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The Hazardous Hermeneutics of Harold Camping The End of the Church or His End?

by G. Richard Fisher

“And the oracle of the Lord you shall mention no more. For every man’s word will be his oracle, for you have perverted the words of the Living God, the Lord of Hosts, our God” (Jeremiah 23:36).

Harold Camping is at it — again! One would have thought that his failed prediction of the return of Christ in 1994¹ would have shamed and silenced him.

Camping left himself very little wiggle room in his book titled *1994?*, when he stated:

“I will be surprised if we reach October 1, 1994. ... By God’s mercy there are a few months left. However, if this study is accurate, and I believe with all my heart that it is, there will be no extensions in time. There will be no time for second guessing. When September 6, 1994, arrives, no one else can become saved. The end has come.”²

Camping’s heart and his hermeneutics were dead wrong. He should have ended his foolishness then and



there. However, as another purveyor of false prophecy, the Watchtower Society has proved time and again,

some false prophets don’t know when to quit.

Back in 1993, after writing about Camping and stating that his premise for 1994 was unbiblical, PFO received from Camping’s followers stern warnings and predictions of dire judgment because we dared to question his hermeneutics, interpretations, and date-setting. PFO was called “judgmental” for even questioning Camping. When September 1994 came and went without incident, and Camping went on as if his false prophecies had never occurred, we heard no more from his avid devotees and were no longer promised God’s judgment. Camping slipped back, at least part way, into the woodwork.

That all changed this past September when Camping gathered his staff for a solemn meeting to announce
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SPINNING SIN

Roberts Liardon (named after Oral Roberts) catapulted himself into Pentecostal fame by releasing "God's Generals," a series of videotape biographies (featuring clips with his commentary) on the old pioneer faith healers of yesteryear. Liardon platformed the likes of William Branham, A.A. Allen, Aimee Semple McPherson, and Kathryn Kuhlman. He dished out endorsements of them and, by extension, their aberrations and heresies. This video walk in the past with Liardon's editorializing and excuse-making could more accurately be labeled hagiography, not honest biography.

Liardon also launched the Empire Christian Center in California as well as the Spirit Life Bible College. He has overseas offices in England, South Africa, and the Philippines. He has published books with the standard fare of Charismatic buzzwords like "anointing," "authority," and so forth. He certainly tells everyone how to do it.

Liardon's wildest claim is that he's been to heaven and back (*I Saw Heaven*, Harrison House, 1983). While in heaven, he claims to have a playful water fight with Jesus in the river of life. In this trite and playful bit of fantasizing, Jesus supposedly told Liardon to be different than anyone else. Recent events show how different he is. No discerning Christian believes Jesus told him that in

heaven, but Liardon's fanciful way of describing himself is interesting, if nothing else.

And now comes Roberts Liardon's latest adventure. It could be called *From Here to Homosexuality — and Back!*

The spin masters of Washington (and even Bill Clinton) have nothing on the rich, powerful, sinful Charismatic televangelists. This lot can spin sin and bounce back on a trampoline of a quick repentance with new revelations from the cesspool of their sinful experience. The premise seems to be that you have to jump into the pig pen to know it smells, or that an oncologist has to contract cancer to treat it. The subplot is that massive failure equips you to minister to failures. That idea, however, would have totally excluded Jesus from ministry.

The news of Liardon's sinful conduct first broke on Dec. 21, 2001, on *Charisma's* ministry web site. It was entitled "Roberts Liardon Leaves Ministry Over 'Moral Failure.'" Liardon said that what he had done was "inappropriate." Most people would say that he should resign. However, it is not quite that simple.

The "moral failure" or "inappropriate" behavior idea (note that neither *Charisma* nor Liardon calls it "sin") plays into modern psychology, minimizes the severity of sin, and tones down responsibility. Surely everyone fails — right? The "he is only human" card plays well when you are caught, but the rest of the time you dish out

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TBN DONATION DOLLARS HARD AT WORK

The *Los Angeles Times* has reported that Trinity Broadcasting Network's Jan and Paul Crouch have purchased a \$5-million "palatial estate." The Harbor Ridge mansion is located in a prestigious guard-gated Newport Beach, Calif. community. The home is said to have nine bathrooms, an elevator, a six-car garage, a climate-controlled wine cellar, and tennis court.

Last November, the *Times'* "Hot Property" column stated, "Jan Crouch had been wanting a bigger yard for her dogs, sources said."

TBN's attorney, Colby May, maintains that the Los Angeles newspaper is mistaken in its report. "The Crouches didn't buy the \$5-million house, the ministry did. And the Crouches don't intend to move into it, May insists. It's for use by overseas guests who visit the ministry," the *Times* stated. It also noted that "May couldn't explain why Hot Property was told that Jan Crouch wanted more room for her dogs."

In a separate report in the *Orange County Register*, it was disclosed in January that "Televangelists settle \$40 million plagiarism suit." The article stated, "Orange County-based televangelists Jan and Paul Crouch have settled the plagiarism lawsuit filed against them by West Virginia minister Sylvia Fleener, who alleged that the Crouches stole liberally from Fleener's 1997 doomsday novel, 'The Omega Syndrome,' for their successful 1999 film, 'The Omega Code.'"

The suit was filed in July 2000, and was resolved just prior to going to trial on January 2, 2002. In settling the case out of court, the Crouches admitted no wrongdoing, and the terms of the settlement were confidential. However, Fleener said in a statement on her web site that "the matter was concluded in a manner acceptable to both parties." Daniel J. Quisenberry, Fleener's attorney, told the *Register* that his client is pleased with the settlement.

The Crouches also received additional negative publicity in an editorial piece in the *OC Weekly* magazine section of the *Orange County Register*. The feature from the Nov. 30-Dec. 6 edition stated, "Always bizarre, TBN's Crouches are on a crazy roll." The satirical article described "the Crouches' own 'teaching' [as] essentially Christianity for Smurfs, where, if you'll tithe sufficiently to them, ebbingything gonna be hunky dunky down im lil' Smurfland. Great bounty will come to you, your money

worries will be over, and you will have great abs. It's in the Bible!"

Writer Jim Washburn penned his lampoon after viewing the Crouches on TBN's fund drive last fall. "What I gathered after watching for a while is that individuals sunk in hopeless debt were urged to send in \$3,000 (or at least a down payment of \$300) along with copies of their outstanding bills," Washburn wrote. Crouch and Company promised to burn the bills sent in with the donation. This would release God's miraculous power to free the TBN faithful from debt.

Washburn also likened the gaudy TBN headquarters in Costa Mesa, Calif. to Caesar's Palace in Las Vegas. As the secular media exposes the excessive, extravagant, and unrestrained lifestyles of the Crouches and their televangelist colleagues, the world will continue to be shown an erroneous picture of Christ and His Church.

—MKG

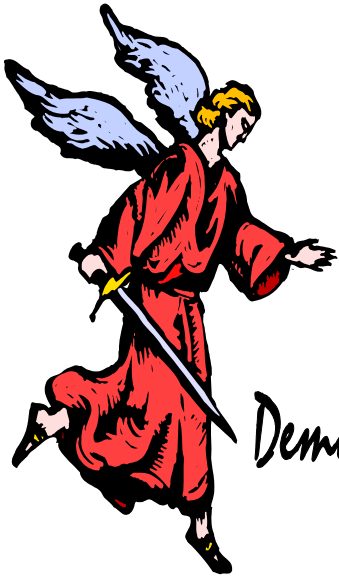
WATCHTOWER LINKED TO UNITED NATIONS

Hypocrisy has once again been uncovered in the policy and procedures of the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society. The Jehovah's Witness organization has, for nearly a century, denounced the United Nations and its predecessor, the League of Nations. The apocalyptic sect has repeatedly branded the UN to be the beast described in the Book of Revelation. However, last fall it was discovered that the Watchtower had, for the past decade, been granted associated status, appearing on the list of non-governmental organizations (NGO) of the UN.

A report in *The Guardian* cited a former Jehovah's Witness as saying, "There is a glaring inconsistency which has emerged between the WTBS's frequent portrayal of the UN as an evil organisation and its behind-the-scenes attempts to curry favour with that organisation. ... By no stretch of the imagination could the WTBS be considered to share the ideals of the UN charter unless you supposed that destruction of the UN by God is consistent with that charter."

The article, which appeared on the British newspaper's web site, also explained that "To qualify, organisations must show that they share the ideals of the charter, operate on a non-profit basis, 'demonstrate interest in UN issues and proven ability to reach large or specialised

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MIRED IN Confusion and Mysticism

Demonology and Spiritual Warfare According to Joyce Meyer

by G. Richard Fisher and M. Kurt Goedelman

The Holy Spirit, through James, warns, "My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment" (James 3:1). Joyce Meyer remarks, "Sometimes I don't know too much about common sense. I guess that's why I'm still preaching. ... the spirit of error is the hardest to break, because they're convinced they're right."¹

Reformer Martin Luther's 16th century world was one in which people lived in fear of demons, whom they saw everywhere. People practiced rituals, prayers, incantations, and spiritual maneuvers in an effort to be free of malignant spirits. People in the late Middle Ages believed that Satan could assume a visible form as a dog, a hog, even as "a man with horns" who "steals little children."² The demonology was taught out of ignorance and superstition.

Joyce Meyer demonstrates that the mind set Luther knew is alive and being taught today.

In his hymn, "A Mighty Fortress is Our God," Luther wrote of Satan, "one little word shall fell him." Luther firmly believed the Scriptures and taught that the devil had no real power over believers. Luther also believed that the devil would flee from prayer and the cross, and that believers simply needed to affirm that

Christ had slain him and would at last cast him into the fire of hell. The believer could jeer and taunt Satan, Luther taught.³

As a child, my mother thought to keep my brother, sister, and myself in line by telling us that if we lied, our lips would be sewn up by "sewing bugs." She showed us all the "sewing bugs" outside (they were nothing more than dragon flies). Our ignorance kept us in fear as well as indoors for a time. It was a sincere attempt to keep us in line, and worked (for awhile) until we were educated enough to know that dragon flies do not do surgery.

Sincerity can be dangerous in any age. Sincerity toward the wrong things creates bondage when not based on truth.

Alfred Edersheim, many years ago, said people can fall into the pursuit of the superstitious:

"...those who have lost the habit of seeing God in the ordinary Providence of every-day life — as is the case with all who are conformed to the world — are too often in the habit of looking for things strange, or for miracles, and thus become at the same time superstitious and unbelieving."⁴

Many so-called deliverance ministries may sincerely believe they are a help to others with all of their exorcisms and teaching as to what demons can do to believers. Some claim to get their extra-biblical information right from demons themselves, which should make us question the validity of their sources of information.⁵

How could one be sure a demon is not lying? Many modern exorcists disagree at major points on many details, which places us in the dilemma of conflicting revelations. Since many teach that Satan and demons can do so much to Christians by way of distress, damage, mischief, and mayhem, it is hard to fathom what Christianity does for a believer, since it sounds as unsafe for a believer as it is for one outside the faith.

Joyce Meyer deviates widely from the Scripture in her teachings on demons and other matters. Her demonology and other teaching is an amalgam of imagination, Middle Age mythology, speculation, and overstatement. In her eight-tape series, *How to Fight the Devil and Win!* one can only conclude that demons are everywhere and we must worry and protect ourselves all the time. Meyer makes demon spirits out to be almost as omnipresent, sovereign, and omnipotent as God. Each tape in her series

mires listeners deeper in mysticism and subjectivism.

The announcer tells us at the introduction of the tapes that this is “anointed teaching.” Meyer says as well that “God gave me this to teach” as she begins this series. So, according to her, it is nothing less than straight from God with God’s anointing. She has moved herself well beyond that of any average Bible teacher who has labored hard to correctly handle and rightly divide the Word of Truth. The tape album’s back cover boasts:

“WARNING! These resources contain IMPORTANT INFORMATION THE DEVIL HOPES YOU WILL NEVER FIND OUT!”⁶

Charisma magazine calls Meyer “America’s most popular woman minister” and “a national sensation.”⁷ A local St. Louis television station says she is “large and in charge” of her multimillion-dollar ministry.⁸ Meyer claims an initial profession of faith at age 9, but says it wasn’t until she was in her 20s that she knew she was saved. Suffering through a failed first marriage, she met Dave Meyer and the couple were married in 1967. Dave claimed to be a “Spirit-filled Lutheran,” and Joyce’s “Baptism of the Holy Spirit” came years later at age 36. Eventually, the Charismatic beliefs of the couple caused conflict within the Lutheran congregation they were attending and they departed for an independent Charismatic church. The church, Life Christian Center, is pastored by Rick Shelton and became a springboard for Meyer’s early ministry.⁹

Dave was the catalyst who convinced his wife to take her ministry to the airwaves. First on radio, then in the mid-1990s to television. Currently, Meyer’s daily television show is broadcast to two-thirds of the world. She has published more than 40 books and recorded more than 200 tapes. She drives to her ministry’s new \$20 million facility in a Porsche and travels to her crusades in a

private jet. She tries to defend herself and deflect criticism for such an opulent lifestyle by stating:

“I know that there’s always a temptation to judge people in ministry who have anything, which is an amazing thing when you think about it. I mean why would people want their spiritual leaders to be poverty stricken and have nothing?”¹⁰

Meyer’s comments are scheming and manipulative. Her remarks leave one with no balance or middle ground. Apparently for Meyer, a minister must either live in extravagant luxury or live in gross poverty. The Apostle Paul outlines the character for ministers in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. He calls for virtue, reputation, moderation, and *balance*. Money is the bottom line for several of Meyer’s illustrations of personal success and integrity presented on her demonology tape series.¹¹

Meyer also tries to deflect other criticism by stating, “I think two of the main things that aggravate people is: 1) I’m a woman, and 2) I don’t have a lot of formal education.”¹² Meyer also admits a desire to

surround herself with others who lack skill and formal education:

“You know, I’ve begun to figure out that the more people that I hire that don’t know what they’re doing, the better off I am. It’s when you get the smart ones that you’ve got a problem. You need to get the ones that don’t know how to do nothing.”¹³

Her comments are insightful. A good manager, leader, or pastor will always attempt to surround himself with quality and capable people. On the other hand, those who fear being surpassed by someone else’s skill will surround themselves with incompetent people.

There is a danger in following people like Meyer. She holds out just enough truth to throw one off track. The claims of God-given teaching also intimidate one who would question. Of the small bits of truth she teaches, Christians will have no problem. It is the additions that cause trouble. Jesus warned about the doctrines and commandments of men (Matthew 15:9). Meyer’s appetizers — such as marriage enrichment, weight control, and health improvement — may sound



Joyce Meyer Ministries’ new \$20-million facility west of St. Louis where, according to a local television station, Meyer is said to be “large and in charge.”

and look good, but it is her main theological meals which are dangerous. There is a great peril in looking for God in strange places — trying to look into Satan's lair and be immune to his deceptions. Our protection is to constantly look into the Scriptures (Psalm 1).

Meyer is in many cases just following the lead of so many other demon-busters and exorcists so prevalent in Christendom today. Given the propensity and popularity of "Christian" teachers such as Neil Anderson, Mark Bubeck, Rebecca Brown, Derek Prince, Bob Larson, along with a plethora of lesser-known exorcists, Meyer is wrong in her statement that:

"Do you know that in this country [United States] that we are probably more ignorant of demonic power than any country on the face of the Earth? You go to almost any other nation, and they understand demonic power. They understand demons getting into people and possessing them. But in this nation, we have stuck our head in the sand and tried to blame it on everything except the devil."¹⁴

If there is any ignorance, it is ignorance of sensible Bible teaching on demonology. Certainly, trustworthy Bible schools and seminaries have a biblically balanced understanding of Satan, demons, and angels, but the proliferation of modern day exorcists compound the confusion. Despite what Meyer claims, the United States is saturated with all the wrong kinds of information about Satan and demons — teachings that we readily export into other countries. In various segments of the Church, there is demon obsession because of such teaching. Christian bookstores are flooded with material that is sensationalistic, imaginative, and unbiblical. Meyer only adds fuel to an already out of control fire.

A DEMON IN EVERY ROCK?

For example, Meyer without any scriptural foundation, teaches:

- "[In] one of the foreign lands, there's a certain tree that they believe that demons inhabit this tree. Demons have been known to inhabit rocks. And you know, there are inanimate objects that they will inhabit. But largely they want to inhabit a human body because they can work out their evil through that human body. Occasionally they will get into an animal, but they want to be in a body. That's the highest honor for them is to get in a body. They want to be in a body."¹⁵

- "Evil spirits are drawn to sounds, to smells, and also to different things they can see like different idols."¹⁶

- "Poverty is probably one of the most unique spirits to watch. You can watch a spirit of poverty take over an entire neighborhood. ... And almost always with a poverty spirit, comes a spirit that just stinks. I mean, a poverty spirit just plain stinks. When I get people at the altar that got a poverty spirit on them they almost always have bad breath and body odor."¹⁷

- "You know, a lot of lazy people get demons. A lot of passive people get demons."¹⁸

TOOTING HIS OWN HORN

Meyer maintains that in the original creation, God created three archangels unto personal and distinct functions: Gabriel was created as the chief messenger; Michael was created as the chief warrior; and Lucifer was created as the chief worship leader. Concerning these specific angelic creatures, it is helpful to first note that Gabriel's appearances in Scripture are limited to one each in the Old and New Testaments (Daniel 8-9 and Luke 1). For additional references to an angel Gabriel, one must go outside the biblical record, to places such as the Jewish *Talmud* or Islamic *Qur'an*.

Secondly, while claiming that Michael was "the angel in charge of war," Meyer does not disclose exactly why he was created for such an office — being that originally all angels were created good. There was neither

sin, rebellion, or good opposing evil for which Michael to war against. Perhaps, Meyer would argue, that Michael was created, and then placed on hold, for this future enterprise. However, one must establish such speculation apart from the clear teaching of Scripture.

Finally, Meyer further contends:

"Lucifer had a tambourine built into his body. He also had pipes. Organs have pipes. It's very clear from these Scriptures, and there are many authorities that agree with this, that Lucifer's body, along with being made up of other things, was also made up of musical instruments."¹⁹

Is this true? Or is Meyer again merely playing fast and loose with Scripture for effect? Moreover, should we make dogmatic statements about obscure and debatable verses in Scripture? To be dogmatic where evidence is thin is not wise.

The passage Meyer cites that deals with Lucifer is Ezekiel 28. Is he really pictured as some kind of freak creation with instruments of music created into his body? Is he half spirit being and literally half one-man band? It is grotesque to think of the crass literal interpretation given by Meyer. Verse 13 mentions "timbrels and pipes." Perhaps Meyer is confused by the rendering in the King James Version, which says "in" him.

The text is clear that the instruments were prepared "for" Lucifer not in or on him. Saying these were "for" him would not lead us to believe the strange understanding of Meyer. Pentecostal expositor and former President and Dean of Central Bible Institute, Frank M. Boyd offers this:

"The latter part of v. 13 should be translated: — 'The service of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared with (or for) thee on the day when thou wast created.'"²⁰

Verse 13 also mentions various jewels, and we would not think of the body of Lucifer being studded with

diamonds, but rather with the glory and luxury around him. Boyd suggests that Lucifer originally, in his pre-fallen state, dwelt in a heavenly city like the New Jerusalem.²¹

According to Meyer — and she probably has not thought this through — Lucifer would have been at least partially material. He would be part horn, part tambourine, and part spirit. Yet, we are assured by Scripture that spirit beings are non-corporeal — that is, non-material (John 4:24), and “have not flesh and bones” (Luke 24:39). As such, material elements are not in their makeup. Some would say maybe it means spiritual pipes and spiritual tambourines. Meyer did not say that and we don’t want to put words in her mouth. Besides, there is no biblical evidence for instruments that are “spiritual.” Instruments of music are always shown in Scripture to be *physical* and *external* to the user.

Probably the most that could be said about Lucifer and musical instruments in Ezekiel has been stated by Dr. Harry Ironside:

“It was his to lead the praises of the angelic host. The workmanship of his tabrets and of his pipes suggests this: in the day that he was created he was prepared to lead the heavenly choir.”²²

No one could go any further than this, given the sparse nature of the Ezekiel passage. No interpretation could make a spirit being into a partially material being.

Some may view the above as small or inconsequential issues, but misleading anyone in regard to the Scripture is serious. It shows a propensity to read into the text and not get the meaning out of the text. Will we be able to trust Meyer’s interpretations and statements as she further preaches on the tape? Will she just be saying things from her imagination for effect?

Meyer admits along the way that she is not bound by the Scriptures. She relates a story of a Baptist

preacher who supposedly died, went to heaven, and was then sent back to Earth. Her words are revealing:

“Now here’s where I’m telling you — I don’t have Bible to back this up — I’m telling you this man’s experience. We do have Scriptures to back up that there are ranks and orders of demons, okay? But he tells us what some of them look like, and so on and so forth. I can’t prove that to you, but I have no reason to believe he’s lying. Matter of fact, I bear witness with what he says.”²³

How about others who have had conflicting heavenly visitations? What

Charismatic preacher who made the claim of messages from angels was healer William Branham. Branham ended his career denying the Trinity and believing he was Elijah.²⁵

Others, like Roland Buck in the 1970s, were led astray into false doctrines by claimed angel messengers.²⁶ Meyer further invites her listeners into the same hazardous mystical wasteland, stating God sends angels to give them messages as well:

“If you receive a message either in a dream or a vision, it’s brought to you by some messenger angel. ... There have been preachers who have been preaching and people’s eyes in the

“I would suppose that every sermon that I get, I get it from a messenger angel.”

—Joyce Meyer

of those who, like Meyer, “bear witness” to these conflicting experiences? Whose experience or witness is right? Is it then just Meyer’s “experience” that tells her what she thinks she knows about Lucifer, Michael, or Gabriel?

TOUCHED BY AN ANGEL?

Meyer asserts for herself a practice that most would consider very dangerous spiritually. She claims special ongoing messages, not from the Word, not from illumination of the Holy Spirit, but from angels. “I would suppose that every sermon that I get, I get it from a messenger angel,” she claims.²⁴

This is a troublesome and frightening statement and puts Meyer on very dangerous ground. Others have claimed to channel angels, however it is obvious they were under deep deception. The most well-known

congregation have been opened to see a large angel standing beside this preacher and the angel would bend over and whisper something in the preacher’s ear and the preacher would get all excited and say something.”²⁷

Meyer also makes an observation that puts some of her superstar colleagues in conflict with her when she states:

“Angels are not fat little babies with wings on their backs. Whether you know it or not, Satan has painted that picture also. ... He doesn’t want us to know that they are big and strong and their coming [is] sent from God and they’re here to protect us.”²⁸

However, popular faith healer Benny Hinn does teach this and claims he has had divine revelations

from God on the issue. Hinn claims these little children angels appeared to him:

“Angels would appear in my bedroom at night and just stand and look at me. I would wake up to see angels in my bedroom. All sizes. Call me crazy but I would even see little boys in my bedroom with beautiful white robes. Like, little, they almost looked like girls but they were male. You say, ‘Do you mean there are little angels?’ I believe that ‘cause I saw them. ... There must be little angels in heaven.”²⁹

Meyer’s angelic source for her sermons, as noted above, is a strange one. The image she paints of angelic whisperers to preachers, moves her further into the realm of the occult. Isaiah 8:19 informs us that mediums and wizards hear whispering voices. Despite her repeated claims that she is immune from deception,³⁰ Meyer is, in fact, very vulnerable to deception. She is deceiving and is herself deceived (2 Timothy 3:13).

Meyer shows ignorance of the centrality of the Holy Spirit and His offices and work spelled out in John 14-16. It is the Holy Spirit who teaches and leads us into truth. He unveils Christ to us. It is the Spirit who illumines the Word to us — He does not bring us new or ongoing revelation. There are abundant warnings about “angel” messengers in the Bible. One of these warnings comes from the Apostle Paul: “For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light” (2 Corinthians 12:13-14).

There is no precedent or biblical justification for receiving messages from angels. The Word of God is our unshared source for “doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16). It seems that Paul warns against this kind of thing — which the Gnostics were doing — in Colossians 2:18. The

word Paul uses in Colossians 2:18 in his warning regarding our dependence upon angels is the Greek word *threskeia*. The King James Version incorrectly translates this word as “worship.” Worship in the sense of worshipping God is the Greek word *proskuneo*.

The idea that Paul is talking about only worship could mislead us since we could correctly say Meyer is not worshipping angels. *Threskeia*, however, has to do with a religious practice of seeing angels as intercessors. There is a show or ceremony of religiosity and humility, and a dependence on angels as opposed to a direct dependence on the Savior and the ministry of the Holy Spirit.³¹ The first chapter of Hebrews affirms that Jesus is far greater than any angel, and we have direct access to Him.

Co-founder of Dallas Theological Seminary, W.H. Griffith Thomas, refers to Colossians 2:18 with the term “angelic mediation.”³² Thomas warns that “Christians are to beware of becoming entangled again in anything that would lead them away from Christ and from the fulness of their privileges in Him.”³³ Meyer has succumbed to the vanity of human imagination.

MISINFORMATION AD NAUSEAM

Meyer further shows how out of touch she is with events and happenings when she suggests that psychic surgeons in South America give true healings and that some people serving Satan have more success in healing people than do Christians.³⁴ In reality, these so-called psychic surgeons do nothing more than sleight of hand. For decades, their gimmickry has been repeatedly exposed by even the secular media on television specials and in books. Using fake blood and palmed chicken parts they exploit the simple-minded by pretending to take diseases out of the body with no cuts or incisions. It is an old racket of which Meyer appears to be undiscerning.

Meyer also makes a shocking statement to her audience, informing them that cults are probably 90% truth.³⁵ Where would the 90% truth be in Jehovah’s Witnesses or Mormonism or Theosophy? With all the denials and heresies, one would be hard-pressed to find any truth whatsoever in the mainline cults. Even the words they use as common denominators (Jesus, God, salvation, etc.) are distorted and redefined.

She shows her further ignorance of the cults when she claims, “Many of the real false, false, false religions — I think Christian Scientists is one of them, the basic core of it is an angel appeared to somebody one day and gave them a new book which was in addition to the Bible.”³⁶ Even one with a rudimentary knowledge of the history of the cults can recognize Meyer’s mixing up the origins of the Mormon religion³⁷ with Christian Scientists.

Mary Baker Eddy and her founding of Christian Science is very well documented and accessible to any reader. Eddy created Christian Science as an outcome of her involvement with the mind science teachings of Phineas Quimby.³⁸ Eddy made no claim of angelic information, but claimed to get her system right from Scripture by waiting on the mind of Christ.³⁹

THE MURPHY’S LAW OF MURPHY’S RECALL

Meyer, in her discussion of reincarnation, continues her deluge of misinformation when she uses the case of Bridey Murphy as an example. Under hypnosis, a woman was supposedly regressed back to a former life in old Ireland during the 17th or 18th century and, speaking in the Gaelic language, gave details of the geography, customs, and clothing of the times. Meyer says Bridey Murphy was deceived by a familiar spirit. However, the story of Bridey Murphy has been thoroughly debunked. Murphy was not an outstanding proof of reincarnation. Neither was Murphy proof of familiar spirits, but was a dramatic

case of modern childhood memories, as proven by the meticulous documentation of the late apologist Walter Martin. Martin wrote:

“But finally an especially persistent psychiatrist found Bridey Murphy and began to check on her background. She seemed to be telling the truth under a lie detector, but he still wasn’t satisfied. As he reexamined all the evidence, it turned out that Bridey Murphy never existed at all, but was a figment of a child’s imagination. This lady had spent some of the early years of her childhood in the presence of her grandmother, who spoke Gaelic and who had history books about old Ireland. The child had spent many hours reading these books, and Granny had taught her Gaelic. She forgot the language and the history books as she grew older, but her memory banks recalled them. Under hypnosis she regressed to four or five years of age and began to spew out in Gaelic everything she knew at that period in her life. Her recall was so convincing that it was taken as absolute proof of reincarnation.”⁴⁰

Meyer somehow missed the rest of the story and is sowing falsehood in the name of truth. But it is not just that Meyer misleads with her uninformed comments, she also blurts out other statements — probably for effect — which have no basis in truth or reality.

Meyer states, on two separate tapes from her series, that the occult headquarters for the entire nation (and possibly the whole world) has moved to Florissant, Mo. — right in her backyard, so to speak.⁴¹ Personal Freedom Outreach, since its inception in 1975, has worked in and around the city of Florissant (which is a north suburb of St. Louis). Could the relocation of such a vast occultic enterprise to this city have escaped the notice of PFO? Not likely.

Beyond this apparent lack of awareness by PFO, also comes a complete

unawareness by high-ranking city officials in Florissant. Robert Lowery is mayor of Florissant. Prior to being elected to that office in 2001, he served as the city’s chief of police for over two decades and headed up the major case squad. Lowery responded to Meyer’s defamatory report about his city, stating, “I know what goes on in my community, and I am not aware of any facts that would substantiate these troubling statements.”⁴²

Other leaders in the community share Lowery’s assessment. Dr. Robert Griffin, for the past decade, has served as pastor of Parker Road Baptist Church in the heart of Florissant. Griffin is a pastor who is keenly discerning and aware of the spiritual climate in and around his city to be able to warn, protect, and feed his congregation. He told PFO that Meyer’s allegation against his city “is extreme to say the least.” Griffin added:

“Our community has spiritual needs, as any community does. But what Mrs. Meyer is alleging would be a major concentration of evil, and I don’t believe such could exist in our midst without as least some of the spiritual leaders who actually live in the city being aware of it. It would have been helpful if she had been willing to provide some type of documentation.”

PFO contacted Meyer’s organization for details about the vast occult empire supposedly centered in Florissant. Meyer’s “Correspondence Supervisor,” Kathy Russell, dismissed the inquiry with this comment: “We believe that the occult headquarters that were mentioned on those tapes have moved to another unknown location.”⁴³

It is remarkable that after making such a grievous charge against a community, such a superficial response would be offered. The doors to PFO’s ministry would have been closed long ago if we had ever made such grave and undocumented allegations. Moreover, Meyer’s organization

offers no disclaimer, and anyone who currently purchases and listens to the tapes are led to believe that the occultic headquarters for the nation (or the world) is centered in Florissant.

Just as important is the fact that, like Meyer’s misguided information of the cults, her ignorance of the occult is likewise apparent. Even a quick search of Gordon Melton’s massive *Encyclopedia of American Religions* will detail many dozens of occult, spiritistic, New Age, and channeling societies. Melton’s information also shows that not one of these organizations is in Florissant or St. Louis. Since occultism is not monolithic, but is a conglomeration of unconnected or very loosely connected small groups as Melton shows, the term “headquarters” for the occult, in fact, has no basis. The world of the occult is vastly different from sects such as Jehovah’s Witnesses or Mormons who have a central and distinct headquarters (e.g., in Brooklyn and Salt Lake City). There are autonomous occultic groups headquartered in many, many cities, but none in Florissant.

As repeatedly shown above, Meyer’s facts are all so wrong and she shows herself to be out of touch with even the most basic of information. At this point, the question looms large and screams for an answer. How can anyone trust anything Meyer says? How can anyone believe anything she teaches?

Meyer then tells us that almost every medium speaks in tongues and prophesies.⁴⁴ She mentions this after telling of her speaking in tongues to protect herself against a family of Satanists while walking to an airport gate.⁴⁵ She also informs her listeners that, while not being “a prophet of God,” God gives her prophetic utterances and she operates under a prophetic flare.⁴⁶ What are we to think? She then comes to the aid of faith teachers and the faith movement:

“But you cannot throw out positive confession, and you cannot throw out all the faith teachers,

and you cannot throw out positive thinking. And you cannot get rid of those kinds of things because they're in the Bible from one end of it to the other."⁴⁷

Despite her appeals for "balance," how could anyone be anything other than confused?

NO HUMBLE PIE SERVED HERE

Meyer is not in any way humble, and allows her pride to show throughout the tape series. For example, she boasts: "I'll bet I give him [the devil] a nervous breakdown about six times a day. I hope every time he sees me coming he has to take a whole handful of tranquilizers."⁴⁸ She further asserts:

"Do you want me to tell you something? And I don't say this in a wrong spirit. I doubt that

Meyer also contends that she has a supernatural cognition of when people criticize her: "Do you know I believe that I can feel it when people are talking adversely about me? And I don't necessarily know how I feel or what I feel, but I might feel pressure that day. I might feel physically bad that day."⁵⁰

While Meyer may wish to deflect criticism leveled against her, she is not immune from finding fault with others. She says there are some Charismatics who are "flaky as the day is long" and "goofy as they could possibly be."⁵¹ Her tolerance level for those with whom she disagrees is dramatically unchristian. She speaks of one "Charismatic nut" who "aggravated" her "to the point where I just wanted to strangle her."⁵² Later she intimates those who question her teaching, "I tell you when somebody comes to me and says, 'Oh, this stuff

Circumventing or ignoring criticism is not the way "God feels" or the way He wants His children to respond. God has established the course of action for grievance and wrongs in Matthew 5:23-24 and 18:15-20. The Bible — especially the book of Proverbs — is replete with the wisdom and prudence gained when one heeds a rebuke. A Christian's response should be one of repentance and restitution, not apathy or disdain. These latter attitudes display a carnal, haughty, and unregenerated spirit.

Throughout the series, she repeatedly directs comments toward her audience with voice inflections that are cruelly mocking and condescending. "Oh, you poor baby," she intones with ridicule⁵⁵ and demeans her listeners by telling them to "Quit being childish and silly."⁵⁶

In her boasting, she spawns even more confusion by telling her audience that the devil will lie to them by telling them they are either wonderful or worthless.⁵⁷ However, it may not be the devil telling them they are worthless at all. If we are living in sin or in gross violation of God's law, we will feel guilty and worthless, and we should. The Holy Spirit works to bring conviction, and bad feelings may be part of the repentance process (2 Corinthians 7:8-10).

Dr. Jay Adams points to the fact that sinfulness and slothfulness can trigger depression:

"...the guilt of neglect, the guilt of doing work with a lick and a promise, the guilt of facing others who have depended on him catches up with him. Once laden down with guilt, and because of the depression that accompanies it, he finds he can't do even the work he has been doing very effectively. So he slackens up still more. Thus he is caught in a cyclical downward whirlpool of despair. What is true of the lazy man is true generally of clients caught in the vortex of their sin and subsequent failure to deal

"I tell you when somebody comes to me and says, 'Oh, this stuff don't work,' I'd like to black both their eyes."

—Joyce Meyer

there are very many women that could do what I'm doing. Now you say, 'What in the world would make you think that? What's so different about you than anybody else?' Because most women operate out of their emotions and they don't know how to judge between emotionalism and logic and they could no more do what I'm doing and control in the right way what's going on — keep it in balance without getting goofy and silly. ... And I believe that God is allowing me to bring this teaching. Do you know why? Because I believe that I can bring it to you in balance."⁴⁹

don't work,' I'd like to black both their eyes."⁵³

Other of Meyer's comments also display a tendency to cast off any type of reprimand. She explains:

"If my next-door neighbor comes over and says, 'Boy, that kid of yours is a mess.' Do you know what I'm going to tell them, don't you? 'Don't you worry about it, lady. He's my mess!' Isn't that right? I mean, every one of you, if you're a good parent, you'd tell them the exact same thing. 'Just don't you worry about it, lady. He's my mess.' And that's exactly the way God feels."⁵⁴

with it properly.”⁵⁸

HEART TROUBLE

Meyer repeats the same mistake so many other hyper-Charismatic teachers make in denigrating thinking. She confuses the heart and mind and creates a false dichotomy in repeating the old canards of the Charismatic extremists. She actually says we have to turn off our head and go by our heart. For Meyer, “peace” becomes the ultimate arbitrator for truth. It is an argument which is hammered home again and again throughout her series as her patrons are made to recite her mystical chants. She even misapplies Colossians 3:15 in an attempt to provide a scriptural basis for the unbiblical premise that peace equals discernment.⁵⁹

Like a Mormon, she makes the center of knowing and conviction the heart. She has her audience repeatedly chant that they are to be led out of their heart, not out of their mind. She instructs the audience to “Stop living out of your mind,” and classifies one who does as a “carnal Christian.” She chides, “Don’t listen to your stinking thinking,” and says that a “prophet” told her that “the definition for ‘occult’ is ‘thoughts.’”⁶⁰ Is this a biblical notion?

Close attention to the Scripture will not let us wander into this error and false dichotomy. In Matthew 22:37, Jesus commanded us to love the Lord with “all our mind.” Jesus stacks up words to tell us we must love the Lord with our whole being. Paul commanded that we bring “every thought captive to the obedience of Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:5).

According to linguist W.E. Vine, the Old Testament word for heart (*leb*) is a synonym for mind. He points up that Genesis 6:5 talks of the thoughts of the heart.⁶¹ While the Hebrew word for heart can mean the pumping organ of the body, it is also used of our thought processes and emotions, as well. Another form of the word *leb* (*lebab*) can be the whole inner man, as in Deuteronomy 30:14. Then Deuter-

onomy 8:5 and 29:4 see the heart as the seat of knowledge.

In the New Testament, the Greek word for heart is *kardia*. Vine points up that *kardia*, while at times refers to the literal physical heart, means otherwise: “man’s entire mental and moral activity, both the rational and emotional elements.”⁶² Thoughts, reasoning, emotions, imaginations, desires, affections, and intentions are bound up in the word *heart*.

It is so simplistic and so shallow to glibly separate heart and mind. It makes no sense biblically, and is simply an attempt to get people to stop thinking (and only feel) and then control them. It should be a large red flag to the discerning Christian to hear Meyer claim, “God is saying, ‘You’ve got to turn your head off and you’ve got to go by what’s in here [the heart].’”⁶³ It is dangerous when any teacher attempts to get Christians to stop thinking or somehow elevate any part of their make-up over their thinking. Paul warns that when there is futility (vanity or emptiness) of mind, there can only be ignorance and darkness of understanding (Ephesians 4:17-18). All through the Scriptures we find the affirmations — in one way or another — that our minds do matter!

NO BIBLICAL BACKUP

Meyer insists that nothing is done in her services that cannot be found in the Bible. That is a blatant contradiction at many points. We have already seen one such admission already in the story she tells of the Baptist preacher’s visit to heaven. She also says that there are times she feels 100% sure she has heard from God, but finds out later she did not.⁶⁴ Yet in the face of that, she confesses: “You see, I’ve got a strong personality. ... Folks, when I get convinced, I’m convinced. I mean, if I believe that God has told me something, you just might as well forget trying to talk me out of it, because I believe that I’ve heard from God. And I will do my utmost, most of the time, to try and

convince you.”⁶⁵ So it sounds like right or wrong — God or not — she will not be talked out of it.

Another example of Meyer’s departure from Scripture is her insistence that Old Testament prophecy and New Testament prophecy are different.⁶⁶ The idea is that Old Testament prophets could not miss at all in their predictions, but New Testament prophets can be wrong some of the time. This, first of all, is a tacit admission that she is wrong, and many of her cohorts in ministry give false prophecies all the time.⁶⁷

Despite Meyer’s appeal to a two-class prophet system, there is no Scripture to support it or back it up. The New Testament would never support the idea of fallible prophets. God has not changed his mind. God is the same yesterday, today, and forever about the accuracy of His prophets. That, after all, is one of the primary ways we have to determine if they are genuine (Deuteronomy 18:21-22).

The fallible-prophet idea is a recent invention from the imagination of self-proclaimed prophets who are confronted with misses all the time. Men like Mike Bickle, Rick Joyner, Bob Jones, Jack Deere, and James Ryle have conspired to create a new paradigm of prophets who make mistakes in their predictions. This way anybody can do it. By their definition, anyone who can guess right a lot of the time can be a “prophet.”

The Vineyard’s James Ryle tries to use Agabus in Acts 21:11 as his example of a prophet who makes a mistake. However, he overreaches and proves too much. By such reasoning, the Bible is suspect, contradictory, and even wrong since it calls an error a prophecy. The Bible, then, would not be inerrant. When Agabus says the Jews will bind Paul, he is speaking of the Jews as the agents or facilitators or cause of the binding. If he was wrong, he was subject to stoning.

Apologist Hank Hanegraaff, using good hermeneutical sense, writes:

“Scripture often speaks of a person performing an action when in reality that person is merely the cause or agent of the action. Thus, Agabus is perfectly accurate in saying that the Jews bound Paul because the Jews were the cause for which Paul was bound.”⁶⁸

PASS THE GENERATIONAL SPIRIT, PLEASE!

Other of Meyer’s views of demonology are downright spooky, superstitious, and further depart at major points from the Bible. Christians being demon possessed⁶⁹ and losing their salvation⁷⁰ can nowhere be proven from the Bible. Meyer dogmatically asserts, without any textual reference, that every person has a familiar spirit assigned to them at birth, and sometimes a spirit is assigned to a family. This spirit is then transferred from generation to generation within the same family.⁷¹

Who does the assigning? God? Why would He do that? Satan? Why would God allow it since the Bible never mentions it? What verse is there to suggest this or back it up? Where has Meyer gotten these special insights? If this were true we would have to live in constant fear because there would be no objective way to sort this out or know which relatives and what sins. Complications mount for those who, as small children, had their grandparents or even parents die.

Meyer also says that these generational spirits show up as cysts.⁷² This is really strange because cysts can easily be removed by a doctor. Therefore, does the doctor actually remove a demon? She suggests (from personal experience)⁷³ that we are to avoid going to an unsaved doctor. This poses an interesting paradox: If someone goes to an unsaved doctor to have a cyst removed, has Satan worked against himself? Even female problems are generational curses. What does this say about Meyer’s own bout with breast cancer?

Nothing gets missed by Meyer. She regards alcoholism, incest, poverty,

divorce, miscarriages, headaches, and even baldness as generational curses and Christians are beset by these curses. “Just because you happen to be a believer doesn’t necessarily mean that you cannot have a generational curse,” she informs her naive followers.⁷⁴ Why doesn’t the Bible ever call the above things demons? Drunkenness and unbiblical divorces are looked on by God as sin, but never called a generational curse or demon. The unfortunate medical problems because of the Fall (or at times, personal sin or neglect) are never called spirits or demons in the Scripture.

The only real curse that has been passed down is the curse of this false teaching. The idea of generational spirits and generational curses form a total skewing and misunderstanding of four Old Testament verses (Exodus 20:5, 34:7; Numbers 14:18; and Deuteronomy 5:9). Each of these verses say essentially the same thing. So it really boils down to one and only one pronouncement. It refers to “the iniquity of the Fathers visited on the third and fourth generation.” Meyer mentions Exodus 20:5 as the scant evidence for all her confusion.⁷⁵

Because God is completely fair and righteous in His judgments and because Ezekiel 18:19-20, as well as Deuteronomy 24:16, are very clear that God will not punish someone for his ancestor’s sins, Meyer cannot be right. Furthermore, the first chapter of 1 Peter assures us that we have been redeemed from our parents’ vain habit patterns. We are not stuck and vulnerable, as Meyer suggests.

The four verses in question lay emphasis on the condition that, if the succeeding generations *continue to hate God*, they will receive punishment. It is the third and fourth generation “of them that hate me” (Exodus 20:5). Otherwise God shows mercy to thousands of generations of those who love Him. The sin cycle can be broken by repentance and the mercy and grace of God. The context is clear.

While it is true that God holds parents accountable for sinful

example, and at times innocent family members suffer *social* consequences — it is essential to keep in mind that demons are not even mentioned in the passages. How does Meyer get spirits and demons into those verses? Purely by imagination. She injects them, thus adding to and distorting the Word of God. Meyer totally abuses the Scripture and inserts things that are not there. It would be like reading a newspaper story about a political race and trying to convince people it is all about a horse race.

STICKING IT TO JOYCE

Meyer also teaches the validity of Satanic curses. She, herself, alleges to have been the recipient of a voodoo curse. Years before entering full-time ministry, a coworker who “despised” Meyer made a voodoo doll of her and stuck it with pins. The effect, Meyer claims, left her “foggy and far out,” with “real strange feelings” in her body for “years and years and years.”⁷⁶

While some may utter a curse or claim a curse on us, are they really effective as far as Christians are concerned? Do unsaved people really have that power over a believer? Believers have been delivered from the power of darkness (Colossians 1:13). John says, “greater is He who is in us than he who is in the world” (1 John 4:4). Technically, God alone has the power to effectively curse someone as clearly taught in many places in Scripture. Christ became a curse for us and redeemed us from the curse of the law (Galatians 3:13).⁷⁷

Pastor and author David Kirkwood advises:

“...there is no record of Paul breaking any ‘Satanic curses’ or binding Satan’s power over them after they were saved. The reason is because they were automatically set free from Satan’s dominion the moment they first believed in Jesus.”⁷⁸

Thomas Ice and Robert Dean debunk many of the modern warfare myths that circulate in deliverance

circles today. They remind us:

“This kind of ‘I-inherited-it-from-my-parents’ view is also a popular explanation for all kinds of aberrant behavior within many Christian psychology circles as well. It is used to explain mental and emotional disease, chronic sickness, all sorts of female problems from miscarriage to PMS, marriage and financial problems, rebellious teenagers, etc. But the idea that a Christian might have to be delivered specifically from a curse or occult power which salvation in Christ has not taken care of is not found in Scripture. In fact *there is not one example in the entire Bible of a saved person being under a satanic curse which had to be broken by Christian exorcism or distinct confession.* The only curses which the Bible treats as effective are those uttered by God. This attempt to shift responsibility for current failures to someone else is reminiscent of Adam’s attempt to shift the blame for his sin to Eve.”⁷⁹

The real danger with Meyer’s teaching is that she binds yokes upon people whom God never intended to bear them. It creates paranoia and demon obsession. One is sidetracked from healthy growth into a vain expedition digging out non-existent demons from their history. It is a bait-and-switch tactic that lures Christians into seeing things that are not really there. Meyer’s teaching is worse than junk-food doctrine, it is doctrine that makes for mental and spiritual sickness. It is very unhealthy. The old cliché, “demons behind every bush,” is now demons behind every relative.

TOTALLY OUT OF TOUCH

Meyer goes on to ridicule those with the gift of discernment, disparaging that precious gift from God, and saying that those who exercise discernment are “always squint-eyed” and have a “spirit of suspicion” on them.⁸⁰ Obviously she has none, which is unfortunate for her hearers. It is obvious that they have none as

well, if they do not protest any of this, but laugh and cheer her on.

Meyer goes on to say that her education in demonology came from a prominent book by a Christian author, but she refuses to give either the author’s name or the title of the book.⁸¹

Meyer has many “war” stories, but of course they are just stories and anecdotal evidence with no corroborating evidence or proof. We are simply to believe Meyer’s stories and her interpretations of the stories. She discloses an arrangement of deliverance episodes which are said to have happened in her home. For her listening audience, it seems the more bizarre, the better. Yet it must be asked, were the people involved legitimate? Were they mentally disturbed? Were

piggyback is never suggested in Ephesians 6 or anywhere else. Vomiting is never given as a mark of spiritual progress.

Meyer claims she is able to “judge between what is just a work of the flesh or just that sin nature, and what is somebody who really has a demon.” She says it “is when that person begins to say to you, ‘I can’t control myself.’ That’s one of the things I listen for when somebody comes to me for ministry.”⁸³ She encourages her listeners to employ this same methodology. Thus, for Meyer and her followers, apparently persons who say they can’t control themselves are no longer dealing with a deeply rooted sin nature or lack of self-discipline, but by demons. It is, according to Meyer, a case of *the devil made me do it!*

On one occasion she and her pastor, Rick Shelton, supposedly rode a large demonized woman piggyback around her house while the woman vomited on every towel Meyer had in the house.

they simply physically sick or perhaps deranged? These kinds of hard questions can never be posed about the secondhand tales on a tape.

Meyer claims that she has had people in her home, hitting her, spitting on her, throwing up on her, socking her in the face, and running crazed through the house. On one occasion she and her pastor, Rick Shelton, supposedly rode a large demonized woman piggyback around her house while the woman vomited on every towel Meyer had in the house.⁸² Was Meyer just the victim of some wild charade, or is she merely exaggerating for effect? Though we will never know, we do know her actions and activities are in no way biblical. It is only her word that she was dealing with demons. Riding

Jay Adams, in his biblical treatise on anger, shows the fallacy of Meyer’s premise:

“Like many others, you have bought the false line that under certain circumstances you are totally unable to control your temper. That is false, I say, because the Bible assures us that if you know Jesus Christ as your Saviour, you can. God calls upon you to do just that... When you say *can’t*, what you really mean is you *don’t* or *won’t*. You may have convinced yourself that you can’t, but that doesn’t change the facts. You can; God says so.”⁸⁴

Adams’ comments can be well applied beyond the sin of uncontrolled

(or misdirected) anger. They can equally pertain to drunkenness, immorality, or any other lusts of the flesh. When one claims, "I can't control myself," we must never ignore personal responsibility in favor of a demon, as Meyer tells us. Would Meyer argue that the Apostle Paul had a demon when he revealed his own struggles with sin in Romans 7?

Whether knowingly or unknowingly, Meyer speaks as though she is into a form of mind science. She alleges that sickness cannot get you unless you accept it in your mind. This is certainly regurgitation of positive confession, Word Faith, and Latter Rain ideas. Positive affirmations are supposed to guarantee health and wealth. We are to believe that we can speak a new reality into existence. As PFO director Steve Cannon has stated, the basic error of Word Faith is: "No negatives are allowed. God wants you healthy, wealthy, and wise."⁸⁵ Meyer contends: "The faith movement is right. You can't throw the faith movement out the window."⁸⁶ She also teaches that, "We need to have faith-filled words going out of our mouth."⁸⁷

Job and Jesus would be indicted if Meyer was right. Both spoke realistically and truthfully in discussing the negatives of life. If Meyer was right, we would be forced to throw out Romans 8 and reject Paul because he realistically spoke of the "sufferings of this present time" and his "thorn in the flesh."

Meyer then gets her audience involved in a silly exercise of putting an open Bible on their heads, pretending it is a graduating cap.⁸⁸ "You're not all playing my game. Ah, you're afraid it'll mess your hair up, aren't you," she scolds.⁸⁹

On another occasion, after having her audience go through the same silly exercise, Meyer repeats to them an obvious error. She relates, "I heard one man say not too long ago, and I really like this. He said the verb for 'believe' and 'obey' are the exact same verb in Greek. So he said if you can't believe, just obey, because it's the

same thing."⁹⁰ Even a first-year Greek student knows they are not the same. They are not even close. Both may be acts of the will, but one has to do with trust and content, the other content and action. One may flow from the other, but they are not the same in Greek at all. "Believe" is from the noun *pistis*, and "obey" from the noun *hupakoe*. Yet Meyer will say "always tell the truth." Amazing. We can only conclude that in some areas she just does not know the truth. She even tells untruths dogmatically.

Joyce Meyer's teaching is a mass of contradictions and confusion. Her ramblings are mired with miscues, misinterpretation, misunderstandings, mistranslations, mysticism, mistakes, and just downright muddle. Meyer claims, "You need to know how to rightly divide truth. ... So you can't have a whole lot of truth and a little bit of error. You need to have all truth."⁹¹ She has grossly violated her own rule and standard.

Meyer is an unsafe guide, a sinking ship, and certainly not a port in any storm. Her teachings can only confuse and mislead her many avid, but gullible followers. She is a sad case of a little knowledge being a great danger. It would not be surprising if, in light of the above criticisms which establish Meyer's demonology biblically invalid and erroneous, she would desist from any further selling of her *How to Fight the Devil and Win!* series. This has been her custom in the past when biblical criticism has exposed her unorthodox teaching.

However, regarding these taped teachings, her announcer proclaimed each tape in the series as "anointed teaching," and Meyer herself repeatedly said they were God-given. Meyer, with her claims of anointing and divine revelation, has placed herself in a precarious position. If she discontinues selling the tapes, she is withholding "anointed teaching" and "important information the devil hopes you will never find out." If she continues to make the tapes available, one could conclude then that God is confused and contradicts Himself and is responsible for false teaching at

worst, and confused teaching at best. We know that the latter cannot be right and either way we must lay the blame totally and completely at the feet of Meyer. Christians who think Meyer a sound and reliable teacher need to carefully reconsider such an evaluation.

Endnotes:

1. Joyce Meyer, "Familiar Spirits & Generational Curses," tape 4, sides 1 and 2. From the series: *How to Fight the Devil and Win!* Fenton, Mo.: Joyce Meyer Ministries, no date.
2. Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1994, Vol. VII, pp. 336-337.
3. *Ibid.*, pg. 337.
4. Alfred Edersheim, *Bible History Old Testament*. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 2001, pg. 687.
5. See for example, C. Fred Dickason, *Demon Possession and the Christian*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1987, pg. 224.
6. *How to Fight the Devil and Win!*, op. cit., cassette album, back cover, bold and upper case type in original.
7. Ken Walker, "The Preacher Who Tells It Like It Is," *Charisma*, November 1998, cover and pg. 48.
8. FOX-TV Saint Louis, "Joyce to the World," KTVI, Nov. 11, 2001, video tape on file.
9. For information on the early ministry and teachings of Meyer, see G. Richard Fisher and Paul R. Belli, "Doctrinal Ambiguity of a Wandering Star," *The Quarterly Journal*, Vol. 16, No. 1. Also, Paul R. Belli and G. Richard Fisher, "The Preacher Who Doesn't Tell It Like It Is," *The Quarterly Journal*, Vol. 19, No. 2.
10. "Joyce to the World," op. cit.
11. For example, she cites the failure of a message she gave because "Well, what happened was we didn't sell hardly any tapes that night." ("Deliverance & The Character of Satan," tape 6, side 1. From the series, *How to Fight the Devil and Win!*, op. cit.) She also addresses Christians with a lack of integrity — those who say God told them to support her ministry, but became infrequent in their giving and then stop altogether. ("How to Defend Yourself Against the Devil (Pt. 1)," tape 7, side 2. From the series, *How to Fight the Devil and Win!*, op. cit.)
12. "Joyce to the World," op. cit.
13. "How to Defend Yourself Against the Devil (Pt. 1)," op. cit., side 1.
14. Joyce Meyer, "Satan & Demons — Origin & Fall," tape 1, side 1. From the series, *How to Fight the Devil and Win!*, op. cit.

15. Joyce Meyer, "Deliverance & The Character of Satan," op. cit., side 2.
16. Joyce Meyer, "Witchcraft & Related Spirits (Pt. 2)," tape 3, side 1. From the series, *How to Fight the Devil and Win!*, op. cit.
17. Joyce Meyer, "Generational Curses & Deliverance," tape 5, side 1. From the series, *How to Fight the Devil and Win!*, op. cit.
18. "Deliverance & The Character of Satan," op. cit., side 2.
19. "Satan & Demons — Origin & Fall," op. cit., side 1.
20. Frank M. Boyd, *Book of the Prophet Ezekiel*. Springfield, Mo.: Gospel Publishing House, 1951, pg. 130.
21. Ibid.
22. Harry Ironside, *Expository Notes on Ezekiel The Prophet*. Neptune, N.J.: Loizeaux Brothers, 1984, pg. 192.
23. "Satan & Demons — Origin & Fall," op. cit., side 2.
24. Ibid.
25. See further, C. Douglas Weaver, *The Healer Prophet*. Macon, Ga.: Mason University Press, 2000, pp. 120, 173.
26. Roland Buck, *Angels on Assignment*. Kingwood, Texas: Hunter Books, 1979.
27. "Satan & Demons — Origin & Fall," op. cit., side 2.
28. Ibid.
29. Benny Hinn, "Personal Testimony," Orlando Christian Center, Orlando, Fla., July 19, 1987, tape #A071987, tape on file.
30. Consider these examples: "I am going to tell you something right now. I no more believe that my God is going to let me stand around and believe a lie than I believe that I'm going to turn green in the next two minutes. ... And if I'm accidentally or any other way getting into error, I am going to have a bell go off in the inside of me that is going to be so loud that not only am I going to hear it, but so is everybody else." (Joyce Meyer, "Witchcraft & Related Spirits (Pt. 1)," tape 2, side 2. From the series, *How to Fight the Devil and Win!*, op. cit.)
31. See for example, W.E. Vine, *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1985, New Testament section, pp. 520-521, 687.
32. W.H. Griffith Thomas, *Studies in Colossians and Philemon*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1973, pg. 94.
33. Ibid., pp. 93-94.
34. "Witchcraft & Related Spirits (Pt. 1)," op. cit., side 1.
35. Ibid.
36. "Familiar Spirits & Generational Curses," op. cit., side 2.
37. That is, Joseph Smith Jr. and the angel Moroni who allegedly gave him gold plates containing *The Book of Mormon*.
38. See, John Ankerberg and John Weldon, *Encyclopedia of Cults and New Religions*. Eugene, Ore.: Harvest House Publishers, 2000, pp. 105-106.
39. See, Mary Baker Eddy, *Science and Health with Key to the Scripture*. Boston: The First Church of Christ, Scientist, 1875, pp. viii-ix.
40. Walter Martin, *The Riddle of Reincarnation*. Santa Ana, Calif.: Vision House Publishers, 1977, pp. 20-21.
41. Joyce Meyer, "How to Defend Yourself Against the Devil (Pt. 1)," op. cit., side 1 and "How to Defend Yourself Against the Devil (Pt. 2)," tape 8, side 2. From the series, *How to Fight the Devil and Win!*, op. cit.
42. Conversation between Robert Lowery and M. Kurt Goedelman, Dec. 23, 2001, and subsequent statement by Lowery's office to PFO, Feb. 1, 2002.
43. Joyce Meyer Ministries letter to PFO, Nov. 27, 2001, copy on file.
44. "Witchcraft & Related Spirits (Pt. 1)," op. cit., side 2.
45. Ibid.
46. "Witchcraft & Related Spirits (Pt. 2)," op. cit., sides 1 and 2.
47. "Witchcraft & Related Spirits (Pt. 1)," op. cit., side 2.
48. "How to Defend Yourself Against the Devil (Pt. 2)," op. cit., side 2.
49. "Witchcraft & Related Spirits (Pt. 2)," op. cit., side 1.
50. "Familiar Spirits & Generational Curses," op. cit., side 1.
51. Ibid., side 2.
52. Ibid.
53. "How to Defend Yourself Against the Devil (Pt. 2)," op. cit., side 2.
54. Ibid., side 1.
55. Ibid., side 2.
56. "Witchcraft & Related Spirits (Pt. 2)," op. cit., side 2.
57. "How to Defend Yourself Against the Devil (Pt. 2)," op. cit., side 2.
58. Jay E. Adams, *Competent to Counsel*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1970, pg. 144.
59. "Witchcraft & Related Spirits (Pt. 2)," op. cit., side 2.
60. "Deliverance & The Character of Satan," op. cit., side 1.
61. W.E. Vine, *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, op. cit., Old Testament section, pp. 108-109.
62. Ibid., New Testament section, pg. 297.
63. "Witchcraft & Related Spirits (Pt. 2)," op. cit., side 1.
64. Ibid., side 2.
65. "Familiar Spirits & Generational Curses," op. cit., side 1.
66. "Witchcraft & Related Spirits (Pt. 2)," op. cit., side 2.
67. For example, modern day prophets like Mike Bickle, Rick Joyner, Benny Hinn, and others have all failed in their prophetic utterances.
68. Hank Hanegraaff, *Counterfeit Revival*. Dallas: Word Publishing, 1997, pg. 77.
69. "Generational Curses & Deliverance," op. cit., side 1.
70. "Familiar Spirits & Generational Curses," op. cit., side 2.
71. Ibid., side 1.
72. "Generational Curses & Deliverance," op. cit., side 1.
73. Here Meyer offers yet another paradox saying, "You can think this is my opinion if you want to, but God's spoken to me..." ("Familiar Spirits & Generational Curses," op. cit., side 1.)
74. "Generational Curses & Deliverance," op. cit., side 1.
75. Ibid.
76. "Familiar Spirits & Generational Curses," op. cit., side 1.
77. See further, M. Kurt Goedelman, "Quick Fixes and Spiritual Baggage," *The Quarterly Journal*, Vol. 22, No. 1, and G. Richard Fisher and M. Kurt Goedelman, "The Curse of Curse Theology - The Return of Rebecca Brown," *The Quarterly Journal*, Vol. 16, No. 3.
78. David Kirkwood, *Modern Myths About Satan and Spiritual Warfare*. Pittsburgh: Ethnos Press, 1994, pg. 132.
79. Thomas Ice and Robert Dean, Jr., *Overrun by Demons*. Eugene, Ore.: Harvest House Publishers, 1990, pp. 180-181, italics in original.
80. "Familiar Spirits & Generational Curses," op. cit., side 2.
81. "Generational Curses & Deliverance," op. cit., side 2.
82. Ibid.
83. Ibid.
84. Jay Adams, "What Do You Do When Anger Gets The Upper Hand?" Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R Publishing, 1975, pamphlet, italic in original.
85. See, Stephen F. Cannon, "The Presumptuous Teachings of the Word Faith Movement," *The Quarterly Journal*, Vol. 8, No. 4. This article is available in tract form from PFO.
86. "Witchcraft & Related Spirits (Pt. 1)," op. cit., side 2.
87. "Satan & Demons — Origin & Fall," op. cit., side 2.
88. "How to Defend Yourself Against the Devil (Pt. 1)," op. cit., side 2.
89. Ibid.
90. "How to Defend Yourself Against the Devil (Pt. 2)," op. cit., side 1.
91. "Witchcraft & Related Spirits (Pt. 1)," op. cit., side 1.

that “the Church was dead.” PFO has on file a tape recording of the Family Bible Radio staff meeting. At the meeting, employees asked for specific Scriptures. Camping replies with out-of-context Old Testament verses twisted to conform to his new thesis. In the recording, Camping tells his employees that if they cannot accept this new revelation, he will help them find other work.³

Is the Church dead? Camping goes on record when he writes:

Biblical prediction of the expectation of an increasingly dead church and the actuality of a robust healthy presentation of the Gospel by means of an organization like Family Radio.”⁵

“Indeed we must realistically admit the churches of today cannot by any means fulfill Christ’s command to go into all the world with the Gospel. Fact is, if we honestly evaluate the totality of the mission effort that is based on a true presentation of the whole counsel of God, we must admit the situation is hopeless.”⁶

must now refer to any Christian gathering as a fellowship only. Camping will not even refer to Family Radio as “parachurch.”

- The Church today cannot, in any way, fulfill the Great Commission. The proof of this, says Camping, is the church of Sardis in Revelation 3:1. It says that Sardis “had a name that lives” meaning the whole Church is dead and this verse is a prophecy of that fact. Hazardous hermeneutics.

- Only Family Radio stations can preach and fulfill the Great Commission. This is a fulfillment of radio airwaves as the instrument of God during the tribulation period that we already have entered. Preaching is the instrument of God, whether done in pulpits or on air waves. Camping has no right to arbitrarily confine God to his radio station in an elitist fashion.

- The ceasing of Old Testament ceremonies somehow proves that Baptism and the Lord’s Supper are obsolete and can no longer be practiced. In the question and answer session at the staff meeting, Camping did not declare the exact timing of this ceasing, but only specified it was a few years back and corresponded to what he labels the “satanic Charismatic signs and wonders movement.” Ordinances are down and out — period. Camping seems to know this, based on some misty timeline that was crossed years ago. He seems to be the only one who knows for sure.

- Even Bible-believing churches are the same as Baal altars and “high places” of the Old Testament. In God’s eyes, they need to be destroyed. The arrogance and elitism of Camping is blatant and obnoxious here.

- All offices of pastor, elder, and deacon are abolished as there is no longer any office in God’s eyes because there is no Church. If one meets with other believers, it is without leaders and is to be called a fellowship.

“On the one hand we see churches everywhere becoming more and more apostate. Yet on the other hand we see a ministry like Family Radio becoming more and more useful to the Lord in sending the true Gospel into the world.”

– Harold Camping

“What is going on? Certainly something strange is happening. On the one hand we see churches everywhere becoming more and more apostate. Yet on the other hand we see a ministry like Family Radio becoming more and more useful to the Lord in sending the true Gospel into the world. ... Indeed any spiritually minded believer must admit something drastic has happened and is happening in even the most conservative of the churches.”⁴

The dead state of the churches today and the rise of Family Radio is right from the Bible — or so Camping says:

“However, there appears to be a major contradiction between the

Perhaps, it has not dawned on Camping that many of his shows are church-sponsored, church-related, church-funded, and that his supporters are connected to churches. Moreover, Camping acts as though he is omniscient. He cannot know the state of all churches.

The broad strokes of Camping’s startling and shocking new revelations or new discoveries from the Bible (he says) are as follows. A summary of his booklet, *Has the Era of the Church Age Come to an End?*, as well as the tape of his September 20 staff meeting reveals:

- The Church is dead. Not just the apostate or liberal churches. God is finished with *all* churches and the Church age is over. It is even wrong to use the word “church” and we

• Somehow Daniel 12 predicted this very day and the light Camping has received. This new teaching, he claims, on the Church age ending is all there in that chapter.

Camping has spent his entire career formulating and trying to float mystical numerology, prophetic dates, and strange and inaccurate translations of select verses. Often his wobbly ideas are held up by one verse and a shaky cultic interpretation of it. He seems incapable of sorting out the Bible from his interpretation of the Bible.

In a past phone interview when PFO pressed him to show us a verse to verify his interpretation of certain numbers in Scripture, he kept saying, "All Scripture is given by inspiration from God." It was hardly an answer for his strange understanding of certain verses. He serves up his distorted biblical interpretations and his followers hardly understand they are being grossly misled.

A LEAKY BOAT

The teaching of the Church's demise also was given at Camping's 2001 Tuscarora Conference, held August 2001 at the Tuscarora Inn and Conference Center in Mt. Bethel, Pa. Here Camping "proved" his wild claim by rambling through the Book of Acts. He called the boat in the storm in Acts 27 a picture of the Church and observed that Jesus was not in the boat. This, Camping believes, means that Christ is no longer with or in the Church.

Apparently, it means nothing to Camping that the "angel of God" was in the boat (v. 23) or that Paul knew Christ was *in him* in the boat (Colossians 1:27). Also, Paul promised them deliverance only if they stayed in the boat. It also apparently means nothing to Camping that the Church is never likened to a boat in the New Testament. The Tuscarora Conference errors were rebroadcast Thanksgiving week 2001 over the Family Radio network.

If anyone had doubts before that Camping was strange, quirky, and even cultic, there is little doubt now.

This new revelation is a partial rehash of his *1994?* and *Are You Ready?* books. The same misinterpreted verses and numerology are used in the new paradigm — except for the date for Christ's return, which is now left out. Camping has ratcheted things up a bit and painted himself into the proverbial corner. He has locked himself into an impossible extreme.

THE WILDER THE BETTER

As our culture overtakes the Church, we see laughing revivals, Vineyard craziness with people justifying animal sounds in worship, claims of gold dust and angel feathers, promotion of healing statues, vomiting as a sign of ancestral demons being expelled, and the nonsense and altered states of Benny Hinn and Pensacola meetings. There is also the latest in Jabez paraphernalia — Jabez coins.

This is "believe it or not." The bizarre is not only welcomed, but demanded. Designer prophets — who are no longer called fortune-tellers — will deliver personal prophecies. Nothing is off-limits and no experience is too wild and crazy to report and pass off as being from God. Everyone's experience or interpretation seems valid. It is really the era of the confused and superstitious Church.

Joni Eareckson Tada sees the disastrous trend:

"We play fast and loose with the word of God these days. In-depth Bible study and examining verses in their context takes too much time. People seem to prefer instant revelation and 'words of knowledge' on the spot."⁷

Tada also sees the real issue:

"How can I possibly engage this brother or sister in a meaningful debate, if they claim they are speaking *ex cathedra*, or 'from the throne'? It's a dead-end discussion."⁸

Enter Harold Camping and a world already primed for the new and

strange. A world where anything goes and even God seems out of control and unable to govern Himself by His own Word.

As earlier noted, everything that Camping articulated to his staff at the September 20 staff meeting was all taught by him to a degree in the book *1994?* Because of his insistence on Jesus returning in September 1994, most critics took on that issue and overlooked the rest. After all, the end of the world should get some attention. Did Camping know something no one else did?

NOW YOU SEE IT, NOW YOU DON'T

Camping has always played a sleight-of-hand game that is hardly picked up by a casual observer. It is what could be called "sandwich hermeneutics." Camping believes that not only is the Bible inspired, but his interpretations are, too. However, he would never directly say it that way. He may hardly notice that that is what he is doing when he makes the claim that he only gets his teaching from the Bible and proves one verse by proof-texting and "comparing the Bible with the Bible." His followers will swear he "only uses the Bible." Major cults claim the same thing. The manipulation is hard to catch — at least at first.

His sandwich hermeneutics work like this: Imagine I tell you, "I have a good piece of bread," but I then (very quickly) lay on the bread a tainted piece of meat (which you've hardly noticed) and quickly top it with another piece of good bread. I deftly add another slice of tainted meat and then top that with another piece of good bread. I did it so fast and so easily that it was hardly seen. I then declare it a good sandwich. It is good because I said so.

Camping's good bread is Scripture. The bad meat is his interpretation. Camping's sandwiches are Scriptures with tainted and twisted interpretations which are put together so fast you hardly realize what you have been given. He is in a closed circle of

reasoning. He then assures us that he only uses the Bible and nothing else. However, he is interpreting and assigning questionable definitions and false meanings as he goes.

BIBLE HOPSCOTCH

So Camping will quote a verse saying, for instance, that “judgment begins at the house of God.” He quickly drops in a statement that all churches fail and go apostate. He tops it with a verse to the church in Sardis “having a name that lives and is dead” (Revelation 3:1). He suggests that Sardis is prophetic of the whole Church (tainted interpretation). The final piece of bread is Satan warring against the Church in Revelation. Has he really proven his point and only used the Bible?

Camping, in his booklet, *Has the Era of the Church Age Come to an End?*, asserts, “As a matter of fact God declared in 1 Peter 4:17 **‘judgment must begin at the house of God.’**”⁹ By this he means that judgment has already taken place (his interpretation), as his booklet later concludes. We will see that as we progress.

Camping goes on:

“But there is a larger plan of God that must be looked at. This plan shows that a time will come when God will no longer use the churches and congregations to bring the Gospel to the world. They instead will come under the wrath of God.”¹⁰

Using Leviticus 26:27-31, Camping then begins to compare the Church to “high places” or pagan altars.¹¹ Is this really comparing Scripture to Scripture or just imposing non-related Scripture on other parts of the Bible? It all happens so quickly. Nearly without our realizing it, the pagan altars have quickly been turned into churches!

Camping then compares churches to Baalism, saying, “But is it true, that our churches are free of high places? The Bible shows us that the churches of today are not at all free of the high places.”¹² Camping does not prove

his statement, but simply quotes 2 Corinthians 10:4-6 and pretends it makes his point. It’s another quickly made sandwich.

Camping then goes on to name the “high places” that are in the Church:

“Such conclusions that there can be divorce for fornication, baptismal regeneration, our faith is an instrument that God uses to bring us to salvation, a future millennium, women can pastor a church, universal atonement, our acceptance of Christ as a requirement for salvation, are typical of many doctrines solemnly adopted by churches. But these are high places, in that they have come from the exalted minds of men instead of coming from God.”¹³

We can be absolutely sure that Baal worshipers of the Old Testament were not involved in any of the above issues.

While some may feel very strongly about trying to counteract ideas of baptismal regeneration and women pastors, can we honestly say that all the rest of the statements are pagan ideas equivalent to Baalism or “high places” and divide over them? Cannot the other things be debated under the pale of orthodoxy? Unfortunately, Camping has set himself up unilaterally as the new evangelical pope. His view is the only view.

He continues:

“This coincides with the warning of Revelation 11 that the time will come when the work of the church to bring the Gospel, as typified by the two witnesses, is finished. ... This punishment would take place when the obedience of the churches had been fulfilled. We have already seen that the obedience was fulfilled when the work of the two witnesses had been finished.”¹⁴

If the finishing of the witnesses is the present finishing of the Church, what is the resurrection of the wit-

nesses in the same chapter? Camping does not get that far.

Over the centuries, good men have argued for the two witnesses of Revelation 11 being past (preterists), or the witnesses being future (futurists), but only Camping has used these witnesses to prove the most unlikely scenario that the Church is now dead. Other than Camping saying so, why would one interpret the witnesses as being the Church? Camping also misses the point that the witnesses have the approval of God (Revelation 11:11-12), not His condemnation.

Camping further teaches we are in the tribulation period:

“While a number of Scriptures detail the character of the great tribulation, there are two that are especially in evidence so that we need have no doubt that we have arrived to that final event.”¹⁵

Matthew 24:24 talks of false christs and false prophets and is cited by Camping, asserting that “This evidence alone assures us that we are living in the period of the great tribulation.”¹⁶ While the verse does address the facts of the tribulation, *it does not address the timing*. The interpretation Camping gives for the timing of the tribulation is tainted meat thrown into the sandwich. The timing issue is foisted in. Nowhere is the exact timing of these events laid out.

During his September 20 staff meeting, Camping talked of seeing the tribulation *occurring now*, just about everywhere he opens the Bible. The truth is he imposes that idea on every Scripture he looks at. He told his staff:

“But as I studied Hezekiah. ... I began to get an understanding of the great tribulation ... in which we are a part of right now. ... when we came to Acts 21 we found that it was guiding us down the same path. Exactly the same path, that — that there’s going to come a time when the Church Age has come to an end. ... I’m scared, I’m frightened at

where this is going. ... It looks like we are going to come to a point where the Bible is teaching the Church is dead."¹⁷

So sandwiched between Hezekiah and Acts 21 we are told we are in the tribulation and Camping is leading down a road that will tell us the Church is now dead.

Camping further says he found this tribulation/death of the Church truth in Ezekiel with Tyre and Sidon, and in Luke 21 where Jerusalem is encompassed with enemies. He says "a light went on." So it seems whenever and wherever he opens the Bible, he sees the death of all institutional churches. He then is so bold as to say, "The Bible is clear." The Bible may be clear, but his interpretations are not.

ONLY ME

Camping seems out of touch and has gone tone deaf to others' music. He has acquired some kind of remnant syndrome, and in the words of Elijah, must be thinking, "I alone am left."

Camping says that the fact that Family Radio is not under Church authority and yet remains true to Scripture is a reason "we can know that we are in that time of the great tribulation."¹⁸ How does being a parachurch organization prove anything — unless Camping is trying to reinforce his argument to say everyone's organization is dead but Family Radio. But it still does not make his point.

Using Jeremiah 29 and the prophecy of the Babylonian destruction, Camping concludes that we ought not to stay in our churches:

"In other words it was God's plan that no one was to remain in Jerusalem. ... Get out of Jerusalem (the church). No longer are you to be under the spiritual rulership of the church. This command is given because God is finished with the era of churches being used of God to evangelize. ... The message should be clear. We must remove ourselves from the church."¹⁹

Camping further maintains that "Because the church era has come to an end the churches have become dead as the church of Sardis long ago became dead."²⁰

To use the Babylonian captivity of Israel as a model for the Church raises the question: Does the Church die and then in 70 years come alive again? Should we even try to salvage our churches? Camping quickly throws in "there will not be left one stone upon another."²¹ Yes, Camping decrees, forget your church — do not try to redeem it. He speaks against anyone who may think they can resurrect this dead church by removing all the "high places."

Camping arbitrarily picks things that were destroyed and subjectively makes them pictures of the Church. Why not take all the things that were not destroyed? The wood, hay, and stubble of 1 Corinthians 3 is clearly defined in the Bible as the believer's "work" (v. 14), not the Church.

Though the Jewish Temple was destroyed and that prophecy fulfilled in A.D. 70 as Jesus prophesied, it means nothing to Camping. The Temple's destruction has Camping simply concluding that "the era of the church as an institution used of God has come to and [sic] end."²²

We must realize that this new teaching has dire and disastrous consequences, which Camping cavalierly brushes over in his final words. He pushes lack of accountability and independence to a new level:

"If a person or family is a member of a church they can withdraw their membership and fellowship on sundays [sic] with whomever there may be who are of like mind."²³

Roughly translated, this means Camping's followers can meet with other Camping followers with no leadership or direction. Camping cares little if churches everywhere collapse. Consider further:

"For that individual that is not a trauma because he has become

convinced that the church era has come to an end and the church no longer has any divine authority. ... The elders will no longer be elders. The deacons will no longer be deacons. The Pastor will no longer be pastor. In other words no individuals will have spiritual rule over the congregation. ... This is so because now that the church as a corporate institution has no spiritual authority, each person must answer directly to God."²⁴

TIME TO JUST SAY "NO!"

Camping has no hermeneutic but his own. In short, verses mean whatever he wants them to mean. It is time for his board and staff to deal with him and not let him go on with the doctrinal insanity he is promoting. It is time for the Church to rise up and say "enough is enough." This should have been done in 1992 (when he first published his book 1994?), and we would not now have the proliferation of even more cultic teaching. Unfortunately, money and power talk, and talk so loud they often silence the recipients. Money, it seems, does talk, and in this case says whatever it pleases. At a time when truth is needed, many are falling silent. Camping's extremes call not for public relations, but for public rebuke (Romans 16:17-18). The other sad fact is that Camping, no doubt, is taking the compromise and silence as endorsement and encouragement.

In writing about terrorism, former Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu mentions a motto of Zionists Israel Zangwill, one of Israel's early leaders. This principle is *Obsta principiis*, which Netanyahu says is "oppose bad things when they are small."²⁵

People around Camping did not confront him with his strange numerology in the early years. Everyone looked the other way because of what they saw as all the good he was doing with the radio. They did not stop him with his 1994 extremes and his scheme of the Second Coming and the

end of the world. After all, jobs were at stake. Now the bad things are no longer small, but have reached alarming proportions with his wholesale indictment of all churches and his denigrating of pastors and church leaders. He has forgotten that these are his support base.

Sadly, some ministries have accommodated Camping and are editing out all references to the Church, pastors, elders, deacons, or ordinances of the Church. It is a compromise that is a tacit endorsement of Camping's extremes and elitism. All for the sake of staying on the radio.

BEEN THERE, DONE THAT

The 1993 PFO article labeled Camping's book *1994?* as "a labyrinth of subjective speculation, private interpretation and numerical guesswork."²⁶ Camping's view of the Church (all churches) being overrun by false gospels and being ruled by Satan was already being proclaimed nearly a decade ago.²⁷ At that time, however, Camping did not make the death of the Church a do-or-die situation, and his employees were not confronted with "my way or the highway." It may be too late for *Obsta principis*.

Camping has now gone on record with the publication of his new booklet, *Has the Era of the Church Age Come to an End?* It is essentially what he tried to convey to his staff, and his answer to the title is definite, emphatic, and *affirmative*, as we have seen.

This sweeping judgment on all churches further points up one of Camping's major flaws and one of the crucial fallacies in his thinking. He constantly argues from the general and universal to the specific. For instance, all liberal churches have departed from the truth and many conservative churches have compromised the truth, therefore *all* churches are under God's judgment. Or, many churches are not preaching the Gospel, therefore only Family Radio is. Arguing general principles into specific conclusions is not logical.

During the September 20 staff meeting, Camping tries to prove his point by wrestling, twisting, and bending 2 Thessalonians 2:1-10 (regarding Satan in the sanctuary). In effect, Camping says, See, there it is! Satan setting up shop in the temple. And with that, Presto! Satan is somehow ruling all believers in the Church. To further "prove" his argument, Camping throws in Daniel 8:10-14 about the sanctuary being trodden underfoot for 2300 days. How any of that fits, he does not explain. Many Bible commentators have seen Daniel 8 in regard to Israel. And regardless of whether you take the verses literally or figuratively, there is no way to apply them to the Church as does Camping.

What Camping does to Daniel 8 and other passages is criminal. The context of Daniel 8 is clear, and the "sanctuary trampled underfoot" (v. 13) has nothing to do with the Church of today. Daniel was given understanding of the vision (vv. 16-17) and the details were for events some days ahead (v. 26). The details have to do with things that will occur during the time of Persian and into Greek rule (vv. 20-21). The Scripture is its own best interpreter in its context. We know that the Greek Seleucids at the command of Antiochus IV Epiphanes trampled the holy Sanctuary of the temple and committed the "abomination of desolation" by killing a sow on the Jewish altar in Jerusalem. Any of this can be checked in any major commentary.²⁸

Dr. Harry Ironside agrees that "The sanctuary contemplated by Daniel is earthly, and the prophecy has already been fulfilled in 2300 evening-mornings after Antiochus Epiphanes polluted it by setting up a statue of Jupiter Olympus in the holiest."²⁹

The sealing of the vision (Daniel 8:26) had to do with waiting for the unfolding and fulfilling of the details, not waiting for Harold Camping. Hebrew scholars Keil and Delitzsch inform us regarding "time of the end" in Daniel 8:

"...not of the time of the end of all history, but of a nearer relative end of the prophecy. 'Time of the end' is the general prophetic expression for the time which, as the period of fulfillment, lies at the end of the existing prophetic horizon — in the present case the time of Antiochus."³⁰

It eludes Camping that he is proving too much. If Satan were ruling the Temple, and the New Testament says that our body is the Temple, Satan would be ruling Camping's body as well. However, this would be lost on him. Camping will make the Temple the Christian in one place and the Church in another where it suits him.

It is silly to make one symbol the be-all and end-all of any interpretive system. The Church is a building, a flock, a branch, a bride, a lampstand, an army, salt, light, a body, and so forth. Each has a specific thing to teach about the Church's makeup and mission. These are not prophecies in the strict sense and they each have a small bit to tell us about the many functions and responsibilities that we have as Christians. We cannot press the figure of the sanctuary totally out of shape, just as we cannot press any of the other figures and make them a comprehensive picture of all that the Church is. Besides, the Old Testament Sanctuary is clearly of a different category than the New Testament Church in a myriad of ways.

Timothy D. Oliver, director of Christian Soldiers Ministries, has it right when he says, "This all stems from his '1994' fallacy..., which is, of course, a result of his pathetic hermeneutic (he has no boundaries, nor accountability to anyone, or any balanced method)."³¹

Camping tries to tie in Daniel 12 and suggests that the sealing of "the scroll until the time of the end" (v. 4) refers to his new discoveries. This was the same error in interpretation that was used to prop up Camping's *1994?* book. The context is clearly *resurrec-*

tion of bodies (vv. 2-3). The shutting of the book has to do with the awaiting of fulfillment and a guarantee of the same. Again, note Daniel is not speaking of discovery of interpretation, but an absolute promise of fulfillment of details. This has been pointed out by many commentaries in the past. However, Camping's imagination is his own commentary. He is more like a mystical kabalist than a Christian.

Consider what PFO said back in 1993 and how applicable it remains today:

"So, does Camping have anything new to offer in the way of prophetic interpretation? Like a lot of cultists, he misuses Daniel 12:4, 8-9, which speaks of sealing the book until the end and are taken to mean that someone in the end time finally will see into information heretofore unknown and be able to date the coming of Jesus. Many others before Camping have claimed to have this insight."³²

The PFO article then observed:

"Hebrew scholars Keil and Delitzsch deal at length with these verses from Daniel. In Volume 9, pp. 312-313, they show that the Hebrew text has to do with the preservation of Scripture, that Daniel's prophecies will be guarded and preserved until their fulfillment. The 'sealing of the believer' by the Holy Spirit is the preservation of the believer. The text suggests the rendering 'preserved in security against defilement' or 'in safety continue to the end.' The verses are not a license for private interpretation."³³

To state it again, these verses are an indication of future fulfillment and a guarantee from God as to their coming to pass — not an interpretive scheme or a mystical unfolding to one individual. It has nothing to do with our understanding, but with God's

power to do in resurrection all he said He would do.

HARMENEUTICS NOT HERMENEUTICS

There is an old saying that states: "He is a poor judge who starts with his own verdict." Camping starts with his verdict of judgment on the Church and sees it everywhere and in everything.

It is easy to see that he imposes it on every text he visits.

For example, Camping utilizes Matthew 24:24, which says that false christs and false prophets will arise with signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, the very elect. His sweeping conclusion or private interpretation from this broad and general statement is that "No one can honestly say that all is well in today's congregations."³⁴ What does that really mean? Obviously we could not say that all congregations are perfect or that all congregations have other than fallible humans that make them up. However, we do not have to conclude, as Camping subtly suggests, that all congregations are deceived and ruled by Satan. He just does not make his point. He starts with his own verdict.

Further, Camping's use of the church of Sardis is wrong. In Revelation, Christ addresses seven churches, each of them differently. There is no biblical proof that Sardis primarily represents any church but itself.

Revelation 3:2-3 indicates that God was not through with the church at Sardis. Camping's mangling of the text imposes something on Scripture that is not there. Keep in mind Jesus' words to the people at Sardis: "Be watchful and strengthen the things that remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God. Remember, therefore, how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent." Christ then proceeds to speak of those in Sardis who walk with Him and will be honored and confessed by Him. This is not Camping's message at all. Christ honored the remnant in Sardis

and kept working with them. Camping wants to jettison them and the whole Church.

No one — including Camping — knows when the Christian community at Sardis came to an end. This awaits more archaeological information. It is generally assumed that the church there went on with its candlestick burning until the Muslim conquests in the seventh century A.D.³⁵ Other evidence indicates that a Christian community and church continued to exist in Sardis up through the Byzantine era or into the fifth century A.D. There is also evidence of a Christian clergy from this time.³⁶ As the text clearly indicates, the Lord was not through with them.

EAT THIS BREAD, BUT ONLY UNTIL CAMPING SAYS SO

Camping further inflicts injury on the Church and his staff by misleading Christians in thinking that they should no longer practice the ordinances of Baptism or the Lord's Supper. During his initial comments at the September 20 staff meeting, Camping affirmed his obsolescence of the Lord's Supper. Later, in the employee question and answer session, a discerning staff member queried Camping with 1 Corinthians 11:26 ("For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes"). The verse is as clear as day. This ordinance is to continue until Jesus returns. It is "until He comes."

Unfortunately, Camping never answered the question. As is his custom, and as he so often does, he evades the question altogether and goes into a filibuster about Old Testament ceremonial laws which have nothing at all to do with the issue. He calls the New Testament ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper ceremonial laws. Camping mistakes verbosity for explanation. He even talks about creeds, which take the pretended answer even further afield.

Here, in his many words and in many other places, Camping makes a

major category mistake. A category mistake would be like discussing the physical make-up of a man by studying a rock. There is a huge difference between the two, and they are each of a totally different category. Though Baptism and Circumcision are paralleled by Paul in the New Testament, and the Lord's Supper is paralleled with the Passover, they are different categories by content and meaning.

What applies to the duration of the Old Testament ceremonies is never said to apply to Baptism and the Lord's Supper. The purpose of the parallel is to show how one is fulfilled in the other. That is, that the Old is fulfilled in the New. Camping also slips in the idea that Baptism and the Lord's Supper are "ceremonial laws." The New Testament never identifies them that way.

Bible students know that many of the Jewish ceremonial ordinances were said to be "forever." The Hebrew word translated "forever" in the Old Testament is *olam*. The Hebrew word *olam* is wonderfully exegeted and explained by Bible commentator Adam Clarke. Clarke simply says that "in general a time the limits of which are unknown."³⁷

Olam can mean age-long or for an undetermined period of time. The English translation (*everlasting* or *forever*) throws us off. We also know from Jeremiah 31:31 that the Old Testament would be replaced by the New Covenant. So Baptism and the Lord's Supper are totally unrelated to the past ceremonial laws. Old Testament ceremonies and the Lord's Supper are of different categories.

Camping seems to think that a long discourse, responding to anything but the question, qualifies as an answer. As Camping hems and haws through a long dissertation about Old Testament ceremonies, many have already forgotten the question, and that the New Testament text affirms not *olam*, but *until He comes again*. The New Testament wording is not even close to *olam*. The duration is clearly stated

and defined by the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

Camping would rob us of this ordinance and our Lord's command. In contrast, Paul warns: "If anyone does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine that accords with godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words" (1 Timothy 6:3-4).

Likewise, Baptism is clearly outlined in Matthew 28 and is never said to be *olam*, but is to be practiced continually until the end of the present age (vv. 19-20). Christ will tell us by His coming when the end of the age is.

Camping then goes on to try to twist the Baptism of Matthew 28:19 and make it Spirit baptism.³⁸ This does not hold water, since it is a command that the Apostles were told *to do to others*. One person cannot "Spirit baptize" another person — only God can. It makes no sense to read the verse, "Make disciples and then you baptize them in the Spirit." They would not and could not understand it that way. Acts 8, with the conversion of the Ethiopian and his baptism, gives us the confirmation of the understanding of performing water baptism after profession of faith.

Camping's new age has no churches, no ordinances, and no pastors. Responding to Camping's severing the office of pastors and elders, there is no biblical reason for saying these positions are no longer valid. The Apostle Peter instructs elders to go on feeding and instructing the flock until Jesus returns (1 Peter 5:1-4). Peter did not want his charge to those serving as shepherds misunderstood and so he made it very clear.

To read 1 Peter 5:4 in Camping's way, one would have to reword it to say, "When Jesus comes, He better not find you acting like or calling yourselves pastors." Camping may be forced to come up with a scheme like the Jehovah's Witnesses and suggest that Jesus has already returned.

Camping seems to want to get rid of the word "pastor" (Greek: *poimen*), which means "shepherd," and is often used of Jesus. It is used in Acts 20:17, 28, and again in Ephesians 4:11 to indicate the ministry committed to elders.³⁹

In Camping's design, elders and deacons, along with all their responsibilities, should be clipped from major portions of Scriptures. We are also left with no church-planting missionaries, and a hymn book much reduced in size since we can no longer sing, "The Church's one foundation," or any songs that remotely relate to Baptism or the Lord's Supper. Can this new thing be called Christianity at all? Does Camping really realize the ramifications and extent of this bizarre path on which he is trying to take us?

Ultra-dispensationalism has been fought vigorously by the Church since the 1920s and 1930s because it robs us of a portion of the Bible and truth needed by the Church. Dr. Harry Ironside informs us that "some have ignored dispensational truth altogether. Others have swung to an ultra-dispensationalism which is most pernicious in its effect upon one's own soul and upon testimony for God generally."⁴⁰

One of the major defects in ultra-dispensationalism is its revisionist view of the Bible. It reassigned many New Testament passages to a past dispensation and robbed the Church of its direction. Ironside addresses this major flaw, stating "it is insisted that the four Gospels are entirely Jewish and have no real message for the Church, the Body of Christ. All might not put it quite as boldly as this, but certainly their disciples go to the limit in repudiating the authority of the Gospels."⁴¹

REAL RAMIFICATIONS

Camping has now gone beyond the ultra-dispensationalists into an ultra-ultra-dispensational position. It is anti-clerical and anti-ordinance. In his view, there is no institutional Church, therefore we are in a new era or new

dispensation of some kind, or as (according to his staff) he has called it, "the latter rain."⁴²

The anti-ordinance movement is not new, but shows up occasionally in cultic teachings. In the 1880s, "some preachers advocated doing away with Baptism and the Lord's Supper (the ordinances)."⁴³ Similarly, the Anabaptist Ambrosians "taught that ministers were unnecessary."⁴⁴ Fortunately these things were short-lived.

Like it or not, Camping's followers, by virtue of his extremes, have a new Bible. It is a cut-and-paste Bible full of passages that now have no meaning. These archaic passages may have helped the Church for 2,000 years, but no longer. We must now, in essence, jettison large parts of First Timothy and Second Timothy and parts of Titus since they are addressed to churches and are for church use, church structure, and church government. We must throw out all passages that instruct elders and deacons, or instruct the Church regarding elders and deacons.

Just as Thomas Jefferson hoped to eliminate certain things that he deemed unneeded and false with his amended *The Jefferson Bible*,⁴⁵ Camping now stands as final judge and sole arbiter and interpreter of sacred Scripture. We must seek his approval and imprimatur on what is in and what is out.

Camping tries to relegate everything to an understanding of only a universal Church (spiritual remnant Church) — that is, just born-again believers in the world. He is critical of creeds especially as they relate to Church structure and ordinances, but does not deal with the fact that some churches do not use creeds. Though the majority of the references to "Church" in the New Testament are a local body, we are to dismiss those. Camping is wrong in playing one aspect of the Church against the other.

Rev. John Thornbury, a biographer of David Brainerd, wrote a masterful biblical treatment of the Church titled,

The Doctrine of the Church. His words are powerful and perceptive:

"There is nothing inconsistent or incompatible about the contrasting concepts of a local visible church and a universal invisible church. Each has its place in the plan and revelation of God. To deny or despise either is to repudiate a considerable part of God's word. Man is, of course, an extremist by nature, so there is always a danger of one's going too far in one direction or another. One can dote on or even make a fetish of the local church while utterly disregarding the teachings of Scripture on the one universal spiritual body of Christ. On the other hand, it is possible for one to glory so much in membership in the universal church that he fails to pay proper respect to the visible churches on earth. Either situation represents an abnormal and unbalanced approach. As is the case in so many areas of Christian belief, *the truth lies between two extremes*. A *balanced* view of the New Testament teachings on the church comprehends an understanding and appreciation of the oneness of all God's people in the invisible church and a recognition of the importance of the local church and its tasks. ... Until the middle of the 19th century it never occurred to anyone that there was an inconsistency in holding to both."⁴⁶

CRISIS OF CONSCIENCE?

PFO applauds the courage of Joseph Jacowitz, an 18-year veteran at Family Radio on KEAR-San Francisco and the host of the network's "Prayer-time" program for ten years. On Monday, Nov. 5, 2001, Jacowitz resigned publicly over the airwaves, stating:

"In good conscience I can no longer be identified with a ministry whose President calls for the destruction and dissolution of the church. I have disagreed with

Mr. Camping on other points in the past, such as his prediction that Christ would return in 1994, but I stayed with Family Radio because I believe we can serve the Lord together without having to agree on every point of doctrine. But Harold Camping's latest teaching, that every church is apostate, and that all Christians are to leave their churches, and that the office of Pastor and the office of deacon are no longer valid, is crossing the line into severe heresy, and I can no longer serve the Lord in a ministry that hurts the body of Christ in this way."⁴⁷

Sadly, spiritual schizophrenia has set in with some remaining employees and they have rationalized their staying on with Family Radio, saying that they will quietly object to Camping's ideas since the work has done such good in the past.⁴⁸ They will live with extremes in false teaching because part of the station still broadcasts good music and good teachings. Some urge listeners to turn off their radios when Camping comes on. They will not mention churches or pastors, and pray for God to resolve the mess.

Revelation 22 points strongly to the perpetuity or continuance of local churches until Jesus returns. The context clearly is His Second Coming — "I am coming quickly" (vv. 7, 12, 20). In the midst of that Jesus announces: "I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things *for the churches*. I am the root and offspring of David, the bright and morning star" (v. 16). Christ gives His grace to the churches (v. 21), not His condemnation. From the testimony of Scripture, it appears that *churches* are there right up to the end. It is promised by the Alpha and Omega.

Camping certainly fits the sociological definition of a cult, as offered by Ron Rhodes. Rhodes writes that the "Sociological characteristics of cults include such things as authoritarianism, exclusivism, dogmatism, isolationism, and threats of satanic

attack.”⁴⁹ Camping scores big in four out of five characteristics.

Camping in the past has had failed prophecies, and now in the present has false teaching. In the future, he will have a floundering organization, because some people are jumping ship for conscience sake.

In the reverse of the biblical character Samson, who destroyed the Philistine temple, Camping may bring down and destroy Family Radio. He may hurt and injure as many in his declining years as he helped earlier. Sandwich hermeneutics packed with tainted meat may be his end. It will surely not be the end of the Church in its local manifestation. The Church and churches will march on. Camping cannot succeed in simplistically reducing everything to Church universal.

The words of John Thornbury offer this fitting conclusion:

“Without a doubt, the local church has a very important place in the New Testament. One who would discredit or minimize the significance of this divinely ordained institution or forsake it under any pretense whatever has committed a grievous fault.”⁵⁰

Thornbury closes his volume with the words of G. Dana Boardman, former pastor of First Baptist Church of Philadelphia:

“Not that I would for a moment hint that we do not need church organizations or the enforcement of our Master’s ordinances. These we must have and must strenuously maintain; for they are, at least in this world, essential not only to the spread of the gospel, but also to the preservation of the Christian life itself. Indeed, I am almost ready to affirm that without churches — that is, formal organizations — we could hardly have the church — that is, the spiritual organism of which I am speaking to-day. In fact, all life tends to organization, even as

all death tends to disorganization. Accordingly, a church in the sense of a formal organization is as truly a divine institution as the church in the sense of a spiritual organism. He who is too good for a local, visible church is not good enough for the universal, invisible church.”⁵¹

Endnotes:

1. See further, G. Richard Fisher, “Will Jesus Return in 1994? The Prognostications of Harold Camping,” *The Quarterly Journal*, Vol. 13, No. 1, and “Ready for Failure? The Further Prognostications of Harold Camping,” *The Quarterly Journal*, Vol. 14, No. 3.
2. Harold Camping, *1994?* New York: Vantage Press, 1992, pg. 533.
3. “Family Radio Staff Meeting,” Sept. 20, 2001, tape on file.
4. Harold Camping, *Has the Era of the Church Age Come to an End?* Oakland: Family Stations, Inc., no date, pg. 3.
5. *Ibid.*, pg. 4.
6. *Ibid.*, pg. 5.
7. Joni Eareckson Tada, *More Precious Than Silver*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1998, entry for November 26.
8. *Ibid.*
9. *Has the Era of the Church Age Come to an End?*, op. cit., pg. 6, bold in original.
10. *Ibid.*, pg. 7.
11. *Ibid.*, pp. 7-9.
12. *Ibid.*, pg. 11.
13. *Ibid.*, pg. 12.
14. *Ibid.*, pp. 12-13.
15. *Ibid.*, pg. 17.
16. *Ibid.*
17. “Family Radio Staff Meeting,” op. cit.
18. *Has the Era of the Church Age Come to an End?*, op. cit., pg. 18.
19. *Ibid.*, pp. 19-20.
20. *Ibid.*, pg. 21.
21. *Ibid.*
22. *Ibid.*, pg. 22.
23. *Ibid.*
24. *Ibid.*, pp. 22-23.
25. Benjamin Netanyahu, *Fighting Terrorism*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2001, pg. 130.
26. “Will Jesus Return in 1994?”, op. cit., pg. 1.
27. *1994?*, op. cit., pp. 52-54.
28. See, for example, Merrill F. Unger, *Archaeology and the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1975, pp. 40-46; and Paul L. Maier, *Josephus - The Essential Writings*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Kregel Publications, 1988,

pp. 209-210.

29. Harry Ironside, *Daniel The Prophet*. New York: Loizeaux Brothers, 1960, pg. 248.

30. Johann Keil and Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1983, Vol. 9, pg. 310.

31. Letter to PFO, Oct. 30, 2001, ellipsis and parenthesis in original, copy on file.

32. “Will Jesus Return in 1994?”, op. cit., pg. 13.

33. *Ibid.*

34. *Has the Era of the Church Age Come to an End?*, op. cit., pg. 4.

35. See further, *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1975, Vol. 5, pg. 278.

36. See further, Colin J. Hemer, *The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia in Their Local Setting*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1989, pp. 258-259.

37. Adam Clarke, *Clarke’s Commentary*. New York: Abingdon Press, no date, Vol. 1, pg. 137, italic in original.

38. “Family Radio Staff Meeting,” op. cit.

39. See further, W.E. Vine, *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1984, New Testament section, pg. 462.

40. Harry Ironside, *Miscellaneous Papers*. New York: Loizeaux Bros., Inc., 1945, Vol. 2, last chapter, pg. 8.

41. *Ibid.*

42. “Family Radio Staff Meeting,” op. cit.

43. Stephen Lang, *1001 Things You Always Wanted to Know About the Holy Spirit*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999, pg. 103.

44. *Ibid.*, pg. 184.

45. See further, Daniel G. Reid, editor, *The Dictionary of Christianity in America*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1990, pg. 590.

46. John Thornbury, *The Doctrine of the Church*. Lewisburg, Pa.: Heritage Publishers, 1971, pp. 191-192, italics in original.

47. Pastor Joe Jacowitz, “Prayer-time” program, Nov. 5, 2001, transcript of closing comments of broadcast on file. Available online at: www.geocities.com/daverastetter/camping_prayertime.htm

48. See further information posted on www.familyradioiswrong.com

49. Ron Rhodes, *The Challenge of the Cults and New Religions*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 2001, pg. 31.

50. *The Doctrine of the Church*, op. cit., pg. 190.

51. *Ibid.*, pp. 207-208.



revelations from the throne and people really think you are a cut above all Christians. The “special anointed vessel that God speaks through” is the persona at all other times, except when caught flatfooted in gross sin and failure.

In what appears to be a crisp, well-planned, and carefully crafted letter, Liardon admitted to his congregation that he had engaged in a homosexual liaison. But he was quick to say it was “short term.” It was an obvious attempt to minimize the sheer sinfulness and evil that had been done. Apparently, having sex with another man then is not all that bad — as long as it is just once or short term. Moreover, “professional and church counseling” will have him back to normal in three months. However, people with that kind of sin propensity also lie, deceive, and cover up, so who knows? Romans 1 indicates that there is a moral twistedness that is very perverse when one is involved in this type of sinning.

Liardon assured his shocked followers that he would go to a “professional counselor.” Others in certain Charismatic camps would do an exorcism, which probably would be as effective.

What would it sound like if Isaiah, Jeremiah, Paul, or John stood up and told their congregation that they had sex with a man! Then to top it off said, “I am sorry, I am going to the local professional counselor. See you in three months!” Their flock would (and should) be reaching for the nearest stones. Whatever happened to the power of the Gospel, grace, the Holy Spirit, Scripture as sufficient for reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness? Where are the biblical perimeters for discipline and sanctification in Liardon’s revelations about himself?

This is not an appeal for non-forgiveness, but a call for common sense and a biblical approach. At the very least, more time is needed with the Church calling the shots as to if or when Liardon should return without time tables.

Nowhere in his statement does Liardon call what he did unmitigated sin, or what the first chapter of Romans calls it: “ungodliness and unrighteousness” (v. 18), “uncleanness, lust” (v. 24), “vile passions” (v. 26), “against nature” (v. 26), “shameful...error” (v. 27), “debased” (v. 28) and “sexual immorality...wickedness” (v. 28). Rather, Liardon claims it is only a short term moral failure.

Nowadays, admission alone means almost automatic restoration. No one seems to think about one having to build trust, prove themselves, and have a time period to demonstrate repentance. After all, what Liardon admitted to can be a life-dominating sin that will not go away with a trite confession. Even a minimalist view recognizes a year of accountability and real change before

being readmitted to ministry, especially where trust has been shattered. Paul says clearly that real repentance must be radically demonstrated, and that does take time (2 Corinthians 7:8-11). This observation and time table is to be set by others, not the offender.

Though Liardon has others offering “accountability, counseling and authority,” there are no names or specifics, but only his word. Last December, PFO sent three written requests to the Liardon’s ministry and church for specific information. All of our inquiries went unanswered. Three phone calls to the organization always found its public relations person “on the other line.” So much for accountability. One can be sure that Liardon’s staff are playing this close to the vest.

A hard, cold, and brutal fact that Liardon seems unaware of grasping is that in the future, people are going to look at him in terms of that sin, and parents will feel queasy about having their boys around him and will always wonder. It would be advisable for him to be in a lesser ministry (which will never happen), and one away from any kind of association with the prior sin. Other men will feel uncomfortable around him. Some impressions can never be overcome. Restoration to God and restoration to public ministry are two distinctly different things. Sometimes they have to be distinct for practical reasons. Pointing to David does not help us since David was an absolute monarch and the reigning King of a nation. The comparison is not equal to eldership.

The spinning, downplaying of the enormity of Liardon’s sin, and the announcement of a time table did not drive the congregation right then and there to their knees in horror, shame, sorrow, weeping, and repentance, but as reported by the *Los Angeles Times*, they gave Liardon “a standing ovation.”

Jimmy Swaggart set the timetable for his own return and shortly thereafter was seen cruising again. Pride goes before a fall, and easy repentance, spinning sin, and quickly arranged timetables can only play into more failure and more future disasters for Liardon and his devoted followers.

—GRF

NEWS UPDATES

(continued from page 3)

audiences’ and have the commitment and means to conduct effective information programmes about UN activities.”

A statement released by the UN confirmed that the Watchtower had “applied for association with DPI [Department of Public Information] in 1991 and was granted association in 1992.” In light of the Watchtower’s

repetitive denouncements, the UN itself expressed surprise that the sect was accepted on its NGO list, *The Guardian* reported.

Critics of the Watchtower have suggested that the UN association — which was concealed from its membership — was planned in order to gain credibility and acceptance of the sect by governments, such as France, which are antagonistic toward the religious body. A Watchtower spokesman in Britain attempted to diminish his organization's double standard, stating, "We do not have hostile attitudes to governing bodies and if we are making representations on issues to the UN we will do so."

However, just hours after the British media divulged the Watchtower's blatant hypocrisy, leaders of the Jehovah's Witness organization hurriedly "requested termination of its association" with the UN. According to the UN statement, based upon this request, "the DPI has made a decision to disassociate the **Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York** as of 9 October 2001."

—MKG

MORMONS PARTNER WITH KRISHNAS TO BUILD TEMPLE

For years the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has worked hard to shed its cult image and establish itself as just another "Christian church" down the street. Now they may be trying to extend those perimeters to become just another "religion" down the street.

In January, CBS journalist Charles Osgood reported that Mormons in and around Spanish Fork, Utah have volunteered labor and money to build a Hare Krishna temple near the city. Osgood's article stated that a "Mormon bishop donated 25 thousand dollars to the Krishnas' planned new temple" and that during "the past few years, 4000 Mormons have done serious labor, digging trenches, creating an artificial lake, [and] installing siding."

Osgood's report added that upon its completion it will be "the first Hare Krishna Temple to be built from scratch in the U.S." The complex will "feature 200 elaborate columns and archways, hand-carved teak doors and a freshwater lake with lilies and koi." Construction will have been done exclusively by Krishnas and Mormons working together.

The Hare Krishnas believe that there are many paths to God, while the LDS church teaches that ultimate salvation is achieved only through its church and ordinances.

—MKG

APPOINTMENT OF WICCAN CHAPLAIN DENOUNCED

The Wisconsin Department of Corrections decision to appoint a Wiccan priestess as a prison chaplain has come under fire from one of its state's representatives. In December, Rev. Jamyi Witch — who changed her last name from Welch "because I am one" — was selected for the office which comes with a \$32,500 annual salary.

However, State Representative Mike Huebsch criticized the DOC's hiring of Witch and introduced legislation to strip funding for her post. He insisted that "taxpayers shouldn't be forced to accept this hocus-pocus." Huebsch's drive gained the support of his colleagues, one of whom maintained that Witch's appointment was "morally dangerous."

According to a report on WiccaNet, the DOC "is standing its ground in their choice of hiring Rev. Jamyi Witch." DOC officials claim that "Witch met the position's requirements and that it would be unfair and illegal to bar her from serving because of her faith," the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* reported.

Prior to being chosen for the full-time salaried position, Witch had voluntarily ministered to Wisconsin inmates for the past two years. She is one of two chaplains at the Waupun Correctional Institution, a maximum security facility. Her duties as chaplain will include coordinating religious ceremonies and services for all inmates. Wiccans are closely associated with paganism, believing in gods and goddesses, and worship nature.

—MKG

SCIENTOLOGY BILLBOARD CAMPAIGN

Following the aftermath of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, The Church of Scientology has initiated a nationwide billboard crusade. More than 1,100 billboards will appear in a dozen cities across the nation, including New York.

The signs will promote telephone counseling to anyone affected by the events of Sept. 11. The billboards, carrying the headline "Something CAN Be Done About It," provide a toll-free telephone number "that connects callers with trained volunteers, called 'Volunteer Ministers,' who offer Scientology-based counseling," according to a Religious News Service report.

The campaign is estimated to cost \$1.1 million and will be financed through the donations of Scientology church members.

—MKG

“Selected Quotations from Watch Tower Publications for the Years... .” Almost all of these installments cover a ten-year period and further demonstrate the chronic incongruity of the Watchtower. Any Jehovah’s Witness — who is serious about truth — will be confronted with the indisputable fact that the Watchtower cannot be “God’s sole collective channel for the flow of Biblical truth to men on earth.”

As in the past, Gruss once again offers, with his updated volume, one of the most distinct works examining the history and beliefs of Jehovah’s Witnesses.

—MKG

OUT OF MORMONISM

by Judy Robertson

Bethany House, 215 pages, \$11.99

Out of Mormonism is the story of one woman and her husband’s involvement with the Latter-day Saint church. It tells of their spiritual emptiness which they tried to satisfy with the LDS faith, their immersed participation therein in leadership roles and as temple Mormons, and finally their exodus from the oppressive hold of this sect.

Robertson’s chronicle is divided into four main themes: the enticement of the LDS church, her life inside the church, her illumination to the Truth, and her new life in Jesus Christ. Each of these sections are made up of several, quickly-read chapters. Along the way the reader is given an overview of particular LDS beliefs and — more importantly — shown the prevailing undercurrent which keeps members captive. This book is a great resource for one trying to break free from the LDS church or for one who has a family member or friend involved in the sect.

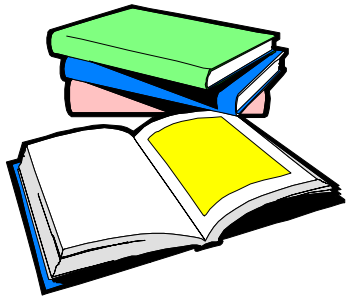
Four appendices greatly add to the volume’s merit. These addenda provide solid, practical, and biblical advice for the LDS reader. The first reveals the false Jesus, false spirit, and false gospel of the LDS church. Robertson also gives helpful guidelines for how to get out and what to do after you’re out. She also succinctly presents the saving message of the Jesus of Scripture. The book concludes with a “Glossary of Mormon Terms” which is a further asset to the reader unfamiliar with the strange nuances of Mormonism.

Robertson and her husband, Jim, are actively involved in mission work to present the truth of the Gospel to members of the LDS faith. Her book is not only born out of a past personal experience, but is framed by her present outreach ministry.

—MKG

PERSONAL FREEDOM OUTREACH — STATEMENT OF BELIEF

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



Books in Review

THE COST OF DECEPTION

The Seduction of Modern Myths and Urban Legends

by John A. Williams

Broadman & Holman, 211 pages, \$9.99

We need more books like this one. With Christian bookstores being deluged with heresy and our Internet mailboxes being glutted with mythical stories and urban legends, we need sources to offset the insanity.

This handy volume has debunked an accumulation of phony stories and Christian myths both from the Internet and circulating on Christian television broadcasts and via church bulletins.

There is an enormous waste of time following the fabricated, which only heaps scorn and ridicule on duped believers. As Williams asserts: "In this information age where knowledge abounds and where the Internet can spread a myth or legend at the 'speed of lies,' we must become more prudent in our assessment of the truth. It is crucial that our testimony to the world not be tainted with exaggeration, fabrication, or fear" (pg. 10).

Williams has a chapter on the history of Antichrist-naming that is a good antidote for newspaper theology. There is another helpful chapter on the end of the world scenarios from A.D. 156 until the present. Thankfully, Williams is not afraid to name names. Yet another chapter covers millennium fever that seems to hit the local churches and the airwaves after times of crisis. Still another chapter covers angel mythology. And there is a lot more.

Williams has not missed many of the past and present e-mail myths and urban legends. If there is a very small weakness, it is the absence of an index for easy retrieval. However, the scope and contents make up for that.

Finally, there are two points of irony with the author and his volume. Williams' brief biography (found on the book's back cover) says that his accomplishments include "work with the Trinity Broadcasting Network." TBN is one of the leading promoters of bizarre and undocu-

mented supernatural myths and legends. Also, Jack Taylor wrote the book's Foreword. Taylor is a frequent speaker at the Toronto Airport Fellowship Church in Canada where the myth is purported that God is dispensing gold tooth filings. Taylor also claims to have "an apostolic insight into the word of God."

These ironies show just how prevalent "the cost of deception" really is. Yet if one can overlook these incongruities, then this work is a valuable resource for a thinking Christian. A book like this should be in the hands of discerning Christians.

—GRF

JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES: THEIR CLAIMS, DOCTRINAL CHANGES AND PROPHETIC SPECULATION

by Edmond C. Gruss

Xulon Press, 357 pages, \$18.99

Nearly three decades ago, the definitive works examining the history, doctrines, and prophetic speculation of the Watchtower Society were authored by Ed Gruss. More recently, a host of publications by a variety of new authors have addressed the Jehovah's Witness religion. Few of these equaled the pioneering works of Gruss. However, regrettably, Gruss' original works were allowed to go out of print. They have now, in part, been updated and returned in *Jehovah's Witnesses: Their Claims, Doctrinal Changes and Prophetic Speculation*.

This oversize book is loaded — 40 chapters in all. It is effectively a catalog of nearly everything you always wanted to know about Jehovah's Witnesses, tracing the organization from its ancestry in the Adventist movement to the sect's recent reorganization in 2000. Many of the chapters are arranged in a timeline format and are loaded with excerpts and documentation sources from the Watchtower's publications. This arrangement clearly shows that the most consistent factor of the Watchtower Society is its inconsistency.

Spread throughout the book are several chapters titled,

(continues on page 27)

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