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“But the Bible is Full of Contradictions!” Pushing Through the Fog of Apparent Bible Discrepancies

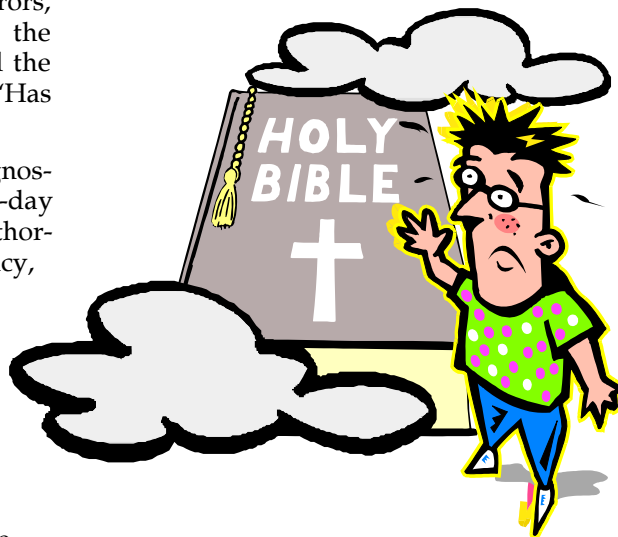
by G. Richard Fisher

Some charge the Bible with errors, discrepancies, and mistakes. In the Garden of Eden, Satan interjected the first doubt when he asked Eve, “Has God indeed said?”

The battle goes on. Atheist, agnostic, skeptic, liberal, and Latter-day Saint question the authority, authorship, integrity, historicity, inerrancy, and inspiration of Scripture.

This is not a new problem. Origen (c. 185-c. 254), not always known for orthodoxy, wrote:

“A person becomes a third type of peacemaker when he demonstrates that the things that appear to others to be a conflict in the Scriptures are actually no conflict at all. He demonstrates their harmony and peace — whether of the Old Scriptures with the New, or of the Law with the Prophets, or of the Gospels with the apostolic Scriptures, or of the apostolic Scriptures with each other. ... For he knows that all Scripture is the one perfect and harmonized in-



strument of God, from which different sounds give forth one saving voice to those who are willing to learn.”¹

There are three classes of people coming at this issue. The first is the *uninformed* and *misinformed*. An example of this type is one who says, “Oh, the Bible — it’s full of contradictions.” Offer them a Bible and ask to be shown one and a likely response will be, “Well, I’ve heard that from more than one person.” Latter-day Saints respond similarly. To camouflage the inconsistencies and disorder within their three other works regarded as inspired Scripture,² they often assert the Bible is replete with error. When asked to point out these errors, they often respond, “Well, I’m not a scriptorian!”

The second category is *dabblers*. They may have tried to read the Bible, but some sections were illogical and unconvincing to them. Unaware of them. (continues on page 15)

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Editorials

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE MOON

Cults, to many, are like the other side of the moon. They do not know what is there and do not want to know. They seem black and forbidding. Apologists and cult researchers, on the other hand, have to act as bold explorers and spiritual astronauts who are motivated by God's Spirit, along with their gift of discernment and their desire to help others to search out "the other side of the moon." They go where others will not go.

Cult explorers often are shocked by their findings, but are compelled to write reports for others to see. They are constantly maligned and called "heresy hunters," "self-appointed watchdogs," and "vigilantes." Satan blinds minds to truth and tries to throw blankets of lies over the light of the Word. Exploring can be dangerous. Cult researchers will not let aberrational groups treat the Bible like a collection of unconnected topics to be spliced together to prove a whim.

The Apostle Paul likened the Church to a body. A body needs an immune system and discernment is that immune system. The Church at large seems to have lost its immune system and has been lulled into a stupor, thinking it needs none. That is why the body is sick unto death and living in an age of confusion and doctrinal chaos. Consider the words of Kenneth Copeland to Benny Hinn and Hinn's audience:

"You and I have talked about it ourselves and we've talked about it with other people. How impossible it looked that the Body of Christ would ever come to any kind of unity and 20 years ago it looked like even God couldn't do that. But He has! This thing is in a greater and better shape than it has ever been in the history of the Body of Christ. It's coming together, Benny. We're not coming together in our doctrines. Never will. They're all wrong. But we're coming together in the love of God and in our faith. Hallelujah. We're coming together, man. And we're coming to a fullness of Jesus. Praise God. Amen. And He'll straighten all our doctrines out. You know what I found out? He's not really all that upset about it. He figures He can handle it. I figure He can too, don't you?"

Hinn then told his devotees, "What Ken Copeland is saying to you is straight from heaven. ... You support this precious man's ministry."

Just as there are medical textbooks which diagnose, define, and offer prescriptions for illnesses, the Bible is our textbook to define what is spiritually unhealthy and what we can do to stay spiritually well.

The average layman is in a real bind when so many pastors claim to be "Christian" ministers, but have abandoned what the term Christian is all about. George Barna reveals that 51% of Protestant ministers in America

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News Updates

CHARISMATICS CALL FOR ACCOUNTABILITY

For several years, many leaders of the Christian Charismatic movement have been exposed by apologetic ministries and the secular media for their shameful lifestyles and arrogance. Last January, prominent members of this elite society gathered in Orlando, Fla., to “tackle tough integrity issues.”

Three discussion panels addressed the continuation of the fivefold ministries, the ethical crisis of Pentecostals and Charismatics, and the future of the movement. The symposium was by invitation only. Those attending included Rod Parsley, Rick Joyner, Reinhard Bonnke, Cindy Jacobs, Stephen Hill, R.T. Kendall, Jack Hayford, C. Peter Wagner, and Joyce Meyer.

Both Meyer and Bonnke were reeling from recent embarrassing news reports. Meyer was disgraced by the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, her hometown newspaper, in a series of investigative articles that revealed the gross use of ministry funds for personal purposes. Bonnke and his ministry, Christ for All Nations, were stung in a \$160 million *ponzi* scheme. A current board member (and former executive director) of Bonnke’s ministry was a key player in the fraud.

According to a report on the *Ministries Today* web site, Hayford said the Charismatic community was stunted “by ethical issues [that] threaten the continued viability of the movement and the willingness of many to identify with it.” He further offered that many “are reticent to be a part of what they see as the excess and shoddy ethics of many high-profile charismatic leaders.”

In its April issue, *Charisma* magazine reported, “The group also acknowledged an ethical crisis in the church that is marked by a greater tolerance for sexual infidelity, an increase in divorce ‘under the guise of commitment to ministry callings,’ an ‘indulgent understanding’ of the concept of restoration, and a lack of self-moderation in areas of financial responsibility and extravagance.”

Yet despite all the praise and fanfare for the two-day symposium, little reform appears to have been advanced. In a document titled “The Orlando Statement,” the group responded to the ethical crisis with a four-statement series of “We hope...” The first stated, “We hope all who embrace life in the Holy Spirit would give an equal and total embrace to the whole of the Scripture’s requirement regarding ethics, moral purity, sexual integrity, marital fidelity, financial accountability and the spirit of Christ-like ministry.” The document further said, “We seek

neither to establish a governing group nor attempt to frame and administer legal structures for enforcing ethical standards.”

Such statements are indeed puzzling when many within the assembly claim to be modern-day apostles and prophets — and those who don’t personally claim such offices support those who do. The wimpy resolves of “The Orlando Statement,” issued by this self-esteeming group, lack the biblical force demonstrated by true apostles and prophets.

The meeting appears to have had little effect upon its participants. Joyce Meyer has yet to apologize for her extravagant lifestyle and within 48 hours of the gathering, called the *Post-Dispatch* articles a “Satanic plot.”

The Jan. 6-7 meeting was the brainchild of Stephen Strang and was sponsored by his magazine, *Ministries Today*.

—MKG

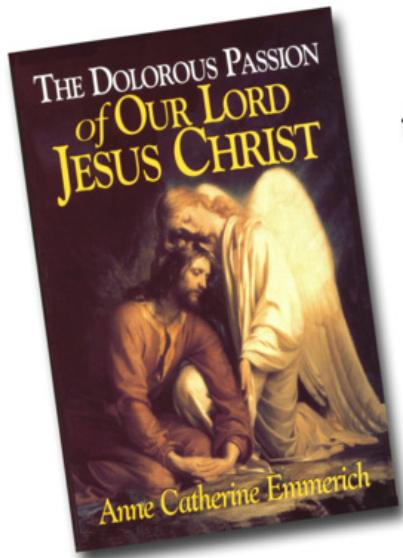
SAYING I’M SORRY — WELL, SORT OF...

Officials from the state of Illinois made a formal apology to leaders of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints for its treatment of church members 160 years ago. In 1844, LDS church founder Joseph Smith Jr. was killed by members of an Illinois militia. During the months that followed, thousands of other Mormons left or were driven from Nauvoo, Ill., a city along the Mississippi River where Smith had settled with his followers.

“There was a chapter in our history that we are not proud of,” the Illinois Lt. Gov., Pat Quinn, told current church leaders and Utah state officials. However, by the time the official apology reached Salt Lake City, it had been tempered considerably — so much so, that the *Deseret Morning News* categorized the admission as, not an apology, but “now simply a statement of regret.”

The original resolution was passed by the Illinois House of Representatives on March 24, and included a petition for “the pardon and forgiveness” from Mormons for past events by Illinoisans. Rep. Jack Franks, the chief sponsor of the resolution, said he had planned to delete the appeal prior to the initial vote. According to the *Deseret Morning News*, Franks said, “the apology was a little bit over the top. ... I think it’s not my position to ask

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Mel Takes Anne to Hollywood

THE REDISCOVERY OF ANNE CATHERINE EMMERICH



by **G. Richard Fisher**

The writer of Hebrews warns, “Do not be carried about with various and strange doctrines” (Hebrews 13:9).

With the help of a movie star, a reclusive 19th-century nun has become table talk for 21st-century Hollywood and the new poster girl for spirituality. Anne Catherine Emmerich has been rediscovered, thanks to Mel Gibson and his movie, *The Passion of the Christ*. Gibson reveres her and carries a relic — purportedly a patch of her robe — which he has displayed on national television. Gibson based some of the details of his film on Emmerich’s extrabiblical visions.¹ There is a joke that if Gibson receives an award for his film, his acceptance speech will include, “I want to thank my writers: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and Anne.” While only a handful of Emmerich’s visions made it to the screen, his wholesale endorsement of her book bothers some apologists.

Emmerich exemplified a Roman Catholic tradition called “passion mysticism,” which dates back to the Middle Ages. Passion mystics believed that sanctification and growth in grace were attained, not by Scripture study, service, and ministry to others in the Church, but by obsessing on the literal bloody wounds of Jesus and the agonies of His scourging, passion, and death. This was more than a recognition of those truths; it was an attempt to re-create them

mentally and actually enter into them physically and spiritually through trances.

These meditations were better done in a monastic setting and around the stations of the cross in a re-enactment of Jesus’ steps to Calvary or by staring at a crucifix with the bloody effigy. Mystics desired even more having visions of the crucified. Passion mysticism is a very long step from the Communion table. It leaps from remembrance to re-enactment and from grateful reflection to a gruesome retreat into a netherworld of gore.

It was a morbid preoccupation, to be sure, but seen by the monastics as a way to grace, ecstasy, and ultimately, heaven. Consider the words of Saint Bonaventure:

“He who desires to go on advancing from virtue to virtue, from grace to grace, should meditate continually on the Passion of Jesus. ... There is no practice more profitable for the entire sanctification of the soul than the frequent meditation on the sufferings of Jesus Christ.”²

Those who indulged in these mental exercises were promised entire sanctification or perfection. Passion mysticism was considered by some to be the epitome of spirituality, where one strove to merge into and become the bloody Christ or one with Him.

This writer was raised in an environment that promoted and taught

passion mysticism. Studying the lives of passion mystics made up a significant portion of that education. It was like a fantasy role-playing game: the role-player became the hero of an invented cosmos of agony and death. The role allowed the player to merge with Christ, enter the last hours of His world on earth, and possibly pay for sins of his own or a loved one. The New Testament celebrates Christianity as a movement of life, health, and freedom. Passion mysticism makes it a religion of darkness and pain.

The Bible offers a far more balanced life than do the mystics, and it moves us to meditate with gratitude on the person of God in all His ways and works. The Bible reports tersely on the scourging and death of Jesus and never advocates a passionate focus on its details.

Emmerich’s visions have been codified by a writer named Clemens Brentano in a book called *The Dolorous Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ*. Brentano is said to have taken dictation from Emmerich. Lest some think Emmerich’s influence on Gibson is artificial, the book now comes with a promotional sticker that says, “The Book That Inspired Mel Gibson To Film The Passion Of The Christ.” Gibson himself has publicly attributed part of his film to Emmerich. An Associated Press report says:

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Rastafarians: A Religion in Turmoil

Where Will the Dust Settle?



by **G. Richard Fisher**

The Rastafarians may well be considered by most a religious sect, not only with a name that is difficult to pronounce, but which exerts little influence or impact. This, however, is far from reality.

There are Rastafarian communities in New York, Miami, Chicago, Washington, and California, and the movement continues to grow. The most controversial aspect of this religion is the use of marijuana. It is clearly established that in the early years marijuana was used to help one get into a "spiritual" state of mind. Today, some Rastafarians will say it is used and other Rastafarians will say it is no longer used. The dilemma exists because the group is not monolithic and no one speaks for all Rastafarians. Unlike mainstream cultic groups like Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons, there is no centralized headquarters for Rastafarians.

Associated Press writer Stevenson Jacobs wrote, "About 700,000 people practice the faith worldwide, with most of them among Jamaica's 2.6 million people. There are about a dozen sects differing in the degree of their adherence to the religion's doctrines. Jamaican Rastas say they still endure discrimination in the birthplace of the religion, maintaining they are looked down upon for their dreadlocks and ritual use of marijuana, or ganja."¹

Confusion abounds within the ranks and one may run across Rastafarians

with Christian overtones. There are some who embrace Christ and Trinitarianism in the mix with "New Age" Rastafarians, dope smokers, free floaters, or none of the above. Just as major denominations run the spectrum, there is a wide range in Rastafarianism. It is certainly a religion in turmoil. The sect is one in major transition and no one knows where it will end up.

Few may realize that Reggae music was developed exclusively by the Rastafarians. This alone is a draw to young people. Dreadlocks, the curling of long hair a certain way to resemble the mane of a lion, was developed by this group.²

To really understand the origins of this originally nationalistic movement, one must go back into the deep roots and history of Jamaica where it germinated. The people of Jamaica, in the early 1700s, had a religion consisting of the worship of African nature gods and spirits. Ancestors long passed, the spirits of Maroons (escaped slaves), were seen to be especially efficacious. This eventually was amalgamated with Roman Catholic Christianity brought by early missionaries.

A group of Jamaican slaves created an uprising to contest British rule in Jamaica and fleeing to eastern Jamaica finally gained recognition in 1739. These runaway slaves were dubbed with the name Maroons. The Jamaican Maroons formed into a sect called the Convince cult. David W. Hogg, who

authored several works on Jamaican religions noted that, "God and Christ, whom they consider too benevolent to worry about and too remote and otherworldly to be of much practical value, therefore merit little attention from them. ... They deal exclusively with ghosts."³

Enter Pukimina. This sniglet may sound like a description of a churning stomach, but has its genesis in a man named Marcus Garvey, who uttered a "prophecy" in 1927 that had to do with deliverance. The word deliverance was a word that long resonated with Jamaicans. Their economy left a lot to be desired. They were ready for the message of a deliverer. Garvey said that a black king from Africa would redeem blacks from horrible white oppression. Garvey simply echoed the ethnocentric ethos of the then-marginalized black communities.

Theologically, Garvey was a Trinitarian,⁴ so it would actually take another man, Leonard Howell, to finish setting the stage. Garvey was connected to the Methodist Church and his main contribution was that he longed for civil rights. According to an article in *Christianity Today* magazine, "Garvey led a movement to set aside a number of states in Africa to create a true African homeland because so much of Africa was under white domination. He was eventually imprisoned, deported, and died in England broke and discredited. Still his impact on Jamaica was widely felt."⁵

The turning point and crowning moment came for Harvey and fellow minister Leonard Howell in the 1930s. William David Spencer, who has tracked the Rastafari movement for over two decades, explains that "in 1933, before conditions improved to the present state, Leonard P. Howell was arrested on the streets of Kingston for revolutionary and blasphemous language when selling pictures of King Ras Tafari of Abyssinia, who he claimed was messiah of the black people, coming to deliver them from their oppression. Lij Tafari of Ethiopia, who was born July 23, 1893, and had become Ras Tafari between 1916 and 1930, ascended the throne in 1930 as Haile Selassie (Might of the Trinity). Blacks in Jamaica, brought by force and kept by the extreme social situation from assuming a proper place in society, recalled Marcus Garvey's cryptic prophecy. When Haile Selassie was crowned, preachers such as Leonard Howell heralded a new age of freedom, when black Jamaicans would be repatriated to Africa, led by this black messiah. The new news that Leonard Howell and others preached was old news reworked, but it was still powerful. They declared that a divine liberator had come to free the oppressed."⁶

On these points, most all Rastafarians agree.

Now we know "the rest of the story" and the basis for the name Rastafarian. Then the unthinkable: after being deposed in 1974, Haile Selassie died in 1975. Without a resurrected messiah, the Rastafarian movement could have gone down in flames, but it did not. As Spencer further points out, they simply retooled by predicting a second coming of Haile Selassie and imposed the events in the Book of Revelation on America (a.k.a., Babylon). They are "awaiting Armageddon."⁷ The "Lion of the Tribe of Judah" in Revelation 5 is now seen to be none other than Haile Selassie, who is also believed to be the embodiment of God by the majority of the Rastafarians.

It seems silly and subjective to assign anything in Revelation to Haile Selassie. Certainly he never claimed

such things. Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie was a Coptic Christian.⁸ Copts are a very liturgical people with rituals in their own language, which is early Greek supplemented by demotic (called Amharic). They have their own version of the Bible.⁹ The Copts' obscure roots are found in the Desert Fathers and one of its branches has linked with Roman Catholicism. It took 1900 years for Haile Selassie to be transposed into the first Rastafarian, but the very thought collapses under the reality of historical weight and evidence.

The opening verse of Revelation is crystal clear as to the focus of its content. The book could not be about Haile Selassie or any other earthly ruler since John puts forth such an intense Christology. The opening verse is like a laser light when it says, "The revelation of *Jesus Christ*" (Revelation 1:1).

William Hendriksen reminds us of the focus when he writes:

"It is a revelation or unveiling of the plan of God for the history of the world, especially of the Church. It is, therefore, a direct communication from God and is not derived from any human source. It is called the Revelation of Jesus Christ because Jesus Christ showed it to John and through him to the Church."¹⁰

To suggest that Haile Selassie is the "Lion of Judah" is also ludicrous. There is no genetic connection between Ethiopians and Jews. Copts would gladly affirm that they worship Jesus. Additionally John says Jesus was the "Root of David" (Revelation 5:5), and further He was "slain to redeem us" (5:9), which is in no way applicable to any national leader.

Even Ethiopians who have claimed Jewishness (called Beta Israel or Falashas) purport themselves to be descendants of Solomon and Sheba and are clearly not Copts. The Falashas have very obscure roots. One writer notes:

"There are at least a dozen theories on the origins of the

Falashas, on how and when they acquired their Judaic beliefs. ... much of what is offered as evidence lacks a historical basis and is of a legendary character."¹¹

More than likely these Ethiopians were converted to Judaism by Jewish missionaries. We know there were migrations of Jews to Egypt on the cusp of both the Assyrian and Babylonian invasions of Israel. The Ethiopian Falashas could easily have become converts during that time. But again these cannot be confused with the Christian Copts of Haile Selassie.

The identification of Babylon (Revelation chapters 17-18) with America is an exercise in fantasy. The scarlet woman of Revelation 17:4, and identified as mystery Babylon (17:5), is said to sit on seven mountains. The United States has many, many mountains in it, but cannot be said to sit on seven mountains. No matter what one's approach to the book of Revelation, the Rastafarian view is a prime example of Scrip-torture.

Christians ought not to get dreamy eyed too quickly because there are some Rastafarians embracing Christ and one small orthodox branch called The Twelve Tribes of Israel that sees Haile Selassie as only a prophetic figure and certainly not on the level of Jesus. The movement is still largely fractured and fragmented and certainly not ready for the "Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval." We need not get too upset about the fact that they would rather call Jesus "Yeshua," given the enormity of other weighty doctrines that divide. We need to find out for sure what any given Rastafarian means when he or she speaks of "Yeshua." Is the Rastafarian's Yeshua the Yeshua of the Bible?

We do not have to get too exercised that they say the Pope is the Antichrist (which they think they know for sure) because some evangelicals have said the same thing. We may be a bit more concerned about the patriarchal structure and overuse of male dominance by the Rastafarians. In dealing with any Rastafarian, we can acknowledge that their desire for justice in society is a commendable goal,

though it cannot be seen as the ultimate goal. Any form of liberation theology that lacks the true Liberator will end up turning earthly goals into ultimate goals.

Where is Rastafarianism really going? At this point no one knows for sure. Thank God that some small segments seem to be heading in the right direction. The whole movement, however, is in a state of uncertainty. In contrast, the Bible gives us certainties while man's religions shift and change with the times. In a word, we need to watch, be discerning, and see where all the dust settles.

Endnotes:

1. Stevenson Jacobs, "Rastafarians Gather in Jamaica for Summit," Associated Press story, July 16, 2003.
2. See further, J. Gordon Melton, Editor, *The Encyclopedia of American Religions*. Tarrytown, N.Y.: Triumph Books, 1991, Vol. 3, pp. 156-157.
3. Hogg cited in Albert Raboteau, *Slave Religion*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1980, pg. 17.
4. See Donna Hailson, "Witnessing to Rastafarians," *Christian Research Journal*, Vol. 22, No. 2, pg. 11.
5. Todd Hertz interview with William David Spencer, "Looking for a Dreadlocked Jesus," *Christianity Today*, August 11, 2003. Document available at: www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2003/132/32.0.html.

www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2003/132/32.0.html.

6. William David Spencer, "Rastafari: Poverty and Apostasy in Paradise," *The Journal of Pastoral Practice*, Vol. 4, No. 4, pg. 66.
7. *Ibid.*, pg. 67.
8. See *The Columbia-Viking Desk Encyclopedia*. New York: Viking Press, 1953, Vol. 1, pg. 523.
9. See *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*. Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan Publishing, 1975, pg. 875.
10. William Hendriksen, *More Than Conquerors*. Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Book House, 1983, pg. 51.
11. Louis Rapoport, *Redemption Song*. San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Publishers, 1986, pp. 19-20.

ANNE CATHERINE EMMERICH

(continued from page 4)

"Gibson has cited 'The Dolorous Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ,' a 19th-century memoir that describes Jewish mobs as 'cruel' and 'hardhearted,' as a source for his movie. Sales have jumped from under 3,000 for all of 2002 to 17,000 just last month, according to Tan Books, a publisher based in Rockville [sic], Illinois."³

The book's publisher seems dedicated to perpetuating both passion mysticism and Marian (Virgin Mary) mysticism. It comes with a Roman Catholic Imprimatur. The book itself bears the dedication:

"To the Immaculate Heart of the Virgin Mary, Mother of God, Queen of Heaven and Earth, Lady of the Most Holy Rosary, Help of Christians, and Refuge of the Human Race."⁴

I READ THE BOOK

The back cover of Emmerich's volume outlines the scope and details of the book:

"The Dolorous Passion has been inspiring thousands since it first appeared in 1833 — being based on the detailed visions of Our Lord's Passion and Death as seen by Venerable Anne Catherine Emmerich (1774-1824), a German

Augustinian nun, and recorded by Clemens Brentano, a prominent literary figure of the day. A saintly person from her youth and a great mystic and victim soul, Sister Emmerich was privileged by God during almost a lifetime of ecstatic visions to see all the events of Our Lord's suffering and death, which visions we can now understand in hindsight were a great gift from God to the world."⁵

The book's epitome continues:

"Also illuminating is its description of Mary's participation in the sufferings of her Son, so that this book gives the reader a poignant understanding of why Our Lady is often called our 'Co-Redemptrix' and 'Queen of Martyrs.'"⁶

Suppose your favorite brother called to say he was coming to town and needed a place to stay for three days. You'd say, "Great, glad to have you." Then a few minutes later you received a phone call from the FBI and were told that your brother would be carrying a suitcase to drop off with a friend (for another friend) and, whether known or unknown to your brother, it contained high explosives and bomb belts. No matter how much you cared about your brother or whatever excuse you could make for him, you would be terrified of the baggage. Whatever Emmerich's men-

tal state and no matter how we view her, it is the baggage that deeply concerns us. Passion mysticism carries baggage that is unbiblical and unhealthy.

WE HAVE CHOICES

The Abbe De Cazales, writer of the preface in *The Dolorous Passion*, makes an interesting concession:

"In the present day men are inclined to regard these revelations as simple hallucinations, or as caused by a sickly condition of body. The Church, according to the testimony of her most approved writers, recognises three descriptions of ecstasy; of which the first is simply natural, and entirely brought about by certain physical tendencies and a highly imaginative mind; the second divine or angelic, arising from intercourse held with the supernatural world; and the third produced by infernal agency."⁷

So we have choices: mental, medical, divine, or demonic. For Christians, however, the Bible must drive our choices and decisions, not emotions or bias toward passion mysticism. Viewed nearly two centuries later, Emmerich's hard life and grotesque ailments may seem romantic to some, but she was entangled in a living nightmare that no one would wish for either themselves or their offspring. In the end, if Emmerich's teachings cannot be squared with

Scripture, we must all say with Isaiah, "As to the law and the testimony, if they do not speak according to this word it is because there is not light in them" (Isaiah 8:20).

SPIRIT GUIDES

It is reported that during her childhood, Emmerich had contact with the other side and was visited by "Her angel-guardian."⁸ Her purported spiritual encounters flourish far beyond mere angels:

"From childhood she was accustomed to have divine knowledge imparted to her in visions of all kinds, and was often favoured by visits from the Mother of God and Queen of Heaven, ... Many of the saints would also appear to her."⁹

Visitation by the dead (even if addressed by the name "saints") is full-blown necromancy, which is clearly forbidden throughout the Old Testament. It was this very issue that caused Saul to lose the kingdom, his kingship, and his life. Guidance from spirits and nightmares is a recipe for deception.

Brentano suggests that the reader accept the book, not just based on the Bible, but established through a number of means. He suggests that one can look at the fruit,¹⁰ see if it all agrees with other saints' revelations,¹¹ and asks if it edifies.¹² In the end, the book and its revelations are in a category that is not quite inspired, but in a class that is authoritative and a good bit above normal. This seems to be an attempt to backpedal, for they are called "revelations,"¹³ and revelations from God must be considered inspired. It is serious business to say one has spoken to Jesus, Mary, and souls in purgatory, and has seen the other world.

Despite the disclaimer and lack of clarity as to Emmerich's inspiration, little doubt remains that the things written are to be believed and embraced:

"To our Christian readers we must remark that this work has received the approval of ecclesiastical authorities. It has been

prepared for the press under the superintendence of the two late Bishops of Ratisbonne, Sailer and Wittman. These names are but little known in France but in Germany they are identical with learning, piety, ardent charity, and a life wholly devoted to the maintenance and propagation of the Catholic faith."¹⁴

If Southern Baptists were told, "Here is a document that has the wholehearted backing of Billy Graham and Charles Stanley," very few members of that denomination would question it.

If someone claimed they went to Calvary and attended the crucifixion, we probably would give them wide berth. However, when it is in a book and it receives patronage from Hollywood, many embrace it. If discernment is the immune system for the body of Christ, we can understand why the body is sickly.

No doubt if Emmerich were alive today, she'd be headlining talk shows and probably even have her own TV program. Her reputed powers rival modern psychics:

"When relics were shown to her, she knew what saints they had belonged to, and could give not only accounts of the minutest and hitherto unknown particulars of their lives, but also histories of the relics themselves, and of the places where they had been preserved. During her whole life she had continual intercourse with the souls in purgatory; and all her actions and prayers were offered for the relief of their sufferings. She was frequently called upon to assist them, and even reminded in some miraculous manner, if she chanced to forget them."¹⁵

TO PURGATORY AND BACK

Emmerich's description of the afterlife is so much fantasy material. She believes in heaven, hell, purgatory, and two compartments in a place called limbo.¹⁶ Postmortem salvation for some is also a possibility, according to Emmerich, who claimed to see

Jesus enter purgatory to deliver "good pagans." Good pagans can reject Christ but have "a faint glimmering of the truth"¹⁷ and have an opportunity for salvation after death. Apparently, she did not believe in the depravity of mankind as taught clearly in Romans 1-3.

The question of purgatory is interesting and divisive. Hardly anyone can discuss it dispassionately. The traditional Roman Catholic view is clearly stated in the *Catholic Almanac* where purgatory is described as:

"The state or condition in which those who have died in the state of grace, but with some attachment to sin, suffer for a time before they are admitted to the glory and happiness of heaven. In this state and period of passive suffering, they are purified of unrepented venial sins, satisfy the demands of divine justice for temporal punishment due for sins, and are thus converted to a state of worthiness of the beatific vision."¹⁸

A discussion of purgatory need not be long since the greater issue is that of authority. If one is completely committed to the authority of Scripture for doctrine, belief, and practice, then purgatory is a non-issue. When other authorities are introduced, the ground rules vary and the playing field changes. The Apostle Paul was confident enough to assert that "absent from the body [is] present with the Lord" (2 Corinthians 5:8).

The central issue of authority can be summarized in this way:

"In reading through Ott, a standard Catholic authority on dogma, it is interesting to note how many times he admits that this doctrine 'is not explicitly revealed in Scripture' or that 'direct and express scriptural proofs are not to be had' or 'express scriptural proofs are lacking.' These phrases are more than a hint to the fact that purgatory has no basis in Scripture."¹⁹

If it is not clearly there, it is clearly not there. God only knows with

whom Emmerich was conversing.

Emmerich's passion mysticism escalated when, around age 24, "she received a favour from our Lord, which has been granted to many persons devoted in an especial manner to meditation on his painful Passion; namely, to experience the actual and visible sufferings of his sacred Head, when crowned with thorns."²⁰

Her stigmata are mentioned throughout the book. What gets our minds gets us. The rigors of passion mysticism gripped Emmerich's mind. If anything can be said about stigmata, it can be said that it is certainly unbiblical.

DOING THE THEOLOGICAL TWIST

The sadness of Emmerich's life stirs one to pity. However, the claims of the theological meaning of her sufferings clearly are heresy:

"... sometimes, wishing to expiate a sin or put an end to some suffering, she gave herself up into the hands of God, and he, accepting her sacrifice, permitted her thus, in union with the merits of his passion, to expiate the sin by suffering some illness corresponding to it. ... to suffer in expiation of the sins of her brethren, and of the faults and negligences of certain portions of the Christian community — and finally to endure many and various sufferings in satisfaction for the souls of purgatory."²¹

Emmerich was said to continue "to suffer all the mental and bodily tortures which were once endured by our Lord."²² These statements simply need to be laid against 1 Timothy 2:5 which says, "There is one God and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus." The precious hymn is being changed to, "Jesus and passion mystics paid it all — all to *them* I owe." Emmerich believed and firmly communicated the skewed view of salvation held for ages by her church.

The word *expiate* means to atone for. The Bible is very clear that Jesus *alone* died for our sins and made the

needed atonement (Romans 5, 1 John 2:2). Jesus *alone* is our Mediator (1 Timothy 2:5) and He *alone* can save us (Acts 4:12). It is amazing that such a fundamental issue for the Christian life needs to be repeated. This demonstrates that any move away from the authority of Scripture is a bad one. It puts us at the mercy of every private "revelation" or evil imagination. Paul says we are to cast down imaginations and speculations and bring our minds into obedience to Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5).

AN UNCANNY SIDESHOW

For a time, Emmerich wandered as a public curiosity:

"... our suffering heroine had been cast forth from the cloister into the world ... she was forced to wear her bloody robe in public, ... Thus this holy woman, who in her youth had been in the habit of praying for long hours before pictures of all the stages of Christ's painful Passion, or before wayside crosses, was herself made like unto a cross on the public road, insulted by one passer by, bathed in warm tears of repentance by a second, regarded as a mere physical curiosity by a third, and venerated by a fourth, whose innocent hands would bring flowers to lay at her feet."²³

The heartbreak in this is to hear that Emmerich and others around her had no assurance of salvation. She could not because her faith was not in the *finished* work of Christ. It was a hopelessness she imparts to her readers. According to Brentano, Emmerich lived only with a hope-so view:

"Did she, like those holy women, attain the end? God alone knows. Our part is only to pray that such may have been the case, and we are allowed to hope it."²⁴

First John 5:13 says, "These things are written that you may *know* that you have eternal life."

Emmerich is reported to have constantly encouraged and embraced phenomena that could only be hallucinations at best or clearly occultic at

worst. She claimed astral-travel and time travel:

"... sometimes even she went all around the earth, when the task spiritually imposed upon her required it. In the course of these journeys from her home to the most distant countries, she carried assistance to many persons, exercising in their regard works of mercy, ... The end of these daily pilgrimages which she made in spirit was invariably the Promised Land, every part of which she examined in detail, and which she saw sometimes in its present state, and sometimes as it was at different periods of sacred history."²⁵

WERE YOU THERE WHEN THEY CRUCIFIED MY LORD?

One does not have to believe that Emmerich actually saw the Holy Land in a vision or in time travel. She had centuries of German mysticism to draw from. Henry Suso, the mad mystic monk of 13th-century Germany, left writings and was involved in a horrific catalog of self-tortures and bloody mortifications that would rank him in the sadomasochist elite. Suso's autobiography and books ruled the convent for centuries.²⁶ Emmerich also was familiar with the passion plays that crisscrossed Europe. She had the New Testament and a vivid imagination.

She also simply reproduced in her "visions" the fictional "way of the cross" established by the Crusaders in Jerusalem, who picked up the tradition from the Byzantines. Its earliest form can only be traced to the 5th century and the later developments to the 1200s. One source informs us that, "Some of the incidents represented by the 14 Stations of the Cross are scriptural; some (III, IV, VI, VII, and IX) are not."²⁷ Multiple sources bear this out. The exact route of Jesus is not given in the Scriptures because it is unimportant and the why is more vital.

She was well-acquainted with the embellished catechisms of the time. She entered the convent in 1802 and

was a 22-year student there, learning all the intricacies of mysticism and mystics' biographies. In short, she was a product of the myths and legends of her day.

It is hard not to think that she and others hold her visions equal to or above the Bible:

"She had never read the Old or New Testaments, and when she was tired of relating her visions, she would sometimes say: 'Read that in the Bible,' and then be astonished to learn that it was not there; 'for,' she would add, 'people are constantly saying in these days that you need read nothing but the Bible, which contains everything.'"²⁸

Her obvious point is that it does not. However, 2 Peter 1:3 and 2 Timothy 3:16-17 tell us that all we need for life, growth, and godliness *is* in the Bible.

One account says Emmerich took on the agonies of a diseased dying person to enable them to die peacefully.²⁹ Then, when she was tempted, she asserted it was the temptation of others.³⁰ James says very clearly, "Each man is tempted when he is drawn away by *his own desires*" (James 1:14).

UNPLEASANT DREAMS

Emmerich had grotesque nightmares, which we are told were divine messages. One such nightmare featured a gigantic, mutilated, rotting, oozing body full of holes and decay. In lurid detail, she explained that her spirit guide informed her, "This is the body of the Church, the body of all men and thine also," and the gangrenous parts were the "obstinate and hardened heretics."³¹

Emmerich's verdict really only mimics that of Roman Catholicism, which regards as criminal those who resist its authority. The *Catholic Almanac* states:

"Heresy is the formal and obstinate denial or doubt by a baptized person, who remains a nominal Christian, of any truth

which must be believed as a matter of divine and Catholic faith. Formal heresy involves deliberate resistance to the authority of God who communicates revelation through Scripture and tradition and the teaching authority of the Church. Obstinate refusal to accept the infallible teaching of the Church constitutes the canonical crime of heresy."³²

Lest contemporary Catholics object that the above citation is an older source and the gangrene is gone, consider this quotation from the most recent and most authoritative Catechism authorized by Pope John Paul II (and the current authentic reference text for teaching Catholic faith):

"*Heresy* is the obstinate post-baptismal denial of some truth which must be believed with divine and catholic faith, or it is likewise an obstinate doubt concerning the same."³³

TRIVIAL PURSUIT

Some of the trite details of Emmerich's visionary description of Jesus are not only unnecessary, but carnal, and sound like a love-struck teen obsessing on the actor playing Jesus in a passion or movie:

"... the last three years had tanned him considerably. His chest was wide but not hairy like that of St. John the Baptist; his shoulders broad, and his arms and thighs sinewy; his knees were strong and hardened, ... his legs long, with very strong muscles; his feet were well formed, and his hands beautiful, the fingers being long and tapering."³⁴

Emmerich further digressed into another subset of passion mysticism called "bride mysticism," in which some practitioners believed they had a real marriage to Christ and referred to themselves as the spouse of Jesus (with some even wearing wedding bands). Christ would meet them on some celestial bed and administer pain and wounds. Emmerich is referred to as Christ's "Heavenly

Spouse" and "Divine Spouse,"³⁵ as well as His spouse in other numerous places.

THE IMMORTAL HOLY GRAIL

As we survey Emmerich's visionary passion week of Christ, it is obvious from the beginning that it is fantasy and embellishments. The roots of her story lie in obscurity in the literature, legends, traditions, and passion plays of that time. She created an almost gnostic aura around the chalice at the Last Supper. As she elaborated on the history of the chalice, she said:

"The great chalice had formally been in the possession of Abraham; Melchizedek had brought it with him from the land of Semiramis to the land of Canaan. ... This same chalice had also been preserved in Noah's Ark."³⁶

By her account, this chalice was a huge pear-shaped bowl ornamented with gold and other pieces attached. Somehow it was used in the Temple as a precious object and then sold to the antiquities market. It was bought by Seraphia, used at the Last Supper, left with James, disappeared, but will one day reappear.³⁷

Emmerich's chalice story demonstrates a complete ignorance of history, archaeology, the Bible, and the Jewish setting of the first century. Consider first her statement regarding the chalice as a temple vessel. Vessels of the temple were considered so sacred, so profound, so sanctified that to suggest that the priesthood would sell them is beyond imagination. In the Jewish mind, temple vessels were so attached to God that to sell them would be considered the greatest of treacheries and treason. Even careless use of them was considered deeply sinful.

Exodus 25-40 describes in minute detail the crafting of the tabernacle and vessels along with the maintenance and care of the objects. Because these were commissioned by God and patterned after heavenly things, they were to be greatly respected. This was carried into the temple in a seamless way regarding any temple instrument. From excavations at Masada

and other sites in Israel, we know that even Scripture scrolls that were worn and old were never sold or discarded. Sacred spaces by way of small closets called a *genizah* (meaning hidden sacred writings) were created for their storage.³⁸

Moreover, there would be no chance at all that the social class of the Jesus movement would have possessed an extremely valuable golden object. This shows Emmerich's attachment to the ornate Mass, with its golden chalice. Based on archaeological research, we know that even the rich classes in Jerusalem did not use gold vessels for eating and drinking — especially at Passover because its stress was on slavery and poverty.

Findings from extensive excavations in Jerusalem's Herodian quarter have firmly established that the upper classes had beautifully polished stone tables, stoneware plates, and ceramic or stoneware drinking cups.³⁹

The poorer classes would have had the equivalent or less, probably relying on pottery. Archaeologists in Israel have uncovered many pieces of ceramic tableware. There is no reason to think anyone but kings drank from golden goblets. The overwhelming evidence in the historical and archaeological record says that kings, at times, used gold, rich "china" (polished stoneware), and even the poor "plastic" (rough pottery).

IS GOD MISTAKEN?

It is obvious that Emmerich was working with the stereotypes, errors, and information she had available at that time. When she stated that at the Last Supper, Jesus "told the Apostles to arrange the seats in a half circle,"⁴⁰ she gave away the fact that this was no divine vision, but imagination. There are more than a dozen words for "sit" in the New Testament. The Gospel writers use two that have roots in the words to *lay* or to *recline*, as well as to lean back or to lay back. Greek grammar will agree with this because many sources tell us that at a first century seder, people reclined on pillows at a low table leaning on their elbows.

It is a grave misdeed to add or take away from Scripture (Revelation 22:18-19). Severe, as well, is adding our interpretations to Scripture as if they were Scripture or divine revelation. It is startling to hear Emmerich place words into the mouth of Jesus (at the seder table) to validate the Roman Catholic papacy:

"Simon, thou hast merited for my Father to reveal to thee who I am, whence I come, and whither I am going, thou alone hast expressly confessed it, therefore upon thee will I build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. My power will remain with thy successors to the end of the world."⁴¹

The statement, earlier spoken by Christ at Caesarea Philippi, which Emmerich hammered into her theological form, was "upon this rock I will build My Church," not upon "thee." The word "rock" is in the feminine form. It is the Greek word *petra* and means an immovable mountain, whereas the word *Peter* means a little stone or pebble. Emmerich is confused. Jesus did not say "upon thee," but upon the immovable rock of Peter's confession.

At one point, in defiance of the Gospel accounts, Emmerich "saw" Jesus in the Upper Room become something other than human. "I saw him becoming transparent, until he resembled a luminous shadow," she claims.⁴² She says she saw, at the same time, Mary levitating:

"I do not know how it was done, but I thought I saw her enter without touching the ground, and come before our Lord to receive the Holy Eucharist."⁴³

Her narrative then adds to the canon of Scripture, claiming Christ's words "came forth from his lips like fire and light, and entered into each of the Apostles, ... He stretched forth his right hand to bless, and, whilst he did so, a brilliant light came from him, his words were luminous, the bread entered the mouths of the Apostles as a brilliant substance, and light seemed

to penetrate and surround them all."⁴⁴

Emmerich's secretary, Brentano, did admit that a catechism of that day elaborated on small details that are found in Emmerich's account. He believed they verified and corroborated one another and would not suggest that Emmerich simply borrowed the material.⁴⁵ It is obvious she did.

The display of Emmerich's ignorance is relentless. She spoke of "secret instructions" given to the Apostles by Jesus at Communion. However, Scripture says differently. "I spoke openly to the world, Jesus said. I always taught in synagogues and in the temple where the Jews always meet, and in secret I have said nothing" (John 18:20).

When the "prophetess" added to or changed Jesus' words, she struck at the heart of the Gospel itself. She made Jesus say, "*It is consummated*,"⁴⁶ while on the cross, rather than "It is finished." Some would think this is a fine point, but the word *consummate* is not the same as *finished*. To consummate something does not necessarily mean to finish it. In Emmerich's view, the cross work of Jesus can never be finished. It must be repeated in the Holy Eucharist and the Mass.

Consummate can refer to one thing being completed, but having to be attended to again. When a husband and wife consummate their marriage, it means they are coming together in an intimate way to fulfill one of the purposes of marriage, which is sexual intimacy. They can say on their wedding night they have consummated their marriage. That does not mean they have finished that aspect of their relationship.

While Emmerich embraced her Catholic theology well, she blatantly contradicted Christ's statement, "*It is finished*," and the entire book of Hebrews, which repeatedly states Jesus died once (Hebrews 9:25-28). The point of Hebrews is that Jesus is unlike Old Testament priests who had to sacrifice often. Peter boldly states; "Christ suffered *once* for sins" (1 Peter

3:18). Emmerich's return to the Old Testament and repeated sacrifices is to be rejected.

Because "it is finished," means *really* finished, it is wrong to imagine we can re-create and enter into the real sufferings that Jesus already accomplished. Those merits now current are applied to us at salvation by grace. The New Testament makes clear the reasons for and benefits of the cross. The "how" is less important than the "why." Hebrews emphasizes that once a will is in effect, after the death of the testator, we focus on the inheritance (Hebrews 9:15-17).

ONLY MAN AND LESS THAN GOD

TAN Publishers and Gibson are promoting a person who has little or no grasp of orthodox theology. Emmerich taught that Jesus' divinity left Him in the Gethsemane experience, thereby fragmenting the Trinity. This can only mean that Jesus ceased to be God. Her speculations come from her feelings:

"I felt that Jesus, in delivering himself up to Divine Justice in satisfaction for the sins of the world, caused his divinity to return, in some sort, into the bosom of the Holy Trinity, concentrated himself, so to speak, in his pure, loving and innocent humanity, ... his love had ordained that he should be left to all the weakness of his human nature, ... it appeared to me that the Divine Will of our Lord withdrew in some sort into the Eternal Father, ... that feeling of doubt and anxiety which a man on the point of making some great sacrifice always experiences, arose in the soul of our Lord."⁴⁷

So Jesus was like any other man about to suffer. He was only man at His trial and crucifixion.

This sectioning of the Trinity and divesting Jesus of His deity is highly unorthodox. The orthodox creeds of Christianity have always affirmed that the two natures of Jesus were

inseparable. The Athanasian Creed is an example of the codifying of biblical truth as it states:

"Furthermore, it is necessary to Everlasting Salvation; that he also believe rightly the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. ... Who although he be God and Man: yet he is not two but one Christ; One; not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh: but by taking the manhood into God; One altogether; not by confusion of substance: but by Unity of Person. For as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man: so God and Man is one Christ."⁴⁸

Emmerich went well beyond the Bible into heresy. Nothing in Scripture remotely suggests that Jesus' divine nature left Him and He became merely a man.

Just following His Gethsemane experience, and before the cross, Jesus affirmed to the elders and priests that He is indeed the Son of God and no mere man (Luke 22:70). This designation carries all the weight of His deity for, in essence, what God is, the Son is. This is not a statement of descent, but of essence or being. Theologian Loraine Boettner explains:

"To our occidental type of mind the terms 'Father' and 'Son' carry with them, on the one hand, the ideas of source of being and superiority, and on the other, subordination and dependence. In theological language, however, they are used in the Semitic or Oriental sense of *sameness of nature*."⁴⁹

Emmerich then allowed the divinity of Jesus to return, but not until the resurrection. She claimed to have seen "the limbs move and the body of our Lord, being reunited to his soul and to his divinity."⁵⁰ So, in Emmerich's judgment, for three days Jesus ceased to be God.

If Jesus was just a man *and only a man on the cross*, He could not have atoned for sin. Such suggestions destroy the doctrine of redemption. Paul assures us, "God was in Christ recon-

ciling the world to Himself" (2 Corinthians 5:19). Emmerich may be trying to help us know that Jesus really experienced humanity in that He was fully human, but because we already know that from the Scriptures, we do not have to sacrifice His deity to do it.

Boettner quotes John Calvin stressing the absolute necessity of not separating the natures of Christ:

"As it would have been impossible, therefore, for one who was only God to suffer death, or for one who was a mere man to overcome it, He associated the human nature with the Divine, that He might submit the weakness of the former to death, as an atonement for sins; and that with the power of the latter He might contend with death, and obtain a victory on our behalf. Those who despoil Christ, therefore, either of His Divinity or His humanity either diminish His majesty and glory, or obscure His goodness."⁵¹

INFORMATION EVERYWHERE

Some may wonder how Emmerich could appear to have had so much knowledge about Jerusalem, its valleys, hills, and other topography. However, one does not have to have divine revelation and, most likely, Emmerich obtained it like everyone else: through reading. Map makers had, for years before Emmerich, produced maps to assist Bible study. The detailed writings of Josephus were also available. Josephus recorded word pictures and vivid details of Jerusalem's terrain. Pilgrim accounts were prolific since the time of Helena, who built churches there in the fourth century. Travel accounts by both Christians and Muslims abound in the centuries since. The Crusaders' history and accounts of day-to-day life in Jerusalem were readily available.

Emmerich adds mythological notes to her fantasy accounts. She invented an unbiblical account of Jesus following His arrest in Gethsemane. Jesus supposedly fell on a rock and "The marks of his feet, his elbows, and his

fingers were miraculously impressed on the rock on which he fell, and these impressions were afterwards shown for the veneration of Christians."⁵² Emmerich's pious legend did not survive and no imprints of Jesus are shown in Jerusalem today except for a "footprint" at a Muslim site purported to have been left by Jesus at the Ascension.

NOW WHERE DID THAT COME FROM?

Some may wonder where and how Emmerich came up with the story about one of the dying thieves being healed of leprosy as a baby by Jesus' dirty (baby) bath water. Emmerich called him Dismas and relates:

"The poor leprous child, who was instantly cleansed by being dipped in the water which had been used for washing the infant Jesus, was no other than this Dismas."⁵³

Emmerich has a few details correct, but significantly alters the story. The particulars are found in a document called, "The Arabic Gospel of the Infancy of the Savior":

"... the same woman took scented water to wash the Lord Jesus; and after she had washed Him, she took the water with which she had done it, and poured part of it upon a girl who was living there, whose body was white with leprosy, and washed her with it. And as soon as this was done the girl was cleansed from her leprosy."⁵⁴

In the third and fourth centuries after Christ, a large body of fictional pieces were written to account for the silent years of Jesus' boyhood. These may have served as the novels of the day and that body of writing was given the title *Pseudepigrapha*, meaning "false writings." They also were labeled *New Testament Apocrypha*, although separated by centuries from the New Testament autographs. Of these, the Roman Catholic Church says are books "which have not been recognized as canonical by the Church. They are characterized by a

false claim to divine authority; extravagant accounts of events and miracles alleged to be supplemental revelation; material favoring heresy (especially in 'New Testament' apocrypha)."⁵⁵

These writings transform Jesus into a "Harry Potter" figure who talks to animals and strikes schoolmasters and classmates dead. Emmerich's "The Veil of Veronica"⁵⁶ also has its origins in the *Pseudepigrapha*. Variations on the legend have Jesus impressing His bloody face on the veil while going to the cross. The original telling had Veronica meeting Jesus during His ministry and expressing her desire to have His picture on a painting. Jesus accommodates her by impressing his facial likeness on the cloth. The story is told in the document, "The Death of Pilate, Who Condemned Jesus," and elaborates how Veronica took the cloth to Caesar in Rome and it healed him.⁵⁷

BLOOD MAGIC

Emmerich, reviving a medieval fetish, takes the literal blood of Jesus and makes it a magical substance with inherent power. According to Emmerich, the Savior's blood seemed to be able to regenerate a person when splashed on their skin:

"... taking his lance in both hands, thrust it so completely into the right side of Jesus that the point went through the heart, and appeared on the left side. When Cassius drew his lance out of the wound a quantity of blood and water rushed from it, and flowed over his face and body. This species of washing produced effects somewhat similar to the vivifying waters of baptism: grace and salvation at once entered his soul. ... Cassius meantime remained kneeling and thanking God, not only for the graces he had received but likewise for the cure of the complaint of his eyes, ... Mary, John, the holy women, and Cassius, gathered up the blood and water in flasks, and wiped up the remainder with pieces of linen."⁵⁸

Reducing the sacrifice of Jesus to magic plasma should be unacceptable to any thinking Christian. Taken to its logical conclusion, the Communion wine believed by the Roman Catholic Church to be the literal blood of Jesus could have the power to redeem and heal by its external application. Blood magic has no place in a Christian system.

WHAT SAITH THE SCRIPTURES?

Emmerich's book is a grand stew of Bible portions, dogmas, myths, legends, traditions, magic, and unrestrained imagination in a thick broth of passion mysticism that flavors all the ingredients. Her convent was the kitchen and breeding ground. The Bible contradicts the foundational premise of passion mysticism, that is, that sanctification can only take place when one obsesses on the brutal agony and the literal minutia of Christ's sufferings. Most all of the hundreds and hundreds of verses on growing in grace speak to the advancing in godly activity, leaving the past and pressing forward, having a positive biblical mindset, and the development of the fruit of the Spirit (1 Peter 1, Galatians 5, Ephesians 4, Colossians 3, Philippians 3-4).

Colossians 3:1 strongly advises a fixed focus, not back at the suffering Christ, but up to the glorious, risen, reigning Christ, "If then you were raised with Christ, *seek* those things which are above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God. *Set your mind* on things above, not on the things of the earth." To seek and to set both speak of an absolute determination in that direction. Our minds are to focus on life and victory, not on the past and agony. We look back only to reflect in gratitude.

Remembering the Lord's Supper and His death are not bad in themselves. The question is what does the word "remember" tell us about *what* we are to remember. Scripture says, "Do this in remembrance of *Me*." It does not say to focus only on My wounds or obsess on torn pieces of flesh, but rather remember *Me*.

The Greek text is very helpful here. The general word for remember is the Greek word *mimnesko*. At times, it is translated to be mindful of, and deals with the act of calling to mind. It focuses more on the act than the content. In 1 Corinthians 11:24-25 where "in memory of" is used, the Greek word is *anamnesis*. This is a powerful word that deals not just with the act of remembering, but more as to the content. W.E. Vine says this is "an affectionate calling of the Person Himself to mind."⁵⁹

Consider for a moment someone who has been saved out of a burning building by someone else who is subsequently overcome by smoke and dies in the fire. The person saved would not constantly call to mind the other's agony and death, but would remember and be filled with gratitude for the love and sacrifice shown.

Passion mysticism is morbid and unhealthy. It takes the focus off *what* Jesus did and *why*, and puts it on *how*. It moves from theology to imagination. There is only so much that raw facts and the unpacking of vivid details of crucifixion can give us. Certainly, we need to know about the Romans and their cruelty. Our focus, however, is not the Romans and their mad machine of torture, but the One who defeated and conquered all they could throw at Him. Our major focus as Christians can never be violence, but the One who is our Peace.

The long-term effects that Emmerich will currently have on the Christian world are unknown. She herself never found any certainty about heaven. She chose pain, suffering, agony, and darkness, not light. She focused on death, not life. Because of this she violated the principle that our bodies are temples of God's Holy Spirit. She advocated denigration and destruction of the body. Her imagination led her to invent false doctrines.

The Dolorous Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ is an unfortunate volume that has been given a resurrection. It is a pathetic read because the Passion of Jesus is trivialized and reduced to a

visit to a slaughterhouse, and because the glorious resurrection and the present glorious reign of Jesus as mediator and High Priest is totally ignored. Sad, too, because Emmerich was so terribly misguided and her visions will mislead many others. She is to be pitied, not emulated; corrected, not followed. Her only positive example is demonstrating in herself the horrors of departure from Scripture.

Endnotes:

1. Some of Emmerich's visions which are contained in the film, *The Passion of the Christ*, include the dialogue between Satan and Jesus during His agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus being chained and thrown from a bridge, and Jesus' mother Mary cleaning up blood at the crucifixion site.
2. Cited in Anne Catherine Emmerich, *The Dolorous Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ*. Rockford, Ill.: TAN Books and Publishers, Inc., 1983, title page, italics and ellipsis in original.
3. Hillel Italie, "Religion as a sales tool," Associated Press, document available at: www.cnn.com/2004/SHOWBIZ/books/03/04/publishing.religion.ap/.
4. *The Dolorous Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ*, op. cit., dedication page.
5. *Ibid.*, back cover.
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Ibid.*, pg. xii.
8. *Ibid.*, pg. 3.
9. *Ibid.*, ellipsis added.
10. *Ibid.*, pg. xiii.
11. *Ibid.*, pg. xiv.
12. *Ibid.*
13. *Ibid.*
14. *Ibid.*, pg. xvi.
15. *Ibid.*, pg. 5.
16. *Ibid.*, pp. 344-345.
17. *Ibid.*, pg. 347.
18. Felician A. Foy, Editor, *Catholic Almanac*. Huntington, Ind.: Our Sunday Visitor, 1983, pg. 357.
19. Norman L. Geisler and Ralph E. MacKenzie, *Roman Catholics and Evangelicals - Agreements and Differences*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1995, pp. 337-338.
20. *The Dolorous Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ*, op. cit., pg. 8.
21. *Ibid.*, pg. 15, ellipsis added.
22. *Ibid.*, pg. 225.
23. *Ibid.*, pg. 24, ellipsis added.
24. *Ibid.*, pg. 31.
25. *Ibid.*, pg. 34, ellipsis added.
26. See further, Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*. Grand Rapids, Mich.:

- Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994, Vol. VI, pp. 262-269.
27. Eugene Fodor, *Fodor's Israel*. New York: Fodor's Travel Publications, 1999, pg. 39.
28. *The Dolorous Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ*, op. cit., pg. 35.
29. *Ibid.*, pp. 36-38.
30. *Ibid.*, pg. 38.
31. *Ibid.*, pg. 43.
32. *Catholic Almanac*, op. cit., pg. 131.
33. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. New York: An Image Book - Doubleday, 1994, pg. 562, italic in original.
34. *The Dolorous Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ*, op. cit., pp. 278-279.
35. *Ibid.*, pg. 16.
36. *Ibid.*, pp. 70-71, ellipsis added.
37. *Ibid.*, pp. 69-71.
38. See further, Yigael Yadin, *Masada*. London: Widenfeld and Nicholson, 1966, chapter 13.
39. See further, Nahman Avigad, *The Herodian Quarter in Jerusalem*. Jerusalem: Nahman AviKeter Publishing, 1989.
40. *The Dolorous Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ*, op. cit., pg. 79.
41. *Ibid.*, pp. 80-81.
42. *Ibid.*, pg. 84.
43. *Ibid.*
44. *Ibid.*, pp. 84-85, ellipsis added.
45. *Ibid.*, pg. 87.
46. *Ibid.*, pg. 292, italics in original.
47. *Ibid.*, pp. 100, 103, 107, 108.
48. J. Gordon Melton, *American Religious Creeds*. New York: Triumph Books, 1991, Vol. 1, pg. 3.
49. Loraine Boettner, *Studies in Theology*. Phillipsburg, N.J.: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1983, pg. 112, italics in original.
50. *The Dolorous Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ*, op. cit., pg. 360.
51. John Calvin quoted in *Studies in Theology*, op. cit., pg. 198.
52. *The Dolorous Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ*, op. cit., pg. 136.
53. *Ibid.*, pg. 275.
54. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. Eerdmans Publishing, 1961, Vol. 8, pg. 407.
55. *Catholic Almanac*, op. cit., pg. 207.
56. *The Dolorous Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ*, op. cit., pp. 257-259.
57. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, op. cit., Vol. 8, pg. 466.
58. *The Dolorous Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ*, op. cit., pp. 304-305.
59. W.E. Vine, *The Expanded Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*. Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1984, pp. 946-947.

chronology, context, culture, customs, or the Bible's claims about itself, they conclude from a small sampling that Scripture makes no sense. And, because they are unbelievers, they lack the Holy Spirit. One such dabbler took the Apostle Paul to task for saying prophecies were made about Timothy. Instead of reading the context where it states that it was the prophecy of Timothy's elders, the critic assumed errors in the Bible, because Timothy was not the subject of any Old Testament prophecies.

In Acts 8:30, Philip asked the Ethiopian, "Do you understand what you are reading?" Many do not understand and are like the child who, after glancing at the obituaries in the newspaper, asked his parents why people die in alphabetical order.

The third category is the *serious liberals, deconstructionists, or revisionists* who intend to prove the Bible wrong. Those like Peter Jennings of ABC News and *The Da Vinci Code* author Dan Brown fall into this group. They believe if they can show mistakes and contradictions, they will have demolished the Bible's credibility. This serious group produces television broadcasts and writes articles and books. In short, they say, "Don't trust the Bible," which equates to "Has God indeed said?" Some of their objections are formidable, but not insurmountable.

On the other side of this divide stand the serious apologists who have written to help us better view and resolve the apparent discrepancies. The one positive bias they work with is this: *The Bible must always be given the benefit of the doubt.*

In other words, we are the fallen and faulty ones. Our minds and intellects are not pure and objective and slanted toward truth, but are rather twisted and tilted by the fall toward error, misunderstanding, and unbelief. Our judgments are often clouded and biased. As the word "sin" indicates, we constantly miss the mark.

Not only are our minds and intellects tainted by the fall, but communication itself is vulnerable to our human frailties. Take, for instance, the lady who, in the midst of preparing lunch, is hitting the bottom of a ketchup bottle to dislodge its contents as the phone rings. The phone is answered by her five-year-old daughter, who tells the pastor on the other end, "She can't come to the phone right now. She's hitting the bottle!"

The Apostle Peter warns us, "some things in Scripture are hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction as they do the rest of Scripture" (2 Peter 3:16). It's a warning we must take to heart.

Webb Garrison reminds us:

"If man could attain all the truth of God, he would cease to be man. We must be content with some tentative explanations, some hypotheses, and above all, some mysteries."³

This attitude of giving the Bible the benefit of the doubt has a long history and is further shown by the words of the 2nd-century apologist Justin Martyr:

"Since I am entirely convinced that no Scripture contradicts another, I will rather acknowledge that I do not understand what is written. ... Perhaps you are not aware of this, my friends, that there were many sayings written obscurely, parabolically, and mysteriously. There are also symbolic actions."⁴

R.A. Torrey, in his book *Difficulties In The Bible*, wrote:

"How many things there are in the Bible that once puzzled and staggered us, but which have since been perfectly cleared up and no longer present any difficulty whatever! Every year of study finds these difficulties disappear more and more rapidly. At first they go by ones, and then by twos, and then by dozens, and then by scores. Is it not reasonable then to suppose that

the difficulties that still remain will all disappear upon further study?"⁵

In the past 14 years, Norman Geisler has collaborated with several authors to provide a very comprehensive series on Bible difficulties and apparent contradictions. Geisler united with Ron Brooks for *When Skeptics Ask* (1990); with Thomas Howe for *When Critics Ask* (1992); and with Ron Rhodes for *When Cultists Ask* (1997). Similarly, Gleason Archer has *The New International Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*.

However, the classic volume on the subject was published in 1951: *An Examination of the Alleged Discrepancies of the Bible* by John W. Haley. Haley gathered the wisdom of dozens of Bible scholars and theologians and gives their take on each problem or dilemma. There is a section on doctrinal discrepancies, as well as ethical and historical discrepancies. He tackles apparent discrepancies as to persons, places, numbers, time, and so on. One can nearly always find clarification, explanation, or the dovetailing of apparently contradictory accounts. Haley's premise is that "every difficulty and discrepancy in the scriptures is, and will yet be seen to be, capable of a fair and reasonable solution."⁶

As we proceed with answers, we will also attempt to lay out why we in our humanness *think* there are contradictions and errors (in Scripture) in the first place. If we understand why our minds are set that way, perhaps the suggested discrepancies will evaporate — or at least most of them. There is no denying that we are curious beings — created that way by God — and that a certain amount of questioning and investigation is good.

One must not minimize or ignore the work of the Holy Spirit in this process. This is not just an academic exercise. Assisted by the Spirit, we must "search the Scriptures," as Jesus said. Paul told Timothy to labor over the Word. The absence of the Holy Spirit in unbelievers is a prime cause of their misunderstanding and misinterpretation. We can better under-

stand a letter from a loved one than can a non-family member. This aspect of the Holy Spirit and interpretation is covered in Roy Zuck's volume, *The Holy Spirit in Your Teaching*.⁷

It should also be presupposed that there exists some awareness and commitment on the part of the Bible reader as to the doctrines of revelation, inspiration, and inerrancy. Our Savior had the highest regard for Scripture and based many of His claims on its accuracy. He said it would stand if all else failed (Luke 16:17). The Word of God was His strength in temptation (Matthew 4).

We must seriously consider the following dozen specifics as we look at any difficulty or apparent discrepancy in the Bible:

First: We tend to jump to conclusions without all the facts. We must be willing to work to get all the facts. Proverbs stresses the wisdom of data gathering and wise counselors.

Picture a man staying at a luxury hotel. Waking during the night with an upset stomach, he calls room service for a few soda crackers. They are delivered, he eats them, and resumes sleep. In the morning he finds a slip under his door marked, "soda crackers" and at the bottom "3150." He calls the desk ranting about the cost of a few soda crackers, "Outrageous! A disgrace!" A voice from the other end calmly says, "Sir, the crackers were complimentary, I think you are complaining about your room number."

Someone wise in their own eyes might challenge a young Christian with this: "Heaven is up — right? Well, what is up for us is not up on the other side of the world. Up in China is down for us and vice versa." The young Christian might not have an answer at the moment, but can give the Bible the benefit of the doubt and do some research.

The Greek word *ouranos* was not necessarily up, but rather *above*. Wherever we are on the earth, there is always an above. So *ouranos* can be the air, the sky, or the abode of God.

So perhaps heaven has to be thought of as not being flat or horizontal, but spherical or circular, wrapping itself around the earth.

Another one is, "Didn't Jesus say He would rise *on* the third day? The Bible surely contradicts itself." Matthew 27:63 reads, "Sir, we remember, while He was still alive, how that deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise.'" Mark 8:31 renders it, "And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes and be killed and *after* three days rise again." To many, that sounds like the fourth day.

In context and in comparing Matthew 27:63 ("the third day") with the following verse (v. 64), there is a strong indication that "after three days" is equivalent in the mind of the speakers with "the third day." This is born out by Sparrow Simpson in his treatment of the Resurrection. He says that "after three days" and "the third day" is not a problem for the Roman or Jewish mind. They would draw no distinction at all between the two phrases.⁸

Greek scholar A.T. Robertson weighs in:

"Moreover, the phrase 'after three days' is used by the same writers (Matthew and Luke) in connection with the former one, 'the third day,' as meaning the same thing. Hence the definite and clear expressions must explain the one that is less so. The chief priests and Pharisees remember (Matt. 27:63) that Jesus said, after three days I rise again. Hence they urge Pilate to keep a guard over the tomb until the *third day* (Matt. 27:64). This is their own interpretation of the Saviour's words. Besides, in parallel passages in the different Gospels, one will have one expression and another the other, naturally suggesting that they regarded them as equivalent. (Cf. Mark 8:31 with Matt. 16:21, Luke 9:22 with Mark 10:34.) On the third day cannot mean on the fourth day, while after three days

can be used as meaning on the third day."⁹

The late David Flusser wrote:

"According to the New Testament Jesus was resurrected on the third day. This is also the meaning of Mark's phrase, although he wrote 'after three days' (Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:34). Mark follows here the Roman way of time reckoning according to which one counts the present day, tomorrow, and the next day. Following this method 'after three days' means in reality 'on the third day.'"¹⁰

This usage is further verified in 2 Chronicles 10:5. Rehoboam said to the people, "Come back to me *after* three days." Verse 12 reports, "So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam on the third day as the King had directed saying, 'Come back to me *the third day*'" (emphasis added).

Second: We fail to realize or forget that we are dealing with an eastern book. There are many oriental idioms and hyperboles that are unfamiliar to a westerner. Many years ago, Edwin Rice elaborated on this in his book, *Orientalisms in Bible Lands — Giving Light from Customs, Habits, Manners, Imagery, Thought and Life in the East for Bible Students*.

Rice writes:

"A girl in the East when married keeps her own name, and is often called after her father, not after her husband. A wife follows her husband on the road at a respectful distance; it would be a shame for them to go arm and arm in the street. In the West, people decorate their walls, and often leave the ceilings plain: the Oriental usually decorates the ceilings of his room and leaves the walls plain. Western people write and read from left to right of the page, the Oriental the reverse way, from right to left, or from top to bottom of the page. The Oriental places his seal or signature attesting a document or letter at the top or beginning of

the sheet, not at the end or bottom of it. Love and courtship may follow marriage: not precede it. An Oriental, finding himself at the tent-door of his deadly foe, would not flee from it, but probably, boldly enter and claim and be granted brief hospitality and protection, the host defending the guest, though a bitter enemy, at any cost, even to his own life. The American in mourning puts on black, the Chinese wear white; In greeting he may shake his own hands, but not his friend's. About everything is done the reverse way by Orientals to what Occidentals do."¹¹

Rice's major premise is:

"No study of the Bible, therefore, can be satisfactory that does not include some knowledge of life and thought in the East. In fact, we must transport ourselves into the conditions and spirit of this Oriental life, difficult as that may be, or often miss the intent of the divine message and sadly misinterpret it."¹²

There is a cultural difference that exists between us and both Testaments in Scripture. Authors Hershel Shanks and Ben Witherington comment on the cultural divide:

"This cultural distance reminds us that we must be careful about what assumptions we bring to the study of an ancient artifact — and to our understanding of the Bible. The past is in many ways a foreign country. The people of biblical times and of the first centuries did indeed view and do things very differently than we do today."¹³

Missionaries dispatched to a foreign mission field study the language, history, archaeology, and background of the country before they enter the field. Familiarity with their surroundings can make them more effective in communicating the Gospel. The same is true in our outreach to those in cults. We learn the language, mindset, doctrine, and practice of the cults in

order to be more effective in our witness. Likewise, before leading tours, a tour guide will study the country's history, geography, and archaeology.

C. Gordon Olson writes:

"When we examine the teachings of the Lord Jesus, we find that there were a significant number of times when He set forth two-sided truths. For example, coming down from the mount of transfiguration His disciples asked about Elijah's return (Mt. 17). The Lord's answer was definitely two-sided: Elijah will come in the future, and also he had come in the person of John, who was beheaded. Both are true! It is mainly us westerners, with our Greek-derived way of thinking (cognitive process), who so easily fall into the reductionist error."¹⁴

Third: Many apparent discrepancies are simply the imagination of the critic. They can assume and even manufacture discrepancies. Some actually lie and spread blatant misinformation like that found in Lloyd Graham's book, *Deceptions and Myths of the Bible*. This volume drips with animosity, vitriol, and lies. Graham launches his supposition:

"There is nothing 'holy' about the Bible, nor is it 'the word of God.' It was not written by God-inspired saints, but by power-seeking priests. ... The Bible is, we assert, but priest-perversed cosmology."¹⁵

Any honest liberal would acknowledge the multiplicity of biblical authors (approximately 40) from all walks of life — of which very few were priests. It is hard to take Graham seriously as his ignorance is evident on the very first page of his volume. An honest liberal might reject the content of the Bible, but would not lie about its many authors.

These kinds of misguided prejudices create doubt and criticism. For many years, critics accused the Bible of error in mentioning an Assyrian King Sargon. No secular records about Sargon had ever turned up in

archaeological digs. It was their argument from silence that betrayed a prior bias: the Bible could not be true. The accusers had to back off when Paul Emile Botta discovered Sargon's 25-acre palace, royal library, and personal artifacts.¹⁶ This kind of claim, and others like it, have fallen as archaeology continued to confirm the biblical record and its historicity.

Fourth: At times there is failure to distinguish between narration and endorsement. This fallacy assumes that the Bible endorses everything it records. Scripture, for instance, reports the necessity of communal living in Jerusalem early in the history of the Church. It does not command it for all times, as 2 Thessalonians 3 shows us. Continuing Temple worship is also mentioned early in Acts, but the Temple's elimination is prophesied by Jesus. The Church in infancy is not the Church in adulthood. In Acts we have the foundation, but in the Epistles the building. It could even be said that the Church of the first chapter of Acts is not the Church of the twenty-eighth chapter of Acts.

The Bible records Satan's lies and David's sin, but does not approve of this type of activity, as seen in the prohibitions all through the Bible. Certain conduct is mentioned in the Old Testament — polygamy, for example — but it is evident that while God allowed multiple unions, it was never His prescript for man. Likewise, in the New Testament, certain behavior is addressed in the Epistles, but it is obvious it is not approved. Those behaviors are to be put off, we are told by Paul. Larger contexts must always be taken into account.

Account must always be taken of progressive revelation. It is prophesied in the Old Testament (as in the New Covenant replacing the Old Covenant). The New Testament is clear that grace supersedes law.

Timothy Lin observes:

"Any student of biblical theology knows that God's revelation is organic and progressive. His truth is like an orange seed: it begins as just a small seed, yet it

has all the DNA which the mature orange tree will have. During the process of the seed's growth new stages develop time after time, but no one would say that the sapling contradicts the full-grown tree. Yet some of today's scholars unhesitatingly affirm contradictions between the Old Testament and the New wherever they find an Old Testament quotation in the New having more words or explanations than the original Old Testament passage. The principle of biblical truth is always the same, but its application is not the same in the New Testament as it was in the Old. Since the progress from simplicity to complexity is the very nature of progress, the development of the Old Testament truth by later paraphrase or interpretation is very natural to God's self-revelation. In truth such modification rather proves that God's word is organic and living. As long as the Holy Spirit was the Author who selected the word, whether or not the words are identical to the Old Testament passage makes little difference to its inspiration. The changing of a noun to a pronoun, or vice versa; the transformation of a verb in its tense, mood, voice, or person; the summarization of a certain Old Testament passage or a certain teaching of the Old Testament — none has to do with contradiction, but rather has to do with the bringing out of God's progressive revelation."¹⁷

Fifth: Christian paradox can present two sides of the same truth, yet not really be contradictory. Paul speaks of being poor yet rich — weak yet strong. We can say, "I am mortal — I am immortal." Both are different aspects, but true from their own point of view. Jesus spoke of finding life through losing it and of the first being last. Les Flynn dealt with some of these paradoxes in his book, *Holy Contradictions*.¹⁸

Sixth: We must recognize different ways of computing chronology and reck-

oning time. The Jews worked with both a sacred and a civil year. Haley points out that, "It was one peculiarity of the Jewish reckoning that fractional years were counted for whole ones."¹⁹ Haley refers to English scholar Joseph Lightfoot, who says that "according to the rabbins, 'the very first day of a year may stand in computation for that year.'"²⁰ Haley adds, "It is clear that the Hebrews often employed 'round numbers,' or, omitting fractions, made use of the nearest whole number."²¹ This applies to fractional days as well.

As the Jews computed the days of circumcision (males to be circumcised on the eighth day from birth) any part of the first day was considered the first day even if it was the last hour of that day. One Jewish source affirms that "if a child was born on a Saturday, the circumcision is held on the following Saturday."²²

We may be confused by Jewish chronology and the Jewish calendar by assuming they are using a modern calendar as we do.

The exact chronological starting points and methods of computation of time cannot be ignored and vary in different cultures. When one speaks of the third hour or the sixth hour, the starting point is important. The Roman calculations started from midnight, while the Jewish reckoning began at 6 a.m.²³

As far as discrepancies in numbers or the numbering of certain things, these touch no real vital points in Scripture and some are clearly copyists' errors or inaccuracies in versions. Textual comparisons and version comparisons eliminate some of these. Haley, as well, points out that similar Hebrew letters were used for many numbers. For instance, a similar Hebrew letter was used for 4 as was used for 4,000, confusing copyists at times and making careful comparison of texts all that more important.²⁴ Context also aids in the search for precision in this area.

Another factor is that one writer may report some of what he sees by way of numbers of people while

another writer may report more detail and other people present. One person may tell the details of a church fellowship in which he spoke to two people in a huddle while another might report on the four others standing around the huddle and overhearing. There is no mistake, just a larger picture.

Seventh: The apparent contradiction may originate in the expositor's interpretation of the verse or verses, not the Scripture itself. Watchman Nee, for instance, says that the nose stands for feeling. Asked for biblical proof that nose equals feelings, one Nee follower could provide only a long Nee quote and Nee's commentary on the Song of Solomon. There was nothing from a Hebrew lexicon or other scholarly, authoritative work in linguistics or philology. Interpretation is simply that — interpretation.

The following humorous illustration clearly shows how pliable and subjective interpretation can be without some linguistic and hermeneutical guidelines:

"A psychologist, an engineer, and a theologian were on a hunting trip in Canada. Seeking shelter, they knocked on the door of a small, isolated cabin. No one was home, but the front door was unlocked, and they entered. They saw something strange. A large, pot-bellied, cast-iron stove was suspended in midair by wires attached to the ceiling beams. Why would a stove be elevated from the floor? The psychologist concluded: 'It is obvious that this lonely trapper, isolated from humanity, has elevated his stove so that he can curl up under it and vicariously experience a return to his mother's womb.' The engineer theorized: 'The man is practicing laws of thermodynamics. By elevating his stove, he has discovered a way to distribute heat more evenly throughout the cabin.' The theologian speculated: 'I'm sure that hanging his stove from the ceiling has religious meaning. Fire lifted up has

been a religious symbol for centuries.' While they were debating the matter, the trapper returned. They immediately asked him why he had hung his pot-bellied stove by wires from the ceiling. 'Had plenty of wire, not much stovepipe,' the trapper said."²⁵

Misinterpretations of words and verses in the Bible can often be what confuses those who are not careful readers. A woman once asked how one could reconcile the fact that the Bible says God loved the world, yet wanted children to suffer. She based her question on a naive reading of Matthew 19:14 — "suffer the little children." She did not realize that in 1611 the word *suffer* meant to "allow." How readily we can blame the book for our mistakes.

Eighth: *The misunderstanding or charge of contradiction can be in the translation of the Bible one is using.* Take, for instance, someone who says, "Acts 28:13 claims they 'fetched a compass.' Anyone knows that magnetic compasses for navigation were not developed in Europe until the 1100s and any encyclopedia would bear that out."²⁶ Obviously there is a huge mistake in the Bible which proves a much later origin than proposed by modern-day evangelical scholars."

However, this "problem" is an easy one to answer because it hinges on a 1611 translation. Mariners in Paul's day could not have used a compass and Acts 27:20 makes clear that ships were navigated by the position of sun, moon, and stars. Acts 27:20 describes that when a storm hit, the heavens were not visible and that their hope was gone. They had no way to chart a course.

The Greek word for compass is *perierchomai*. It literally means to come around or go in a circle. To fetch a compass in 1611 meant to navigate the ship in a huge circle. In the Revised Standard Version, the passage reads, "we sailed around." The *New King James Version* renders it, "we circled round." The discrepancy is dismissed and we cannot blame the

Bible for either a mistranslation or an archaic translation.

Another common one is found in Acts 12:4. At least one translation reads, "intending after *Easter* to bring him forth to the people" (KJV). The objector might say: "Anyone knows Easter festivities and even the word *Easter* was developed centuries after the book of Acts. The first century Jews knew nothing about Easter. It is a fact of recorded history that the exact date was not agreed on and there were controversies on the dating of Easter through the Nicene and anti-Nicene period. This is a colossal error."

Not really. There are no Greek texts that render the word *pascha* as *Easter*

the same with the Jewish pass-over."²⁷

We cannot blame the Bible for a committee's mistranslations or slavery to a Church tradition. Even the most avid King James Only proponent must accept the fact that the *Textus Receptus* uses *pascha* (Passover).

The whole question of textual transmission, touched on before, also enters here as we struggle with alternate renderings. But doctrine is redundant and the large majority of alternate readings in the Hebrew and Greek are minor matters. Nevertheless, we should be willing to at least compare versions, footnotes, and critical apparatus provided in many Bibles.

There are approximately 800 apparent discrepancies in the Bible. Deep study will yield answers to most, if not all, of them.

in Acts 12:4. Greek texts are uniform in using *pascha* and that word simply means Passover. This is verified in Acts 12:3 where it is referred to as "days of unleavened bread," which is a virtual synonym for Passover.

Again the culprit is the translation. The King James translators, here in this Bible passage, followed the old Saxon mode of translating *pascha* as *Easter*. The Saxons did this in their service books. The old *Geneva Bible* properly rendered it *Passover*. Adam Clarke writes:

"After the *passover*. Perhaps there never was a more unhappy, not to say absurd, translation than that in our text. But, before I come to explain the word, it is necessary to observe that our term called *Easter* is not exactly

Ninth: *There are often a plurality of names for people and places.* Mount Seir is called Edom, Esau, and Selah. The Dead Sea is called the Salt Sea. The Sea of Galilee is referred to by different names (such as Chinnereth, Kinnereth, Gennesaret, and Sea of Tiberias). So, too, are many Bible characters. Peter is called Cephas and Simon. These are not contradictions at all. People may have a legal name, a common name used by parents, a nickname, and a confirmational name, in addition to a surname. Also there are many in Scripture with the same name. There are a multiplicity of Marys, a handful of those named James, and a number of Herods.

Tenth: *Critics often wrongly assume that similar events are identical.* Abraham twice lied concerning his relationship to his wife Sarah (Genesis

12:13; 20:2) and his son Isaac imitated the same with his wife, Rebekah (Genesis 26:7). David spared Saul's life on two occasions (1 Samuel 24 and 26). There were two large group feedings by Jesus (Matthew 14:13-21; 15:32-39) and two temple cleansings, one at the beginning (John 2:14-22) and the other at the end (Matthew 21:12-13) of His ministry.

Haley has a great illustration regarding mistaking two similar events as identical. It concerns 18th-century revivalist Jonathan Edwards:

"Take, as a well-known example, the case of the two Presidents Edwards, father and son. Both were named Jonathan Edwards, and were the grandsons of clergyman. Both were pious in their youth, were distinguished scholars, and were tutors for equal periods in the colleges where they were respectively educated. Both were settled in the ministry as successors to their maternal grandfathers, were dismissed on account of their religious opinions, and were again settled in retired country towns, over congregations singularly attached to them, where they had leisure to pursue their favorite studies, and to prepare and publish their valuable works. Both were removed from these stations to become presidents of colleges, and both died shortly after their respective inaugurations; the one in the fifty-sixth, and the other in the fifty-seventh year of his age; each having preached, on the first Sabbath of the year of his death, on the text: "This year thou shalt die." Now, let these circumstances be submitted for the consideration of rationalistic critics, and, the probable decision will be that there was but *one* Jonathan Edwards. ... a large portion of their alleged 'discrepancies' are purely *subjective* — originating, primarily, not in the sacred books, but in the misguided prejudices and disordered imagination of the critic."²⁸

On the reverse side of this is the possibility of trying to merge two

events that really do not belong together. Try, as we may, it is extremely difficult to try to match and merge Acts 1:18, which talks of a man who falls headlong and is burst open with Matthew 27:1-5, which speaks of Judas and his last moments on earth. Matthew 27:5 says clearly and precisely that Judas threw the money down in some area of the Temple compound and went out and committed suicide by hanging himself. What is absolutely certain is that Judas no longer had the money.

While we don't know who had the money in Acts 1:18, we know it couldn't be Judas, since he left it behind in the Temple before his death. In the parenthetical statement in Acts 1:18, it simply says "this man." That is, this unnamed man had the money. As well, this man (and it does not say Judas) purchased the field with the money and then had a terrible accident. The usual attempt to reconcile the two events and make Judas *the man* really does violence to the text. For example, Geisler and Howe try in this manner:

"Judas hung himself exactly as Matthew affirms that he did. The account in Acts simply adds that Judas fell, and his body opened up at the middle and his intestines gushed out."²⁹

This explanation only works if you leave out that this man purchased a field with the money (Acts 1:18) and you leave out the fact that Judas did not have the money to purchase a field (Matthew 27:5) as the man in Acts 1:18 did.

We have an unreconcilable contradiction only if we *assume* that *this man* is Judas. There is no reason to assume so. The point of the passage is that "blood money" only brings horrible consequences, no matter who touches it. Adam Clarke breaks the Gordian knot with these observations as to the parenthetical insertion of information about a man assigned to purchase a burial field with the money:

"Probably Judas did not purchase the field himself, but the money for which he sold his

Lord was thus applied. ... the *buying of the field* was the consequence of Judas's treason."³⁰

Further reading in Matthew 27 shows Clarke to be right on target as the context clearly shows: "But the chief priests took the silver pieces and said, 'It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, because they are the price of blood.' And *they consulted together and bought with them the potter's field*" (vv. 6-7, emphasis added). No doubt "this man" was the agent who did the purchasing, not Judas himself. Similar events may or may not be identical.

Another example is the creation account. There is a panoramic view of creation in Genesis 1 and a breakdown of details in chapter 2, which is obvious to see. Some, however, suggest that the author got confused and presented two different creation accounts even though a careful reading shows no contradictions and the obvious intent of Moses in detailing God's creative process.

Eleventh: *The Bible uses various forms of literature and a multitude of literary devices. There are metaphors, similes, poetry, parables, hyperbole, irony, figures of speech, symbols, allegories, prophecies, and anthropomorphisms. Typology can be overdone and Scripture pushed far beyond its intended limits. Geisler and Howe advise us that, "We must be careful in our reading of figures of speech in Scripture."*³¹

Unfamiliar designations or word usages can throw the untaught off track. Take, for instance, the child who says: "The children of Israel crossed the Red Sea and the children of Israel captured the land, and the children of Israel built the Temple — it's always the children of Israel — the children of Israel — didn't the adults do anything?"

Twelfth: *We realize also that when the New Testament writers quoted the Old Testament writers they, at times, quoted from Hebrew versions and, at other times, from Greek versions such as the Septuagint (LXX). This explains why some quotes are not verbatim. The New*

Testament writers were also led by the Holy Spirit at times to quote partial verses, paraphrase verses, or loosely allude to verses. This free use of the Old Testament (a part of the inspiration process) has been understood and studied and is not seen as contradiction in any sense.

When Steven, in Acts 7:14, states that Jacob's family constituted 75 people and Genesis 46:27 gives the number as 70 we are not faced with an impossibility. Steven quotes from the LXX (the Greek version of the Old Testament) in which the calculation is composed differently and clearly adds five other persons. The Hebrew version is different in the way the totals are calculated.³²

There are approximately 800 apparent discrepancies in the Bible. Deep study will yield answers to most, if not all, of them. It truly is, as Haley says, that every difficulty and discrepancy in the Scriptures is, and will yet be seen to be "capable of a fair and reasonable solution,"³³ if that is what one wants.

Haley adds:

"...the BIBLE will stand. In the ages yet to be, when its present assailants and defenders are mouldering in the dust, and when their very names are forgotten, the sacred volume will be, as it has been during the centuries past, the guide and solace of unnumbered millions of our race."³⁴

Endnotes:

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3. Webb Garrison, *The Preacher and His Audience*. Westwood, N.J.: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1954, pg. 25.
4. *A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs*, op. cit., pp. 337-338.
5. R.A. Torrey, *Difficulties In The Bible*. Chicago: Moody Press, nd, pg. 18.
6. John W. Haley, *An Examination of the Alleged Discrepancies of the Bible*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1951, Preface, pg. x, italics in original.
7. Roy Zuck, *The Holy Spirit in Your Teaching*. Wheaton, Ill.: Scripture Press, 1963.
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9. A.T. Robertson, *A Harmony of the Gospels for Students of the Life of Christ*. New York: Harper Brothers Publishers, 1922, pg. 290, italics in original.
10. David Flusser, *Jesus*. Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1997, pg. 256, footnote 7.
11. Edwin Rice, *Orientalisms in Bible Lands — Giving Light from Customs, Habits, Manners, Imagery, Thought and Life in the East for Bible Students*. Philadelphia: The American Sunday School Union, 1953, pg. 12.
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14. C. Gordon Olson, *Beyond Calvinism and Arminianism*. Cedar Knolls, N.J.: Global Publishing, 2002, pg. 126.
15. Lloyd M. Graham, *Deceptions and Myths of the Bible*. New York: Bell Publish-

- ing Company, 1979, Preface, pg. 1.
16. See further, Jack Finegan, *Light from the Ancient Past*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1951, pp. 174-176.
17. Timothy Lin, *Principles The New Testament Writers Used When Quoting the Old*, Biblical Studies Ministries International, 2000, pp. 3-4. Document available at: [www.bsmi.org/download/lin/Quoting OT.pdf](http://www.bsmi.org/download/lin/Quoting_OT.pdf).
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19. *An Examination of the Alleged Discrepancies of the Bible*, op. cit., pg. 12.
20. Ibid.
21. Ibid., pg. 14.
22. Shmuel Himelstein, *The Jewish Primer: Questions and Answers on Jewish Faith and Culture*. New York: Facts On File, 1990, pg. 143.
23. *An Examination of the Alleged Discrepancies of the Bible*, op. cit., pg. 413.
24. Ibid., pg. 380.
25. Cal and Rose Samra, *Holy Humor: A Book of Inspirational Wit and Cartoons*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publications, 1997, pg. 11.
26. See for example, "Invention of the Magnetic Compass." Document available at: www.computersmiths.com/chinese_invention/compass.htm.
27. Adam Clarke, *The New Testament of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*. New York: Abingdon Press, nd, Vol. 1, Matthew to Acts, pg. 774.
28. *An Examination of the Alleged Discrepancies of the Bible*, op. cit., pp. 26-27, 29, italics in original.
29. Norman Geisler and Thomas Howe, *When Critics Ask*. Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1992, pg. 361.
30. *The New Testament of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*, op. cit., Vol. 1, pg. 686, italics in original.
31. *When Critics Ask*, op. cit., pg. 23.
32. Ibid., pp. 432-433.
33. *An Examination of the Alleged Discrepancies of the Bible*, op. cit., Preface, pg. x.
34. Ibid.

EDITORIALS

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have a biblical worldview and that, "In denominations that ordain women, only 15% of female pastors hold a biblical worldview." That is absolutely frightening. What then do they believe and what are they feeding their flocks?

The Apostle Paul often mentions "sound doctrine." The word *sound* is the Greek word *hugiano*. It is the root of the word *hygiene* and means healthy, wholesome, safe, and sound. False doctrine is poisonous. It is evil not only because it is contrary to God, but because it is unhealthy

in many other ways. It can poison one spiritually as it moves people away from God and the saving knowledge of Jesus. It can put them into a cult setting and foster an unhealthy view of reality. It can predispose them to physical and spiritual abuse and destroy their family as well as other relationships. False teachings are deadly and dangerous. Some even smuggle in heresies on the back of Jesus, pretending to teach orthodox things about Him, but rather imposing unorthodox things. Consider further Copeland's declaration on Hinn's broadcast:

"He's [Jesus] no longer called the only begotten Son of God. No, no. He's called the firstborn Son of God."

Likewise it is not hard to believe that a man (a former Seventh-day Adventist) in Fresno, Calif., could slaughter nine family members, knowing the depravity of the human heart and the delusions of cultic ideas.

Dr. Harry Ironside's 40-year-old warning, from his volume *Timothy, Titus and Philemon*, is doubly applicable today with the proliferation of destructive cults:

"Notice how frequently Paul uses the word 'sound.' Of course I realize he was writing by inspiration; nevertheless it appealed to his own heart. 'Sound' means 'healthy,' and when the apostle speaks of *sound* doctrine he means doctrines which are conducive to spiritual health. If we will turn to some of the other passages in these Pastoral Epistles where he uses this word it will help us to get the force of it: 'If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome (that is, *sound*) words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness' (1 Timothy 6:3); 'Hold fast the form of *sound* words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus' (2 Timothy 1:13); 'For the time will come when they will not endure *sound* doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears' (2 Timothy 4:3)" (pg. 27).

Ironside continues to cite Scriptures on the absolute importance of good healthy doctrine:

"Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by *sound* doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers' (Titus 1:9); 'But speak thou the things which become *sound* doctrine...' (Titus 2:1,2). Through all these Pastoral Epistles Paul emphasizes the importance of teaching the spiritually healthful doctrine. The proclamation of the truth of God's Word is conducive to health spiritually. False teaching tends to death and decay. Where the teaching in the classroom and from the pulpit is sound, it has an effect for good, and tends to build up believers in holiness of life and Christlikeness in character. Where it is otherwise it has the very opposite effect" (pp. 27-28).

As destructive heresies continue to arise and poison the atmosphere in the life of the Church, the much-maligned counter-cult ministries will be the unsung, but necessary, heroes hoping to expose the infections of error, bring cures from the Scriptures, and permanently disable some of the spaceships coming and going from the "other side of the moon."

One of the most insidious and infectious viruses is the worn-out phrase, "God spoke to me." God doesn't tell lies, but the devil could tell us a truth so he can set us up for a lie. If we say God said something He did not say, we have committed blasphemy. Isaiah said, "To the law and the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isaiah 8:20).

A pastor cannot say, "I heard God speak clearly to me, [Southern California is] where I want you to plant a church!" ... I had heard from God" and then refer to Robert Schuller's and John Wimber's churches as "strong, Bible-believing churches" in this same area. God's "voice" would give more discernment than that. Remember that all the cult founders claimed to hear God's voice and be recipients of incredible visions and mandates.

Spaceships may be coming and going, but we need to ask who is navigating them, where have they been, and what have they brought back. Only healthy doctrine will keep us healthy.

—GRF

NEWS UPDATES

(continued from page 3)

pardon and forgiveness for the entire state. I don't want to offend anyone."

On April 1, the Illinois House approved the new version of the resolution. The apology was then made on April 7. Utah Gov. Olene Walker said she welcomed the resolution — either version. "It doesn't change the fact it was a gesture of kindness. ... The resolution provides a sense of closure and understanding," a spokesperson for Walker said.

During the past several decades, the LDS church has invested heavily in a restoration of Nauvoo, including rebuilding of a temple in 2002. The church says more than 300,000 tourists visit the tiny community each year — where tension remains between Mormon and non-Mormon residents.

—MKG

SETBACKS FOR CHRISTIAN SCIENTISTS

Once categorized as one of the four major cults, the Boston-based Church of Christ, Scientist appears to be continuing its slow descent into oblivion. According to a Religious News Service report in April, the sect "has undertaken a series of painful belt-tightening measures, including the elimination of 125 jobs over the past two months." The report claimed that it was the church's "worst financial situation in a decade."

The cutback is part of an attempt to erase an \$8 million deficit. Additional measures include budget cuts at the *Christian Science Monitor* newspaper and the elimination

of tours at the mother church and two homes where church founder Mary Baker Eddy once lived.

Yet church officials paint a different picture. Recently, \$55 million was spent to renovate church property in Boston, while another \$50 million was spent on renovations, new construction, and programming at the four-story Mary Baker Eddy Library, which opened two years ago. Additionally, church treasurer Walter Jones responded to the allegations of financial crisis by asking, "Can it really be said that the Church is in 'dire financial straits,' with over \$500 million in net assets and no indebtedness aside from a software lease?"

The metaphysical sect was founded in 1879 by Eddy. At the time of her death in 1910, about one million people were attending Christian Science churches. Estimates of present church membership are fewer than 250,000 worldwide.

—MKG

MASONIC RITE GONE WRONG

A secret induction ceremony in a Masonic Lodge on Long Island, N.Y., turned tragic when the inductee was shot to death. William James, 47, was being initiated into the Fellowcraft Club when one of the leaders conducting the ritual pointed and fired a loaded pistol at James. The

gun that was to be used in the ceremony was filled with blanks, but the leader reached into his pocket and mistakenly pulled out a loaded .38-caliber semi-automatic pistol.

The ritual was intended to initially induce fear, then develop trust and confidence between the inductee and other members of the fraternity. The gun loaded with blanks was to be pointed at James' head while another member was to beat a trash can to simulate the sound of gunfire. Police authorities, while calling it a "poor decision" to have a loaded weapon in that setting, said they believe the incident was "completely accidental." The ritual also included large rat traps and a six-foot replica guillotine.

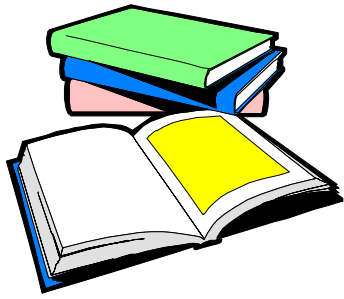
The Fellowcraft Club is made up of local Masons at the Long Island-based Lodge who are responsible for the upkeep and maintenance of the lodge building. Lodge officials, however, were quick to disavow any connection with the death and stressed that the ceremony was not "sanctioned by the Lodge" and that it was sponsored by an "independent social group."

While firearms are not part of the approved traditional Lodge rituals, a Masonic candidate is required to swear a blood oath, vowing to having his throat cut, his tongue torn out, and his body buried on the seashore at low-tide if he ever reveals the fraternal secrets of Freemasonry. Freemasons claim about 1.5 million members in the United States.

—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 USE OF THE ROD AND STAFF

A Neglected Aspect of Shepherding

by Jay Adams

Timeless Texts, 89 pages, \$9.99

Discernment is, at its tap-root, searching out and applying the truths of Scripture. Jay Adams certainly has done that well as he urges Church leaders to carry out their divine call to protect their flock from wolves. Anyone can benefit from this book as it will help all know what a true shepherd is by comparison to the foolish shepherd mentioned in Zechariah 11:15.

Discernment is every Christian's job, but even more so that of Church leadership. Discernment is the immune system for the body of Christ and without it the Church can become very "sick" doctrinally. As Adams notes, "In our time, once again the evangelical church has grown lax. There is an emphasis upon tolerance that tends to exclude shepherdly protection" (pg. 13).

Adams is a wordsmith who is familiar with biblical languages and has taught theology. He is pre-eminently qualified to lay out a case from the Bible for vibrant pre-emptive discernment on the part of leaders. He lays out a few pages of practical exercises that the readers can think through and resolve.

The chapter titles alert us to the tenor of the book: "Bearding the Lion," "Playing Footsie With Rome," "Confronting the Mystic Wolf," "How the Wolf Creeps In," "Keep Sheep From Being Mauled," "Training for the Task," and "Getting Down To Cases."

Good things do come in small packages, especially when those packages are loaded with practical truth. Adams reminds us, "Shepherding is a large theme in the Bible, and there is much that could be said about it. But in spite of that, little is made of the shepherd's *equipment*, how he must use it, and what that means for spiritual shepherds in the church today" (pg. v). Adams does a commendable job in filling in the blanks and answering the issues he raises.

Adams succeeds in his purpose, which is "to show the urgency of the matter and thereby to alert every shepherd to a full consideration and implementation of the biblical ministry of using the rod and the staff" (pg. vi).

—GRF

DECISION MAKING GOD'S WAY

A New Model for Knowing God's Will

by Gary Meadors

Baker Books, 232 pages, \$12.99

Some cults confuse followers by claiming secret knowledge, or with leaders who have secret counsel, and that these "shepherds" or "prophets" of the movement need to discern for you. Still others struggle to find God's perfect will as though it were a tightrope over a chasm with no net below. They are induced by perennial "Christian" best-sellers which sink them deep into a sea of mysticism, experientialism, confusion, and doubt.

Gary Meadors' book gets to the heart of every true believer's struggle: How can one *really know* the will of God for their life?

The volume processes through, with clarity, the pivotal issue of how one's worldview and value system drives their decisions. Meadors debunks the notion that Christians have to just feel their way along, living in uncertainty and on the edge of fear that they have made a wrong decision.

The chapter titles are exciting and inviting: "The Need for a Transformed Mind," "A Preview of a Worldview and Values Model," "The Will of God in the Old Testament," "The Will of God in the New Testament," "Is Every Example in the Bible for Me?," "Becoming an Adult Decision Maker," "The Role of Conscience," "The Role of the Spirit in God's Will and Godly Discernment," "Prayer and God's Will," and "Q&A on Discerning God's Will."

This book is practical, readable, and may well be a lifesaver as it provides a biblical framework to counter the subjectivism and mysticism of our uncertain age.

—GRF

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