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Getting Out and Getting On Dealing with the Grief Process Experienced in Exiting a Cult

by G. Richard Fisher

Life itself can be extremely difficult. Loss and grief are components in the life of every person. Dealing with these can be very problematic. After all, life is loss.

God has given us much in the Scriptures to help us build a theology of suffering. Without this information we can be caught on a greasy slope of despair.

Acquaintance with Romans 8, the books of Job and Lamentations all help us acquire resources for the inevitable losses of life. We should study well Romans 8, even committing portions of it to memory. It will serve us well in our struggles and equip us to help others. Both Job and Lamentations should become familiar to us as well.

In the eighth chapter of Romans, Paul deals in stark realism with, "the sufferings of this present time" (v. 18). He reminds us that all of creation, saved as well as unsaved, is struggling with the stresses of life and the fall: "For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs until now" (v. 22). In all of the psychobabble of today's culture, we



must keep reminding ourselves that there is no commandment in the Bible that says: "Thou must always feel good!" Until resurrection and glorification there will always be groans and pains.

A big part of the suffering of the present time is loss. *Life brings loss.* Loss is an inevitable part of life and when we lose *we grieve.* Therefore grief is an inevitable part of life as well. Think of the losses:

- The loss can be a loss through the death of a loved one.
 - The loss can be the loss of a marriage through a divorce.
 - It can be a lost friend or the loss and rejection of a wayward child.
 - It can be the loss of a long held job.
 - It can be the loss of health or of the younger self.

Life brings losses — devastating losses, crippling losses and again, *when we lose we grieve.*

A good definition of grief and its effects are given by Dr. Jay Adams:

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Editorials

A LOT TO SAY ABOUT NOTHING?

A letter recently came to our St. Louis office from a reader criticizing our examination of the teachings of Joyce Meyer. Among other things, she wrote, "You sure had a lot to say about nothing!" Sadly, her comments reflect a troubling development in the Church: Christian fundamentals are easily discarded when people become captivated by a religious superstar. Meyer is a classic example.

In Meyer's case, the very substance of the Gospel is at stake. False teaching conflicts the truth; it is the Church's enemy. It is not much ado about nothing. Meyer, like cultists and heretics, clearly adds to the Gospel message. She is on dangerous ground and in deadly company. Changing or adding to the Gospel is damnable territory as Galatians 1:8-9 declares. Paul did not consider Peter's union with the circumcision crowd a matter to ignore. His actions cut to the heart of the Gospel. If Christ did not complete our salvation on the cross — and we add to it by ritual or relocation — His declaration, "It is finished," is meaningless.

Consider, for example, how major cults all attack the Gospel. Jehovah's Witnesses limit the atonement of Christ to 144,000 (those it designates as "anointed" Christians) and further restrain God's grace by adding works; Mormons likewise lessen Christ's death by teaching that it may provide salvation if it is earned

through personal merit; Mormons also move the distinctive of the atonement on the cross into the Garden of Gethsemane, claiming that Christ shed his blood for our sins not only on the cross, but in the garden as well; Christian Scientists teach that the shed blood of Jesus did not cleanse us from sin at all.

This letter writer extends "doctrinal grace" and leniency to someone who teaches that Christ's death on the cross was not enough but does not extend that same leniency to PFO. Her bias toward Meyer keeps her blinded and undiscerning.

Meyer teaches that Christ had to take our place in hell to complete the atonement. She writes that a person "cannot go to heaven unless you believe with all your heart that Jesus took your place in hell" (*The Most Important Decision You Will Ever Make*, first edition, pg. 37).

The "born again Jesus" or "spiritual death of Jesus" theology (which is what Meyer suggests here) is a concept not found in Scripture. It is a relatively new doctrine taught by men such as E.W. Kenyon, Paul E. Billheimer, Kenneth Copeland and other New Thought and Word-Faith teachers.

Meyer's teaching, which moves the atonement of Jesus into hell, clearly contradicts Scripture, which states that Christ paid for our sins on the cross. Romans 5:10, Colossians 1:20-22, 2:13-14, 1 Peter 2:24 and 1 John 1:7 are but a few examples. Moreover, there is no mention of

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WATCHTOWER ANNOUNCES ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGES

A major restructuring of the Jehovah's Witness organization was announced at the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society's meeting last October. The extent of the change, which included the resignation of President Milton Henschel and six other board members, is unprecedented in the Watchtower's 116-year history.

The Society announced other changes, too, including the appointment of seven new directors and the establishing of three new nonprofit corporations in the United States. According to a news release from the Public Affairs Office of Jehovah's Witnesses, the changes to the legal structure of the group "will allow them to keep pace with their growth."

Before the restructuring, the Jehovah's Witnesses were strictly ruled by the group's Governing Body. In keeping with the changes, administrative responsibilities will be handled by one of the new corporations. Public affairs director James Pellechia said the changes will enable the Governing Body to "concentrate more on the ministry of the Word." "The reason for the changes was both theological and practical," he further said.

According to an Associated Press report, "Don Adams, a 50-year veteran of the organization, has been named president and seven lower-ranking members will make up the new board. Henschel will remain a member of the Governing Body, which will have a rotating chairman rather than a permanent leader."

The newly formed corporations include the Christian Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses, which will direct the sect's religious and education aspects; the Religious Order of Jehovah's Witnesses, which will supervise full-time ministry workers; and the Kingdom Support Services, which will administer certain organizational assets, including the design and engineering of society buildings.

The changes do not come as a big surprise to many who monitor the organization. A more significant shift in Jehovah's Witness policy is one shrouded within the announced changes. The Watchtower now says its principal offices, including president and vice president, no longer have to be held by "anointed" members of its faith.

According to Watchtower teaching, "anointed" Christians are a select body of 144,000 persons consisting of believers from the first century up until the present day.

Jehovah's Witnesses maintain the total number of this group, which is interpreted from Revelation 7:14, was fulfilled in the 1930s. According to the Society's figures, fewer than 9,000 of the elite are presently alive on the earth. Most members of this remnant are aged and the shrinking number posed challenges in selecting Watchtower officers under its previous criterion.

—MKG

LETTING HER PEOPLE GO

The ministry of best-selling author and weight-loss guru Gwen Shamblin recently reached an impasse with many of the evangelical churches that once actively promoted her highly successful Weigh Down Diet program. Shamblin experienced another setback when her publisher, Thomas Nelson, announced plans to cancel her book contract. The publisher said it was immediately stopping publication of her new book, *Out of Egypt*, which had been scheduled to be shipped to bookstores within days of the September announcement.

Shamblin's woes began late last summer when apologist L.L. "Don" Veinot, of Midwest Christian Outreach, received several calls expressing uncertainty about Shamblin, including some from her employees. Veinot took a closer look at the doctrine and practice of Shamblin. His investigation uncovered her anti-Trinitarian theology, Church of Christ roots, and an exclusive notion in which she claims to be restoring New Testament Christianity.

In January 1999, Shamblin, along with her husband, founded the Remnant Fellowship, a Nashville-based church. The fellowship has about 80 members, mostly employees of Shamblin's organization, and currently meets in a warehouse. It was stated in a *Christianity Today* report that, "At least 40 employees have been either fired or resigned since Jan. 1," apparently because of their refusal to align with Shamblin's elitist fellowship. The article, appearing on the magazine's web site, attributed knowledge of the dismissals to "an anonymous source inside Weigh Down."

A Baptist Press article paralleled the *CT* report saying "that at least 35 employees were pressured into resigning from the ministry because they would not join Shamblin's church and two others were fired." The BP report stated its information came from a "former high-ranking executive at Weigh Down" who also stated that, "On many occasions, Gwen had spoken to the employees during devotionals and strongly suggested that we all come and share in their worship service. The last week of

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this old house and other tall tales

Who Really Has “Touched” Benny Hinn?

by G. Richard Fisher
and M. Kurt Goedelman

There is no doubt that lies sell and are more popular than truth in this day and age.

A popular Hollywood film a few years back featured Jim Carrey playing a congenital liar who is forced to tell only the truth for a time. Carrey's character is subject to all kinds of hysterics and self-flagellation as he tries to resist the urge to prevaricate.

Benny Hinn, who claims to be “one of the great healing evangelists,” is much like Carrey's lawyer character: he just cannot tell all the truth all the time. He claims to have an especially deep relationship with the Holy Spirit. Hinn even explains away his lack of formal Bible training by claiming that during his purported early encounters with the Spirit, “I was receiving an education greater than any university or seminary could offer. My teacher was the Spirit Himself.”¹ It is a wonder then how Hinn can be so mired in heresy.

Hinn is a phenomenon of our times. Sadly, many Christians demand heroes and icons and for many of them, Hinn answers the call. His broadcasts are full of self-serving tributes to his claimed spiritual stature and impact. In spite of his many goofs, gaffes and media troubles, he still manages to enchant people. False prophecy, her-

esy and necromancy do not slow the *Hinn Express*. He continues to sweep thousands off their feet — literally, as his followers succumb to what Thomas Upham called “sympathetic imitation” and are willing to fall on command.²

Hinn's critics try to force him “to tell the truth” by comparing his contradictory public statements and outright lies with documented facts. At times, Hinn allows his underlings to apologize or offer alibis for his slip-ups.³ Hinn, at other times, simply alters his claims in newly released material.

However, even in the revisions and updates, Hinn can't get it right. The careful observer can only wonder if Hinn has been fibbing for so long that he is incapable of telling the whole truth and of functioning within the bounds of reality. He is a serial prevaricator whose followers don't seem to notice or care. No one around him or within his organization holds him accountable.

In the last decade, Hinn has promised to reform as often as a politician in an election year. A video titled *The Many Faces of Benny Hinn*, helps spell out the dilemma. Similarly, the title of

PFO's volume on Hinn captures him as a man in a world of deep confusion. There is no reason to believe what Hinn says about anything. It is a serious venture to claim to speak for God in the manner of prophecies and visions as does Hinn.

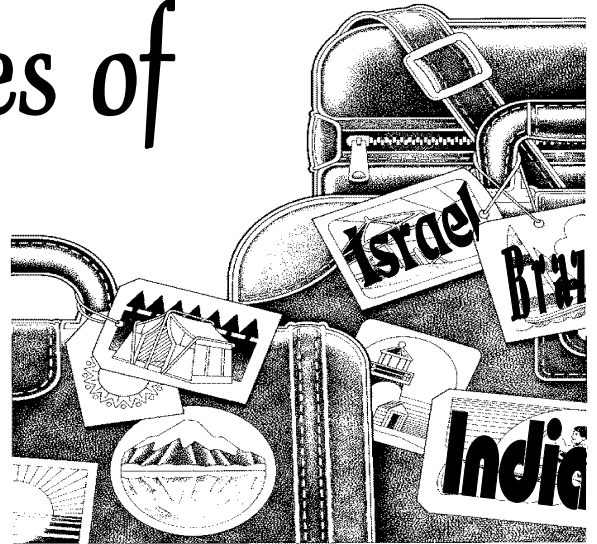
WHO TOUCHED WHOM?

In his latest autobiography, *He Touched Me*, Hinn continues to compound contradictions and falsehoods that have been documented in previous articles in *The Quarterly Journal*. The adage, “You can't tell a book by its cover,” applies to Hinn's latest one. The golden-hued dust jacket is graced with Hinn's subdued face as he would have us believe that he has been touched by God in some unique and special way. The back cover says Hinn's life story “reveals what can happen when one person becomes totally yielded to the Holy Spirit.”

Upon examination of the book, however, one can see that Hinn again has misrepresented his life story. While these lies are certainly creative and artful, they remain lies.

Hinn's stories keep shifting and changing until one wonders if he ever will get it right. Parts of Hinn's new biography get closer to the truth
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The Life and Times of Golden Girl and Globetrotter Ruth Ward Heflin



by G. Richard Fisher

Few had heard of Ruth Ward Heflin until 1998. Then newspapers across the country began reporting on the latest Charismatic sideshow saying that gold glitter was being dispensed by God in church meetings. The names Bob Shattles, Brazilian-born Sylvania Machado and Ruth Ward Heflin were consistently prominent in the news articles. Heflin carried reports on her web site about Machado's claims that "holy gold flakes" appeared on her face and that "oil began to flow supernaturally from her body."¹

Heflin's overly hyped Mount Zion Miracle Chapel in Israel must not have made much of a splash either. Missionaries working in Israel for over 30 years among the Arab communities and Messianic believers reported they knew nothing about her.² So I was not the only one.

Though a self-proclaimed power-preacher and healer, Heflin's untimely death of cancer made more news. A Religious News Service story reported:

"Revivalist Ruth Ward Heflin Dead at 60. — Revivalist Ruth Ward Heflin, known for her role in the so-called 'gold dust' revival involving churches across the globe, died Friday (September 15) at a Richmond, Va., hospital. Heflin, who had suffered from cancer for several

months, was 60. ... She directed the Calvary Pentecostal Campground in Ashland, Va., which was founded by her parents in the 1950s and later led by her brother, Wallace, who died in 1997."³

Her death grabbed a full page in *Charisma* magazine:

"During her nearly 40 years of ministry, Heflin's burden for Israel and for evangelism and discipleship took her around the world. Heflin also was the founder and director of Mount Zion Fellowship, an international prayer ministry in Jerusalem, where she lived for more than 25 years before returning to the United States. ... Heflin suffered a broken ankle in an automobile accident last year. In April, doctors diagnosed her with breast cancer that already had spread into her bones. Heflin underwent a mastectomy on April 25, but refused chemotherapy or further cancer treatment because she said the Lord told her to refuse, according to Connie Wilson, her personal assistant. ... Heflin recently has been a central figure in the so-called gold dust revival. People who attended her camp meetings said they saw gold dust appear on their faces and hands,

and some reported that God put gold fillings in their teeth. Some said they even saw diamonds, rubies or feathers appear."⁴

So Heflin died of cancer even though she boasted wildly in her 1999, autobiography, *Harvest Glory*: "I suddenly knew how easy it is to raise the dead and to heal all manner of sickness and disease. How easy it is in that realm of glory! How easy to see people leaping out of wheelchairs and off stretchers! How easy to see blind eyes opened and deaf ears unstopped! In the glory realm nothing is impossible."⁵ Whatever the "glory realm" is, Heflin, it appears, was not in it personally.

But she continues:

"That glory must have stayed with us two or three hours. God was giving us a foretaste, as He often does, of a greater day, so that we could encourage ourselves and others to move into the glory realm. God showed me that day that if there is no death working in me, if there is no bitterness, no strife, no criticism — nothing of death — I can command death. If death is working in me, I have no authority over death. If only life is flowing through me, I have an authority over death, and I can command it in the name of the

Lord. As we moved deeper into the resurrection power of God and learned to live in the glory realm, I knew that we would see the miraculous as the world had never seen it before. It was a beginning of greater things for all of us."⁶

Shortly after that statement, she was anguishing with breast and bone cancer. Here was a lady under a very strong delusion. Neither could Heflin stay the hand of death for her brother, the Rev. Wallace Harrison Heflin Jr. He died of a heart attack on December 27, 1996 at age 64.⁷

Just an elementary knowledge of the Bible shows us that disease and the realm of death is not defeated until the resurrection day according to 1 Corinthians 15, Romans 8 and Revelation 21. It is sad that people will not believe just what the Bible teaches while claiming to be Bible believers. Illusions of a "glory realm" now are so much nonsense.

LOCAL OPINIONS

Heflin was born and grew up in Ashland, Va., a suburb of Richmond of about 6,500 people. In 1955, Heflin's parents founded Calvary Pentecostal Camp and in 1980 her brother, Wallace Jr., opened End Times Food Inc., selling dehydrated food and giving tips on food storage in preparation for the food shortages and power outages that were on the horizon. Followers were told to "stock up before Armageddon comes."⁸

Heflin inherited the role of camp director after the death of her brother, who had acquired the position in 1972 following the death of their father. The site is on Route 626, south of Ashland, and is well known for help with community services, according to Jay Pace, editor of the *Herald-Progress-Hanover News*. Vagrants and battered women find their way there. Pace was and is a longtime friend of the Heflin family.

Pace noted that Heflin was rarely at the camp because she traveled extensively. He added that the camp often

was a noisy gathering place (accommodating 550 guests in 30 buildings at capacity) attracting worldwide visitors rather than the locals. It all took on an aura bigger than life with fantastic claims of the miraculous. When Heflin was described as brash, pushy, manipulative and one who constantly created photo opportunities for effect, Pace replied, "That's her!"⁹ The camp was run by about 80 people who live there on donations.

HINN HYPE

Heflin gained a further measure of notoriety in the months prior to her death with a "prophecy" regarding the ministry of faith healer Benny Hinn. Hinn, on his *This Is Your Day* broadcast, told followers:

"Ruth prophesied over me back in the '70s and everything she said has happened. She's just sent me a word through my wife and said the Lord spoke to her audibly and said that He is going to appear *physically* in one of our crusades in the next few months. ... She said the Lord spoke to her audibly and said, 'Tell Benny I'm going to appear physically on the platform in his meetings.'"¹⁰

Hinn alluded to Heflin's prophecy at various times while promoting his upcoming healing crusades, most notably his June meeting in Kenya. Despite Heflin's audible word from the Lord and Hinn's fanfare of the prophecy, Jesus never "physically" appeared at his meetings "in the next few months."

Heflin admits that after almost 40 years, "I was still relatively unknown in America."¹¹ Her rise to greater fame in the past few years was a result of an invitation to speak at a Pastor's Conference at Brownsville Assembly of God in Pensacola and her attendance at numerous Benny Hinn Crusades.¹² All of the sudden, she became larger than life.

PROMOTING THE OCCULT

Heflin's autobiography gives no clear conversion story but does contain accounts of strange phenomena

she experienced as a girl. She claimed pictures taken of her when developed were "filled with bright light."¹³ Though the book includes 40 pages of photos (over 100 pictures) none of them shows the bright light she refers to. As with many of her claims, there is no documentation whatsoever.

She also claimed that as a result of a vision she had of the Chinese people, her physical appearance changed and she took on Chinese features.¹⁴ But again, there is no photograph included in the book to document the claim. She wrote that she often spoke in Chinese in her sleep.¹⁵ However, later in the book she admitted that she had a difficult time learning Chinese after arriving in Hong Kong.¹⁶

Heflin claimed her father had success in healing a leper and crippled children¹⁷ but offered no documentation.

At times Heflin sounds like a fortune teller as she practices clairvoyance. She recounts how she was criticized by one (unnamed Pentecostal leader) but "the Lord spoke to me and gave me a message ... concerning his son."¹⁸ She practiced this throughout her life as she recounts, "This was the beginning of God speaking to me in a new dimension and sending me to pastors and other church leaders all over the world. The gift would greatly expand in later years."¹⁹

Extra-sensory ability, where it is not faked, is a tool of Satan. Occult expert Kurt Koch lists clairvoyance in his book, *The Devil's Alphabet*.²⁰

Heflin admitted to other occult experiences, namely out-of-body transport, otherwise known as astral projection:

"I began to be conscious of the fact that I was remembering only the first line of each prophecy and the last line. I could never remember anything in between. In the end I realized that I had not been sleeping at all, but had been carried away in the Spirit. I was conscious of the first line, as my spirit was being carried away, and of the last line, as my

spirit came back into my body. Later, when I got back to Jerusalem, there was a postcard there that I had sent back telling everyone about those amazing days and that I must have been carried away in the Spirit at least a hundred times during that short period."²¹

Heflin's guidance system also consisted of inner promptings and dreams.²² Dr. Jay Adams warns against this kind of mystical practice. Commenting on Psalm 119:2, he writes:

"Notice that the place to seek God is in the Bible. Counselees will find Him and His will for their lives nowhere else. Mystics think that they can have encounters with God apart from the Scriptures. They think that nothing need come between them and God (not even Christ, nor the Bible). They therefore work up some sort of 'experience' they suppose to be the presence of God in this manner and look down on the 'peons' who try to find God in the Scriptures."²³

ON THE ROAD — AGAIN

Heflin recalled another experience, in which she claimed that a "prophecy" was given over her, giving her the assurance from God that, "I will give you My knowledge and My wisdom."²⁴

As a young woman and far into her adult life, Heflin's main pursuit was travel all over the globe. She not only loved travel, it was her obsession. As long as she could get from church to church, she could gather the funds to move on, always making the claim that in this way she was reaching the nations.

The implicit idea is that her getting to a nation was tantamount to the nation being reached. She recounted her trip to Brazil in these words:

"My trips did not always involve ministry to people. Sometimes they were for the purpose of declaration and prophetic release, as in the case of a trip I

made to Brazil. ... I prophesied to Rio and to all of Brazil. I was conscious that God was changing the atmosphere over the city and over the nation. ... God had sent me to take care of the spiritual atmosphere over Rio."²⁵

However, old-line Roman Catholicism has been growing at a steady rate in Brazil since 1960 and about 65% of the population considers itself Roman Catholic.²⁶

Heflin's autobiography gives numerous examples of being brash, pushy and demanding, which served her well and opened many doors and opportunities. Many contacts made in this way with various embassies gave her great photo opportunities as the numerous pictures illustrate.

She displays pictures of herself with Hillary Clinton in Jerusalem in 1995, with Benny Hinn in Jerusalem in 1996 and with former President George Bush in Alabama in 1998. Unwittingly though, she may have tipped her hand and revealed her "M.O." when she wrote:

"I was introduced to Astronaut Jim Irwin at the San Francisco Airport as the tour lined up at the counter to check in for our flight. The Chinese government was thrilled about the visit of a U.S. astronaut, and they were planning to roll out the red carpet for him. *We would benefit from his celebrity.*"²⁷

Heflin actually made a career of touring. Upon arrival in a city, she would contact major embassies and check the schedule to see if there were any public functions she could attend. She would get public tours of parliaments and government buildings and network and name-drop.²⁸ She was constantly meeting and making friends. Every new friend was a virtual steppingstone.

Heflin would go on numerous paid tours with bankers or businessmen, even with airline executives to widen her sphere of influence and information. It also built up many contacts. She was a professional tourist.²⁹ Heflin knew all the ropes as far as travel.

On one occasion, she used an expensive hotel to freshen up in after having slept in her car.³⁰

Heflin would introduce herself to travelers at airports, question them and make immediate friends.³¹ She had it down pat. The more friends (casual and otherwise) she acquired, the more homes she had as stopover places as she crisscrossed countries. She was an obsessive traveler. Having driven a car from England and across Europe to Israel, she exulted, "It was one of those trips I would gladly take again, especially if I had a nice car to do it in."³²

HOLY CHUTZPAH!

At times she admits to wheedling, cajoling and manipulating to get what she wanted. On arrival in Jerusalem, she called the office of then Prime Minister Golda Meir and told Meir's spokesman that she insisted on speaking to the Prime Minister. When she was denied and told that the spokesman would see her for five minutes the following day. She recalls:

"I suddenly found myself saying, 'You see me today for five minutes, and tomorrow afternoon you will call me.' The Jewish people are famous for their *chutzpah*, their boldness, and I suppose in that moment he felt that I had out-*chutzpahed* everybody he knew. He laughed, and then he said, 'All right, I'll see you this afternoon for five minutes.'"³³

This kind of arrogance and brazenness is talked about again and again in her book.

Heflin boasts that she met and was photographed with then Mayor of Jerusalem Teddy Kolleck.³⁴ This is not a major feat and means next to nothing. Kolleck was a regular at large Christian gatherings and very often at public events. One could run into him regularly at hotel gatherings as this author did in Jerusalem some years ago. Status by osmosis may be a public relations gimmick but it is empty of real meaning. People's Temple leader Jim Jones was photographed with public officials, as was

false prophet Herbert W. Armstrong, usually after he gave some large amount of his followers' money to a public or community project.

Heflin, at one point (in the early 1980s), began networking with the infamous scammer and disgraced televangelist Robert Tilton. Tilton assisted her in building a prayer chapel on the Mount of Olives.³⁵ Each one used the influence of the other.

DON'T BE DUPED

We need to look at Heflin by way of an outline, realizing that she is typical of the hyper-Charismatics and restorationists so prominent today. We can do this by using the acrostic *DUPED*.

DIRECT (and **DANGEROUS**) **REVELATION**: Heflin told her loyal followers that she had a special direct open line to heaven. She framed her claims in this way:

"God had dropped important revelations into our spirits, and by the time we got ready to go, we had ten or twelve major revelations to work on. We were learning that you can travel for God without an address, but you don't dare go without a revelation."³⁶

This kind of talk makes the Bible seem dull and unappealing and certainly not a Word from God for today. She makes no appeal to 2 Timothy 3:16-17, but rather to her personal revelations. They seem more immediate, exciting and up-to-date.

Then Heflin said God told her He would, "deal with you in sevens and eights. Don't try to figure out what I'm saying, but I want you to fast seven days and eat on the eighth, and fast seven more days and eat on the eighth, and do it for seven weeks and eat on the eighth week."³⁷

She then adds:

"That night, however, while I was preaching in the church in Richmond, the Lord spoke to me in the middle of my sermon and told me to fly to Jerusalem the next day."³⁸

Some of these "revelations" were a danger to her life:

"That night when I got into my bed, I had an experience in which the Living Creatures from Ezekiel chapter 1 and Revelation chapter 4 flew into my bedroom. I cannot say for sure how long they were there, but their presence was glorious, and when they left, I knew that I would spend my life with the Jewish people. The next morning as I was on my way to church, I could still feel the glory I had felt when they were in my room. It seemed that my arms were possessed of a great jet propulsion. I was trying to drive the car, but my hands would fly off the wheel and flutter as those of the Living Creatures. I would put my hands back on the wheel, and the surging power would hit them again. It was only the presence of angels that got us safely to church that morning."³⁹

Heflin either has a very wild and vivid imagination or is just telling stories. The only other option is demonic activity. The fruit of the Holy Spirit is self-control, not flapping one's arms uncontrollably.

Heflin also reports being "stuck" and unable to move on numerous occasions.⁴⁰ She makes no attempt to explain what this unbiblical experience of being "frozen" has to do with the Christian life or sanctification. Some years ago, before entering ministry, this writer did construction work on the interior of a mental hospital in New Jersey and saw many people in locked wards in states of catatonic schizophrenia. It certainly was not anything connected with anything good, let alone Christianity. Being overtaken and unable to move may be more connected to altered states or the dark side, unless it is pure hype for effect.

UNDOCUMENTED CLAIMS: Heflin makes outlandish claims without a shred of documentation. She claims she healed someone of polio.⁴¹ Her wildest claim was that based on the verse, "*Before Zion travailed, she*

brought forth" God showed her a new thing. That new thing was giving birth without pain. That was later confirmed to Heflin by an article in an Australian women's magazine, "SING YOUR WAY TO A PAINLESS CHILDBIRTH."⁴² The effects of the curse in Genesis 3 will not be lifted before Jesus comes (Romans 8).

Heflin goes on to claim that, "In one service alone fifty-six hearing- and speech-impaired Russians had received their healing, and thousands had been saved and filled with the Spirit."⁴³ Boasts like this can be easily made far from home. She never produced the goods here either.

Likewise, for all of Heflin's visions about China and her boasts of "many exciting events in connection with China,"⁴⁴ the country still remains with only about 6% professing Christians.⁴⁵

Heflin makes many claims regarding either her prayers or presence being a large factor in the ebb and flow of nations. The flip side is who gets the blame (or credit) for the Biafran war breaking out just after she arrived in Lagos, Nigeria?⁴⁶ She seems to indicate that her prayers at the Wailing Wall the night before Anwar Sadat's historic peace visit had some special meaning or effect,⁴⁷ but where was she when Sadat was assassinated? These claims are self-serving interpretations that have little to do with reality. They are not only undocumented but unproven and unprovable. This author was in Israel the year Yitzhak Rabin and Yasser Arafat shook hands in Washington. So what? The events in recent days in the Middle East now show the handshake meant very little.

Another undocumented claim is made by Heflin about a spiritual facelift:

"That sister was so drunk with joy that we had to carry her home after the meeting, and all through the night I could hear her laughing. The next morning she looked twenty years younger, as if she had received a total face lift."⁴⁸

Are we to really believe that not only gold dust but a “gold nugget” has fallen from heaven at her meetings?⁴⁹ Are we to take seriously the story that a shipping clerk at Montgomery Ward got saved simply seeing gold dust (glitter) on a lady’s face?⁵⁰

Heflin reports that while speaking in Christ Church in Jerusalem in September 1998 gold dust appeared. In a phone interview with the Rev. Neil Cohen, pastor of Christ Church, he laughed at the report and then said, “I was there, present at her meetings. I heard the rumor afterwards but while there I saw nothing.” He said that Heflin was admired by some in Jerusalem and despised by others.⁵¹

Heflin even passes on a story about the healing of chickens:

“One night in the great government conference center, she told of a Japanese chicken farmer who was losing all his chickens to sickness. She told him to have the chickens fast for two or three days, and when the chickens fasted, they were all healed. ... It was the chickens fasting for their own healing.”⁵²

The great chicken healing feat was supposedly done by David Yonggi Cho’s mother-in-law, whom Heflin nicknamed “Hallelujah Mama.”⁵³

Though Heflin did not give a date, she asserted that oil flowing from people’s hands and gold dust coming out of their pores started first among visitors from Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka is only 7% “Christian,” the bulk of those being Roman Catholic. Of the approximately 19 million in Sri Lanka, over 70% are Buddhist. Over 21% are Muslim and Hindu, making for a very dark and superstitious land.⁵⁴ Since oil and gold flakes are not a biblical phenomenon, there are only two choices left — deception or demonic.

Heflin was also adept at “after-the-fact” prophecies. She wrote she knew that “Bibi Netanyahu would become Prime Minister of Israel.”⁵⁵

Heflin, like faith healers Oral Roberts and Benny Hinn, wanted us to believe that she raised a woman from the dead. The woman fainted at a funeral home and revived but Heflin insisted she died. There was no attending physician or medical documentation and the woman was taken to a hospital where she recovered. Heflin admitted she never prayed for the lady but that the “miracle” just happened “in the flow of the river.”⁵⁶

PRIVATE INTERPRETATIONS: Heflin is quite proficient at Scripture twisting. One example is her use of Ezekiel 39. She claimed:

“Under a great anointing I began to prophesy that it was time for the events of Ezekiel 39 to come to pass, that God would now breathe His life into His people and that they would stand up in the authority of the Holy Spirit. ... When it came time to open the conference, I stepped to the microphone and encouraged everyone present to join me in shouting the name of Jesus three times. That name had never been shouted in that particular building before, but suddenly the power of it began to go through the atmosphere. The declaring of His name in Jerusalem opened up a whole new era for what God was about to do in the land.”⁵⁷

Two big questions pose themselves:

What has changed in Israel in the last 30 years? Absolutely nothing for the better! The suspicion and hatred is worse than ever. Israel is becoming more secular and unbelieving. Where in Scripture are we told that shouting “Jesus” in a crowded building does anything. Other “healers” say you must shout “Fire” or “Heal” or “Glory” or “More, Lord” or “Take it!” Whom do we believe?

Second, what about Ezekiel 39? Is it a prophecy of Jews standing up “in the authority of the Holy Spirit”? Is it about widespread spiritual renewal?

Foremost, the chapter has to do with war and judgment. It mentions

“birds of prey” (v. 4) and the awful labor of burying invaders for seven months (v. 11-12). It is only after severe judgments fall on Israel for its sin (v. 23) that God extends mercy. Heflin appears to have left that part out. Most commentators would see this in an eschatological connection. It has to be a future event since verse 21 tells us it culminates in God, setting His glory “among the nations” resulting in “the house of Israel shall know that I am the Lord their God from this day forward” (v. 22). Nothing like any of the biblical events above has occurred in Israel in Heflin’s lifetime.

Bruce Larson gives an illustration regarding where private interpretation can take people. It shows the length to which people can go:

“I read about the arrest of three sisters in Lansing, Michigan. These young women had removed their clothes, smeared themselves with mustard and were riding around in a stolen van. The police tried to determine the motive for this bizarre crime. It seems they were reading the Bible when the Holy Spirit seemed to speak to them. They discarded their clothes, having read that in the Garden of Eden Adam and Eve were naked. They read elsewhere the passage that likens faith to a grain of mustard seed, and so they lathered on mustard. The stolen van seems to have no biblical explanation. They claimed they went under the compulsion of the Holy Spirit. We all know people around us who claim that the Holy Spirit is directing them. There are many warnings in the Bible about testing the spirits.”⁵⁸

Another passage totally distorted by Heflin and other hyper-Charismatics involves the rising waters of Ezekiel 47:3-5. Ezekiel sees waters that are so abundant and high that he could not cross over without swimming (v. 5). The verse has nothing to do with dancing, jumping, screaming and getting out of control or about Catholics and Pentecostals getting together as Heflin suggests.⁵⁹

The verse has to do with geography. If one believes in a literal millennium, it would have to do with literal and topographical changes on a renewed Earth. The waters flow toward the east (v. 8) and the Dead Sea is made fresh (vv. 9-10). If one does not believe in a literal millennium, the passage then is seen as a future renewal in the eternal state when God makes all things new.

EXPERIENCE ORIENTATION: As we have already seen much of Heflin's teachings have to do with her experiences and her interpretations of her experiences. Feelings and emotions can be notoriously unreliable and open to conflicting interpretations. Her connection to the heretical End Time Handmaidens group is very suspicious.⁶⁰

At times Heflin seems really delusional. She claims a vision in which she "released all the wealth of America that would be needed for the ingathering of the last-day harvest."⁶¹

Are we also to really believe Heflin's report of her father's out-of-body experience? Of course, it is Heflin's report of what her father told her he experienced, but it makes for good story telling nonetheless:

"Tears came to my father's eyes, and he told us that while he had been praying his feet had actually lifted up off the ground, as he felt himself being lifted from the mountain earlier that morning. He immediately thought of the work that was left undone, and, in that moment, he came back down to earth. As he stood in the glory of that experience, he had to wonder if he had made the right choice."⁶²

One can stand with eyes closed and imagine all kinds of things and create various sensations. Altered states of consciousness can bring all kinds of bodily sensations and twinges. The average Christian would get discouraged believing these kinds of reports, thinking themselves unspiritual because they have never flown without a plane. But where does the Bible

suggest we would or should? There is no piece of armor in Ephesians 6 called flight. This really is unbiblical nonsense. Even the hymn, "I'll Fly Away" is understood as after death.

One of the strangest things about Heflin was her utter devotion to President Bill Clinton. She did not want him impeached and emphasized that, "Our nation's economy and the world's economy are at stake and with them the whole American way of life, as you and I have known it."⁶³ She also confesses, "I prayed that President Bill Clinton would remain in office. I knew that for the sake of America and for the sake of revival, we needed a stable presidency. ... It would be a great loss for us to sacrifice President Clinton."⁶⁴ This makes Clinton sound almost Messianic. Nevertheless, her prayer was answered despite the fact that many Americans did not think Clinton's ouster would be a great loss.

DANGEROUS DOCTRINES: Much of what Heflin teaches is dangerous in that it either ignores the Bible for experience or distorts the Bible for effect. One of Heflin's main teachings was what I call *lazy evangelism*.

Heflin promoted the idea that just being in a place effects great spiritual changes in the atmosphere and is to be equated somehow to a Gospel witness that will set up the Second Coming of Christ. While in Israel, Heflin and her friends would go outside and dance, sing and pray and claim they were opening up and evangelizing nations far away.

Just a whistle stop on a train could suffice:

"One year, while I was ministering in Australia, the Lord brought to my mind something He had said to me in America. He showed me that I should travel across both China and Russia, fasting and praying as I went, believing for the release of the land and its people. I knew that it was time to fulfill that call. ... At each stop, I would step out on the platform and pray and

prophesy. The words the Lord gave me, different for each place, were declaring the release of the Jewish people and the spiritual release God wanted to bring to the country as a whole."⁶⁵

Of course, Heflin would leave the hard work of transport and absorption of Russian Jews (and the expenditure of millions of shekels) to the Israeli government. She just says the words but others have to get the job done.

If Heflin visited a place, she considered it tantamount to reaching that country for Christ:

"In each place God led us by His Spirit, making divine appointments, causing the soles of our feet to possess new territory, making sure that the Gospel of the Kingdom was preached in every nation for a witness before the end comes, using our voices as prophetic instruments to spark life into that which was dead. He was causing us to gather, by our prophetic voices, *Harvest Glory*."⁶⁶

EASY WAY OR HARD WAY?

How easy this was compared to a missionary who has to give his blood, sweat, tears and life in living with a people and doing the hard work of translation and evangelism. Jesus told us to "make disciples, baptize and teach them" (Matthew 28:19-20). We are told not to pray "vain repetitions" (Matthew 6:7), but rather pray that the Lord of the harvest "would send out *laborers* into His harvest" (Luke 10:2). Lazy evangelism is as serious an error as hyper-Calvinism. The Apostle Paul labored to "persuade men" (2 Corinthians 5:11).

When Joshua was told, "Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given you" (1:3), the people of Israel still had to do the work, engage in battle and involve themselves. Obedience to God's battle plan secured the land. Heflin mistakes travel for evangelism. After traveling on a whirlwind tour of 20 countries in six months she is so bold to say "by

faith we had done the route. ... and everywhere we had traveled, we were possessing the nations for the Kingdom of God."⁶⁷

Can we believe that, "Ireland, England, France, Turkey, Syria, Israel, Egypt, the Sudan, Ethiopia, Uganda, Kenya, Chad, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Ghana, the Congo, Cameroon, Gabon, Senegal, Nigeria"⁶⁸ which are places she had visited, have been possessed for the Kingdom of God? The suggestion is ludicrous and one would have to be incredibly ignorant or out of reality to think so.

WHISTLING IN THE DARK

Heflin claimed to have a gift I had never heard of: "whistling in the Spirit." Apparently, even this could evangelize. She said it began in China and she described it this way:

"I began whistling in the Spirit (something I do with increasing regularity) and I whistled into the microphone. When I did, it caused an immediate stir among those who had come. They had never heard anyone whistle in the glory and they brought people from every direction over the coming days to hear. Their lives were changed as a result."⁶⁹

In retrospect, Heflin lived an illusory life. She traveled far and wide, met numerous people, made incredible and unfounded claims, spread false teaching, and perhaps believed her own press. One can only think of the "strong delusion" of 2 Thessalonians 2:11.

IT WAS THERE ALL THE TIME

Maybe all her pull toward China and Israel were not so supernatural and mysterious as she would have us believe. Her uncle (William Ward), her grandfather and parents were great travelers. She described them as having "'faraway places' syndrome."⁷⁰ Her mother and father had supported missionaries in China and Heflin's baby book had photos of Chinese pastors in it. Her grandfather had made a trip to Israel the year she was born and "had sent back post-cards."⁷¹ Heflin had been raised with travel as a family value and a family

pursuit. As well, the church she grew up in stressed missions and was constantly buzzing with incoming missionaries.⁷² Travel was the way she attained her identity and approval. And without a husband, she was free to travel even more.

On the last page of her autobiography, she rhapsodizes herself into fantasyland:

"We are called for this day and this hour. Born for it. Destined for it. It is a time greater than the Day of Pentecost. Greater than the period of the first-century church. The end time. The time of the culmination of all things. The day of fulfillment. The day that the Apostles longed to see. The day that we are not only seeing, but the day we are experiencing. ... Angelic hosts assist us. Signs, wonders, healings and miracles confirm us. All that has happened through the centuries has been geared for this hour."⁷³

And then she died!

Endnotes:

1. "Testimonies of Signs and Wonders at Campmeeting," available at: <http://www.revivalglory.org/campfest.htm>
2. E-mail correspondence from missionary Wayne King to author, dated 11/2/2000.
3. *The Christian News*, Sept. 25, 2000, pg. 10.
4. Renee DeLoria, "Ruth Ward Heflin, Revivalist and Prayer Minister, Dies of Cancer at 60," *Charisma*, November 2000, pg. 24.
5. Ruth Ward Heflin, *Harvest Glory*. Hagerstown, Md.: McDougal Publishing, pg. 241.
6. *Ibid.*
7. Carrie Johnson, "Wallace Heflin Dies," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, Dec. 29, 1996, pg. B-3.
8. Ed Briggs, "Campground and Church Center of Heflin Ministry," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, March 7, 1987, pg. A-13.
9. Phone conversation with Jay Pace and the author, Oct. 31, 2000.
10. Benny Hinn, *This Is Your Day*, March 29, 2000, tape on file.
11. *Harvest Glory*, op. cit., pg. 370.
12. *Ibid.*, pp. 370-371.
13. *Ibid.*, pg. 15.
14. *Ibid.*, pp. 15-16.
15. *Ibid.*, pg. 20.
16. *Ibid.*, pg. 29.
17. *Ibid.*, pp. 37-38.
18. *Ibid.*, pg. 41.

19. *Ibid.*, pg. 42.
20. Kurt E. Koch, *The Devil's Alphabet*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Kregal Publications, 1971, pp. 33-34.
21. *Glory Harvest*, op. cit., pg. 275.
22. *Ibid.*, pp. 78-79.
23. Jay E. Adams, *Counsel from Psalm 119*. Woodruff, S.C.: Timeless Texts, 1998, pg. 3, bold in original.
24. *Glory Harvest*, op. cit., pg. 17.
25. *Ibid.*, pp. 267-269.
26. See further, Peter Brierley and Heather Wraight, *Atlas of World Christianity*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1998, pg. 98.
27. *Glory Harvest*, op. cit., pg. 296, emphasis added.
28. *Ibid.*, pg. 312.
29. *Ibid.*, pg. 286.
30. *Ibid.*, pg. 322.
31. *Ibid.*, pp. 323-324.
32. *Ibid.*, pg. 323.
33. *Ibid.*, pg. 172.
34. *Ibid.*, pg. 175.
35. *Ibid.*, pg. 325.
36. *Ibid.*, pg. 104.
37. *Ibid.*, pg. 163.
38. *Ibid.*, pg. 171.
39. *Ibid.*, pg. 176.
40. *Ibid.*, pg. 374.
41. *Ibid.*, pg. 160.
42. *Ibid.*, pp. 229-230.
43. *Ibid.*, pg. 320.
44. *Ibid.*, pg. 276.
45. *Atlas of World Christianity*, op. cit., pg. 98.
46. *Glory Harvest*, op. cit., pg. 124.
47. *Ibid.*, pp. 237-238.
48. *Ibid.*, pg. 337.
49. *Ibid.*, pg. 388.
50. *Ibid.*, pg. 391.
51. Phone conversation with the Rev. Neil Cohen and the author, Nov. 2, 2000.
52. *Glory Harvest*, op. cit., pg. 339.
53. *Ibid.*, pp. 338-340.
54. See further, *Operation World*. Seattle: Youth With A Mission, 1993, pg. 502.
55. *Glory Harvest*, op. cit., pg. 351.
56. *Ibid.*, pp. 384-385.
57. *Ibid.*, pg. 197.
58. Bruce Larson, *The Commentator's Commentary, Luke*. Waco, Texas: Word Books Publisher, 1983, pp. 56-57.
59. *Glory Harvest*, op. cit., pp. 386-387.
60. *Ibid.*, pg. 373.
61. *Ibid.*, pg. 398.
62. *Ibid.*, pg. 199.
63. *Ibid.*, pg. 394.
64. *Ibid.*, pg. 392.
65. *Ibid.*, pg. 317.
66. *Ibid.*, pg. 125.
67. *Ibid.*, pg. 126.
68. *Ibid.*
69. *Ibid.*, pg. 328.
70. *Ibid.*, pg. 402.
71. *Ibid.*
72. *Ibid.*, pg. 401.
73. *Ibid.*, pg. 406.

while other parts carry on the deception and give new versions of old stories.

Hinn says that as a young child he underwent a “time of intense religious instruction” by Catholic nuns who “had a great spiritual influence” on him. His learning included being able to pray “the Nicene Creed.”⁴ Yet, the influence of the Nicene Creed is not apparent in Hinn’s description of the Trinity: “If I can shock you, and maybe I should. There are nine of them.”⁵

Whatever differences evangelical and fundamentalist Christians have with Roman Catholics, they all share a belief in three persons in the Godhead, not nine. Finis Dake’s annotated reference Bible, not any Catholic nuns or Greek Orthodox teaching, is the source of this particular idea.

Hinn also has employed other unorthodox influences. At the same time Dake’s teachings were influencing his theology, Hinn advanced the heretical teachings of the Word Faith movement when he taught “He who is the nature of God became the nature of Satan when He became sin”⁶ and “Jesus Christ knew the only way He would stop Satan is by becoming one in nature with him. He [Jesus] did not take my sin, He became my sin.”⁷

ALTERED STATES OF UNCONSCIOUSNESS

Hinn now admits that some boyhood tales in *Good Morning, Holy Spirit* were not recalled correctly. In the early book, he told of a “dream” his mother had in which she had “six beautiful roses.”⁸ In this dream, Jesus appeared and asked for one of the roses. In the version of the dream Hinn told to his Orlando church in 1987, he said, “There were eight roses in her hand and Jesus came and said, ‘One of them belongs to me.’”⁹

In the new telling of the purported vision, Hinn explains that his mother recently “explained it was about lilies,”¹⁰ not roses. Despite the change

in number and flower species, Hinn’s interpretation of the dream remains consistent — and herein lies the question as to its divine source and precise interpretation. Hinn now explains the dream of “six beautiful lilies” in his mother’s hand as:

“When she awakened, Clemence [his mother] asked herself, What does this dream mean? What can it be? Eventually, our family was to have six boys and two girls, yet my mother never forgot her bargain with God. ‘Benny,’ she said, ‘you were the lily I presented to Jesus.’”¹¹

Hinn suggests the single flower requested by Jesus in the dream symbolizes his call and life as a minister. The problem with Hinn’s (or his mother’s) interpretation lies in the fact that Benny is not the only member of his family to have become a minister. Four other brothers — Willie, Henry, Sammy and Michael — are pastors and evangelists. Why then did Jesus only ask for one flower when five of Clemence Hinn’s sons would eventually devote themselves to full-time ministry work? Perhaps Hinn’s Jesus is a casualty of open theism or process theology — not knowing what the future would hold. Some may say that the number and type of flowers, and the dream’s interpretation type is a minor issue. Perhaps, but it still does beg the question: How could one misconstrue a vision from God?

Then, too, one can ask: How many other tales and claimed revelations were misremembered, embellished or complete fiction? Hinn’s more bizarre stories often have no witnesses or support whatsoever. And when there are claims of videotape evidence, none actually exists.

A MAYOR NO MORE

Sometime following the 1982 death of his father, Hinn began to say that during his childhood his father, Costandi, was the “mayor” of Jaffa, Israel.¹² PFO knew that neither before nor after 1952 (the year Benny was born) was there a mayor of Jaffa named Hinn. Israeli historian Dan

Kurzman tells us that at the time of the 1948 War in Israel, “Jaffa was left virtually leaderless.”¹³ From that point on, Kurzman states, “Jaffa ... became a Jewish suburb”¹⁴ with Jewish mayors. Costandi Hinn was an Arab, which alone precluded him from such an office.

When Hinn’s untruth was exposed by PFO, he scrambled for excuses and alibis. For a while he retreated to the claim that his father was only the “unofficial mayor” of Jaffa. Then he blamed his book’s publisher and said he tried to correct it prior to publication. Hinn apparently has now even abandoned this latter claim since it too has been disproven. He has never admitted that the claim was an outright lie.

In his new autobiography, Hinn now says his father “can best be described as a liaison between the community and the Israeli government.”¹⁵ Throughout the book, he then ascribes to his father a host of various occupations and responsibilities: postal service employee,¹⁶ Red Cross worker,¹⁷ fruit inspector at the Jaffa port,¹⁸ president of the Greek Orthodox Club,¹⁹ movie projectionist for the club²⁰ and, following the family’s 1968 move to Canada, insurance salesman,²¹ all of which are a far cry from the political position once claimed for him.

Yet, Hinn maintains the pretense that his father held a “unique position in the community” and persists in describing him “as a liaison between the community and Israeli government.”²² He also maintains he “was deeply touched that my father had earned such respect and trust from the Israeli government,”²³ which is still an undocumented claim.

After Israel re-established itself a nation in 1948, the Arabs of Jaffa (as well as Arabs in other parts of the country) were hated, suspected and oppressed security risk to the Israelis. Any history of Palestine in the 1930s will establish that the Arab riots in Jaffa, Hebron and other places, leading to the Arab massacre of Jews, are

remembered to this day. In Jaffa during the time of Hinn's youth Arabs had to get security clearance to perform even the most menial jobs because of continuing Israeli animosity toward them.

Two other major factors, which Hinn has forgotten or is unaware, should be mentioned as they militate against any Israeli acceptance of Arabs being in any way acceptable to Jews during the 1940s and 1950s. First, the Arabs of Israel aggravated Jewish hatred and fear by overtly backing Nazi Germany during World War II.²⁴ This never has been forgotten.

Second, the Arab-Jewish fighting, bombing and killing, so fierce in the 1930s and 1940s, finally came to a head with Israel's 1948 War of Independence. The hatred continues today. In spite of the repeated attempts by the leadership for peace throughout the past five decades, the hostility amidst these people can and has erupted at any instant — and without warning. No one familiar with Israel's political climate would believe for a moment that Hinn's father would have been treated with "respect and trust" or as an equal by the Israelis.

Hinn actually — perhaps unknowingly — provides for readers insight into the socio-economic status of his father and family when he writes: "My father didn't own an automobile the entire time we lived in Israel — he either walked to work or took public transportation."²⁵ A mayor or even a "government liaison" would be expected to have a car and driver (as do politicians in Israel today) and not be left to walk or take a bus to work.

Moreover, Hinn says, "We were not a wealthy family."²⁶ Hinn's family left Israel for Canada virtually penniless and was dependent upon the sponsorship and goodwill of agencies recommended by the Greek Orthodox Church and a neighboring family.²⁷ There was no status or good life but rather, as described by Hinn himself, just the opposite. This is not to say that poverty is bad but that one

should tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

BENNY GIBRAN?

Hinn in some ways resembles the late Kahlil Gibran. Gibran was a charmer who used others for material gain. Both Gibran and Hinn are best-selling authors (with good editors) who have gained a large following. Gibran composed a tall tale of being a child of "fortune" growing up in a very well-to-do home of culture and love. Many still hold onto Gibran's myth. However, in fact, Gibran was raised in "a harsh life of poverty, with a cruel overbearing father, a drunkard who bullied his family."²⁸

rooms on the ground floor of a building owned by the Greek Orthodox Church.²⁹ This is a far cry from his previous description that, "We lived comfortably. Dad's position in government made it possible for us to have a home in the suburbs. It was a wonderful home."³⁰ Strangely though, Hinn qualifies his admission by interjecting, "there was ample room."³¹ Once again, we are confronted with Hinn's ongoing childhood delusions since the reality of nine people living in three rooms would hardly be "ample room." One can only imagine the conditions with seven children living in one bedroom.



The Greek Orthodox Club in Jaffa, Israel where the Hinn family lived in the basement level.

Gibran, like Hinn, was born in the Middle East in an Arabic culture. Gibran was Lebanese, Hinn is Palestinian. Exaggeration of pedigree is a way of life all over that region. While a Bible believer would say one should not lie about his parentage, the Middle Easterner is conditioned in a tradition (of fabricating) that is looked upon as honorable. Even conversion to Christianity does not change that for some. For believers, words cannot be spoken just to appease others but must correspond to reality.

THIS OLD HOUSE

Hinn now also admits that his nine-member family lived in three

Moreover, the location was less than "wonderful" in a minority Arab area of a run-down and neglected section of the city. PFO visited the building that housed the Hinn basement home in Jaffa. The visit confirmed the idea that conditions were crowded. Jaffa neighbors interviewed by PFO talked of poverty there. The only attractive thing about the neighborhood is that at the end of the street one has a magnificent view of the Mediterranean Sea. And even though the house is within view of the Mediterranean, the harsh realities of life in Jaffa in that era cannot be wished away. The oppression of the Arab minority is well documented

and easily proven.

When Hinn's claims went unchecked, he was able to refer to the house on Ibn Rashad street as "a home in the suburbs. It was a wonderful home." The truth that Hinn has been forced to confess is that his family only occupied the ground floor of the building which housed the Greek Orthodox Club. He further admits, "By the time I was a teen, our bedroom in Jaffa began to resemble a hospital ward."³²

TRUTH IS BETTER THAN FICTION

In the past, PFO has been threatened by Hinn's attorneys over its exposés of his exaggerated and false statements. Yet now Hinn is conforming at least parts of his story to that which in the past his lawyers said had been misrepresented.

Rather than try to keep the pretense going, Hinn perhaps could have gotten far more traction with the truth: "Poor Arab boy and high school dropout makes good." Somehow he just seems driven to fabricate his pedigree and spiritual experiences. Perhaps all his lies and exaggerations are his way of responding to a childhood of humiliation.³³ In reality, his new autobiography is really just a revision and rewrite of his testimony tapes and a previous best-seller, *Good Morning, Holy Spirit*.

Hinn continues to assert what he labels "a horrible stuttering problem"³⁴ as a young child up until the time he was called into ministry. This, too, has been a claim that PFO has challenged. Hinn's response has been to misrepresent PFO's assertions. Hinn says PFO claims he never stuttered. PFO never denied that Hinn stuttered; it only questioned the severity of his stuttering.

While still trying to claim he was a reclusive, shy, backward stutterer as a child, Hinn now says that as a boy he put on shows, productions and song-and-dance routines.³⁵ He tells how he loved to strut among his mother's family and rattle off memorized parts

from TV shows. He writes:

"At their house I became an extrovert. 'When are you going to put on the show?' my little cousins begged. They were talking about a skit, or a 'production' I organized every year during our visit. During those years there was a popular television comedy program in the region titled, *Doctor, Doctor, Follow Me!* We did our own version of the show — complete with song-and-dance routines. You should have seen us — me, Willie, Chris and our cousins entertaining a room full of cheering, exuberant relatives."³⁶

At his relative's home, gone is the fear and reclusive behavior that he claimed dominated his youth. This, too, is the way teenage friends remember him in Canada. A showman — sometimes rattling off memorized material — not the fearful, tongue-tied, shy, inhibited, reclusive, backward child Hinn repeatedly claims to have been.

Hinn goes on to say, "When I was seventeen or eighteen, I believed that some day I would go into politics, or perhaps find employment in the travel industry."³⁷ Both occupations are quite ill-suited for a young man allegedly crippled with a shattered self-image and humiliation.

Later in the book, he appears to rationalize by claiming a temporary nature to his affliction: "There had always been times when I could speak without a noticeable problem for a short period before something set the stuttering off again."³⁸ Nevertheless, his admissions in the book reveal a new Hinn — a Hinn which PFO previously discovered in personal interviews with Hinn's boyhood acquaintances. It is the same Hinn that as a young man told a Toronto newspaper, "I'm an artist. I've always been an artist."³⁹

HABITUAL INCONSISTENCIES

As Hinn assembles his narratives, he has a propensity to misstate or

confuse facts stated in previous accounts of the same events. His problem arises from his inability to recall his earlier versions of a story. *He Touched Me* offers more examples.

For example, Hinn has repeatedly flip-flopped on the issue of his secondary (high) school education. He had claimed to have been a senior in 1972 at Georges Vanier Secondary School in Toronto.⁴⁰ When it was revealed that school records showed him to be an undergraduate in 1972 and a dropout before graduation, Hinn replied: "I never said I was a senior, period. Anywhere. It's not in my book. All I mention in my book is that I got saved in high school in February of 1972."⁴¹ Now Hinn has returned himself to his original standing. In *He Touched Me*, he writes: "During my senior year at Georges Vanier..."⁴²

The current offering of Hinn's conversion experience likewise disagrees with earlier versions. While Hinn's description of the event in *He Touched Me* parallels his former account in *Good Morning, Holy Spirit*, it still contains conspicuous differences from an early account. Hinn writes in his *He Touched Me*:

"The next morning I awoke early and rushed off to school before class began. I needed to study in the library. I was seated at a large table, concentrating on my work, when a small group of students approached me. Immediately, I knew they were the same ones who had been giving me all this 'Jesus talk.' 'Would you like to join us in our morning prayer meeting?' one of them asked. They pointed to a room that was just off the library. I thought, *Well, perhaps I'll get them off my back if I agree. After all, one little prayer meeting isn't going to hurt me.*"⁴³

Previously Hinn reported the event this way:

"I go into school, open my locker, get my books, a girl shows up called, Michelle. ... She

looked a little strange, a little like, you know, flying, spacey. Michelle said, with this big smile, she said, 'Would you come to a prayer meeting?' I said, 'Well, Michelle, I—I, you know it's only ten minutes.' It was like quarter to eight, and class begins at eight. And you know, here I'm stuttering back trying to tell her I can't. She said, you know, she said, 'It would really be nice if you'll come.' Took me by the hand and pulled me to the prayer meeting."⁴⁴

Hinn's former narrative was a single-student encounter at a school locker. More recently the story has evolved to a multi-student confrontation in the school library. Regardless of which report Hinn says is true, the more serious concern is lack of a clear Gospel presentation at Hinn's "prayer meeting" conversion. Each version is grossly inadequate when it comes to this vital issue. Hinn currently describes the episode:

"Suddenly, every member of the group raised their hands toward heaven and began to pray in languages I'd never heard before. My eyes became the size of saucers. These were students I had known in my classes — now talking to God with sounds I did not understand. ... My mind flashed back to Bob in the kiosk, saying, 'You've got to meet Jesus. You've got to meet Him!' Meet Him? I thought I already knew Him. ... In the middle of the room, I closed my eyes and spoke four words that changed my life forever. Out loud I said, 'Lord Jesus, come back.' I had no idea why those were the only words that came out of my mouth. Again, I said, 'Lord Jesus, come back.' ... Then I said to the Lord, 'Come into my heart.' And what a glorious moment that was! His power was cleansing me from the inside out. I felt absolutely clean and pure. Suddenly, in a moment of time, I saw Jesus. There He was. Jesus, the Son of God."⁴⁵

As his classmates babbled in tongues, Hinn suggests a genuine conversion experience. Absent, however, from the event is any distinct presentation and understanding of man's sinfulness and God's offer of forgiveness through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, our need for repentance and faith, and the cost of our faith and obedience. Hinn's chronicle is nothing but a mystical, easy-believe conversion. But, perhaps, this like other facets of his life profile may well change and evolve in the coming years and in its retelling.

DIVORCING KATHRYN

In his latest book, Hinn appears to be distancing himself from Kathryn Kuhlman, the woman whom he has said meant so much to his life and ministry. Hinn writes:

"Many times, I've been asked, 'Benny, tell me about Miss Kuhlman. What was she like?' They are surprised when I say, 'Oh, I never had the opportunity to meet Kathryn personally.' Looking back on my journey to Pittsburgh, I believe what happened that day was in God's providence. As I told members of my staff recently, had I met Kathryn it is possible that I would have forever believed she gave the anointing to me, or that God may have used her in some way to transfer it to me."⁴⁶

This, now, is from the man who in the past has visited the burial site of Kuhlman where he claims her anointing still lingers — even to the place where people are actually healed from visiting the grave.⁴⁷ Hinn also says Kuhlman appears to him in dreams and visions. In one report, she supposedly revealed to him a revelation of a heightened level of the miraculous — "greater things for the glory of God" — coming to his ministry.⁴⁸

If Hinn is truly beginning to downplay the significance of Kuhlman in his ministry, one can only wonder if Oral Roberts will be next. A three-hour video, *Miracles: Yesterday, Today*

& *Forever*, produced in 1994 by Hinn's organization, emphasizes the influence of Roberts' life and healing ministry on Hinn and suggests that Roberts has passed his mantle to Hinn.

OTHER WHITEWASH

Hinn also uses his new biography to neutralize damaging reports and episodes during recent years. An illustration of this is in his description of the death of longtime aide David Delgado. Hinn says "Dave was converted from a life of drug addiction and became a personal assistant to me."⁴⁹ He then writes:

"Later in his life, after becoming deathly ill with hepatitis, he died prematurely. His death was a mystery to his family, our staff, and myself. Although reports of a drug relapse came to our attention following his death, knowing David as I did — and how deeply he loved God — I can only leave the circumstance of his passing in the hands of the Lord."⁵⁰

For over a year, knowledge of Delgado's death and another heroin-related death of a ministry staff member were concealed by law-enforcement and Hinn's church officials. While Hinn asserts Delgado's death "a mystery," Delgado's widow, Mary, revealed that her husband knew he was dying from cirrhosis of the liver, which can be a side effect of heroin abuse.

More alarming is the fact that according to the Orange County (Fla.) sheriff's records, at the time of his death, Delgado was under suspicion for the heroin-related death of ministry staff member Sydney Williams. Williams died in November 1997 at his Florida home after injecting himself with a large dose of heroin. Before his own death, Delgado was being investigated in Williams' death because Williams appeared to have been drugged following a visit to Delgado's home.

Hinn's shaded narration of Delgado's death is also inconsistent

with a lofty claim of deliverance from drug addiction. During a miracle crusade, Hinn drew attention to Delgado and told followers that Delgado was one of his “right-hand men” and announced:

“This guy at one time was on drugs. ... He was a — he used to sell drugs. His father is a preacher. He rebelled against God. He used to attend Kathryn Kuhlman services in New York City. She used to come and minister to Teen Challenge when he was there with Dave Wilkerson. And Kathryn one day said there’s somebody that God wants to set free from drugs. And David said, ‘Huh uh, I’m not going.’ But a few years ago, standing in our church he said, ‘Lord, I love drugs. Unless you take that thing out of me, I’m going to die.’ And God took the desire right out of him.”⁵¹

Another whitewash is his description of his October 1998 service at “The Pond” in Anaheim, Calif. Hinn described this event at the service:

“That night I felt led to ask my children to come to the platform — I was going to introduce them to the audience. However, God had something else in mind. The moment they approached me in the center of the stage, the anointing became so strong that when I turned toward them, all four of my children fell to the floor. There were Jessica, Natasha, Joshua, and Eleasha, slain in the Spirit by the power of God. It was a beautiful sight, and I began to weep before the Lord.”⁵²

Here, Hinn demonstrates just how far from reality he can take his readers. A videotape of that evening’s service shows Hinn to be a man out of control. His stage mannerisms and voice inflections would strike mortal fear into most individuals. It was not a simple matter of wanting to bring his children on stage for an introduction. “Get my children up here! ... Get my wife up here!” he wildly commanded in a deep voice. As his family

was ushered onto the stage, bodies were already strewn across the platform. Once onstage, his wife, Suzanne, and daughters and son were also subjected to the same intense and forceful handling. “Fire, I said! Fire, I said! Fire, I said!” he screamed as he brought his family under the subjection of his “Fire” anointing.⁵³

It is quite suspicious to see Hinn’s wife Suzanne, falling in a controlled manner on cue and adjusting her jacket as she lays on the stage.

In *He Touched Me*, he evaluates the event by claiming, “God did an amazing work that night. When they returned to Orlando their Christian witness took on a boldness we had never seen — and the effects of that meeting are still evident.”⁵⁴ The last part of Hinn’s comment may well be one of the more honest statements he has ever made. The harsh and abusive conduct by Hinn toward his family — which is a clear reality on the crusade’s video highlights — could very well have left “effects of the meeting [which] are still evident.”

Over the years, and as his ministry has grown to a multi-million dollar enterprise and thus come under closer scrutiny, Hinn has nuanced and shaded his legacy of false doctrine, false prophecies, lies and exaggerations. *He Touched Me* is really just another volume to sell and help subsidize his grand empire. In reality, Hinn’s professed calling as a minister continues to be contrary to the Word of God:


“Since an overseer is entrusted with God’s work, he must be blameless — not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. Rather he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it” (Titus 1:7-9).

Endnotes:

1. Benny Hinn, *He Touched Me*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999, pg. 80.
2. Thomas Upham, *Elements of Mental Philosophy*, cited by Ann Taves in *Fits, Trances & Visions*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999, pg. 122.
3. A classic example of this is an investigative report by WDFW - Fox 4 Television in Dallas-Fort Worth. Hinn’s spokesperson and executive producer of his television programs, Jeff Pitman, was left to grope for responses to Hinn’s erroneous claims of raising the dead and a “miracle invasion” at a Canadian hospital. This three-part report aired November 18, 1999 and is featured on the video, *The Many Faces of Benny Hinn*.
4. *He Touched Me*, op. cit., pg. 26.
5. Benny Hinn sermon, Orlando Christian Center broadcast on Trinity Broadcasting Network, Oct. 13, 1990. Tape on file.
6. Benny Hinn sermon, Orlando Christian Center broadcast on Trinity Broadcasting Network, Dec. 9, 1990.
7. *Ibid.*
8. Benny Hinn, *Good Morning, Holy Spirit*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1990, pg. 17.
9. Benny Hinn Testimony, Orlando Christian Center, Orlando, Fla., July 19, 1987. Tape on file.
10. *He Touched Me*, op. cit., pg. 11.
11. *Ibid.*
12. Hinn twice makes this claim on his 1987 testimony tape and then again on another testimonial recording from Orlando Christian Center with no date, but with tape number 315 and a copyright of 1990 on the cassette sleeve. It is also found in *Good Morning, Holy Spirit* (pg. 18) and in his second book published by Thomas Nelson, *The Anointing* (pg. 21).
13. Dan Kurzman, *Genesis 1948*. New York: DaCapo Press, 1992, pg. 182.
14. *Ibid.*, pg. 188.
15. *He Touched Me*, op. cit., pg. 4.
16. *Ibid.*, pg. 8.
17. *Ibid.*, pg. 9.
18. *Ibid.*
19. *Ibid.*, pg. 14.
20. *Ibid.*, pg. 18.
21. *Ibid.*, pg. 45.
22. *Ibid.*, pg. 4; see also pg. 15.
23. *Ibid.*, pg. 40.
24. See Said Aburish, *Children of Bethany*. Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988, pp. 85 and 93, and Phillip Mattar, *The Mufti of Jerusalem*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1988, pp. 99-107.
25. *He Touched Me*, op. cit., pg. 18.
26. *Ibid.*, pg. 42.
27. *Ibid.*
28. See further, Fouad Ajami, *The Dream Palace of the Arabs*. New York: Vintage Books, 1998, pp. 74-75.
29. *He Touched Me*, op. cit., pg. 13.

30. *Good Morning, Holy Spirit*, op. cit., pg. 20.
 31. *He Touched Me*, op. cit., pg. 13.
 32. *Ibid.*, pg. 14.
 33. *Ibid.*, pp. 19-20.
 34. *Ibid.*, pg. 19.
 35. *Ibid.*, pp. 36-37.
 36. *Ibid.*
 37. *Ibid.*, pg. 87.
 38. *Ibid.*, pg. 105.
 39. *Toronto Globe and Mail's Fanfare* magazine, Feb. 15, 1978, pg. 11.
 40. See *Good Morning, Holy Spirit*, op. cit.,

pg. 28 and *Toronto Globe and Mail*, Dec. 25, 1976.
 41. *Christianity Today*, Oct. 5, 1992, pg. 54.
 42. *He Touched Me*, op. cit., pg. 48.
 43. *Ibid.*, pg. 49, italics in original.
 44. Benny Hinn Testimony, July 19, 1987, op. cit.
 45. *He Touched Me*, op. cit., pp. 50-51.
 46. *Ibid.*, pg. 120.
 47. Benny Hinn sermon, *Double Portion Anointing*, Part #3, Orlando Christian Center, Orlando, Fla., April 7, 1991. From the series, *Holy Ghost Invasion*. TV#309, tape

on file.
 48. Benny Hinn, *This Is Your Day*, June 11, 1997, tape on file.
 49. *He Touched Me*, op. cit., pg. 169.
 50. *Ibid.*
 51. Benny Hinn Miracle Crusade highlights, Trinity Broadcasting Network, date unknown, tape on file, emphasis added.
 52. *He Touched Me*, op. cit., pg. 196.
 53. Benny Hinn, *This Is Your Day*, Nov. 12, 1998, tape on file.
 54. *He Touched Me*, op. cit., pg. 196. 

GETTING OUT

(continued from page 1)

"Grief may be called a *life-shaking sorrow over loss*. Grief tears life to shreds; it shakes one from top to bottom. It pulls him loose; he comes apart at the seams. Grief is truly nothing less than a life-shattering loss."¹

That life-shattering sorrow called grief, we must not forget, has the power to enslave if not handled properly.

How about that person who gives his life to a cult? That individual gives himself or herself to an illusion, a delusion, perhaps for years. They stake their eternity on the group and its teachings. However, when they attempt to break free, there can be a painful and even excruciating awareness of major losses. Major grief may set in and that person has to begin the long hard process of dealing with that grief. The old spiritual says: "It's not an easy road." At times we may feel that is an understatement.

The first thing that needs to be established is:

THE FACT OF GRIEF IN EXITING

What a strange phenomenon in Numbers 11 that when the going got rough (in the wilderness) the people of God cried out to go back into the bondage of Egypt. It was a case of selective memory and having to feel good. Sometimes the comfort of the known feels better than the fear of the unknown, even if that known has many downsides. It takes courage and

grace to traverse a wilderness. Risks of faith are difficult and scary. Trust and obedience often have to work in the absence of feelings or even against feelings.

Think about what has been lost in the years of cult involvement and investment. In some cases:

- The loss of years of time.
- The loss of family and friends.
- The loss of large amounts of money.

Loss, loss, loss. In other cases:

- The loss of morality.
- The loss of children.
- The loss of a spouse.

More loss. And in other cases:

- An entire family lost with the agony of "we helped mislead them" and feeling totally ashamed for being so stupid or so ignorant.

And finally, in extreme cases:

- The loss of an identity surrendered to the organization.
- The loss of an entire lifetime.
- The loss of a social life and social skills.
- The loss of an education and now no job skills.
- The loss of a desire to ever trust again.
- The loss of all hope.

Written in large letters over the exiting cult member is the word LOSS. A good book title would be: *The Scarlet L*.

So it is not only doctrinal issues that we *must* deal with but heart, soul and

emotions that are delicate and maybe even broken. Thank God we have a Savior who "heals the broken-hearted" (Luke 4:18). The doctrinal issues must be woven into the practical issues of life and living. Position in Christ for instance gives great encouragement and morale to a floundering ex-cultist.

If the exiting cult member is genuinely saved, he or she has God's grace, God's Spirit and God's promises. On a human level he needs skillful, caring, biblical, grief helpers. He needs real support to learn to apply the means of grace.

If he is saved, it is not that he does not have joy and gratitude for salvation and for the Savior but that he is a complex being who experiences conflicts, emotions and a range of ups and downs from the grief process triggered by the losses. We can see in the Psalms the wide range of emotions and emotional turmoil triggered by the stresses of life. We must be keenly aware and sensitive to the *fact of grief in exiting*.

Second, we must think about:

THE FACES OF GRIEF

What does grief look like? What are we dealing with? What do we experience when loss triggers grief? What kind of terrain does grief offer us? If we know the many faces of grief, it will aid us in processing our own grief and in helping others process theirs.

The book of Lamentations is only five chapters. Yet, it is a book that deals with acute, devastating and

catastrophic loss. Jeremiah sits in the rubble of his beloved but destroyed city — Jerusalem. He has lost his city, many friends, his occupation, his house of worship, probably many relatives. The Babylonians have taken everything away and left the unemployed prophet sitting in ashes. In the last two years of the siege of Jerusalem by Babylon, the residents of the city had been reduced to a diet of weeds and grass. The excavations in Area G of Jerusalem revealed that the instances of pin worms and tape worms had increased tenfold during the siege years. The horrific reverberations are hard for us to grasp. And that was only the beginning.

The excruciating grief drips off of every chapter of Lamentations. This book, along with Job, becomes the model and textbook for grief counseling. I have never come across anyone to date who has expounded this book for that purpose, so here is a good project awaiting someone.

In Lamentations his loss is coupled with loneliness, and compared to widowhood and slavery (1:1). Crying, tears, absence of comfort, affliction, unrest, dire straits, are the words used in chapters 1-3. In 1:12, Jeremiah says it feels as though God has maliciously inflicted this sorrow on him. All perspective is gone. The loss of comfort is a recurring theme (1:2, 9, 17, 21).

So there are definite, traceable emotions and experiences that we cycle through, again and again, as we process grief. We can find these not only in Lamentations and Job but in parts of Psalms and other Scripture. For the sake of clarity I will try to catalog and describe the major components of the face of grief. In isolating each, we must remember that it is not as clear cut and simplistic as a list but that the elements swirl and overlap often.²

1. *Shock and emotional upheaval.* Hearing of the death of His friend Lazarus, John 11:35 tells us: "Jesus wept." There are tears of grief found in Scripture in Genesis 23:2, 2 Samuel 18:33 and Acts 8:2. Paul did not say it was wrong to sorrow but rather that

we sorrow in hope (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). The world has a hopeless sorrow that leads them to despair. So tears may come unsought and unexpected. As the tears fall, we can affirm that God cares and understands.

Though tears are mentioned 35 times in the Bible, the Psalmist reminds us that: "Those who sow in tears shall reap in joy" (Psalm 126:5).

2. *Pangs of guilt.* There can be the tendency in difficult times to idolize the cult and to selectively remember some of the comforts experienced in the group. This can exaggerate the bad points of the one grieving, filling them with a sense of guilt. Since cults often operate by guilt manipulation, it is easy for one exiting to take on even more guilt as old wounds and old memories surface.

When the guilt strikes, there is the tendency to agonize and wonder, "Am I the one who is wrong? If I am right in this why do I feel so miserable? Look how happy they all seem." The ex-cultist had always been willing to take the blame while in the cult, so why not now?

Imagine if health problems begin after exiting the cult — problems that would have occurred anyway. The person begins to second-guess himself and it is easy for him to believe that what is occurring is punishment or chastisement from God.

3. *Disorienting fear.* Sleep loss may accelerate this. If a person is not thinking clearly, panic can set in. Extended sleep deprivation can cause hallucinations, voices and "visions." Cultists are taught to be afraid of anyone and anything outside the cult. Therefore, who can be trusted?

Perhaps as the person is misunderstood by the untaught, it only leads to more fear. Perhaps there are the old "tapes" playing in the head of the ex-cultist and he is overwhelmed by fear of retaliation by the leader or leaders or even God Himself. If the person has been browbeaten and constantly told: "You are wrong — you are wrong." Then no matter what they think, they are wrong. Not able to think biblically yet they may

believe and rehearse lies (Philippians 4:6-9).

4. *Crippling depression.* It may be the fear or the guilt or the confusion that triggers the depression. When a person is alone with their thoughts and for years have had a negative mindset he may easily believe, "No one cares" or "What's the use of trying" or "When will I ever level out" or "Maybe they were right after all."

With feelings of security gone and many relationships shattered, it may add to gloom and doom. Jeremiah cried out, "My soul sinks within me" (Lamentations 3:20). Given the right dynamics anyone can be prone to depression although we do not have to give into it or wallow in it. At any low time of life we must get one foot in front of the other and live to please God, not give in to feelings.

5. *Irrational anger.* The emotion (the inner feeling) of anger is not necessarily sin (Ephesians 4:26). If those emotions are vented in outbursts and verbal abuse, it is sinful (v. 29). When negative feelings rise in regard to the deception and misleading of the cult it can issue out in deep resentment, feelings of revenge and rage. This all becomes a confusing part of our hurt feelings and frustrations.

Hostility can be sinfully directed at self or others in close range and even toward God. The sinful manifestations of anger, either with exploding or burying the emotions, can cause even more guilt and complicating problems. We may feel justified in our angry responses since "Look at what they did to me" sounds like logical rationale. Prayer for one's enemies, as well as patience, must be practiced. Pouring oneself into study efforts and learning effective ways to reach others in the old system is a far more positive and biblical response.

6. *Numbing apathy.* One can give up the hostile feelings and shift into not caring. Thoughts of "No one understands what I have been through so why bother" begin to sound reasonable. The inner pain can trigger thoughts of: "I just want to be left alone." The grieving person can withdraw not wanting to relate to the

world. They may try to shelter themselves from more letdowns and disappointments. They have had drilled into them that churches are bad and they don't want the difficulty of trying to negotiate with a new people that they may not be able to trust. Aloneness feels safer — for now. If this continues too long it can be deadly and dangerous.

7. *Unchallenged bitterness.* We can nurse our wounds to such a degree that we fall into prolonged bitterness. In Mark Ammerman's novel, *The Rain from God*, the old Indian woman, Silvermoon, describes how she entertained and coddled her anger. We could substitute the word bitterness in the place of anger:

"I chewed on the meat of my anger for many seasons until only the bones remained. Then I sucked on the bones until even the taste of the meat was gone. Then I carried the bones about in a bag which rattled your name whenever I walked. Then I lay them near my bed and saw them only when I slept or when I woke. Then I arose one morning and looked upon the sad, dry bones, and I wondered at my foolishness."³

When we chew on bitterness, we are the ones poisoned. When we carry bags of bitterness we are the ones worn out. Entertaining bitterness is foolish and sinful. We are commanded in the New Testament to "put away bitterness" (Ephesians 4:31).

Bitterness may knock at the door but we do not have to invite it in. It may call us but we can refuse to respond. It may poke its head in the entrance but we do not have to entertain and feed it. It may peek in the window but we must pull the shade. Far better to shun the bait than struggle in the snare.

8. *Healthy adjustment.* This is where the person latches on to all the help he can get and accepts the loss and begins to rearrange his life. He is able now to cope with the roller-coaster ride as the curves come less often and the drops are not as steep. He is

getting on with his life. The above cycle (points 1-7) may occur from time to time but with less ferocity and the person understands what is happening and stays on course, operating by principle, priority and planning — not feeling. People in good adjustment no longer feel a need to vent hostility or bury rage but are now seeking ways to be a blessing to others.

It must be emphasized that getting to adjustment *may take months for some and years for others.* Everyone is different and we must take people where we find them, not beat them down for not getting in a groove of our imaginary timetable. Their "work" is not easy and neither is the "work" of those who minister to them. The Puritans said "grief is hard work."

The third big point is:

THE FUNDAMENTALS OF GRIEF COUNSELING

We all have seen on various Justice buildings the lady with the blindfold and the scales. As we picture the scale and think of all the weight of grief on one side, what is it that can possibly balance the scale? Grief causes our lives to plummet down out of balance and it is not as simple as saying, "Just get rid of the grief." It seems stuck to the scale. We need a balancing factor on the other side to stabilize and balance out our lives.

There is something very significant in Lamentations. It is a key for us as we process our losses and assist others in theirs. Lamentations 1:2,9,16,17,21 all have as their common theme the word comfort. Jeremiah says that what he needs more than anything else to balance his grief is comfort. He cries out for comfort.

The biblical answer then is *comfort*. As we turn to 2 Corinthians 1:3, we find that God is called the "God of all comfort." In verse 4 Paul says God will "comfort us." The English word comfort means to fortify or strengthen. I need large heaps of comfort on the other side of the scale. The Greek word for comfort (*paraklesi*) means encouragement, consolation and the alleviation of grief, to soothe.⁴

Remember also that the precious Holy Spirit is called the "Comforter."

Life need not be totally out of balance under the burden if I can get hold of resources to strengthen and fortify me. If sorrow, loss and grief are an inevitable part of life — how can I negotiate through it all? How can I balance the scale?

The larger question however is: "How can I get the comfort and how do I minister to others?"

Realizing that so many get stuck in grief, what can I tell them to help move them on and to help them mature spiritually? What can I give them to balance the scale? We must know the resources God has given us for comfort. I would suggest at least three.

A. **Commitment to Christ.** In 2 Corinthians 1:2-3, Paul reminds us of the grace, peace and comfort that comes from the Father and Jesus Christ. To experience these things we have to have a personal union with Jesus — that is be vitally linked to Him. We must receive Christ (John 1:12) and not just some idea of Christ.

To have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ means we are eternally united to the one who is the God-man, born of a virgin, dying and then rising in a glorified body. The one in whom dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily (Colossians 2:9). To know Him in a personal way is to have life eternal.

The God of all comfort will give comfort to His children. He will give comfort for every aspect of grief. God wants to comfort us and it is in relationship to our knowing Jesus as Lord and Savior.

We are further assured by Scripture in 2 Corinthians 1:4-5 that God comforts us not just to make us comfortable but that *we might be comforters*. We are assured in these verses that whatever has happened or is happening, God will use it for our greater training. It fleshes out a bit more of Romans 8:28.

Marilyn Heavilin lost three children but she assures us:

“Friend, don’t give up. As you go through this December of your life, God is willing to walk beside you. He understands when you have hard days; He understands you are grieving because of the terrible loss you’ve suffered. Look around you and see the roses: the friend who is standing with you, the memories of your loved one, the Scripture God has given you, the kindnesses others have offered, the work God is doing in your heart. Gather those roses, and let their refreshing aroma fill your life with a confidence that Jesus hears and cares about you.”⁵

Her union with and faith in Jesus brought her through and gave her great comfort in her losses.

Ex-cultists, disillusioned by the cult, will only become cynical without Christ. They will exchange one bondage for another. John 8:36 reminds us that, “Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.”

B. Commitment to the Word of God. God’s Word is an incredible source of comfort. In Romans 15:4, we are instructed: “For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and *comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.*” The grieving Christian *must* stay in the Word. Remember John 8:32 says: “the truth shall make you free” and Romans 10:17 assures us that faith comes by the Word of God. Both comfort and faith are ministered in the pages of Scripture. Satan will do everything in his power to keep us from it.

The grieving Christian cannot live on feelings. As well, we do not live on explanations — we live on promises! Grieving, Jeremiah remembered and called to mind God’s mercies and promises and in this found hope (Lamentations 3:21-26).

Here is how it works:

You face a day where you feel weak. You feel extremely vulnerable and have no strength. Then you turn to Isaiah 40 and your eyes land on verses 29-31:

“He gives power to the weak,
And to those who have no might
He increases strength. Even the
youths shall faint and be weary,
and the young men shall utterly
fall. But those who wait on the
Lord shall renew their strength;
They shall mount up with wings
like eagles. They shall run and
not be weary. They shall walk
and not faint.”

You take heart and realize that God is bigger than your weaknesses. Inner strength returns and the comfort of God floods your mind and soul.

You lay in bed at night, alone. All of a sudden you are hit with panic and fear. You are afraid. Then your mind turns to Isaiah 41:10:

“Fear not, for I am with you. Be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you. Yes, I will help you. I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.”

You realize and know that God is bigger than all your fears and that comfort banishes the fear.

You wake up feeling dry — spiritually dry. Inside you feel parched. You take your Bible and open to Isaiah 41:17-18 and read these words:

“The poor and needy seek water, but there is none. Their tongues fail for thirst. I, the Lord, will hear them. I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them. I will open rivers in desolate heights and fountains in the midst of the valleys. I will make the wilderness a pool of water and the dry land springs of water.”

Though you know and recognize the primary interpretation and the Messianic and Kingdom overtones, there is a secondary application that ministers incredible comfort as you realize that God sees, knows and cares and is bigger than your driest experience. Hope is rekindled as the Holy Spirit restores your soul. You are reminded that you have the One called “the water of Life” living in you.

One evening there is an overwhelming sense of confusion. You have

never walked this way before. This experience is new terrain with no markers or sign post. It is a dark lonely road and you feel lost and disoriented. You don’t know what’s ahead. You have just never been this way before.

Looking for the comfort of the Scriptures, you continue in Isaiah reading up to 42:16 and you see these incredible words:

“I will bring the blind by a way they did not know; I will lead them in paths they have not known. I will make darkness light before them and crooked places straight. These things I will do for them and not forsake them.”

God knows the road and is bigger than our uncertainty.

When you feel disconnected and think you can’t go on, there is great comfort in Isaiah 43:1-2:

“Fear not, for I have redeemed you. I have called you by your name. You are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, nor shall the flame scorch you.”

Go to the Word of God for comfort. The comfort of the Scriptures is God’s provision for hurting grieving people.

C. Commitment to a Healthy, Well-Balanced Fellowship of Believers. In short, stay attached to a local church in worship, fellowship and ministry. *You will prolong grief without fellowship.*

Though this may go against everything that was drilled into the one exiting, Hebrews 10:25 commands, “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together.” To be elitist, exclusive, or elusive is to be weak and deprived of comfort.

We often think of the Apostle Paul as a super-Christian. After all he was a church planter, missionary and the recipient of direct revelation. He wrote Scripture, did miracles, and made a trip to heaven. Surely he was

self-sufficient and in no great need of others. Wrong.

In spite of Paul's gifts and greatness he was very human and very vulnerable. He, at times, found life to be fearful, hard and even excruciating.

Listen to Paul's admissions in 2 Corinthians 7:5: "For indeed when we came to Macedonia, our bodies had no rest, but we were troubled on every side. Outside were conflicts, inside were fears."

Here Paul sounds just like us. How often we've said "I feel stressed — overextended — so much going on around me that is not right — everywhere I turn things are out of sorts — it troubles me inside — it upsets me inside!"

Paul needed comfort. How would he get it? Would it be a warm fuzzy feeling sent directly from God? Would it be a booming voice from heaven? Would it be a bolt that would strike him? Would he tingle from head to toe? How did God minister comfort to Paul?

The next verse gives the answer. The answer was *fellowship*. Plain and simple — fellowship. God sent a man:

"Nevertheless, God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus" (v. 6). Comfort was ministered through fellowship.

We can be a Titus to someone and we need a Titus or two around us. Even Paul did.

Black gospel musician Thomas Dorsey lost his wife and newborn son in 1932. Ministering in revival meetings in St. Louis, he received a telegram giving him the tragic news of their sudden death.

Stunned, broken, and torn by shattering grief there was born in his grieving heart the words of the wonderful hymn, "Precious Lord, Take My Hand."

"Precious Lord, take my hand,
lead me on, let me stand — I am
tired, I am weak, I am worn;
thro' the storm, thro' the night,
lead me on to the light — Take
my hand, precious Lord, lead me
home. When my way grows
drear, Precious Lord, linger near
— when my life is almost gone.
Hear my cry, hear my call, hold
my hand lest I fall — Take my
hand, precious Lord, lead me
home."⁶

He knew Christ, he knew the Word, and he spent his life being a Titus to God's people. Many of them were a Titus to him.

May the God of all grace and the God of all and every comfort, minister that grace and comfort to you through Christ, the Word and others. May you keep yourself in the way of grace and under the means of grace. May you in turn minister that grace and comfort as a Titus to others (Romans 15:14).

Endnotes:

1. Jay E. Adams, *The Big Umbrella*. Nutley, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1972, pg. 66, italic in original.
2. Some of these elements can be found in Warren and David Wiersbe, *Comforting the Bereaved*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1985, pp. 22-23.
3. Mark Ammerman, *The Rain from God*. Camp Hill, Pa.: Horizon Books, 1997, pg. 268.
4. See further, W.E. Vine, *The Expanded Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*. Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship Publishers, 1984, pg. 199.
5. Marilyn Heavilin, *Roses in December*. Eugene, Ore.: Harvest House Publishers, 1987, pg. 148.
6. Kenneth Osbeck, *Amazing Grace*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Kregel Publishing, 1990, pg. 260.

EDITORIALS

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Jesus taking our place in hell as part of the Gospel message so clearly described by the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4.

Meyer, by virtue of her redefined gospel, has moved herself onto a more critical playing field. She, like so many heretics and cultists, says God gave her this teaching apart from the Bible. She places herself beyond the authority of Scripture when she says, "The Bible can't even find any way to explain this. Not really. That's why you've got to get it by revelation. There are no words to explain what I'm telling you. I've got to just trust God that He's putting it into your spirit like He put it into mine" (*From the Cross to the Throne*, cassette tape).

Meyer's premise leads us to conclude that she believes that an infinitely wise, intelligent and omniscient God had trouble expressing His truth in Scripture and that she thinks she can better express those truths herself.

The Bible is clear in its proclamation of the Gospel. God was not at a loss for words, nor were the inspired authors of Scripture. Scripture is all we need for life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3). Nothing more, nothing less, nothing else — it's just that simple. We do not need extrabiblical declarations stolen from heretical teachers.

Clearly, the reason Meyer appeals to "revelation knowledge" and not the Bible is because her doctrine is another Gospel. She has borne false witness against God by saying that He put this teaching into her spirit. Again, she finds herself on even more dangerous ground with such a claim. She has painted herself into a theological corner by claiming this teaching came directly from God. If it came by revelation from God and means our very salvation, as she says, it is a doctrine that must never be denied or ignored. If she ever moves to disclaim such teaching, then she has lied — to the utmost — in saying that God gave her the declaration by revelation. She is a false prophet.

When we allow ourselves to drift from God's Word alone, we open ourselves to be exposed to "destructive

heresies" from men and women who distort the truth (2 Peter 2:1). Apart from Scripture, we will all too easily believe and tolerate false and unorthodox teachings. The Church needs Bereans who "examine the Scriptures daily to see whether these things are so." We must commit ourselves to a lifelong and daily study of Scripture in order to grow in our knowledge and understanding of God. We must not allow ourselves to become weary in our passion for the Word. We should be like the Psalmist whose very being was consumed with a longing for God's Word in his life (Psalm 119:20). We must never become bored with the Scriptures so that we search for truth apart from the Bible. Regrettably, for many Christians, they're looking for truth in all the wrong places.

The Church does not need modern-day prophets, like Kenyon, Copeland or Meyer, to uncover for us principles of God's redemption for man, that have been missed down through the centuries. Jesus promised the Holy Spirit, who would "guide you into all the truth" (John 16:13). Whether knowingly or unknowingly, Meyer, with her call to "spirit revelation," is supplanting the work of the Holy Spirit.

The current wave of self-proclaimed prophets and esoteric teachers only pretends to enhance biblical truth. In employing their mystical repertoire, they try to usurp the authority of Scripture. Despite claims to the opposite, these men and women are really linked to liberalism. Their doctrine and practice draw one away from the Bible and dilute Scripture. PFO, as believers in Christ and under the authority of the Scripture, will strive to stand up for the truth and be witnesses for the truth when error is being propagated.

British author, Peter Jeffery wrote: "The doctrinal health of the church is of paramount importance in the New Testament. False teachers may be lovely, kind, charming men but their doctrine is poison."

Indeed, it is *not* a lot to say about nothing.

—MKG

NEWS UPDATES

(continued from page 3)

my being there, it became more of a 'you need to be there and support what we are doing or don't take a paycheck from me.'"

One employee, Anita Pillow, told the Baptist news service, "I was told that because the direction the company was moving towards, my position was being replaced by someone who attended her Remnant Fellowship church." Pillow added, "[Shamblin] thanked me for my hard work but said my services were no longer needed. Because I was not a member of the Remnant

Fellowship, I was being replaced." Pillow is a member of Park Avenue Baptist Church.

Amid the revelations of her heretical theology, Shamblin sought to play down her unorthodoxy. "A few people have been on a witch hunt in the last month," she told *CT*. "People don't care about this. They don't care about the Trinity. This is going to pass. What the women want is weight loss. They care about their bodies being a temple and their lives turned over to the Lord. That's what my ministry is about," she said.

Shamblin says that despite the disclosure of her beliefs, she continues to receive the support of "many ministers," from Baptists to Episcopalians.

In less than a decade, Shamblin's diet program went from her garage to a multimillion-dollar business. Her 1997 volume, *The Weigh Down Diet* sold more than 1 million copies and at its apex, the ministry had 30,000 locations, including thousands of evangelical churches, which hosted weekly meetings of her Weigh Down Workshops.

—MKG

ARMSTRONG FURTHER SILENCED WITH AID OF COURT

The Philadelphia Church of God, a religious group based in Edmond, Okla., which strictly adheres to the teachings of Herbert W. Armstrong, had its efforts to publish and distribute the last written work of the late religious leader quashed by a federal appellate court in September.

A year before his death in 1986, Armstrong, at the age of 92, completed a 315-page book, *Mystery of the Ages*. Armstrong taught "the Bible was a coded book, not to be understood until our day" and that his *Mystery of the Ages* enabled the Bible to be "clearly understood." The book's copyright was bequeathed to the Worldwide Church of God, the church founded by Armstrong in 1934. Over 9 million copies of the book were distributed free of charge by the WCG.

In the months following Armstrong's death, the Pasadena, Calif.-based WCG began a radical and protracted departure from the doctrine and practices of its late founder. This deviation led to the founding of the PCG in 1989 by two former WCG ministers in order to advocate the undistorted teachings of Armstrong.

While the WCG ceased distribution of the *Mystery of the Ages* in 1987, the PCG continued distributing existing copies of the book. In 1997, the supply was exhausted and the PCG began reproducing the book without permission of the WCG. Later that year, the WCG sued in federal court for copyright infringement. When a federal district court ruled in favor of the PCG, stating

the sect was within "fair use" protection of the copyright law, the WCG appealed to the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

On Sept. 18, a three-judge panel of appeals court reversed the lower court's decision and ruled 2-1 in favor of the mother church. Two members of the judicial panel stated that wholesale reproduction of the book by the PCG did not fall within the perimeters of fair use of a copyrighted work.

The dissenting judge, Melvin Burnetti, contended the PCG acted within the fair-use clause. "In this lawsuit, WCG appears less interested in protecting its rights to exploit MOA (*Mystery of the Ages*) than in suppressing Armstrong's ideas which now run counter to church doctrine," Burnetti said.

—MKG

POPE ATTEMPTS VATICAN EXORCISM

Vatican officials recently acknowledged the involvement of Pope John Paul II in an attempted exorcism at St. Peter's Basilica. On Sept. 6, during the pope's weekly appearance, a 19-year-old girl began "screaming insults" toward the pontiff as he moved to bless her. Vatican guards struggled to restrain the girl but, according to witnesses, she possessed "superhuman strength" and violently pushed them away.

As the Secretary-General of Vatican City, Bishop Gianni Danzi, stepped in to subdue the girl with a crucifix, she began "insulting him, uttering disconnected phrases, and speaking in unknown tongues."

Reluctant to discuss specific details of the episode, the Vatican stated that the pope spent time in prayer with the teenager. Other reports divulged that, "the Pope talked to the girl, exorcised her, and stayed with her for half an hour," but further revealed "that the Pope's intervention had only a temporary effect on the girl."

The girl is said to have been possessed since she was 12 years old. It is said that her demonic affliction was the result of a curse placed on her by someone in vengeance against her parents. She was brought to the pope's weekly audience by her parents in the hope that a blessing by the pontiff would cast out her demons.

The attempted exorcism is said to have been John Paul's third in his 22-year papacy.

In the United States added emphasis among Roman Catholics is being employed against purported demon possession. "For the first time in its 160-year history, the Archdiocese of Chicago appointed a full-time exorcist," the *Chicago Sun-Times* reported. In New York, the archdiocese claimed a total of 300 cases in the past decade. The Rev. Robert Barron, a Catholic theologian, stated, "I've heard that about 95 percent of those who present themselves for exorcisms are not really subjects," the Chicago daily reported.

—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 DISCIPLINING THOSE WHO HAVE BELIEVED.



Books in Review

CHRISTIAN FAITH 101

The Basics and Beyond

by Steven Tsoukalas

Judson Press, 107 pages, \$12.99

Most Christians can easily find a surplus of publications which describe the errors of cultic and aberrational groups. These volumes are invaluable — and even necessary — to help unsettle a mindset mired in false teaching. However, many of these books only tell what's wrong with a particular group or belief. While systematic theology works are available, most are quite detailed and academic, and beyond the grasp of new believers and those recently converted from a cult background.

Christian Faith 101 by apologist Steven Tsoukalas helps to bridge that strategic gap. Tsoukalas delivers the essentials of the Christian faith in a clear and effective manner. His simple, yet basic, approach should whet the theological appetite of any new convert, young believer, and perhaps even one fearful of the study of theology.

The book consists of four major sections. Part one examines the person and nature of the triune God. Part two explores the work of the Savior including His birth, life, death, atonement, resurrection and ascension. Part three defines man's salvation detailing the new birth, adoption, justification, sanctification, our own resurrection and eternal reward. Part four briefly surveys the Church and the importance of fellowship.

The book is enhanced with a glossary of key words and terms, which are boldfaced in the book's text itself. Each section contains questions for discussion and review making it worthy for small Bible study groups or for an addendum to a Sunday school curriculum. In addition, every section closes with a "Meditation," lending to the value of the work for personal, private study. In all, Tsoukalas has provided one of the most user-friendly volumes on theology available.

In a day and time when doctrine is *out* and endtime biblical fiction, Christian romance novels and spiritual quick fixes are *in* — Hosea 6:4 still applies. The cults and

aberrational groups proliferate because of the ignorance of believers. Tsoukalas' book practically communicates the Christian faith and is a great work in which to teach the new or unlearned Christian.

—MKG

ENCYCLOPEDIA OF CULTS AND NEW RELIGIONS

by John Ankerberg and John Weldon

Harvest House Publishers, 731 pages, \$19.95

John Ankerberg and John Weldon come up big with their *Encyclopedia of Cults and New Religions* — really big. Weighing in at over 2.5 lbs. and over 700 pages, this massive volume is one of the most exhaustive and up-to-date investigations of non-Christian sects ever published. It even delves into some world religions and occultic groups that have transformed into contemporary movements.

The book surveys over 50 easily recognized groups. While some entries are brief, several others such as the Watchtower Society, Latter-day Saints and Freemasonry are thoroughly detailed in sections of 60 pages or more.

The book's layout makes for quick information retrieval. The shorter profiles contain "Info at a Glance" and "Doctrinal Summary" sections. These segments list fundamental, historical and theological facts about the group. The larger profiles contain extended descriptions of the group's history and doctrine, critical analysis, biblical refutation of unorthodox beliefs, false prophecies, witnessing suggestions, and comparison charts.

A 66-page "Doctrinal Appendix" is really a book within the book. It presents and biblically defines all the major tenets of the Christian faith, including the Trinity, the deity of Christ, salvation, death and the afterlife, and much more.

Ankerberg and Weldon have brought together thousands of hours of research into this one volume. It may well prove to be a "one-stop" reference work to assist in the struggle against the onslaught of non-Christian cults and new religions.

—MKG

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