odds.

Of course, don't struggle with the fact that God could do for you what He wants, where you are, when He wants, because He is omnipotent and omniscient. Somehow you have to believe that God really only works mightily in "power centers" and *that the outlandish claims are always true*. Then again, just the idea of free dental work can really grab you. In the end, however, the cost of travel and the purchase of "revival" paraphernalia can be an expensive bottom line.

In a powerful sermon on God's providence, Charles Spurgeon compassionately lays out the implications of God's omnipresence and providence, which is a great antidote to the idea that we must have "power centers." He says:

"...wherever you are, the eye of God will be upon you — as much upon you as if there were not another person in the whole world. If there were only one, you might think how much God would look upon that one; but he looks on each one of us as if there were no other created being, and nothing else in the whole world. His eye is fixed upon us at every hour, and at

every moment. ... You cannot banish me from my Lord. Send me to the snows of Siberia or Lapland, I shall have the eyes of God there; send me to Australia, and let me toil at the gold diggings, there will he visit me."

Spurgeon presses on powerfully:

"If you send me to the utmost verge of the round globe, I shall still have the eye of God upon me. Put me in the desert where there is not one single blade of grass growing, and his presence shall cheer me. Or let me go to sea, amid the howlings of the tempest and the shrieking wind, where the mad waves lift up their hands to the skies as if they would pluck the stars from their cloudy thrones, and I shall have the eye of God there. Let me sink, and let my gurgling voice be heard among the waves — let my body lie down in the caverns of the sea, and the eye of God shall be on every bone, and in the day of the resurrection shall my every atom be tracked in its wanderings. Yes, the eye of God is everywhere; Providence is universal."⁷

THE OFFICIAL STATEMENT

Arnott and his Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship have issued a press release and "official statement" with the caption, "GOLD TEETH!"⁸ It seems that God has reemerged at Toronto as the cosmic dentist — a mystical Dr. Midas — a celestial tooth fairy, a heavenly Goldfinger, who fills teeth and sprinkles a little gold dust besides. What will God think of next? God is being recast as literally the "God of glitter."

The old adage "all that glitters is not gold" reminds us that what we see may not be what we get. In other words, judge by more than first appearances. First John 4 reminds us to evaluate all religious claims, as does many other portions of Scripture.

SPURIOUS REASONINGS

"Power center" promoters sometimes refer to John 20:30 in a mis-

guided effort to try to "baptize" the bizarre. Although the Apostle John says, "Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples that are not written in this book," many of them *are* written in the other books of the Bible. As well, we do not expect that God would work out of keeping with His character, His will or His Scriptures. So we need to confront and refute any appeal for nonsense and silliness based on John 20:30.

The "official statement" gives no biblical reason why God would supernaturally give His people gold fillings and gold crowns (on their teeth) and this is what is being claimed. In fact, Scripture is significantly absent from the press release. There is not even an attempt to justify the claims from the Word in the statement.

The "official statement" asks the question: "Why would God fill people's teeth with gold?" Then the statement moves into pure speculation: "*Perhaps* because He loves them and delights in blessing His children. *Perhaps* it is a sign and a wonder to expose the skepticism still in so many of us. *Perhaps* His glory and presence are drawing very near" (emphasis added). The report adds that God has thrown in the sprinkling of gold dust.

We already know *from Scripture* that God loves and blesses His children. We already know that skepticism can only be conquered when we bow in faith to God's holy Word (Romans 10:17). We already know that God's presence has come near in Jesus (John 1). We already know that "Christ in us" is the hope of glory (Colossians 1:27). Do we need more?

PERHAPS, PERHAPS, PERHAPS

In its "official statement," the Toronto Fellowship says perhaps, perhaps, perhaps. Yet *perhaps* it is none of those things that are suggested as possibilities. *Perhaps* it is a swindle or trick. *Perhaps* many of those people already had gold fillings or gold crowns. *Perhaps* the yellow lights were on the stage that night. The statement admits: "In a few cases, dentists were able to show from their records that the gold was put in their mouths

previously by the dentist and not by God. These people had apparently forgotten that this work had been done."

When PFO phoned the Toronto church, another *perhaps* was given. The secretary assured us that this was happening all over the world and she had witnessed it in Mexico. It was asked if it happened to her personally and she replied, "No." When asked why God would do this, she offered that it was probably "the extravagance of God." Another *perhaps*. When asked if there are external verifications of these things, her answer was, "Not yet." We moved onto the question as to why God would just not give new teeth or new enamel. The immediate answer was, "We don't want to get into deep theological discussions here. It is just cool to think of God doing it." So much for that.

What about lying signs and wonders Paul warned against? (2 Thessalonians 2:9) Would it be wrong to ask that and think — perhaps? (1 Thessalonians 5:21) What about over-anxious followers who want to stretch the truth just a little for effect? Perhaps?

Of all the recorded miracles in Scripture, no dental miracle comes to mind. The New Testament records no miraculous dental interventions. There are no miracles of gold dust either. The only gold connected to Jesus was that which was given by the Wise Men at His birth.

Modern dentistry only dates to the 18th century. The ancients did extractions and used herbs and other less wholesome things to apply to toothaches.⁹ We are not told why dental miracles are noticeably absent from Scriptures. There are no examples of anyone seeking them. Acts records only a few miracles a year in the life of the early Church and none of them are dental. Jesus may have done them but that would be pure speculation which violates Scripture (Deuteronomy 29:29).

In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus sweat, as it were, great drops of blood, not gold dust. Arnott is out on

a golden limb on this one and may have to back off quickly.

We were assured in our phone conversation to Toronto that there were pictures on the Internet of these "miracles" (which some humorously call "tooth pics"). I laughed out loud to see a proof text over the pictures — "Open your mouth and I will fill it" — from Psalm 81:10. What a terrible distortion of God's Word.

The photographs turned out to be gross views of people's open mouths; some with gold crowns on their teeth. There is no telling when, where, or how these pictures were obtained or of when the dental work was done and on whom. They are worthless as "evidence." I could photograph my mouth and make any claim I wanted to. I could photograph someone's mouth, anyone's mouth, and assert claims. Taking pictures of the insides of people's mouths can be done by anyone, anywhere.

On further reading of the "official statement" we are told that in some cases the fillings have turned from dark amalgam to bright silver. In other words God, we are told, made the fillings shinier than before. Since no one checked before, how would anyone know? There are *no before and after pictures*. The so-called "dental miracles" are "rapidly spreading," it is claimed.

Doctor God the dentist (my description), it is asserted, gives the "dental miracles" while you are even watching a Toronto video tape, so the "official statement" claims. Incredible. So for the price of a tape you may luck out and get a mouthful of gold. That would be worth at least a try. It should boost video sales but is somewhat akin to Las Vegas, as we've already noted. If as was stated (in the phone inquiry), that God is giving Mexicans gold teeth, they may (given the low standard of living and wages) yank them out and put them to better use. It seems it would be more practical for God just to multiply food. David Hogan, who has been featured at Pensacola, claimed just that for himself, however with no documentation.¹⁰

In a letter circulating over the Internet, "Kathy" claims to have been in Toronto and watched modern-day prophet Dutch Sheets minister. She reports: "the wonderful 'gold dust' started to show up on people's hands and in their tears as they worshipped!"

We often have that at our church as well. It happens when the preschoolers get messy with the glitter. I have seen teens with gold glitter in their hair and on their eye lids and face. It was not from a heavenly cosmetician but readily available at a craft store or cosmetics counter. It's a craze that has been resuscitated not just in "signs and wonders" camps, but in the secular world as well.

According to one newspaper report: "Now, thanks in part to the glam-rock and '70s revival, glitter is back. ... Club kids are wearing glitter from their cheeks to shoulders."¹¹ One proponent of the fad stated, "Wearing glitter is sometimes a spiritual and magical thing for me." And a Hollywood makeup artist further noted, "It's playful. It might also relieve a little pre-millennial tension."¹²

GOLD DOWN UNDER

The River Christian Church in Australia is a Vineyard Church closely connected to Toronto. They are also claiming through Pastor Ian Turton: "We have been hearing about what God has been doing overseas filling peoples teeth with gold, silver & platinum even braces turning to gold. ... Last Sunday night we asked all present to lay hands on their mouths & we prayed that the Lord would fill the teeth with gold. By Monday night we were amazed as we actually saw fillings change into gold before our eyes. Personally I have 7 gold fillings my wife 2 & others are getting blown away by their fillings changing before their eyes."

In response, PFO wrote Pastor Turton and asked: "I am trying to determine a genuine move of God. Can you provide any proof or documentation (or before and after photos), dental records, etc. to verify the claims of fillings and braces turning to gold?"

The short answer from Pastor Turton was "no real proof." He put it this way: "In regards to your request of documentation. All that we can provide are photographs of the actual gold fillings. ... There are no photos of before (we were not anticipating what God would really do at the time). ... I believe Toronto Airport C.F. are publishing findings soon regarding hundreds of testimonies there." So much for that. No proof, just pudding. The real proof is in Toronto, we are told, but we have already seen that "proof."

Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship has been in competition with other "revival" centers for some time. This seems to be an obvious and overt scheme to "take the lead" once again. These claims, as we'll see, are not new and others have tried to launch gold fever and a gold rush before. Not surprisingly, *Charisma* reported on golden manifestations at Toronto in the magazine's June (1999) edition.

GOLD FLAKES

Ruth Ward Heflin (author of *Revival Glory*) of Ashland, Va., has a web site on which she claims seeing in her meetings not only flakes of gold falling out of people's hair and off their bodies, but oil running out of their hands! *And she has pictures to prove it!* Her *Mount Zion Newsletter* proclaims:

"God gifted us this year with the manifestation of gold dust in our meetings. As we are worshipping, gold dust from heaven is seen on us. Some comes through the pours of our skin, some falls directly from heaven on us and some is created in front of our eyes."¹³

Any good stage magician could do the same thing. I have seen coins lifted from peoples hair. Perhaps Arnot's ideas were lifted from Heflin. What they are trying to pass off as an act of creation anyone can produce.

Another thread in this is the cross pollenization of the strange and weird. Heflin has been a speaker at

the women's conferences at Brownsville Assembly in Pensacola and the church there offers her book. The overlap should not be missed.

Those with not-so-short memories will recall that the "gold dust" idea was promoted by Franklin Hall, the father of the Latter Rain Movement,¹⁴ and accompanied many other heresies. Hall, in the 1940s, made ridiculous and outlandish claims. He was either an unprincipled charlatan or mentally unbalanced. His writings are like science fiction or the meanderings of a lunatic, depending on how you view them.

In citing Hall's book, *The Return of Immortality*, the Apologetics Index web site reports:

"Hall claims that there is an 'Immortal Substance' that comes upon the believer who feeds upon it 'from within Christ's now body' — the 'FIRE-IMMORTAL-PACKED-BODY' (Emphasis Hall's). This 'Immortal Substance' is claimed to be seen on those who attend Hall's meetings, as a fine gold and silver, sparkling material that emanates from sometimes visible 'Immortal Heavenly Objects' (IHO's), 'Unusual Heavenly Objects' (UHO's), and 'Unidentified Flying Objects' (UFO's). In Hall's words, 'The sparkling shining FINE GOLD and SILVER are seen upon their SKIN, brought about through the faith-power of impartation.'¹⁵

Hall also claimed that he never changed his clothes, which never wrinkled and that he had no body odor. It was one of the perks of deep spirituality and fasting.

CORRUPT ROOTS, CORRUPT FRUITS

Asa Alonzo Allen (1911-1970), was really the granddaddy of Charismatic scams, at least in making them work. He had great skill at thinking up fantastic scenarios. Even though he was arrested for drunk driving in 1955 and divorced his wife in 1967, he

kept his following at Miracle Valley, Arizona.

He made claims of raising the dead, turning a hermaphrodite into a man by casting out a female spirit, of having \$1 bills change into \$20 bills in his pocket and creating a miracle oil that would flow from people's head and hands.¹⁶ There are a parade of current day copy cats who imitate Allen even though he died in a drunken stupor (of cirrhosis of the liver) in a San Francisco hotel. Amazingly he is extolled by top Charismatic leaders today.

Allen would show toads, snakes and spiders in jars and tell his devotees that these were "disease demons." He was at his best (or worst) when he caused a cross of blood to form on his forehead. He knew the rudiments of chemistry. His act grossed millions a year. The same trick of the cross on the forehead was used by the self-admitted charlatan Marjoe Gortner. Allen's immediate successor was R.W. Schambach, who has the same flamboyant preaching style and makes undocumented and outlandish claims of miraculous healing.

Shortly after this writer's conversion to Christianity (and not knowing any better), I took a blind man to a "Schambach Show." The man was prayed over by Schambach and told he was healed. It was now his job to denounce the "lying symptoms" and claim the healing all the way home. He was told he would be seeing by the time he reached his house. Great show — great effects — but unbeknownst to the vast audience present, the man remained blind.

The Charismatic wing of the Church keeps sinking deeper and deeper into a morass of wild and crazy claims. The most outlandish things are being claimed and defended as visitations from God. Without a scintilla of biblical justification the bizarre is being accepted without questioning or discernment. Surely the above demonstrates clearly to us that what is being touted as revival is a move back into the Dark Ages. The rank-and-file

should rise up against this and call their leaders to account.

DOWN IN THE MOUTH

In the 1970s there were a few "healers" wandering through the Southern States convincing people they had the power to change the silver filings in their mouths into gold crosses embedded in their teeth. The value of having a gold cross in your mouth was never explained. I heard such reports and such urban legends.

The most well-known of the "psychic dentists" was Rev. Willard Fuller of Palatka, Fla. In the 1980s, he was claiming he could turn silver fillings and crowns into gold, cure gum disease and even grow new teeth in the mouths of his followers. No before and after X-rays were ever produced and requests for such evidence were always ignored.

The success of the ruse depends on the fact that most people do not know or remember where fillings are located in their mouths. Also the Fuller literature was so vague and lacking crucial facts and documentation that there was no hope of ever checking it out. Fuller would never supply names or evidence of any kind, just his claims. Critics of Fuller noted that he himself had missing teeth and his remaining ones were stained. He also wore thick eyeglasses.¹⁷

An inquiry with a dentist was quick to "reveal" that most fillings are already in a cross shape since that is the contour of the top of most of our back teeth. It also helps the "healer" to have a yellowish bulb in the flashlight used to illumine the mouth of the gullible. Surely people will "swallow" anything. Unfortunately, the scams will continue because first amendment rights cover just about anything.

Satan kept the Church of the Middle Ages in superstitious bondage as the hierarchy touted its claims of visible relics and supernatural interventions. The medieval Church produced all kinds of "aids to faith" in the absence of the Word of God.

Revival paraphernalia abounds, whether it is prayer banners, rams

horns, magic vials of oil, prayer cloths or other junk to stimulate the faith of the believer. Remember Paul said, "Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God" (Romans 10:17). Even the tangible symbols of the Old Testament, like tabernacle, priests' dress, and so forth, have been done away. People are too prone to put their faith in objects and make talismans or fetishes out of them.

Philip Schaff details the "endless number of objects transmitted to western Europe" to assist the "faith" of the gullible. People saw "Noah's beard, the horns of Moses, the stone on which Jacob slept at Bethel, the branch from which Absalom hung, ... milk from Mary's breasts, the table on which the Last Supper was eaten, the stone of Christ's sepulcher, Paul's stake in the flesh, a tooth belonging to St. Lawrence," to name just a few.¹⁸

There were also claims to possess Christ's tooth and umbilical cord. If there had been cameras then people surely would have seen pictures. No doubt some would have been downloading these "proofs."

NOTHING NEW UNDER THE SUN

Robert Liichow, director of Inner City Discernment Ministry in Detroit, gave to PFO his evaluation of the current "gold rush":

"...this is nothing 'new.' WV Grant (jr.) has made such claims as has Peter Popoff, it is sorta standard charismatic nonsense which probably goes back into the 1950's healing revival and the various religious con-men involved in that 'move.'"¹⁹

Remember that both Grant and Popoff have been exposed as fakes, frauds and charlatans of the highest degree. Grant has done jail time for his schemes and scams. Popoff is a shameless con man.

Contrast the sign mongering and object seeking with the clear testimony of Jesus: "Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed" (John 20:29). We need to meditate long and hard on those words.

The Puritan John Trapp reminds us of the impact of those words:

"We see Christ in the flesh by the eyes of the apostles; like as the Israelites saw Canaan by the eyes of the spies; and this is sufficient unto faith, as the evangelist showeth in the next verses."²⁰

In J.R. Dummelow's, *A Commentary on the Holy Bible*, we find this telling statement:

"Thomas in a sense represents the spirit of our age. He will be satisfied with nothing less than the evidence of the senses."²¹

Still another reminder comes from the pen of William Kelly:

"It is better still to believe without seeing. And grace would provide for those who in the nature of things could not see that they might hear and live. Hence the writing of this precious book."²²

First Corinthians 5:7 is abundantly clear: "For we walk by faith and not by sight." *The New Geneva Study Bible* affirms this clear principle in its footnote: "Again Paul specifies a contrast between the unseen spiritual realm of God's presence and activity and the present visible world."²³ The verse is very plain.

WHO NEEDS SILVER? WHO NEEDS GOLD?

The Apostle Peter confessed: "Silver and gold have I none" (Acts 3:6). Even Peter, with all the bad "press" he received in the New Testament writings, would not have anything so carnal as gold for a goal. He later said that our faith (and the trials that accompany) is: "more precious than gold that perishes" (1 Peter 1:7). Peter, in both of these verses, clearly disparages gold. Marvin Vincent suggests that "The comparison is between the approved faith and the gold."²⁴

The New Testament With English Notes, though a Greek New Testament, provides these English comments: "gold is apt to be worn out and perish, even after it is tried in the fire, and found to be good, whereas

your faith approving itself to God shall never perish."²⁵ It seems clear where the Christian's focus should be.

The strong implication from the "official report" is that gold is much more important, much more dramatic and much more exciting than simple faith. The Word by comparison is mundane and routine. The Apostle Peter would not agree. Gold does not equip us for living but the Word does (2 Timothy 3:15-17).

The Apostle Paul said: "The things which are seen are temporary, but the things that are not seen are eternal" (2 Corinthians 4:18). *The extravagance of God has been already shown in the life, death, burial and resurrection of Jesus*. Why do we need more? We don't! We don't need or require "signs and wonders," for "signs and wonders" do not make a believing generation (Matthew 12:39; Luke 10:13-15; 11:29 are but three examples).

The eternal realities and the eternal promises are the real "gold" of the believer. Treasures on earth are not to be our pursuit (Matthew 6:19-21). There may be "extravagance" in heaven but this is earth and we are promised "the sufferings of this present time" (see Romans 8). When I mentioned the claims of the "gold rush" at Toronto to an astute believer, the immediate reply was: "So what!" Bravo.

Commenting on Proverbs 8:10 ("Receive my instruction, and not silver; and knowledge rather than choice gold"), author Dan and Nancy Dick offer this:

"In the mid-eighteen hundreds, thousands of men and women sold everything they had in order to move westward in the great gold rush. Gold fever took hold and pushed people to extremes. People were willing to kill in order to protect their claims to land in the goldfields. The hale and hearty devoted themselves heart, mind and soul to the pursuit of the golden nuggets. All else was considered loss, and many individuals found themselves in ruin, because they

had been blinded by a glitter which led straight to disaster. The attractive glitter of gold, the enticing appeal of wealth has drawn many people toward it, and away from God. Christ said that no one could be the servant of two masters."²⁶

Gold draws away from God and the Word. This may be the motive of Satan after all.

Recently in Israel, Israeli teens have found that they can literally dance themselves into a trance. Trance parties have been outlawed by the Israeli Government. Emotions can be addictive and destructive. Emotions can be so misleading. They are a good handmaid but a terrible master. Thank God that the Israeli Government is that perceptive. They are obviously more perceptive than some professed Christians when it comes to human emotions and self-deception.

Some reports on the "new" Toronto mania are saying that the professed "gold" is tarnished. Consider a portion of an e-mail letter:

"Hello and thank-you for the website to the TAC live broadcast of the gold teeth phenomenon. As I watched I remembered something my mother had told me about an uncle of mine who is a devout catholic, and how he was praying the rosary everyday on his knees in front of a statue of Mary when suddenly his rosary turned gold. He too thought this was a miracle of God. I think it is the same spirit who filled the gold teeth and it's NOT the Holy Spirit. I see no scriptural basis for what I saw going on there. Seems like an entertainment show instead. When is the church going to wake up and start taking authority over the demonic spirits that they let rule the services[?] Doesn't anyone there have discernment[?] I suppose they love not the truth and have been given over to strong delusions. I have just come out of this so called 'Move of God'. And I believe the only reason my eyes have been open[ed] to the truth

is because I cried out to the Lord for truth, His truth. I had to throw out my theology based on experience and get back to sound biblical doctrine."²⁷

WORSE BY THE DAY

The Charismatic wing of the Church is sinking lower and lower to try to uphold and justify the emotional and the bizarre. They even employ dishonesty — whether knowingly or unknowingly — to back the claims of their "signs and wonders." Take for example Dick Dewert, president of CJIL-TV, a Canadian Christian television station. Dewert, during a recent fund-raiser, said after prayer that God had worked a miracle in his mouth. "I've got a gold tooth I never had before," he told his viewing audience.²⁸ However, Dewert's dentist disagrees.

Dr. Jack Sherman, Dewert's longtime dentist, advised him that there was no divine intervention regarding the gold tooth. For it was Sherman himself, not God, who had placed the gold filing there some 10 years ago. "It was an honest mistake," Dewert claimed, "I was sincere in what I said. I don't remember details."²⁹

Sincerity and a failing memory are inadequate proofs for the miraculous. Illusions such as this help give rise to Christians who are easily ruled and manipulated by emotions, hysteria and experience — no matter where it comes from or where it leads. Who knows what is next: Apparitions of stigmata or even worse?

One video of a Toronto/Pensacola type meeting showed a woman tearing and ripping at her clothes and others trying to stop her from the inevitable. It is awful to have to even report these kinds of things. Thankfully the video panned away to others. Who can even guess the depths and craziness of the human imagination out of control? Head snapping, pogoing, trance states and convulsions are now mainstream. Occultic phenomenon and even necromancy is now acceptable, as has been reported by PFO and other ministries. What is more disconcerting is that it is all in the name of God.

Looking at the word "miracle," *Baker's Dictionary of Theology* gives the composite definition for "miracle," "wonder" and "sign":

"Synthesizing the root connotations of these terms, we may define a miracle biblically as an observable phenomenon effected by the direct operation of God's power, an arresting deviation from the ordinary sequences of nature, a deviation calculated to elicit faith-begetting awe, a divine inbreaking which authenticates a revelational agent."³⁰

The writers of the Bible are the revelational agents. What could the leadership at Toronto reveal to us that is not already revealed by Jesus and the Word of God? Or would they have us believe they have something better? I think not.

The events at Toronto, no matter how they are viewed, do not meet this definition or even come close. What is happening at Toronto — that is, patching teeth — an ordinary dentist could do. Anyone can purchase gold glitter. We are also being told that the happening of gold in one's mouth may last only a few weeks. This is a convenient back door showing it never happened at all.

New revelations are not really needed in the light of an all-sufficient Bible (2 Timothy 3:15-17). One part of the Christian's armor in Ephesians 6 is the Word of God, not gold fillings. If the Bible were incomplete, deficient or defective, how would we be able to stand? Our armor would be stripped away.

ALL WE REALLY NEED

The historic and orthodox position regarding the finality and sufficiency of the Scriptures is reflected in the Westminster Confession of Faith which states:

"The whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture: unto

which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men."³¹

This position was so universally held that it is repeated almost word for word in *The London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689*.³²

G.I. Williamson spells out the impact of the orthodox position:

"Revelation 22:18-19 also teaches the impossibility of addition to the Bible. Some argue that John was merely forbidding any addition to the particular book he was then writing, namely, the book of Revelation. But everyone knows that John was the last surviving apostle, writing the final book. He was conscious of this fact. And then note the peculiar expression he uses in 22:18. The word translated 'unto' is not ordinarily translated 'unto.' It is the Greek word *epi* which means 'on, upon, or above.' It thus would indicate addition to that which was under it, or to what had gone before. If John wrote the last book, what better way to deny that anything else could be added to the whole Bible, than to deny that anything could be added on top of this book?"³³

The gold fever is a hoax, a cheap trick. We have something in Jesus Christ and the Word of God which is far more precious than gold. When we think of Jesus in Gethsemane, then on the scourging block and the cross, all the gold talk and gold fever seems shallow, nonsensical and meaningless. We need to discuss deep theological issues, not dodge them as a way out of accountability.

Adrenalin can be a drug and people can get addicted to emotional highs and mind-altering pandemonium. They can also become mindless servants of unprincipled, manipulative and greedy leadership. They can get hooked on myths and fables (2 Timothy 4:3-4). Seeking sensations and not the Savior (the true Savior revealed in

the Word) is a dead end. All that glitters may be fool's gold.

Peter Toon reminds us where the real "power center" for the believer is located:

"Heaven is the place and sphere from where the universe is sustained and ruled; heaven is the place and sphere from where salvation goes forth into the world of space and time. For God's salvation to be a universal and everlasting salvation, the incarnate Son, Jesus the Messiah, returned to heaven where He could be the source of salvation everywhere to all who believe. From heaven through the agency of the Holy Spirit (whom the Father sends to the world in the name and for the sake of the exalted Jesus), the incarnate Son preaches the Word of God, builds up God's church, and continues universally the divine work that began in the restricted area of Palestine."³⁴

Endnotes:

1. Benny Hinn, *Praise the Lord Show*, Trinity Broadcasting Network, Dec. 9, 1990.
2. Benny Hinn, *Praise the Lord Show*, Trinity Broadcasting Network, Nov. 9, 1990.
3. See *The Quarterly Journal*, "A Look at Spiritual Pandemonium — The Strange Views of Rodney M. Howard Browne," Vol. 14, No. 4.
4. See *The Quarterly Journal*, "The Murky River of Brownsville — The Strange Doctrine and Practice of the Pensacola Revival," Vol. 17, No. 2.
5. See *The Quarterly Journal*, "Is Benny Hinn's 'Fire' Anointing Really Just the Emperor's New Clothes?," Vol. 19, No. 2.
6. See *The Quarterly Journal*, "The Animalization of Christianity — Chaos in the Vineyard," Vol. 15, No. 2.
7. Charles Spurgeon, *God's Providence*. Wilmington, Del.: Cross Publishing, n.d., pg. 12.
8. "Official" statement and press release, GOLD TEETH!, March 17, 1999, Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship, copy on file.
9. See, *The Encyclopedia Americana*, New York-Chicago: Americana Corporation, 1952, Vol. 8, pp. 688-694.
10. See *The Quarterly Journal*, "The Green River of Brownsville," Vol. 18, No. 4.
11. Chris Jordan, "Stardust Memories,"

Asbury Park Press, Apr. 16, 1999, pg. 16.

12. *Ibid.*

13. Ruth Ward Heflin, *Mount Zion Newsletter*, January 13, 1999.

14. See *The Quarterly Journal*, "The Latter Rain Movement — Showering Heresy on the Church for Nearly Fifty Years," Vol. 15, No. 2.

15. Apologetics Index web site, "An Examination of Kingdom Theology — Part 1/3," <http://www.apologeticsindex.org/106.html>.

16. Hank Hanegraaff, *Counterfeit Revival*. Dallas: Word Publishing, 1997, pp. 131-134.

17. James Randi, *The Faith Healers*. Buffalo, N.Y.: Prometheus Books, 1987, pg. 216.

18. See further, Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1907, Vol. 5, pg. 846.

19. Personal correspondence from Robert Liichow to G. Richard Fisher. Letter on file.

20. John Trapp, *Trapp's Commentary on The New Testament*. Evansville, Ind.: The Sovereign Grace Book Club, 1958, pg. 418.

21. J.R. Dummelow, *A Commentary on the Holy Bible*. New York: Macmillan Company, 1958, pg. 810.

22. William Kelly, *An Exposition of The Gospel of John*. Orange, Calif.: Ralph E. Welch Foundation, 1966, pg. 432.

23. *The New Geneva Study Bible*, 1 Corinthians 5:7, pg. 1834.

24. Marvin Vincent, *Word Studies in The New Testament*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1946, Vol. 1, pg. 633.

25. *The New Testament With English Notes*. London: A.J. Valpy, 1831, Vol. 3, pg. 260.

26. Dan and Nancy Dick, *Wisdom from the Proverbs*. Uhrichsville, Ohio: Barbour Publishing, 1986, devotional for April 9.

27. E-mail correspondence, name withheld, copy on file.

28. "Tooth truth is that gold was not God's gift," *Vancouver Sun*, Mar. 7, 1999, pg. B3.

29. *Ibid.*

30. Everett F. Harrison, editor-in-chief, *Baker's Dictionary of Theology*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1960, pg. 356.

31. G.I. Williamson, *The Westminster Confession of Faith for Study Classes*. Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1964, pg. 9.

32. *The London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689*, Choteau, Mont.: Gospel Mission Press, 1980, pg. 9.

33. *The Westminster Confession of Faith*, op. cit., pg. 11.

34. Peter Toon, *The Ascension of Our Lord*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1984, pg. xiii.

usually at the expense of all other school, community and family activities.

"POSSESSED BY DEVIL SPIRITS"

The Way freely condemns everyone outside the organization (and often those in it as well) of being "possessed by devil spirits." The parent who is a Way member considers the ex-spouse to be spiritually in error, stuck in "negative believing," a tool of the devil to oppose The Way, and probably "possessed by devil spirits." The Way member often tells the children to be wary of, resist, not obey or avoid the fallen-away parent to protect themselves from the influence of the parent's devil spirits. The most common and vicious claim is that people are possessed by "homosexual devil spirits." Way President Craig Martindale saves his most severe condemnations for those he thinks may have any homosexual leaning (including people who are clearly heterosexual), and teaches in his basic "The Way of Abundance and Power" classes that homosexuality was the first sin ever committed, and is the most heinous of sins.

Therefore, Way leaders often assert that non-Way parents are possessed by devil spirits, and warn their children to be wary of or fear their parents because of this. It is easy to find "reasons" to believe that a non-Way parent is possessed, partly because the list of potential devil spirits is so long and varied.

The founder's "Advanced Power for Abundant Living" class, on which The Way's current teachings on devil spirits is based, listed more than 31 varieties of devil spirits, including: Spirit of Anti-Christ, Bondage, Error, Fear (in any realm of life), Jealousy, Emulation (ambition), Envy, Infirmity, Iniquity, Leviathan (alcoholics), Oppression, Depression, Hallucination (often from drugs), Cancer, Murder, Epilepsy, Lesbianism, Sensuality, Ob-

session, Sadism, Lying, Deception, Python, Masochism and many more.

Followers of The Way can easily see many more devil spirits in non-Way parents, even when they aren't actually there. Especially a Spirit of Strife (people who can't see and entirely obey The Way's version of truth), Whoredoms (especially not worshipping The Way's version of God; therefore, in most anyone in any religion or church other than The Way), a Morbid Spirit (sickness), Sordid Spirit (foul language), Sullen Spirit (introvert, sourpuss, unsociable, which may well be confused with the sadness of being recently divorced and under attack by a Way ex-spouse), Spirit of Python (being critical, as any ex-Way spouse would be of The Way), and other devil spirits.

Since devil spirits can harm people, children are taught by The Way to avoid people, including parents, who may be possessed.

"MARK AND AVOID"

The Way's current practice of "purge, mark and avoid" (which are Way terms) is another means The Way uses to put wedges between children and a parent who is no longer in The Way. The Way has taken great pains in the last 10 years to "purge" its ranks of those who do not give Way leadership their complete allegiance and obedience. Confrontation of followers considered to be weak or in error often includes verbal abuse. This aggressive confrontation has been strongly promoted in leader training, Sunday services and *The Way Magazine*, which is distributed to all of its followers.

However, when followers do not immediately obey leaders and respond to every one of their demands, leaders "mark and avoid" them. In other words, leaders tell them to stay away from all Way activities, and tell all "faithful" followers to have nothing to do with them — not even to speak to them. Therefore, the ex-spouse avoids the non-Way parent as much as possible and teaches the children to do the same. The Way

pressures children to choose obedience to Way leadership (which to them is obeying God Himself) rather than (not in addition to) developing a relationship with the non-Way parent. "M & A" is often a factor causing divorce between spouses, and becomes a factor in children "divorcing" the non-Way parent.

PROFANITY AND NAME CALLING

Way teachers typically verbally attack anyone who is not in The Way, so as children accept Way teaching, they tend to turn against parents and family members who are not in The Way. Profanity and name-calling are typical in the language of Way followers and Way leaders. The Way President Martindale sets the example, since he peppers his conversation, lectures and even sermons with profanity. In a brief, 15-minute impromptu talk to his followers during a Sunday Night Service (May 4, 1997), he called his critics "morons," "snot-nosed punk," "can't find their — in the dark," full of "devil spirits," "not have two brain cells to rub together," etc. He identified the local newspaper as "St. Mary's puke sheet" and mused at how wonderful it would be if all journalism and law schools were burned down. In less public settings he is even more profane. Since children commonly hear Way members and leaders call their non-Way parents profane and derogatory names, this reduces their respect for their non-Way parents.

"SENSES REALM"

Members believe that only they have "holy spirit" with the ability to understand spiritual things to hear from God. Therefore, everyone else is "natural man," and can't be trusted to have right thinking and believing about anything. Thus, children are taught not to trust, accept, rely on, or act on anything the non-Way parent says, since it is bound to be wrong and lead them away from the truth and into all kinds of harm (to The Way, physical, psychological and spiritual harm are all intertwined).

AUTHORITARIANISM

Way members are taught that the President of The Way is "The Man of God" and that they must give allegiance to and obey him in all things, no matter how insignificant, and even if it appears that he is in error. Way members are also told to obey local leadership, especially the "clergy" and "Way Corps" who have graduated from The Way's leadership program.

Anyone who closely views the lives of Way members is amazed and shocked by how every aspect of their followers' lives is controlled. Leadership tells followers whom to date, whom to marry (and not marry), when to separate or divorce, how to spend their time and money, when to sell their house, where to live, when to change jobs, how to discipline their children, the list goes on. In recent years, leaders have told Way members to vacate certain towns and move close to leaders (sometimes hundreds of miles away, as when Way members in Saint Louis were all told to move to

Columbia, Mo., in 1998) to be under their "protection."

Leaders control their followers mainly through fear. Leadership convinces followers that if they do not obey on every point, the followers will:

1) be "confronted," which amounts to severe and sustained verbal attack and abuse;


2) terrible things will happen to them, such as accidents, illness or death;

3) Way leaders will convince all other Way followers to "mark and avoid" them — that is, to avoid all contacts with them, even if they are spouses or immediate family. Because children are especially vulnerable, non-Way parents are concerned that their children will be dominated and controlled by uncaring Way leadership (which will be reinforced by the parent who remains in The Way), and have little or no personal freedom.

This problem is even worse when the woman is the ex-Way parent. Way

members are taught that wives must obey their husbands in all things, and many husbands use this as a reason to severely subjugate them (this autocratic and pejorative attitude intensifies when the woman leaves The Way). This is partly due to The Way's teaching that the very first sin on Earth was Eve's lesbian relationship with the devil.

For these reasons, many believe that children are in a psychologically and emotionally unsound environment when they are in the custody of a parent devoted to The Way. Furthermore, children are at an increasing degree of risk the more they are exposed to The Way through parents who are Way members. Therefore, in order to protect children and maintain family relationships, it is very important to consider involvement with The Way when making child custody and visitation arrangements.

Editor's Note: Detailed information on The Way International can be found at Dr. Juedes' web site: www.empirenet.com/~messiah7. 

THE LIKEABLE LEGALIST

(continued from page 1)

they need therapists. Most therapists who are Freudian or eclectic will feed the very attitudes that Dr. Laura rails against and opposes.

If you are a real fan, you can get an "I am my kids' Mom" coffee mug or tee-shirt from Dr. Laura. There is no doubt about where people stand in their opinions of her — they either love her or hate her.

She has received accolades that strain credibility, some of which are excessive and certainly overstated. She has been called by a wide variety of impressive titles: "Queen of Talk Radio,"³ "a spiritual guru for multiplied thousands,"⁴ "a prophetess for our times,"⁵ "a voice in the wilderness"⁶ and "a petite, blonde, latter-day version of Moses."⁷

Dr. Laura has spoken in Robert Schuller's Crystal Cathedral church

and has more listeners to her daily broadcast (5 mornings a week) than Rush Limbaugh. Limbaugh boasts a 16-million listener audience while Schlessinger celebrates with nearly 20 million.⁸ More than 60,000 callers a day jostle the phones for a few minutes with their favorite shrink and advice-giver, and Dr. Laura does not disappoint.

LAURA RULES

Raised in an unhappy non-religious home with a nominal Catholic mother and a Jewish father who argued frequently, Dr. Laura says she often felt lost. *U.S. News & World Report* pictured her on the cover of its July 14, 1997 issue. Bold letters beneath her picture proclaimed "Laura Rules."

The magazine's article entitled, "NO WHINING!," detailed her conversion to Orthodox Judaism approximately seven years ago.⁹

Dr. Laura has authored three best-

selling books. In 1994, she released, *Ten Stupid Things Women Do To Mess Up Their Lives*. In 1996, she authored, *How Could You Do That?! And also in 1996 came Ten Stupid Things Men Do To Mess Up Their Lives*, apparently her sequel to her first volume. In September 1998, there was the release of her fourth book, *The Ten Commandments: The Significance of God's Law in Everyday Life*. This volume was coauthored with Rabbi Stewart Vogel.

Dr. Laura has her critics. They accuse her of "3 R's." They say she is *rough, rude* and *rigid*. Some say she is, at times, impatient, abrupt, abrasive, arrogant and openly disdainful of her callers. She has severely chastised callers for laughing or nervously giggling over serious matters but she herself has an annoying laugh (as some have referred to it) throughout the show. If some disagree, she will wait for fax messages from those who do agree and read them as an added support and justification. In that case,

the majority rules.

MICROWAVE SOLUTIONS

In a day of fast food and microwaves, critics ask if *bona fide* problems can be resolved in a minute or two over the airwaves. Quick answers may work for shallow and superficial problems where a quick decision is needed. However, real deep-seated problems require time for proper analysis and diagnosis. No radio host gives anyone with pervasive, deep-seated problems that kind of extended counseling, although as mentioned, Dr. Laura will suggest therapy which may be a grab bag affair at best for most people.

Dr. Laura is usually direct, practical and to the point but not every problem can be handled in just that way. For the Christian who is committed to the New Testament, the difficulty with her is not only technique, but theology which is more foundational and fundamental. How solid is her theology?

One-stop shopping (for answers) may appeal, but no one, including Dr. Laura, has all the answers. She is estranged from both her mother and sister.¹⁰

MESSIANIC MISSION

There is no doubt that Dr. Laura sees herself in deeply religious terms. One day after watching a Holocaust documentary with her son, she solidified her Jewish identity which led to her "conversion" as noted above. Later, when reading Genesis, she says her life purpose clicked in. She told her husband: "I'm a priest and my mission is to help God perfect the world!"¹¹

Is she a priest? Even within Judaism, priests were male and there were no female priests. Further, though it is a lofty goal, is the world perfectible? Dr. Laura's mission sounds almost Messianic. Maybe it is just hyperbole. While it is commendable to want to better the world, it is a stretch to think it can be perfected. However, there is no doubt that Dr. Laura is a religious teacher and a very persuasive one.

HOLES IN THE DAM

There are inconsistencies in Dr. Laura's advice which even the secular media has pointed out:

"Schlessinger admits now and then that moral absolutes don't always hold. More than once she has advised callers against honesty, which 'can be evil if it's harmful or cruel.' ... The particulars of morality can always be debated, she says. What matters is the overall effort to be a person of character."¹²

Dr. Laura says that God Himself told a "white lie." While explaining the "white lie" of God, she distorts and misunderstands two passages from Genesis 18 and tries to use them to say God told "a white lie in order to avoid family discord."¹³ In her zeal to make her point, she may not realize that she has tried to pull God down to the level of fallible sinful man. The passages she refers to are easily reconcilable and do not teach dishonesty by God.

Stranger still is the fact that Dr. Laura leaves the door open a tiny bit for the viewing of pornography in some situations and under some circumstances. In addressing why pornography is wrong she states that it does lessen love in the marriage and does disrupt the relationship with one's wife. Yet she still finds a place for it. In the context of the pornography discussion, she states:

"Occasional viewing or reading of 'sexy' material often helps stimulate 'sexy behavior' when stress, family, and work distractions might be stalling you in 'neutral.' So, as an aphrodisiac to help jump-start you and your wife — fine."¹⁴

Although she says that viewing this "sexy material" is not an alternative to meaningful and reciprocal love, she misses a major point, that is, the words of Jesus. Married love is not to be stimulated by sinful and lustful viewing. Jesus emphatically said that this kind of toying with mental sin must be dealt with:

"I say to you that whoever looks on a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you" (Matthew 5:28-29).

Sexuality is viewed wrongly when it is seen as a need and not what it really is, a desire. The Hebrew Scriptures, to which Dr. Laura readily appeals, very clearly emphasize this. Job declared: "I have made a covenant with my eyes" (31:1). David determined: "I will set nothing wicked before my eyes; I hate the work of those who fall away; It shall not cling to me" (Psalm 101:3).

In giving her "permission" for this occasional viewing under the right circumstances, Dr. Laura is opening up an avenue for mental sin and coveting.

Tom Allen rightly notes:

"... adultery can be committed in the mind and heart of man without even touching a woman. ... The real point was this: Faithfulness to one's spouse — which includes a pure mind — can only be achieved by the radical change of heart that Christ alone can deliver."¹⁵

While some are encouraged that Dr. Laura has constructed a dam and barrier for honesty and against the use of pornography, upon closer examination, her dam has a serious breach.

WE'RE NOT SO BAD AFTER ALL

The Apostle Paul's letter to the Romans, while not saying that each man is as bad as he can be, does unquestionably teach that "all have sinned and fall short of God's glory" (3:23) and are therefore in need of salvation. Romans 5 teaches that we are born with a sinful nature because of Adam (called Original sin): "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned" (v. 12). John

Phillips affirms the imputation of Adam's sin to every one of his descendants:

"All sinned in Adam and death was imputed immediately and directly from Adam to each individual human being."¹⁶

Isaiah 64:6 tells us that even our righteousness is as filthy rags in the sight of God. Psalm 51:5 affirms that from conception we were tainted by sin. Christ's imputed righteousness is the only answer for our inherited and actual sins (Romans 5:14-21).

John Murray affirms:

"If we appreciate this fact of racial solidarity and therefore the solidaric relationship which Adam sustains to posterity and posterity to him, we shall be less reluctant, to say the least, to entertain the proposition that the one trespass of Adam can properly be construed as the sin of all."¹⁷

Orthodox Judaism, and consequently Dr. Laura, take a much more benign view of man and his sinfulness. Dr. Louis Goldberg details this:

"Orthodox Jews and Conservative Jews deny that man's nature is basically evil and always inclined to do evil. ... In summary, none of the Jewish theological camps teach that man is born with a sinful nature which will ultimately condemn him."¹⁸

Jewish belief is that whatever evil inclination we have, it can be overcome by our own efforts — thus Dr. Laura talks of our perfectibility. In this view, we are all like blank slates and we must do the writing.

Dr. Laura states straight out that "neither men nor women are inherently bad." There is an "inherent magnificence" in all of us, she says.¹⁹

When this kind of teaching (autonomous, neutral, self-perfecting man) was first promoted in Church History, it was branded as heresy. The lack of original sin and man's perfectibility was promulgated by Pelagius in the early fifth century.

Church historian, Elgin Moyer, of Moody Bible Institute describes Pelagius and summarizes his errors:

"An English monk of culture and education, of devout and virtuous character, but developed unorthodox views on the dignity and self-sufficiency of man, and on original sin and divine grace. At Rome [he] came into intimate fellowship with Celestius, a lawyer of noble descent. Together they developed this doctrine, Celestius being the chief proponent of it, though the heresy took the name from Pelagius. Faith with them was hardly more than a theoretical belief; the main thing in religion was moral action, the keeping of the Commandments of God by one's own strength. They were more concerned with the ethical side of religion than with the dogmatic."²⁰

Moyer then outlines Pelagianism:

"Pelagianism is summed up as follows: (1) Man has no original sin inherited from Adam. Sin is a matter of will and not of nature. (2) Each person is created with perfect freedom to do good or evil. Hence a sinless life is possible, and salvation can come by good works. ... The Pelagian heresy spread in North Africa so widely and so effectively that Augustine felt it necessary to oppose it. ... This heresy never formed an ecclesiastical sect, but simply a theological school or movement that did make a powerful impact upon the Church."²¹

Allen concurs with the above:

"Dr. Laura indicates that a positive self-image can be obtained through choosing right over wrong and good over evil. She implies that righteousness can be attained through human aspiration ... Such a humanistic approach to holiness caresses the ego because we can take the credit for choosing good over evil, mastering our passions and

creating our own righteousness."²²

While we may help our self-image by doing right, our right-doing will never effect righteousness before God. In making man autonomous, Dr. Laura is the perfect (or imperfect) blend of Pharisee and Pelagian. While not always agreeing with William Barclay's theology, it must be admitted that he has incredible insights into first century Jewish manners and customs and can teach us much in that area of study. He reminds us:

"In many ways the Pharisees were the best people in the whole country. There were never more than 6000 of them; they were what was known as a *chaburah*, or brotherhood. They entered into this brotherhood by taking a pledge in front of three witnesses that they would spend all their lives observing every detail of the scribal law."²³

TRY A LITTLE HARDER

Dr. Laura's view is that we just have to try harder. Though we have the capacity for bad, we just have to decide to be good. Scripture indicates we are fallen, with a fallen nature and a decided bent toward sin and that even our best works are tainted as to motivation (Isaiah 64:6). In our lost and unsaved condition, we have an inherent inclination and bent toward evil and are in desperate need of a new birth, that is, an internal regeneration by God's Holy Spirit through the salvation secured and offered by Jesus.

While individuals are capable of good (there is still the marred image of God in us) they can never be good enough or do enough good to save themselves (Ephesians 2:8-9). Leonard Verduin reminds us:

"This is one of the New Testament's boldest innovations ... it is plainly implied that there are resources in the as yet not regenerated human heart, due to the remnants of the original righteousness left after the Fall."²⁴

Whatever and to what degree these "remnants" are left over in us, there is neither enough nor are they sufficient to save us eternally. That can only be realized through an application of the finished work of Christ to our lives.

THE DEVIL DIDN'T MAKE ME DO IT

Not only is the biblical view of salvation missed by Dr. Laura, but she dismisses out of hand the reality of Satan. In a taped show from May 6, 1998, she admits, "I don't believe in Satan either. We don't need Satan."²⁵ Here Dr. Laura is even inconsistent with her Judaism. Not only is the Old Testament clear on the existence of a malignant evil spirit entity called Satan, but Jewish reference works affirm the Jewish belief in his existence:

"He first tempts, then accuses and slays. But monotheism has circumscribed his powers ... Ultimately he will be vanquished by the Messiah."²⁶

From the beginning, Adam and Eve struggled with Satan and his wiles (Genesis 3). Even Christ had to confront Satan's temptations (Matthew 4). The religious Pharisees were said to be his children (John 8:44). Ephesians 6 shows him as a constant enemy who needs to be resisted. The Book of Revelation spells out his final doom. One cannot pick and choose some parts of the Bible and not others.

A POTPOURRI OF ERRORS

Does Dr. Laura say good things? Yes. Does she help people? Yes. Does she offer practical advice? Yes. Is she often right on? Yes. Is she right all the time? Obviously, no. The things that she is wrong about should concern a Christian because they are serious errors and they are in vital areas of belief, doctrine and the very Gospel itself. If Dr. Laura was not teaching things about God and religion, it might be easy to just enjoy her helpful hints, her direct approach, her practical insights and sense of humor.

For one thing, Dr. Laura teaches that God's will is not found primarily

through the Scriptures, but through each individual's religious traditions. She is very clear on this when she writes that, "We attempt to discern and clarify 'God's will' (expectations, obligations, rituals, etc.; in other words, what God wants of us) through the filter of our religious tradition (expectations, obligations, rituals)."²⁷

Jesus showed the downside of tradition when He said; "Thus you have made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition ... in vain do they worship me teaching as doctrines the commandments of men" (Matthew 15:6,9).

It is obvious from the words of Jesus that some traditions contradict the Scriptures and are in error. As well, one must be honest in admitting that traditions within various religions contradict one another at major points.

In the end, Dr. Laura puts forth the illogical view that any religion can be right as long as we sincerely embrace it. *The Christian News* recently reported:

"From the **Milwaukee Journal Sentinel** (9/30/98) comes a bit of advice from this popular radio talk show host. Responding to a young woman who was raised Catholic, but wanted to be married in the Methodist church, much to the dismay of her 'Easter and Christmas' Catholic parents, Dr. Laura, who is of Jewish faith, said, 'This is not a question of right — either religion is 'right' if you embrace it with honesty, dignity and a commitment to lead a moral and even holy life.'"²⁸

Can we even make a cult, the worst of cults, right if we embrace it with honesty? Any particular cult may well help one to lead a more moral life but does the sincerity of followers morph the cult into acceptance as long as no one is being hurt or seemingly helped? Dr. Laura's "logic" is hard and dangerous to follow here.

Dr. Laura also endorses the prayer of a listener that teaches the error of the universal Fatherhood of God. She writes:

"One of my listeners, Pat, from San Diego, California, wrote the following passage, which describes a relationship with God: 'I see God in everything, everyday. I believe He is in all of us all the time.'"²⁹

This sounds more New Age and pantheistic than Scriptural. It is ecumenical gobbledygook meant to pacify. Is God in *all* of us all the time? Was He in Hitler? Was He in Mohammed? Was He in Jim Jones, David Koresh or Marshall Applewhite? Colossians 1:27 tells us that it is "Christ in you, the hope of glory." Christ can only be in us by invitation, according to John 1:12.

Further, Dr. Laura knows the issue of what distinguishes Christianity and Judaism when it comes to salvation and yet states the two contradictory positions as if they were equally valid:

"There are differences in the perspective of how and what that salvation entails. Both Jews and Christians see God as 'Savior.' For Jews, that saving grace is our survival in spite of *external* oppression and enemies. For Christians, that saving grace is Christ's sacrifice to save each Christian's soul from its own *inner* tendency toward sin. In the Christian view, the world is redeemed as each individual's soul is saved through Jesus Christ. In the Jewish view, we are redeeming the world by our own efforts."³⁰

Dr. Laura has the right verbal formula as far as Christians are concerned, but what a radical difference she articulates as far as Judaism. She can state that Christians must be internally regenerated by Christ (in so many words) but that Jews redeem themselves and others by their own external efforts. How can the two be

equally valid? How can they be the same thing? Romans 4:4 says that works and grace are mutually exclusive. If it is one, it can't be the other. John Phillips states that, "Under a system of works, everything depends on the sinner; under grace, everything depends on the Saviour."³¹

One of the greatest Jews who ever lived said regarding another of the greatest Jews: "What then shall we say that Abraham our Father has found according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Now to him that works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt. But to him who does not work, but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness" (Romans 4:1-5).

Respected Bible commentator, Dr. Harry Ironside points up clearly the vast difference between law and grace:

"What the law, with all its stern and solemn warnings and threatenings could not accomplish (that is, produce a life of holiness, because of the weakness and unreliability of the flesh), is now realized in the power of the new life by the Spirit. ... The law demanded righteousness from a man whose nature was utterly corrupt and perverted, and which could only bring forth corrupt fruit. The Holy Spirit has produced a new nature in the man in Christ, and linked with this new life are new affections and desires so that he gladly responds to the will of the Lord as revealed in His Word."³²

MOUNT SINAI VERSES MOUNT ZION

Dr. Laura feels so strongly about Mount Sinai that she says: "Mount Sinai is the metaphor for God's continuing presence in the world."³³ Is that statement true? Was Mount Sinai

ever a metaphor for God's presence? God's presence was *on* Mount Sinai but the mountain itself *became a metaphor for judgment and death*. In the Old Testament the symbol of the real continuing presence of God was the Ark of the Covenant (Exodus 25:22) and later the Tabernacle, but never Mount Sinai.

Jeremiah predicted clearly and dramatically that God localizing Himself for the Nation of Israel would change (see Jeremiah 3:16-17 and 31:31-34) and that the symbolism of the Ark would be replaced by a new inner direct faith in God through the coming New Covenant.³⁴ God would be found in Christ (John 1). John 4 teaches us that God would not be localized in a place (neither Jerusalem or Mt. Gerizim) but in a Person. Our worship is in "spirit and in truth."

The writer of Hebrews shows us that Mount Sinai is a metaphor for God's judgment (as was stated) and that it is not where the true Christian has gone:

"For you have not come to the mountain that may be touched and that burned with fire, and to blackness and darkness and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words, so that those who heard *it* begged that the word should not be spoken to them anymore. (For they could not endure what was commanded: '*And if so much as a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned or shot with an arrow.*' And so terrifying was the sight *that* Moses said, '*I am exceedingly afraid and trembling.*') But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn *who are* registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant" (Hebrews 12:18-24, NKJV).

J.C. Macaulay rightly comments on Mount Sinai, reminding us that:

"Here we have a vivid picture of the terrifying accompaniments of the giving of the Law at Sinai. ... The Law, with its thunders and lightnings and clouds and darkness, has no release for sinners."³⁵

Adolph Saphir further shows the stark contrast between Sinai and Zion:

"Upon God's holy hill of Zion He hath set His King, even the Son. Mount Sinai represents the law, temporary and intermediate; mount Zion the Gospel, eternal and abiding; mount Sinai is connected with God's dealings with man according to responsibility; mount Zion with the eternal election of grace. The one is touched by God as it were for a moment; the other chosen to be His habitation. The one brings fear and terror; the other brings joy and peace, because God delights in it. In the one, the very Mediator trembles; in the other, God's own Son, crowned with glory and power, brings nigh His people, who approach 'boldly' in the peace and joy of Christ."³⁶

Dr. Laura's main confusion is in making sanctification equivalent to salvation. She does not state it that way, but it is the obvious problem. Even if one held, as a Christian believer, to the moral aspects of the Law, they would in most cases assign it to the sanctification or growth process of the believer.³⁷

Reformer Martin Luther, for one, was emphatic about the distinction between *salvation* and *sanctification*, knowing that we can easily create a works/salvation mindset. Luther's words are helpful and important:

"We conclude that a person has God's approval by faith, not by his own efforts. Romans 3:28 Our opponents insist that good works are necessary for salvation, and the world enthusiastically agrees with them. Certainly, what the saints did was admirable, and they did many great works. But even if you were to show me the

most holy saint of all, would that person have done enough good works to earn God's approval?"³⁸

Luther's rhetorical question answers itself. He goes on:

"Therefore, we should value good works and remember doing them is still necessary. But we should value God's Word and his promises even more highly. We will live in God's presence because we believe in what he says, not because we do good works that make us holy. We have to make a clear distinction between our good works and our faith in God's Word. Believing in God's Word defeats the devil and makes us holy children of God."³⁹

Commenting on Galatians 3:19 (the Law was given to show us sin), Luther observes:

"Although the Law doesn't justify us, it's still useful and necessary. First, in society, it holds the lawless people in check. Second, it shows each person that he is a sinner guilty of death and worthy of eternal wrath."⁴⁰

We must keep before us the biblical fact that when the people of Israel failed to keep the Law (and God had anticipated they would fail) they had to run to the Tabernacle, the Priesthood, the sacrifices and the blood. There may have been certain blessings and external benefits in keeping the Law but access to God was in the sacrificial system which was a type of Jesus (Hebrews 8). Whatever use we make of the Law, we cannot see it as a means of salvation or perfectibility.

WHAT IS MISSING IN THE COMMANDMENTS

The Ten Commandments do not require prayer or Christian service, evangelism, missionary outreach or Gospel preaching. They do not offer union with Christ or a walk in the Holy Spirit or the enablement of grace or the fellowship of believers. They offer no hope of eternal salvation or heaven. We can delight in the Law of

God and its power to bring conviction but must remember that it is the agent that drives us to Christ and salvation not the means of salvation.

Lewis Sperry Chafer, noting the absence of these above mentioned things in the Ten Commandments, elaborates:

"If it is asserted that we have all these because we have both the law and grace, it is replied that the law adds nothing to grace but confusion and contradiction, and that there is the most faithful warning in the Scriptures against this admixture. A few times the teachings of the law are referred to by the writers of the Epistles by way of illustration. Having stated the obligation under grace, they cite the fact that this same principle obtained under the law. There is, however, no basis here for a commingling of these two governing systems. The Law of Moses presents a covenant of works to be wrought in the energy of the flesh; the teachings of grace present a covenant of faith to be wrought in the energy of the Spirit."⁴¹

The confusion will only deepen if we believe the error that somehow the Old Testament people were saved by law keeping. The New Testament (Hebrews 11 and Romans 4:3) makes it amply clear that the Old Testament saints were saved by faith rather than works.

Wayne Strickland makes it abundantly clear that Israel was not saved by the Law:

"As one studies the Mosaic law, it becomes increasingly clear that its purpose was not to save, for it contains no clear message of salvation or redemption. ... God gave His law to an already redeemed or covenant nation (Ex. 20). ... In short, God is addressing his laws to a covenant, believing nation, giving no indication that salvation is in view. The law presents Moses and the redeemed people with their re-

sponsibilities as a theocratic nation under God; obedience to the commandments will bring physical blessing and long life. ... according to the testimony in the Old Testament, the Mosaic law was never intended to provide salvation. All expositions of the law lack statements that suggest a soteriological purpose. ... Dispensationalists and non-dispensationalists admit that no one (apart from Christ) has ever obeyed, or could ever obey, the law perfectly enough to merit salvation."⁴²

PROGRAMS THAT FAILED

Trying to get to heaven by our own efforts and law keeping without a relationship to Christ is like a man trying to swim the ocean from New York to England with a weight on his back when he has a boat available. Sin makes us poor spiritual "swimmers" and Christ is the only safe vessel.

The Galatians were inundated with "Judaizers" who attempted to get them back under the Law as a way of justification before God.

The Apostle Paul assures us in Galatians 2:16: "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law; for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified."

C. Norman Bartlett, commenting on Galatians 2:16, asserts:

"Despite these clear statements as to the utter hopelessness of men's saving themselves by their own good works, we find countless men and women vainly hoping to justify themselves before God on the basis of character building. If they had even the remotest conception of what an infinitely holy God requires in the way of moral perfection, they would realize the utter futility of such efforts. They seem blissfully unaware of the ever receding

horizons of what the law demands in the way of fulfillment in spirit as well as letter (cf. Matt. 5:17-48).⁴³

The New Geneva Study Bible translates Paul's meaning in Galatians 2:16:

"His phrase ... includes all the efforts of fallen humanity to keep God's law so as to merit His justifying verdict."

It is not Christ plus the Law that justifies as Marvin Vincent points out:

"Paul means that justification is by faith *alone*. The use of *ἐὰν μὴ* is to be thus explained: A man is not justified by the works of the law: (he is not justified) *except* by faith in Jesus Christ."⁴⁴

The old adage that "Men that do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it" applies here. Early Jewish Christian believers who mingled the Law and the Gospel, mutated into groups broadly classified as Ebionites. Some of the Ebionites were unorthodox when it came to Jesus and relied wholly on the law and human works.

There were subgroups like the Symmachians and others. One such hybrid group was known as Nazarenes. They were quite right in terms of Jesus and their theology of Him and accepted all the New Testament but merged it and amalgamated it into the Old Testament. By the fourth century A.D. they had disappeared.⁴⁵ Being neither fish nor fowl, they were rejected by both Christians and Jews and had no longevity or lasting impact.

THE EXAMPLE THAT FAILS

The Apostle Paul, before his conversion, was an example of what Dr. Laura says every person ought to be. Paul, known then as Saul, was the perfect law-keeper, the perfect Pharisee. Yet in Philippians 3, after laying out his pedigree and near perfect conformity to the law, Paul avows: "But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ" (v. 7). The word translated "loss" is the Greek word *skubalon*. That word can mean waste of any and all kinds,

including animal excrement and was also used of table scraps that were thrown in the garbage.⁴⁶ Salvation by human works then is garbage doctrine.

Shocking to think that Paul would refer to an exemplary life as garbage. Vine has an interesting take on this verse and its meaning:

"Judaizers counted Gentile Christians as dogs, while they themselves were seated at God's banquet. The Apostle reversing the image, counts the Judaistic ordinances as refuse upon which their advocates feed."⁴⁷

So, in spite of Dr. Laura's helpful advice and moral teaching which resonates and touches chords in all Christians, we must part company at the thought that man is perfectible or can earn his way to God. As helpful as Dr. Laura is in some areas, this major area of theology is crucial and cannot be compromised. The very Gospel is at stake.

Martin Luther reminds us:

"Faith is very fragile and needs to hear the command: 'Forget your father's house.' Something inside of us strongly compels us to keep trying to earn God's approval. We look for good works, in which we can place our trust and which will bring us praise. We want to show God what we have done and say, 'See, I have done this or that. Therefore, you must give me your approval. ... The Holy Spirit provides us with a way to counter this godless delusion. We need to hold tightly to what we have received through the undeserved kindness of God. God's approval doesn't come to us by what we do. Rather, it comes through the holiness of Christ, who suffered for us and rose again from the dead.'⁴⁸

LESSONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Two lessons can be learned from the Dr. Laura phenomenon:

1. She is outspoken about religion and that ought to shame us if we are

reticent about sharing our faith in Christ.

2. In counseling others, either formally or informally, we ought to be aware (as Dr. Laura demonstrates) that people want a frank, open, direct approach. Who better than the Christian to boldly lay out solutions from Scripture in a forthright, direct way. There should be no hesitation in stating God's solutions to problems.

As much as we are grateful for Dr. Laura's emphasis on self-determination, character, responsibility and goodness, her ideas, when seen as a means of self-salvation, have a fatal flaw. We are saved not by character but the cross, not by determination but by the death of Jesus, not by goodness but by grace, not by fortitude but by faith, not by our merit but by our Mediator, not by conduct but by Christ and Christ alone. Proper conduct *will* flow out of genuine salvation (Titus 2:10-15). *Sola fide — sola gratia — sola Scriptura!*

Endnotes:

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3. *Ibid.*, pg. 2.
4. *Ibid.*, pg. 3.
5. *Ibid.*, pg. 5.
6. *Ibid.*, pg. 25.
7. *Ibid.*, pg. 27.
8. *Ibid.*, pg. 9.
9. *U.S. News & World Report*, "NO WHINING!" July 14, 1997, pg. 51.
10. *Ibid.*
11. *Ibid.*
12. *Ibid.*, pg. 55.
13. Dr. Laura Schlessinger and Rabbi Stewart Vogel, *The Ten Commandments: The Significance of God's Law in Everyday Life*. New York: Cliff Street Books, 1998, pg. 287.
14. Dr. Laura Schlessinger, *Ten Stupid Things Men Do to Mess Up Their Lives*. New York: Cliff Street Books, 1997, pg. 148.
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16. John Phillips, *Exploring Romans*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1969, pg. 96.
17. John Murray, *The Imputation of Adam's Sin*. Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1959, pg. 25.
18. Dr. Louis Goldberg, *Our Jewish Friends*. Neptune, N.J.: Loizeaux Brothers, 1986,

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21. Ibid.

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24. Leonard Verduin, *The Reformers and Their Stepchildren*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1964, pg. 22.

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27. *The Ten Commandments*, op. cit., pg. 8.

28. "Dr. Laura, Typical Ecumenical, Works Religionist," from *The Christian*

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29. *The Ten Commandments*, op. cit., pg. 8.

30. Ibid., pg. 13.

31. *Exploring Romans*, op. cit., pg. 78.

32. Harry A. Ironside, *Lectures on Romans*. New York: Loizeaux Brothers, 1956, pp. 97-98.

33. *The Ten Commandments*, op. cit., pg. 15.

34. See further, *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing, 1975, Vol. 1, pg. 310.

35. J.C. Macaulay, *Expository Commentary on Hebrews*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1978, pp. 230-231.

36. Adolph Saphir, *The Epistle to The Hebrews*. New York: Bible Truth Press, n.d., Vol. 2, pp. 847-848.

37. See further this author's article, "There Ought to Be a Law — Or Should There? The Old Testament Law and the New Testament Church," *The Quarterly Journal*, Vol. 18, No. 2.

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Language. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Word Publishers, 1998, entry for February 10.

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40. Ibid., entry for July 27.

41. Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*. Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1948, Vol. 4, pg. 211.

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43. C. Norman Bartlett, *Galatians and You*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1948, pg. 47.

44. Marvin Vincent, *Word Studies in The New Testament*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1946, pg. 104.

45. See further, Ray Pritz, *Nazarene Jewish Christianity*. Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, The Hebrew University, 1988.

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CHRISTIAN FORTUNE-TELLERS

(continued from page 2)

Broadcasting Network audience that "[Cain] is the most accurate prophet, I believe, on the Earth today. ... Thank God for such accurate prophets" (*Praise The Lord Show*, Nov. 20, 1996). Hinn's declaration prompts the question: "If Cain is the *most* accurate prophet, are there within the modern-day prophetic movement those who are less accurate than Cain?" Scripturally speaking, less than 100% accuracy abrogates any claim of being a God-sent prophet (Deuteronomy 18:21), but Hinn's criterion is just one more demonstration of how the Church is continually being moved from biblical standards and biblical moorings.

How did Hinn arrive at his conclusion as to Cain's status? It apparently came about as a result of Cain's past visit to Hinn's central Florida church. "He came to our church one night — scared me so bad, I began to pray," he told the TBN viewers.

According to Hinn, Cain was able to call out people by name from the congregation and disclose certain of their life circumstances. Additionally, Cain had the ability to reveal to the faith healer his home address, describe his house, and even foretell of a future home.

In all, Hinn's telling of the event sounds more like Las Vegas entertainment (an act any good stage magician can do) than biblical prophecy. Where, in all of this, do we find a difference from the psychics and their fortune-telling gimmicks? What irony for Hinn to boast of his desire to confront the psychic hot lines on national

television.

Then there's the absurd and frivolous "visions" of Vineyard pastor James Ryle. Ryle asserts a divine word which claims God called, anointed and gifted the Beatles for the purpose of ushering in the Charismatic renewal by way of a musical revival. Unfortunately, according to Ryle's revelation, the popular British music group of the 1960s chose to ignore God's call and used their talents to serve themselves and the devil.

Ryle has further claimed to receive revelation knowledge regarding collegiate sports. According to a purported dream Ryle said he had in 1989, coach Bill McCartney and his Colorado university football team would be empowered by God's Spirit and would have a "golden season." And they did. However, when it came to their last game, played for the national championship, Ryle received a new and different omen from the Lord by way of the team's mascot and the Holy Spirit's prompting him to Isaiah 21:6.

In Ryle's version of his glimpse into the future, the Colorado mascot, Ralphie the buffalo, had a broken horn, symbolizing the Holy Spirit's departure from the team. The interpretation was that it would lead to the team's downfall in the national championship game. And the team did in fact lose to the University of Notre Dame by a score of 21-6. (Remember Isaiah 21:6?) Interestingly, Ryle kept the prophetic outcome of the contest to himself until after the game! I think all of us could do retrospective prophecy like this. (For more information on Ryle, see further *Charismatic Chaos* by John MacArthur and *Counterfeit Revival* by Hank Hanegraaff).

What home addresses, descriptions of houses and collegiate sports have to do with biblical sanctification and true biblical prophecy is well beyond this writer. These are the things from which parlor games and magical illusions are made. Tricks, psychic gimmicks and manipulation have no place in the Christian ministry.

But then there are those prophets who go beyond the scriptural record and report details as historical and biblical fact. Take, for example, revivalist Tommy Tenney of Alexandria, La. In the spring of this year, Tenney was part of the "Pensacola Outpouring" at the Brownsville Assembly of God in Florida. According to one report, Tenney's brief appearance there was described as "Two Days of Glory At The Brownsville Revival." What was it that Tenney revealed to the faithful of Brownsville? According to his message, titled "God's Favorite House":

"There's a primary thing that you're going to find that's different between David's [tabernacle] and the rest of them. All the rest of those places of worship had an artifact or a structure in there that was called 'the veil.' The veil — it was a draping in our modern colloquialism. It was stretched across an inner sanctum that separated one portion of that inner sanctum [that] was called the Holy Place and the other portion behind that veil [which] was called the Holy of Holies. And behind that veil is where the Ark of the Covenant rested. That ark of gold-covered wood with the outstretched wings of the cherubim and the blue shekinah flame hovering between them. It was always hidden behind that veil. But something happened in David's tabernacle that didn't happen at any other point or any other time. And that David's was the only one of any of these structures that had no veil."

David, after defeating the Philistines, moved the ark of God from Baalah of Judah (i.e., Kiriath Jearim) to Jerusalem and there placed it inside a tent that he had pitched for it (2 Samuel 6:1-17; 2 Chronicles 1:4). It was a temporary tent as God's promise to David clearly stated that it would be his offspring, not David himself, "who will build a house for My name" (2 Samuel 7:5-16; esp. vv. 12-13).

In all of this, there is no biblical basis to conclude that David assembled his tabernacle apart from the scriptural instructions given to Moses. "Make this tabernacle and all its furnishings exactly like the pattern I will show you," the Lord commanded Moses (Exodus 25:9). These initial directives included hanging a curtain or veil between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies (Exodus 26:33). In 2 Samuel 7:2, David said to Nathan the prophet, "See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells within the tent curtains."

Moreover, in light of the untimely death of Uzziah recorded in 2 Samuel 6:7, it is more sound to conclude that David would be faithful to God's direction. True to God's orders, David witnessed firsthand the tragic result of His command that the Levites were forbidden to touch

the ark upon the pain of death (Numbers 4:15).

Further, nowhere in David's makeshift tent, nor in Moses' tabernacle before or Solomon's temple following, do we have a biblical description of a "blue shekinah flame" hovering above the ark. Scripture records, however, that Solomon's temple — not David's tabernacle — "was filled with a cloud" so much so that "the priests could not perform their service" because "the glory of the Lord filled the temple" (2 Chronicles 5:13-14).

Perhaps Tenney should not be so concerned with making a name for himself with judgment prophecies and forewarnings, but should desire to become more diligent in properly handling the truths already recorded in God's Word (2 Timothy 2:15). The unbiblical speculation he dispenses to the Church does not honor the Word of God, but only titillates the naive and gullible with extrabiblical fairy tales and mythology.

Christians must not so easily forget or overlook the spurious oracles of these "superstar" prophets. No amount of word games or semantics should permit these self-assuming prophets to distance themselves from the claimed "revelations" which they've used as catapults to superstar status. Playing on the tendency in today's Church for the "cult of celebrity," they have in an elitist way set themselves up as gurus and an untouchable caste. The Church should demand accuracy and accountability from these deceivers.

We must not forget Benny Hinn's proclamation from the "Holy Spirit" that "God would destroy the homosexual community of America" in the mid-nineties — "about '94 or '95, no later than that." Or his divine messages that in the 1990s "the economy of America is going to fall" and that "there will be many raised from the dead in that day" along with "many visitations of angels." He clearly made it all up. (See further, *The Quarterly Journal*, Vol. 16, No. 4, or chapter 13 of *The Confusing World of Benny Hinn*.)

Hinn and those like him who claim the mantle of "prophet" must be held accountable for their false and frivolous utterances. They ought to be exposed and held accountable for leading God's people away from a respect for the sufficiency of Scripture into a mystical land of "Christianized" fortune-telling. And there is a responsibility on the part of believers as well. Christians need to forsake the enticing inventions of these modern-day prophets and superstars. They need to return to the safe and simple foundation of Scripture — nothing more, nothing less, nothing else. As Word-Faith critic Curtis Crenshaw astutely noted:

"If anything is contrary to Scripture, it is wrong. If anything is the same as Scripture, it is not needed. If anything goes beyond Scripture, it has no authority."

It is time to tell the Christian fortune-tellers, who never get it right, to stop the charade.

—MKG

commonplace. Now a civil court case involving the Watchtower in Moscow is being closely monitored by many religious denominations and groups.

A law established in 1997 by the Russian government restricted nontraditional denominations in respect to religious worship and activity. The legislation further required all religious organizations to re-register, which has been criticized by human rights groups and the United States as discriminatory. The statute authorizes the courts to disband groups they find guilty of inciting hatred or intolerant behavior.

The 1997 ruling also assisted the preeminence of the Russian Orthodox Church, and last summer the church called for a ban on proselytizing groups, specifically those moving the Russian people away from the "religions of their ancestors."

According to the *New York Times*, a complaint filed by a Moscow district prosecutor against the Jehovah's Witnesses charges the sect had "violated the 1997 law by preaching religious discrimination, breaking up families, withholding medical treatment — all in the name of their 'one true religion.'" The newspaper also reported that from "an exhaustive textual analysis of literature disseminated by the Witnesses' door-to-door proselytizers, the prosecutors concluded that 'overseers' in Russia and abroad 'not only control the spiritual environment of the congregation but also subject the manner of life, thinking, psyche and conduct of every member of the sect.'"

The prosecutors have assembled more than 20 people to testify as to the destruction inflicted upon their family and finances as a result of the Watchtower organization. A top expert from the Serbski Center for Social and Forensic Psychiatry furnished written testimony that "the teaching and activity of Jehovah's Witnesses contains factors that may lead to neuroticism and a state of depression."

The Jehovah's Witnesses deny the prosecution claims, saying no supporting evidence has been produced and accuse the Russians of reverting to Soviet-style attempts to control all religious activity.

Despite the attempts by Moscow prosecutors to ban activity by the Watchtower, their efforts may have been thwarted by the Russian Justice Ministry's re-registration of the group as a religious organization, according to a May 7 report by the Reuters News Service.

"We are very pleased with this development and hope that it will have a positive impact on the court case in Moscow," said Judah Schroeder, a Watchtower representative in Brooklyn, N.Y.

Schroeder said the group had been re-registered under the name "Administrative Center for Jehovah's Wit-

nesses in Russia." He added that the word "Russia" in the official name was given only to religious organizations that had existed in the country for more than 50 years.

"The Russian Federation's decision to re-register the Jehovah's Witnesses is the right decision. We hope that local officials in Moscow will follow suit," said Lyudmila Alekseyeva, president of the International Helsinki Federation. Secular human rights groups, as well, hailed the move.

In March, a judge overseeing the case ruled that a panel of experts should decide whether to uphold the prosecutor's claims and ban the Jehovah's Witnesses. At the time this newsletter went to print, that decision had not been reached.

Christian leaders from various denominations continue to monitor the court's decisions, fearing a reprisal against their missionary efforts as well, if a final judgment goes against the Watchtower. The litigation also has the eye of the United States Senate which has an established law stating that American aid to Russia is contingent upon religious freedom.

Although a ruling against the Watchtower by the local Moscow court would not affect the national status of the sect or its activity, some feel it would encourage a domino-effect — where other local judges would follow the lead of Moscow's civil court.

According to the *New York Times*, the Jehovah's Witnesses have 130,000 adherents throughout Russia, with 10,000 living in Moscow. The Reuters news report said, "The group says it has existed in Russia for more than a century and claims about 250,000 members nationwide."

—MKG

SDA PRESIDENT RESIGNS AMID CONTROVERSY

The president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church has announced that he is stepping down as leader of the 10-million member denomination, according to an Associated Press report in February.

The brief news item stated that Robert Folkenberg resigned after pressure from other church officials which began earlier in the year. The report suggests that Folkenberg's resignation comes as a result of a "controversy over his business dealings." A recent lawsuit helped elicit the study of Folkenberg's business practices, and in mid-January the church began its formal investigation. The suit, which had been filed against the SDA church and its president by a California businessman, charged that the defendants had backed out of a 1993 business contract.

The news article also stated that "G. Ralph Thompson, secretary of the church's top policy-making body, is acting president."

—MKG

KRISHNAS BEGIN ABUSE RECOVERY PROGRAM

The International Society for Krishna Consciousness — more commonly known as Hare Krishnas — has disclosed its plans to spend \$1 million on a multi-year program to help hundreds of children of its members who suffered physical, sexual and emotional abuse at the sect's boarding schools during the 1970s and 1980s. The project, known as ISKCON Office of Child Protection, initially designated \$250,000 for the first year, but recently announced an additional allocation of \$750,000 which will be spent over a three-year period.

According to a Religious News Service report, "Boarding school teachers, movement officials, monks and gurus (spiritual leaders) were most often responsible for the abuse." The movement has established an office in Alachua, Fla., to function as its administration center in dealing with the abuses. Last year the group voluntarily released details of the child abuse which it described as "widespread," occurring in the sect's schools in the United States, India and elsewhere. Up until the organization's public disclosures, knowledge of the events was

primarily confined to those inside the movement. Details of the problems were brought out in a fall 1998 edition of the *ISKCON Communications Journal*.

The boarding schools, known as "gurukulas," were originally established to free Hare Krishna parents from the obligation of child raising, which permitted them to invest more time in the proselyting and book selling efforts of the sect. Children were sometimes placed in educational institutions located thousands of miles from parents. As parents learned of the mistreatment, they took their children and left the sect, leading to the eventual downfall of the schooling system.

At least two-thirds of the designated funds will be used for psychological counseling and job training for the victims of the abuse. The remaining revenue will be spent on education of Hare Krishna leaders and parents to help eliminate further or future occurrences of child abuse.

Anuttama Dasa, national spokesman for the organization, said the monies will come from the earnings generated by the sale of the sect's colorful and lavishly illustrated books. He further revealed that the abuse recovery program will utilize about 80% of the group's annual net revenue accrued from book sales. "This represents a major commitment of money for us," Anuttama said. In the past, book sales income was used to finance the construction and maintenance of Hare Krishna temples. The sect regards the marketing of its publications as its "most sacred activity."

—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

CHRISTIANITY: THE FAITH THAT MAKES SENSE

by Dennis McCallum

Tyndale House Publishers, 152 pages, \$4.99

This volume claims to help those who already believe but have trouble explaining their faith to others. It's a proposal that is sorely needed for a lazy, uneducated and undiscerning Church.

Decades ago, the late apologist Walter Martin would say, "Christians know what they believe, but they don't know why they believe it." Martin's judgment is just as true today as it was when it was said back in the 70s and 80s. In fact, the Church seems to have lost, not gained, ground.

Dennis McCallum's book is compact and economical. Yet it is logical, direct, and filled with a wealth of facts and evidence for the Christian faith. This makes it a rarity within today's Christian marketplace. Don't be fooled by the size — good things can come in small, inexpensive packages.

He clearly argues for the existence of God and establishes the framework of Christian belief. He examines the authenticity and reliability of Scripture through prophecy — both in Christ's first coming and in the present and forthcoming events leading to His second coming.

McCallum also uses the longest chapter in his book to answer objections to the Christian faith. And the volume is not an end to itself. The author concludes with "becoming involved with Christianity" — helpful suggestions containing the "hows" and "wheres" to persuade a believer to learn and grow. While this section is more to encourage and cultivate a new believer, McCallum's intent of spiritual growth can be realized in the life of all Christians by whetting their apologetic appetite.

The book is also well-suited for Sunday school or Bible study groups. Leader's guides and student study guides are available directly from McCallum's ministry, The Crossroads Project. They, like the book itself, are economically priced.

—MKG

WHAT DID JESUS MEAN?

by Ron Rhodes

Harvest House Publishers, 239 pages, \$10.99

If the Bible is the inspired Word of God and every statement by Jesus that is recorded in it is accurate and pertinent to the Christian faith, then Christians need to know not only what Jesus *said* but what he *meant*.

Cults have twisted His words, skeptics scoffed at them and Christians often puzzle over them. Misunderstanding or misinterpreting His words can do more than start an argument; it can have eternal consequences. Grasping their true meaning can bring satisfaction for the believer and eternal life for the seeker of truth.

Author Ron Rhodes, president of Reasoning from the Scriptures Ministries, a Christian apologetics organization, has taken about 150 of Jesus' sayings and removed the apparent mystery from them to reveal plain truths that anyone can grasp. Rhodes discusses each saying in the linguistic, cultural and historical contexts necessary to make them come alive to a reader living in the late 20th century. Many of the sayings Rhodes examines are parables. He explains why Jesus used this method and clarifies the illustrations where needed.

The book is organized into topical chapters, such as "Jesus' Claims About Himself," and "Living Ethically." There is a Scripture and subject glossary in the back, too. The book is useful if read cover to cover, opened randomly or searched for answers to specific questions — or to settle debates.

Perhaps the most rewarding aspect of the book is the way it immerses the reader in the sayings of Jesus, forcing him to ponder what the Savior said and challenging him to act on his faith.

In a day when some so-called Christian books focus on the author and what he or she has to say, Rhodes has wisely put the spotlight on Christ's words and helped the reader sharpen his focus on their meaning.

As with many of Rhodes' previous writings, his latest volume is yet another valuable tool which will enable the Christian to strive to be "a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15).

—KAM

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