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What a Marriage! Why Did Evangelicalism Marry Catholicism's Stepchild?

by G. Richard Fisher

John MacArthur has said, "It's frightening to realize our culture has more interest in emotion and pragmatism than in thinking."¹

Evangelicalism is seething with confusion and lack of identity. Author and pastor John Piper distances himself from cessationism and believes in Peter Wagner's sign-gift ideas and the fallible-prophet notions of Wayne Grudem.

The airwaves resound with the voices of fallible prophets who fill their followers' heads with lies and guesswork and empty their wallets. Newly anointed "bishops" and "apostles" appear even though the limits for true Apostles — and their job description — restricted them to the first century (Acts 1, Ephesians 2:20). The average Christian is tossed about by winds of off-beat doctrine.

John Armstrong, a prominent author of apologetic articles and books, now embraces the so-called new — really very old — perspective on justification. "Covenantal nomism," as it is labeled, is a rehashing of progressive justification as taught by



Roman Catholicism and the Greek and Russian Orthodox churches.

The voices of Bill Hybels and Bruce Wilkinson can be heard in Robert Schuller's Crystal Cathedral. And if

that was not a kick in the Bible, Tim LaHaye, James Kennedy, and Michael Youseff appear on the Trinity Broadcasting Network to sell their ministries and wares. Test-marketing, not truth, is what many ministries are about today.

A new genre of books has emerged that find theological truth and direction in "R" rated movies. California's Fuller Seminary seems to be the leader in this move to impose theology on current films. *Christianity Today* magazine prints all the news that is unfit to print — and some that *is* fit — because everyone's side must be heard. Evangelicalism is caught in an identity struggle.

Meanwhile, *Charisma* magazine will sell advertising space for any book, (continues on page 13)

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STUDY TO SHOW THYSELF APPROVED

People come to their crusades by the tens of thousands and watch their broadcasts by the hundreds of thousands. How do those like Benny Hinn and other Charismatic gurus acquire such large audiences? Many reasons come to mind, but paramount is biblical illiteracy.

The Apostle Paul, in his last and greatest discourse on discernment, instructed young Timothy to:

- "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, KJV).
- "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15, KJV).
- "But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 3:14-15, KJV).

These principles are as important as ever. People are still led astray because they do not know the Scriptures. Believers today need to emulate the first-century Berean Christians of Acts 17, and exercise caution in whom they trust and follow and look to for doctrine and practice.

These religious celebrities surround themselves with the biblically uneducated. There is no greater example of this than Benny Hinn. Consider the following:

The pastor with a past: While Hinn was pastor at the Orlando Christian Center, the church he founded in Florida, he selected Kent Mattox as one of his associate pastors. Mattox says he came out of a lifestyle that was "so demon possessed" and that "every day of my life for over ten years I was high — whether it was marijuana or cocaine or speed or some type of drugs."

Mattox added:

"I'm so grateful to God that He put me in the ministry. I came to Orlando, I was in a service of about 2500 people and Pastor stopped preaching ... and he told me to stand up and he said, 'God's going to put you in the ministry.' He prophesied I would be in the ministry. Well, 18 months went by and I woke up one night. I just came out of a dream and I dreamed that the Second Coming was taking place. And I heard the Lord tell me, 'Preach My Word.' I didn't know how to do it. I didn't know where to go. I didn't even know all of the books in the Bible. I didn't know anything about it. And the Lord said, 'See Benny Hinn.' Well here I am, not knowing anything about the Christian walk, not knowing anything about the Word. I'm supposed to go tell Benny — Pastor Benny Hinn, God told me to see you, I'm going to preach. I thought it would be pretty stupid, you know. So I—it was amazing, that next two wee— two days later I was at a— an event they had at the church and, just out of the blue, Pastor walked up to me [with] his wife Suzanne and they said, 'The Lord spoke to us two days ago' — which was the same time I'd had that dream — 'and said you're to come on staff full time as one of our pastors.' And I've been doing it ever since."

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HERITAGE USA RESURRECTED, AGAIN

The South Carolina resort facility that led to the eventual ruin of televangelist Jim Bakker has again been revived, this time by his good friend, Rick Joyner. Joyner's MorningStar Fellowship Church purchased 52 prime acres of the 2,200-acre property last fall for a reported \$1.6 million. MorningStar's parcel includes the 510-room Grand Hotel, an unfinished 21-story condominium tower, a restaurant, and parking lots.

Prior to MorningStar's acquisition and restoration, the complex had laid dormant for seven years: its buildings in disrepair with peeling paint, cracked sidewalks, and weeds growing throughout the exterior and parking lots. Almost immediately, 250 workers — many of whom were volunteers from Joyner's church — began the process of cleaning and making repairs. Initially, complete restoration was expected to take two years at a cost of between \$4 and \$5 million. More recent figures reduce the cost to between \$3 and \$4 million and cut the time of completion in half. According to Joyner, because of its hazardous condition, the condominium tower will be demolished. York County officials have given Joyner two years to tear down the tower.

Earl Coulston, who sold the tract to Joyner's ministry, also plans to develop single- and multi-family residences and townhouses on another 900 acres of the property.

The facility was renamed Heritage International Ministry and has become the headquarters for Joyner's organization. In addition to holding its regular worship services there, MorningStar also plans to use the campus for conferences and retreats, and hopes to establish a ministry training college.

On Dec. 5, the 2,000-member church dedicated the new location during a Sunday morning worship service in a temporary assembly hall located in the lobby of the former Grand Hotel. Following nearly an hour of music, Joyner addressed the congregation for more than an hour, saying he's committed to learning from Jim Bakker's mistakes.

Bakker's dream for Heritage USA as a Christian resort met its demise amid a sex and money scandal in the 1980s. Construction of the original Heritage structures was paid for by donations of at least \$1000 acquired by Bakker in exchange for the promise of lodging. However, Bakker allowed the number of donors to far exceed the recreational facility's lodging capacity. In 1989, he was convicted of defrauding 116,000 followers and was

originally sentenced to 45 years in prison. While serving jail time for his scheme, Bakker's wife Tammy divorced him. He was released from prison in 1994, remarried, and later connected with Joyner. MorningStar Ministries donated to Bakker a 17,000-square-foot log lodge in Charlotte. Bakker has since resurrected his own television ministry and is now headquartered in Branson, Mo.

—MKG

CONTROVERSY BESETS HINN IN INDIA

Faith healer Benny Hinn, whose miracle crusades continue to spark controversy, found his Jan. 21-23 meetings in Bangalore, India, igniting violent protests. Opposition to Hinn's assembly came from a variety of directions, including government and religious leaders.

Two days before Hinn began his three-day "Festival of Prayer for India," a dozen Swamijis staged a protest against Hinn and his prayer meetings. The group insisted the government withdraw its consent for Hinn to lead his series of meetings, claiming "Hinn was a hoax and his claims were false and misleading." However, not all of the antagonism toward Hinn came from Hindus. According to one government leader, "Even Christians have expressed displeasure over Hinn's meeting." Several petitions by various groups petitioning the Karnataka High Court to cancel Hinn's meetings were rejected by the court.

Hinn normally calls his assemblies "Miracle Crusades," but strict Indian legislation may be the reason he called these a "Pray for India" program. According to India's Drugs and Magic Remedies (Objectionable Advertisement) Act of 1954, police can arrest anyone suspected of deceptive healing. A later ruling stipulated, "anyone advertising or carrying pamphlets or any related literature which claim that diseases can be cured by mere touch, hug or by chanting mantras is an offence and any violator can be jailed for six-months and later if found practising again, another one-year jail term."

Prior to Hinn's meetings, another self-styled healing guru appeared in Bangalore claiming divine power to cure ailments with his healing powers. Aslam Baba was arrested and jailed after gullible followers invested personal fortunes to receive healings. Baba's recent demise may have well been in the minds of the public as rumors and theories of a possible Hinn undoing were

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Their Blood Cries Out?

The History and Histrionics of Stigmata

by G. Richard Fisher

Skeptic Joe Nickell once said, "But just when we think we are at the limits of human credulity, we sadly witness a further extreme."¹

The phenomenon of stigmata continues to attract attention. A 1999 movie called *Stigmata* renewed focus on the topic, and *The X-Files* television show featured it in several episodes. But in real life, people do exhibit something called *mystical stigmata*. It is claimed by some to be miraculous and deeply spiritual. From the time of its first reported occurrence, it has been demonstrated by seven times as many women as men.²

One scholar describes stigmata as "eruptions on the skin that symbolize a belief held by the stigmatic."³

Robert Todd Carroll writes in his *Skeptics Dictionary*, "The stigmata are wounds believed to duplicate the wounds of Christ's crucifixion that appear on the hands and feet, and sometimes on the side and head, of a person. The fact that the stigmata appear differently on its victims is strong evidence that the wounds are not genuinely miraculous."⁴

Religious art seems to be the template for stigmata. Joe Nickell adds:

"Perhaps no miraculous power is more equated with sanctity in the popular mind than stigmata, the spontaneously duplicated wounds of Christ's crucifixion upon the body of a Christian."⁵

Stigmata have occurred almost exclusively within Roman Catholicism and have only been reported since the Middle Ages. There are also modern reports of stigmata which are primarily Roman Catholic. However, as one study reveals, "Occasional reports have been made of Moslems displaying stigmata symbolizing the battle wounds of Mohammed."⁶

One urban legend says there must be 12 people a year bearing stigmata to parallel the 12 Apostles. However, the *Catholic Encyclopedia* reports only 20 occurrences in the 19th century.⁷

The marks on the forehead, hands, and feet can appear in a variety of ways: bruises, blood from broken or unbroken skin, redness on the skin, welts, pinpricks, rashes, or blisters that ooze. In some cases stigmata are reported as blood smeared all over. Some stigmatics claim they have the pain of the wounds of Christ, but show nothing externally.

HERE WE GO AGAIN

The dramatized exorcism of Linda Blair's character in the movie *The Exorcist* produced a spate of people believing they were a new squatting ground for Satan. More recently, we have Mel Gibson's movie, *The Passion of the Christ*, with its vivid presentation of Roman crucifixion that earned the movie an "R" rating. While many are aware that Gibson adheres to a pre-Vatican II version of Roman Ca-

tholicism,⁸ one significant aspect that has passed under the radar screen of the Evangelical Church's hype of the film is that Gibson is a strong believer in stigmata.

Gibson has personally fixated on a stigmatic German nun, Anne Catherine Emmerich (1774-1824), also known as Pious Berguine. News reports revealed that Gibson carries a relic piece from her robe.⁹ Gibson flashed the relic when interviewed by Diane Sawyer for ABC's show *20/20*.

The Internet edition of *Newsweek* magazine also reported the Emmerich-Gibson connection:

"Gibson has amalgamated the four Gospel accounts and was reportedly inspired by the visions of two nuns: Mary of Agreda (1602-1665) of Spain and Anne Catherine Emmerich (1774-1824) of France; Emmerich experienced the stigmata on her head, hands, feet and chest — wounds imitating Jesus'. The two nuns were creatures of their time, offering mystical testimony that included allusions to the alleged blood guilt of the Jewish people."¹⁰

Mary of Agreda, who is sanctioned by Rome, is believed to have bilocated to other parts of the world through occult astral travel and is purported to have an incorruptible body. Her corpse is on display in Spain.

Apparently, Gibson believes that even fake stigmata, created by Hollywood make-up artists, have power and claimed that on the set of *The Passion* were “people being healed of diseases.”¹¹

Charisma magazine climbed aboard with the claim “people were converted and healed on the set, including a girl who was reportedly cured of epilepsy.”¹² However, the magazine provides no evidence or documentation for this claim.

Emmerich was an anorexic and self-proclaimed seer whose prophecies can be found on various web sites.¹³ She was also an admitted psychic who claimed occult powers and visions. Past, present, and future all supposedly came to her in mystic visions. She claimed she could suffer for and communicate with the souls in purgatory. She also claimed visits and conversations with Mary the mother of Jesus and said Mary was co-redeemer with Christ. She boasted visions of the baby Jesus.¹⁴ She also was bitterly anti-Semitic.

Credit for perpetuation of Emmerich’s utterances goes to poet Klemens Brentano who, at her command, recorded her revelations. She herself, being an ecstatic visionary, was somewhat of a Mary Baxter¹⁵ of her time. Because some of her discourses were so extreme, Emmerich’s modern day supporters make the suggestion that perhaps Brentano extensively embellished her writings and even go so far as to say that they cannot technically be considered her writings.

Yet none of this kept her from beatification by the Roman Catholic Church. Following an official order by Pope John Paul II, Emmerich was beatified during a ceremony last fall, which leads to canonization or sainthood among Catholics.

Pope John Paul II has beatified about 12 potential saints a year since being named to the papacy in 1978. Among those he moved toward sainthood is one named Padre Pio. Sadly, it took the American Atheist Society to blow the whistle regarding charges of Pio’s mental illness, fraud, and philandering:

“During his lifetime, Padre Pio was the subject of two official investigations conducted by Vatican authorities. There were claims that he liked the intimate company of young women who wore perfume, and had even inflicted stigmata wounds on himself using acid. ... [and as a youth] regularly fell into ‘trances’ and hallucinating states of altered consciousness.”¹⁶

It is also a matter of documentation that Pio failed a number of medical tests specifically designed to establish whether his stigmata were authentic.

This writer received a call from a former congregation member from her new home in New York because a wheelchair-bound woman in her Baptist church had begun displaying stigmata. She asked what was wrong with it biblically. Because the Bible is silent on the phenomenon, the answer may not seem to be readily evident.

The questions came fast: “Was it demonic? Medical? Fraud? Attention-getting? In any way biblical?” “After all,” the caller said, “Jesus bled on the cross from five wounds.”

As we consider stigmata, we need to examine four points: the history; the histrionics and hoaxes; the health issues; and hermeneutics and the Bible in relation to this issue.

THE HISTORY OF STIGMATA

Heresies and strange teaching were prevalent in New Testament times, as is obvious from the writings of Peter, Paul, and John. Every second epistle is a warning regarding apostasy and heresy.

Considering all of the millions of professed Christians who have lived the last 2,000 years, the purported cases of stigmata are infinitesimal by comparison with fewer than 400 being reported (300 in the past eight centuries alone and mostly devout Roman Catholics).¹⁷ Many of these reports have little or no documentation, so the number shrinks considerably. It gets reduced even further when we subtract the number of verifiably faked incidents. Rome has accepted about 64 cases.

Historically, the Roman Catholic Church encouraged self-mortification and self-inflicted pain, which developed in the monastic strain following the conversion of Emperor Constantine to Christianity. First Timothy 4:1-5 warns against such stringencies against our body, as does Colossians 2:21-23. False humility and the neglect of the body are marks of departure from the faith and are not to be commended or encouraged. We must also remember that stigmata first appeared in an age that had a “climate of morbid fascination with the physical effects of crucifixion — depicted in art, shown in miracle plays, and expressed in acts of self-mutilation.”¹⁸

The record for stigmata is empty for the first 1200 years of Church history. The first reported case of stigmata was St. Francis of Assisi (1182-1226). On this all agree. Francis seemed to start the ball rolling with another 13 cases reported that century. Catherine of Siena, a century later, claimed to have stigmata “only inwardly, not in outward manifestation.”¹⁹ These bloody marks were seen as sure signs of spirituality. Historians and writers point out that two-thirds of these occurrences were reported by priests and nuns.

There were no known stigmatics before the 13th century. Stigmata are prominent by their absence in the pre- and post-Nicene Fathers. In early Church history, baptism was the only “mark” required for the Christian.

Historian Philip Schaff admits that the evidence for the purported stigmata of St. Francis of Assisi is at best ambiguous. The Dominicans called the occurrences into question and Schaff reports “a very strong argument against their genuineness is the omission of all reference to them by Gregory IX in his bull canonizing Francis, 1228. Francis’ claim to sainthood, we would think, could have had no better authentication and the omission is inexplicable.”²⁰

Not all within the Roman Catholic Church were buying stigmata. Ignatius Loyola, when consulted, quipped, “the marks ... might just as well have been the work of the devil as of God.” He affirmed that the marks were no

safe indicator of “supernatural action.”²¹ Even though Rome emphasized the “imitation of Christ” during that period, Loyola did not accept stigmata as evidence of spirituality. There had to be better, more biblical ways to imitate Christ.

HALL OF SHAME

The extent to which some of the medieval mystics took stigmata is heresy to an extreme. B.B. Warfield reveals, “They experience under the cross, under the crown, under the nails, under the lance the same sufferings as Jesus; they really languish and die with Him.”²² Warfield also noted that “they are admitted by a kind of divine grace to perpetuate the sacrifice of their God, to expiate like Him sins of which they are personally innocent.”²³ Suffering *as* Christ is a far cry from suffering *for* Christ.

During later centuries, we find, “More recent cases are those of Anna Katherina Emmerich (1774-1824), who became a nun at Agnetenberg; ‘L’Ecstatica’ Maria von Morl of Caldaro (1839); Louis Lateau (1850-83, in 1868), whose stigmata were stated to bleed every Friday; and Mrs. Girling (1827-86, about Christmas 1864), of the New Forest Shaker community.”²⁴ Then, from 1889 through 1901, Gemma Galgani of Lucca claimed stigmata, but further claimed to remove it through prayer.²⁵

Some were crazed and into torture and self-mutilations like “the 19th century stigmatic Teresa Higginson, who slept on an old sack studded with knitting needles and sharpened sticks.”²⁶ Higginson had many encounters with the law and had what we know today as a rap sheet.

The first systematic study which numbered, cataloged, and analyzed stigmatic reports was prepared in 1895 by Antoine Imbert-Gourbeyre. Jesuit priest Herbert Thurston’s *The Physical Phenomena of Mysticism* was another helpful addition in 1950.²⁷

In 1973, Robert M. Goldenson had his book, *Mysteries of the Mind*, published by Doubleday in which he reported a stigmata incident from 1940. Mrs. Donald McIssac, a Roman Catholic housewife from Toronto, is

said to have lapsed into a trance bleeding from feet, hands, back, and side.

The year 1972 birthed reports of the first stigmatic out of the Baptist tradition. She was a 10-year-old girl from Oakland, Calif., named Cloretta Starks. Young Cloretta said, “It’s weird,” after bleeding from her hands, feet, and side for 10 days.²⁸ We will have more to say about Starks below.

WE LOVE LUCY — IF SHE’S CHARISMATIC

One of the more bizarre stigmata episodes took place in 1988 when the Pentecostals had an intense, but brief infatuation with a woman named Lucy Rael. Rael, who was Roman Catholic, was floated as a walking miracle. Introduced to the public by T.L. Osborn,²⁹ Rael brought stigmata for the first time to the Pentecostal community and with the endorsement of one of their superstars. Osborn is no stranger to sensationalism and marketing. Now in his mid-70s, he still appears on the Trinity Broadcasting Network.

Osborn, an exponent of the “health and wealth gospel,” tried to sell Rael as “a sister in Christ who brings a message of healing.”³⁰

Those who closely and personally witnessed Rael testified that her hand wounds looked like razor cuts and the “scourge” marks which were on her waist, not her back, looked like rope burns or abrasions after a rope had been tied too tightly. The only conclusion was that they were self-inflicted.

Osborn and others would not be deterred, and Rael was invited to be mistress of ceremonies at an event called “The Church Reunion” at the Mabee Center at Oral Roberts University in Tulsa. However, the end was near. It had earlier been reported that “no one has actually seen Lucy’s stigmata appear. Rather, they have already been in manifestation by the time she has taken the stage. Not even her own secretary has seen them manifest from clear skin. When she takes the stage without the stigmata it doesn’t manifest later in her appearance.”³¹

Osborn did not demur. He went forward with Rael’s appearance at “The Church Reunion.” Rael did not manifest stigmata that night, but pushed the envelope and began dropping palmed feathers, which she claimed was the Dove — The Holy Spirit. The feathers were examined and found to be goose feathers or down.³² Osborn continued to defend Rael. Others at the “reunion,” including Kenneth Hagin, Kenneth Copeland, Fred Price, and Lester Sumrall quietly tried to forget it, though never openly denounced it. Lucy Rael faded off into the sunset. Even rabid fans of Osborn and Roberts will probably ask, “Lucy who?” A now-60ish Rael “pastors” quietly today in New England.

ROLLER COASTERS AND “MIRACLES”

In the 1990s, attention was focused on bleeder Father James Bruse of Lake Ridge, Va. He probably sought and loved the attention. He has the distinction of having had his name placed into the *Guinness Book of World Records* in 1978 for taking the longest roller-coaster ride in history (five days straight). Another “miracle” claimed by Bruse includes statues that weep when in his presence.³³ To date, his stigmata have ceased.

Even New Agers are getting into the act. In the late 1990s, Georgio Bongiovanni was claiming stigmata and hosting a web site with photographs of his “wounds.” He also lectured about extraterrestrials and told of their impending return to earth.³⁴

THE HISTORICAL AND HOAXES OF STIGMATA

Dr. Sharon Farber studies the history of self-harm. Writing on sado-masochism and how it became attached to Christianity in the Middle Ages, she documents that the female mystics of that period involved themselves in high-risk behavior such as binge-eating, purging, self-starvation, and self-mutilation. She clearly documents that some of the stigmata were self-created and that those attached to it would today be sent to psychiatric

hospitals, not coddled and then beatified.³⁵

Lucy Rael is far from being the only hoaxer in the stigmata circus. Some of the other ancient and modern self-mutilators are well-known and well-documented. Attention-getting is a mania for some and fear of being exposed keeps the con man or woman trying even harder. Fear of exposure can be a fierce motivator. Some have even used their own sharpened fingernails to dig into their palms. Blood packs and red dye are easily available.

Few stigmatics manifest while being watched or studied. It is interesting to observe professional wrestlers who, after falling to the mat, stand up with foreheads bleeding. What makes this incident curious is that the blow taken before falling is many times not to the forehead. The mystery is revealed in a brief article in which a professional wrestler divulged that the cutting was done while on the mat, face in hands, with a tiny blade taped into the finger tape they often wore. Another case of "stigmata" cleared up.

Quoting from Michael Freze's book, *They Bore the Wounds of Christ*, Joe Nickell discusses false stigmata:

"...there have been cases where some overly fanatic souls have so desired the Sacred Stigmata that they have intentionally wounded themselves with knives, picks, etc., in order to produce false impressions to others that they were extraordinary saints!"³⁶

Nickell cites documentation regarding Magdalena de la Cruz (1487-1560) who, after becoming seriously ill, feared "she would die a sinner ... suddenly confessed, admitting that for many years she had been practicing deceptions."³⁷

Another interesting case was Maria de la Visitacion, who used red paint on her hands. Her inquisitors "scrubbed away the 'wounds' to reveal unblemished flesh."³⁸ Two Friars had put her up to trying to trick the world with artificial wounds. With so much chicanery it is easy to see why Nickell concludes, "Indeed, I feel that hoaxing — the proven explanation in

numerous cases — provides the most credible overall solution to the mystery of stigmata."³⁹ However, there may well be a little more to it than just hoaxing. It is hoaxing-plus.

If we believe that God imposes bloody stigmata and pain on people, it is only a step further to believe in bleeding statues and effigies.

In the 1800s, Rose Tamisier demonstrated stigmata and then caused a picture of Jesus to bleed. In November 1850, she was "tried at Nimes on a charge of imposture, and — 'after a long and patient investigation' — was found guilty and sentenced to six months' imprisonment, in addition to being fined 500 francs and costs."⁴⁰

In Italy in the late 1950s, Sister Elana Aiello, who claimed stigmata in her hands, also claimed "the blood splashed onto the wall next to her bed, and the blood formed an image of Jesus' face."⁴¹ People who saw the image laughed because it looked like a child's drawing.

Bolivian bleeder Katya Rivas has been labeled a pious fraud by many. The secret to her demonstrations may be the sharp ring she wears and that she is often in bed under sheets before manifesting.

HOAX OR DISEASE

As we return and take a closer look at the story of 10-year-old Cloretta Starks, our study will show a puzzle with missing pieces. The historical reference branch of the Oakland Library was extremely helpful in turning up news items regarding Starks. Kathleen Digiovani ferreted out clips from the *Oakland Tribune* and *Oakland Register*. The newspaper articles helped correct all types of misinformation — including Starks' name and age — which other reports generated. Starks' bleeding supposedly began on Good Friday in 1972, but was only first seen after the fact, when it was already in place. A doctor "examined the hand, wiped the blood away, and could find no sign of a wound."⁴²

The Rev. L.L. Hester of New Light Baptist Church claimed to be a believer in stigmata and allowed Starks to come to the front of the church on

occasion to display her "wounds." Pictures in the newspaper show her displaying the blood spot above her left palm.

Hester again displayed Starks and her stigmata in subsequent years at Easter Sunday church services. On one occasion, the church went into a minor hysteria during an Easter service, taking 15 minutes to restore calm. Her mother invited the news media to her home to observe. The "bleeding girl" became a regular feature at Easter services for at least five years after the original manifestation. Starks became a kind of local heroine and was featured at a "'Youth Supernatural End-time Revival' at the East Oakland Faith Deliverance Center," in which Hester said "miracle healings were claimed almost every night."⁴³

THE FUND THAT CAN'T BE FOUND

Hester showcased Starks at various meetings and set up a college fund for the girl. Starks' mother had to escort her daughter to school to keep her from being mobbed by fans. There is an account from 1977, when Starks was 15 years old, of her again being showcased and honored by Hester on Easter Sunday. Yet by then it may have been "old hat," as there were apparently no news reports that year.

The sad aftermath of the story was revealed in a phone conversation with Starks' mother.⁴⁴ Alice Robertson still lives in Oakland at the same address. She sounded believing and almost naive as she slowly and thoughtfully said Starks still manifests stigmata at times throughout the year. She said her daughter prefers to be silent about it because crowds had always let her down. They were there for the show, but never after. So since the late 1970s, Starks has not sought public attention.

Sadly, Robertson said Starks never went to college and never saw any of the money raised for her fund. As far as she knows, no one ever knew the amount raised. It has left very hard feelings. Robertson no longer attends L.L. Hester's church, choosing to attend elsewhere. Starks, who is single, does not live with her mother. Robert-

son says the doctor who followed them for a while said Starks "had the wounds of Christ." If something is still occurring, it is now private. Robertson said Starks calls every week or so and they just talk in generalities. She did not know if her daughter still attends church.

Starks' manifestations might have had another motive. Sharon Farber writes of the medieval, female stigmatics:

"...their extreme suffering provided of [sic] them with a degree of visibility, influence, and power that was unheard of for women at that time."⁴⁵

Veronica Lueken of Bayside (Queens), N.Y., claimed that her own "stigmata were presumably carved into her feet by the legendary Italian mystic Padre Pio while she was at home sitting on her toilet."⁴⁶ Lueken and her Marian Apparition cult, with its doctored photos, misuse of money, wild claims and plagiarized messages, were exposed by numerous investigators.⁴⁷ Lueken's material came from Mary Ann Van Hoof who, along with Lueken, is not recognized by the Catholic Church.

Returning to the call received from a former parishioner now in New York and the bleeding event in the American Baptist Church, it appears that after a talk initiated by the church's pastor, the "stigmata" ceased.

HEALTH PROFESSIONALS' VIEW OF STIGMATA

Stigmata have never been looked at too kindly by the medical community. Mario Martinez, a clinical psychologist who investigates stigmata, makes this general judgment:

"Usually it turns out to be self-mutilation or something else science can explain."⁴⁸

A number of them believe those that are not outright hoaxes are psychologically or psychosomatically based. Others believe it may be a number of improperly diagnosed (by the Church), but verifiable medical conditions.

Health professionals also wonder if some rare cases of stigmata could be from auto suggestion or somehow mentally induced. Stress stimuli for some can trigger severe hives and skin eruptions, indicating the power of mind over body.

One researcher expresses it this way:

"Apart altogether from the question of the value of the evidence offered, we may reasonably conclude that some kind of stigmatization is a pathological condition of occasional occurrence. The Roman Catholic Church is extremely cautious in giving credence to cases of stigmatization as genuinely supernatural and Theodor Schwann, a professed Catholic professor at Louvain and a noted biologist, who carefully looked into the subject, refused to admit for stigmatization other than a perfectly natural character."⁴⁹

Leonard George points to some specific medical causes:

"A skin disorder called dermographia, most often found among dissociative sufferers and persons who have undergone extreme stress, renders the skin so sensitive that a mere gentle touch can cause discoloration or even welts."⁵⁰

So perhaps someone with dermographia might knowingly or unknowingly help the process along. George further offers:

"Dermatology journals have recorded a phenomenon known as psychogenic purpura, in which skin inflammation and the hemorrhage of blood from capillaries occurs in response to stress."⁵¹

As already stated there are also many psychologists who point to stress-induced causes and various kinds of pathology creating psychosomatic forms of stigmata.

There is also haemathidrosis — also called bloody sweats — and it is "not unknown in medical history."⁵² Extreme stress can cause bloodlike serum to exude from the pores. Christ's

Gethsemane experience is an example of this and a demonstration of His full humanity.

The only offer of a medical diagnosis for Cloretta Starks was proffered by Dr. Loretta Early, who said "the bleeding was caused by red blood cells passing through the walls of tiny capillaries and through the skin. There were no open wounds."⁵³ If that diagnosis was accurate, then a medical phenomenon was exaggerated by the exploitation of preacher L.L. Hester. What did not click with Hester was that Easter was not Good Friday, but he knew Easter was the time when most people would be there for the display. The sad outcome of the deception of the missing college fund shows that God was not in it.

STIGMATA FROM A BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE

John Calvin spoke of heresies as "a magnet to attract the unsound and unsettled mind."⁵⁴

The Bible does not address everything, but it does speak to absolutely everything believers will need for growth in grace and godly living (2 Timothy 3:15-17, 2 Peter 1:3). Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God (Romans 10:17), so everything necessary for spiritual growth will be in the Word of God. Stigmata are not addressed by the Bible, so one can conclude it is neither necessary nor godly. The Bible does not tell us what color to paint our garage, but it does tell us how to get along with our spouse as we paint it. The Bible does not say what kind of car to buy, but reminds us to be a testimony to the car salesman and to use good stewardship in our purchase.

There are many biblical objections to stigmata, especially the lack for any command to seek it. Jesus said we are to do all He taught and commanded (Matthew 28:18-20). He never taught or commanded stigmata for the Christian life or its advancement. He was "wounded for our transgressions." There is no good that could come from Christ wounding us in this fashion. Stigmata certainly calls into question the finality of the atonement

and the character of Christ. Because Roman Catholicism calls for the ongoing suffering of Christ in the Mass, it seems to make sense to the average Catholic to perpetuate His suffering through themselves. Poor theology leads to very poor practice and habits.

A MARKED MAN

The Roman Catholic Church has offered a weak apologetic by bending Galatians 6:17 beyond recognition. Paul said, "From now on let no one trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus Christ." The Roman Catholic interpretation is crushed under the weight of historical evidence because neither anyone in the New Testament, nor Roman Catholics for centuries, took Paul's words as stigmata. The justification, now offered, was invented after the fact to support something untenable.

If anything, the early post-Apostolic Church took the verse in an entirely different direction as "Christians had the sign of the cross or the name of Christ tattooed on their wrists or arms."⁵⁵ This kind of pagan practice was never directed by the Bible, but the point is that the early Church did not have a mental framework to understand "marks" as the later distortion called stigmata.

In an even more bizarre and demented twist, the occult mystic Madame Guyon "wrote the name *Jesus* on pieces of paper and sewed them to her skin so that they would always be a painful reminder to be repentant and obedient to the Lord."⁵⁶

Even if we would say for the sake of argument that Paul was speaking of stigmata, he is not saying others should seek it or have it. Whatever it is, he is claiming it only for himself. He insists he has it, but nothing indicates he is commending it or commanding it for others. Paul was also a Pharisee, but we shouldn't seek that for ourselves. He spent time in jail and was beheaded, yet that does not mean all believers must consider those fates to be a requirement for themselves.

What then are the "marks" talked about by Paul? True, the Greek word Paul uses for mark is *stigma*. How-

ever, it was only centuries later that a meaning of re-enactment of the wounds of Jesus on Calvary would be imposed. That meaning was foreign to Paul and the hearers of the first century.

We must further note that Paul does not use the word for "wound" or "puncture wound" (*trauma*). The word *stigma* was used in a few specific ways. One application was its use as branding, as in branding a slave. Paul certainly could be talking of his scars from stonings and beatings as being his slave marks for Christ. Note also that Paul did not locate the scars specifically in his hands or feet, but simply says in his body.

In the Graeco-Roman World, "Branded marks were carried especially by domestic animals, slaves, criminals, and later soldiers."⁵⁷

The *New Geneva Study Bible* elaborates:

"The Greek word denotes brands used to mark a slave as the property of a certain master. The word was also used to refer to the mark that pagan priests carried to identify the god they served. Paul uses the word to refer to the scars he received during his missionary activity (2 Cor. 11:23-25). These scars branded him as a slave of Christ (Rom. 1:1; Phil. 1:1; Titus 1:1)."⁵⁸

There is another possible complementary view, given the context of Galatians. Remember Paul is fighting the idea of requiring Gentiles to be circumcised, as the Judaizers insisted. The latter demanded this body mark even for non-Jews. Paul may be saying that when it comes to marks, cuttings, or scars, he already had paid his dues with the marks and scars from his beatings for Christ. Given the setting, it is plausible he could have been heard that way.

Otto Betz allows for this understanding, stating:

"The [*stigmata tou 'Iesou*] which Paul bears in his body are the antithesis to the circumcision in your flesh of which his Judaising

opponents boast."⁵⁹

Dr. Harry Ironside blends both of the above ideas nicely:

"Now that these Judaizers have made so much of a distinguishing mark upon the body through an ordinance and have said that a man that did not bear that mark was unclean and unfit for Christian fellowship, Paul says, I have a better mark than anything you may talk about. ... His very body had been wounded many times for Jesus' sake, when those cruel stones fell on him at Lystra, when beaten with stripes his body was branded; but he glories in these things and says, 'I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.'"⁶⁰

We will go into error every time if we seek to impose 21st-century understandings and word usage on first-century terms.

The only other Scripture that might be appealed to would be a misreading of Colossians 1:24 where Paul says, "I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ for the sake of His body which is the Church."

We can be certain of two things as we approach this verse. First, stigmata are not mentioned and could not be applied because no one in the first century would have had any knowledge of the later meaning of the word and therefore have no desire to read it that way. And second, whatever Paul meant by "lacking in the afflictions of Christ," it could not refer to adding to Christ's atoning work on the cross because the first chapter of Colossians makes it clear that Christ's work on the cross was sufficient and that man could not do the work of atonement in any way. Nothing was lacking in Christ's cross work. That we know and are certain of.

Knowing from the entire New Testament that nothing is lacking in Christ's work and that nothing needs to be added to a perfect atonement (Jesus having to die only once), it is obvious that Paul could only be referring to two other periods of Christ's afflictions. Before the cross,

while on earth, Jesus suffered temptation, rejection, slander, and in His humanity was afflicted. After the cross, Jesus knows and feels the sufferings of His people (Hebrews 4:15). He shares the sorrows of the Church. Those are the only two options open to us: afflictions pre-cross or post-resurrection. In either case, the cross is not in view and could not be. Our afflictions for the Gospel continue on and fill up or fulfill what Jesus came to do: build a Church.

W.H. Griffith Thomas unties the knot:

“The phrase ‘the afflictions of Christ’ is unique in the New Testament, and can only mean the afflictions which He Himself endured — His own afflictions. The apostle says that he supplied what was lacking in these, but to what afflictions of Christ can he refer? Certainly not to His expiatory sufferings on the cross, which were, as we know, perfect and complete (cf. v. 20; Heb. 9:25-28; I Peter 3:18). These need no supplement whatsoever; they are not only complete but they are unique, and they are eternal in their significance and their efficacy. But surely the apostle’s reference is to those individual, personal afflictions in which Christ lived on our behalf during His earthly ministry (cf. Isa. 53:4; Matt. 8:17).”⁶¹

Thomas relies on English scholar and textual critic Joseph Lightfoot and goes on:

“...the sufferings of Christ must be considered from two standpoints, either as atoning or as exemplary, the one possessing sacrificial efficacy, the other ministerial utility. In the former case, he agrees, the sufferings are perfect and complete, since our Lord’s work is both unique in purpose and different in kind from that of His servants. There is no reference here to atonement since, as we have noted, the word ‘affliction’ is not found elsewhere in reference to the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. From the latter standpoint the

afflictions of every saint and martyr may rightly be said to supplement the afflictions of Christ, and the Christian Church is built up by acts of self-denial that continue those begun by Him. Indeed, that which is lacking, says Lightfoot, will never be fully supplemented until the struggle with sin and unbelief is brought to a close. Thus the idea of expiation is wholly absent from the passage, and when this is understood we are free to give every word of the apostle’s striking statement its full meaning, and yet avoid all suggestion of vicarious satisfaction, which is entirely foreign to the context. ... We can have fellowship with His afflictions and also imitate His patience and courage in suffering.”⁶²

The point of going into this detail in Colossians 1:24 is to show that anyone going in that direction to try to justify modern day stigmata is wrong. In fact, they have no direction at all because nothing in the Bible is viable for them as they try to prop up an unbiblical sideshow.

OTHER POSSIBILITIES

As we consider the Bible, we must seriously ask if there are demonic elements to stigmata. There are definitely paranormal and occultic phenomena in evidence with *some* stigmatics:

- In this century, Heather Woods claimed “mystical writing and drawing.”⁶³

- Ethel Chapman proclaimed “a vision in which she saw herself walking on water with Christ ... a gift of clairvoyance and could foresee the deaths of people close to her.”⁶⁴

- Jane Hunt reported “seeing the face of Jesus on her pillow and that night had a vision of him standing by her bed. ... She often spoke of sometimes feeling as if she was inside of Christ. In another vision, she tells of the feeling of being transported to Bethlehem and being allowed to hold the Christ child. Another time, she saw Mary in her own house.”⁶⁵

- George Scotland said “he heard a voice speaking to him and mocking him from a tape of music which he had put on his cassette player.”⁶⁶

- It is reported of Father Bruse that “Statues began weeping after he touched them” and “He describes a time when, after blessing a statue of Our Lady of Fatima during confession, the colors started moving on it.”⁶⁷

- Even Cloretta Starks, the young Baptist stigmatist, “talked of voices telling her to go and pray with certain people.”⁶⁸

- Canadian stigmatist Georgette Faniel told doctors, “God and I are two in one same flesh” and that “Satan spoke to her.”⁶⁹

It is hard to deny the presence of Satan and demons at different levels when it comes to the already mentioned Teresa Higginson, “whose claims included ecstasies, mortifications, and stigmata — was once dismissed from school for ‘apparent poltergeist phenomena’ and later accused of theft, drunkenness, and unseemly conduct: accusations that led to her dismissal as a teacher.”⁷⁰

Catherine of Siena, mentioned earlier, “practiced flagellation, thought herself tortured by demons, experienced visions, and showed other symptoms of severe mental disturbance. She believed she wore a ‘mystical ring’ that was placed on her finger by Jesus himself. Adding to this vainglory, as shown by contemporary paintings, she permitted her hand to be kissed by devotees. Catherine supposedly became stigmatized at the age of twenty-eight, but the marks disappeared so that she was left only with the pain of her five ‘invisible’ wounds.”⁷¹ In the end, this pathetic creature literally starved herself to death.

Stigmata are nothing more than human mutilations from some source with God being called the mutilator. It certainly calls into question the character of God until one notes what the Bible says about the origins of mutilations and the power behind them:

“And when He had come out of the boat, immediately there met Him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no one could bind him not even with chains, because he had often been bound with shackles and chains, and the chains had been pulled apart by him, neither could anyone tame him. And always, night and day, he was in the mountains and in the tombs *cutting himself* with stones” (Mark 5:1-5).

Satan, not God, orchestrates people cutting and mutilating themselves. God forbids such practices on one’s flesh (Leviticus 19:28; 21:5; Deuteronomy 14:1).

ONE OTHER REALLY BIG PROBLEM

One major issue for the stigmatic is the location of the blood smears on most all that have manifested it. The placement of the blood seems to indicate that the occurrence is self-orchestrated. Stigmata seems to always show on the tops of the feet and palms which may give away the ignorance of the “bleeder.” We all know that the early and later paintings of Jesus, showing blood or scars on the tops of the feet and palms, are simply an artist’s conception. Most stigmatics have simply mimicked placement of wounds as directed by art work.

For many years, scholars and scientists have reasoned that someone hanging by nails in their palms and feet was an impossibility because the hands and feet could not bear the weight of the body. Some tried to suggest ropes around the arms, but the New Testament statements agree that Jesus was nailed to the cross with no reference to ropes or lashing.

Many questions were answered and the above clarified when portions of the skeletal remains of a crucified man were discovered in 1968 on Mount Scopus in Jerusalem. For this one, it appeared that his legs had been side-saddled to the cross since the nail marks were through the ankles, completely throwing off the

artists’ conceptions of nails through the tops of the feet.

The supporters of this practice cannot fall back on saying it makes no difference where the marks are, because they are the ones claiming the placement proves these are the marks of Jesus. Someone bleeding from the knee could not claim to be a stigmatic, as the location has been the primary apologetic for the stigmatic.

Further, the Greek word *cheir* does not just mean hand, but can mean the whole arm (including the wrist). Eduard Lohse confirms that “Since the power of the arm is exerted through the hand *cheir* can also denote a man’s arm.”⁷²

We cannot be certain that the Romans nailed the palms. Researchers have long thought the wrists were more likely. Because we are governed by Scripture, not artists’ renditions and tradition, we acknowledge that Jesus said to Thomas, “Reach your finger here and look at My *cheir*.” The exact spot on Jesus arm is undesignated and *cheir* most certainly could be the wrists. Still, because the stigmatic did not know the ankle, we would not trust them to know anything else with precision.

The stigmatic might try to convince us that God is keeping up with the times. Perhaps it is that they are getting a bit smarter in that “newer archaeological research shows that nails were more likely driven into the wrists of the crucified, where the arms’ bone structure would better support the weight of the body. ... More recent stigmatics have had wounds in their wrists instead of in their hands.”⁷³

GETTING WITH THE TIMES

Stigmata are unnecessary for the Christian and are, in fact, impossible to be anything that could be called genuinely Christian. Jesus said that His sufferings were “finished,” over, absolutely paid in full (John 19:30). Everything that needed to be accomplished for our redemption was accomplished once for all, forever. It is an affront to the Savior to claim otherwise. Hebrews 9:26-28 affirms that Jesus died *once*. In the book of

Acts, the early Apostles preached the past, completed death of Christ for sin, and the emphasis was always on the living resurrected Jesus. Jesus no longer needs to languish and suffer — *it is finished!*

Any outward identification with the death of Jesus is only in biblically commanded symbols of baptism and the Lord’s Supper. With the former, however, we do not stay down under the water emphasizing death, but rise up to walk with the risen Savior in newness of life.

HOW FAR WE HAVE FALLEN

The biblical burden of proof is really up to those who would try to justify stigmata as being desirable. They are the ones who have to defend and prove their position. They need to produce a verse (or verses) in the Bible that clearly shows:


- The practice of stigmata in the Book of Acts or the epistles.
- It is commanded or endorsed for believers in Scripture.
- It is to be desired or sought.
- It is a sign of spirituality.
- It is a part of the fruit of the Spirit.
- It is a part of spiritual warfare and spiritual equipping.
- It is a higher state of spirituality.
- That Jesus is still bleeding.
- That Jesus wants to be perceived as a suffering being and not a victorious Savior.
- That we could perpetuate Jesus’ sufferings.
- That His sufferings are not over and His cross agonies go on.
- That the devil could not bring stigmata, since he uses false signs and wonders (Matthew 24:24).
- That we are to preach stigmata rather than the Gospel or along with the Gospel.
- That there would be any kind of distinction between spontaneous and self-inflicted stigmata.
- That we should expect other kinds of torture and wounds to be visited upon us.

As we consider the silence of Scripture on these points, we can conclude that stigmata are not of God as it is unbiblical and can be faked — or may be demonic or a medical condition.

If it is faked or demonic, then deep and profound repentance is the answer (Mark 5:6-13). If it is a health issue, then medical attention and counseling are the answer. There are no other answers.

The Apostle Thomas saw something better than stigmata. He saw the very wounds of Jesus that he could touch. Yet Jesus said, “blessed are those who have not seen (His wounds), yet have believed” (John 20:29). We do not need His literal wounds simply because we have the spiritual riches those wounds provided.

Endnotes:

1. Joe Nickell, *Looking for a Miracle*. Amherst, N.Y.: Prometheus Books, 1998, pg. 62.
2. Leonard George, *Alternative Realities*. New York: Facts on File, 1995, pg. 270.
3. *Ibid.*, pg. 268.
4. Robert Todd Carroll, *Skeptics Dictionary*, “Stigmata.” Document available at: www.skepdic.com/stigmata.html.
5. *Looking for a Miracle*, op. cit., pg. 219.
6. *Alternative Realities*, op. cit., pg. 268.
7. See further, *Catholic Encyclopedia*, “Mystical Stigmata.” Document available at: www.newadvent.org/cathen/14294b.htm.
8. Adherents to this version of ultra-conservative Catholicism reject the ecumenical reforms of Vatican II (1962-1965) up through the present. *Christianity Today* magazine noted that Gibson “prefers the Tridentine Latin mass and calls Mary co-redemptrix.”
9. Austin Cline, “Does Mel Gibson Profess Antisemitism?,” About, Inc. web site, Sept. 11, 2003. Document available at: <http://atheism.about.com/b/a/024802.htm>.
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11. “Paul Harvey Comments on ‘The Passion,’” *Christian News*, Feb. 2, 2004, pg. 27.
12. Erika Larson, “Screen Savior,” *Charisma*, March 2004, pg. 40.
13. See for example, “Prophecies of Sr. Anna-Katarina Emmerick.” Document available at: <http://nostradamus.freehomepages.com/emmerick.htm>.
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17. See *Alternative Realities*, op. cit., pg. 268.
18. *Looking for a Miracle*, op. cit., pg. 220.
19. B.B. Warfield, *Counterfeit Miracles*. Carlisle, Pa.: Banner of Truth Trust, 1972, pg. 84.
20. Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: William Eerdmans Publishing, 1991, Vol. 5, pg. 405.
21. *Counterfeit Miracles*, op. cit., pg. 85.
22. *Ibid.*, pg. 88.
23. *Ibid.*, pg. 89.
24. *The Encyclopedia Americana*. New York: American Book-Stratford Press, 1952, Vol. 25, pg. 647.
25. *Counterfeit Miracles*, op. cit., pp. 84-85.
26. *Alternative Realities*, op. cit., pg. 269.
27. *Ibid.*
28. Ralph Rath, “‘It’s Weird,’ Girl Says of ‘Stigmata,’” *Oakland Tribune*, March 23, 1972.
29. Osborn regularly appeared with heretic William Branham. For more information, see Stanley M. Burgess and Gary B. McGee, Editors, *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1988, pp. 655-656.
30. Albert James Dager, “Stigmata – Is Lucy for Real?,” *Media Spotlight*, Special Report 1989, pg. 3.
31. *Ibid.*
32. *Ibid.*, pg. 4.
33. *Looking for a Miracle*, op. cit., pg. 55.
34. See further, “Stigmata.” Document available at: www.crystalinks.com/stigmata.html.
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37. *Ibid.*
38. *Ibid.*
39. *Ibid.*, pg. 225.
40. *Ibid.*, pg. 59.
41. *Ibid.*, pg. 62.
42. “‘It’s Weird,’ Girl Says of ‘Stigmata,’” op. cit.
43. “Cloretta Gets Back to Normal,” *Oakland Register*, April 4, 1975.
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65. *Ibid.* Author’s note: Translocation (mystical transport to another place) or bilocation (supposedly being in two places at once) is something claimed in occultic and new age practices.
66. *Ibid.*
67. *Ibid.*
68. *Ibid.*
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70. *Looking for a Miracle*, op. cit., pg. 223.
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72. Eduard Lohse in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, op. cit., Vol. IX, pg. 424.
73. “Psychologist studies mystery of stigmata,” op. cit. 

WHAT A MARRIAGE!

(continued from page 1)

ministry, or conference. Christian bookstores are infected with false teachings. People are looking for nudges, pushes, anointings, and voices they claim are from the Holy Spirit. All this comes in spite of the fact that the Holy Spirit's ministry is to spotlight the glory of Jesus, not give us our daily tingle (John 14-16).

In November 2003, The Evangelical Theological Society voted to retain Clark Pinnock and John Sanders as members. It has covenantal nomism champion N.T. Wright as a speaker.² Pluralism is in. Evangelicalism cannot call itself "evangelical" once it has embraced those (Pinnock and Sanders) who embrace views of a fallible God who does not know the future or who question the Apostle Paul's view of the Jews as Wright does. The growing and emerging god of Pinnock is a short step away from the exalted man-god of the Latter-day Saints. One Bible teacher says that all heresies begin with defective views of God. Since Jesus is God, this leaves Pinnock's and others' Christology in trouble. It is not sensible to be an "evangelical" anymore. No one knows what it is.

But that is only half of it.

OFF THE RICHTER SCALE

We need to *first* analyze the theological earthquake that everyone missed. On Oct. 28, 1965, Pope Paul VI, as a part of Vatican Council II, issued a document called *Perfectae Caritatis*. It was a "Decree on the Appropriate Renewal of the Religious Life."³

The practical result of *Perfectae Caritatis* can hardly be measured. It empowered religious orders to embark on "wide-ranging experimentation" and to reinterpret "doctrine in startling ways."⁴

In 1972, David Wells said of the Roman Catholic Council, known as Vatican II (which began in 1962 under Pope John XXIII and culminated under Pope Paul VI with *Perfectae Caritatis*):

"...it is not yet clear which kind of progressive theology will finally emerge as dominant in Catholic teaching. ... The disintegration of institutional Catholicism may lead to a form of belief which is less sympathetic to biblical belief than was traditional Catholicism."⁵

Perfectae Caritatis was mistaken to mean that priests were allowed to do wholesale experimentation in any direction and so they began to interpret dogma and doctrine not only in startling ways, but in grossly heretical and evil ways. Brett M. Decker summarizes the devastating effects of the 1965 council:

"The Second Vatican Council was an ecclesiastical Woodstock. It unleashed forces inside the Catholic Church that genuflected to the delusions and experiments of the era rather than raise swords against them. The destruction continues to this day."⁶

Consequently, a do-it-yourself Catholicism began to emerge. It led to encounter groups (the rage in the 1960s and 1970s) where one could explore one's inner self. It led to changes in the liturgy; Latin was abandoned. This may have been one of the more benign results. Yet what followed was more frightening.

Some of the experimental Catholic groups took on a more sinful and sinister change with sexual experimentation and the beginning of a sexual option called the "third way."⁷

Until that time, priests and nuns had two choices, either celibacy or sinfully (in their view) rejecting their vows of celibacy for marriage. The new third way offered sexual libertinism, experimentation, and an outlet while staying in the nunnery or priesthood: no marriage, no celibacy, do as you please. Encounter groups encouraged journaling so that nuns and priests could write out their sexual fantasies as they lived out the third way.

It is not surprising to find out that allegations of pederasty within the priesthood date back to abuse taking place in the mid-1960s when the third

way was beginning. This third way was not endorsed or approved by the Catholic Church, but came out of a perverted use of *Perfectae Caritatis*.

Out of this milieu came a widespread practice of mysticism and meditation.

Mysticism peaked during the Middle Ages and was contained. It was the practice of lesser numbers, some of whom were canonized.⁸ Medieval mysticism had a monastic coloring and names like Thomas A. Kempis, Catherine of Siena, Catherine of Genoa, St. Thomas of the Cross, St. Francis of Assisi, and Theresa de Jesus of Avila are well known, even though they lived in the 15th and 16th centuries.⁹ The rationale was that maybe days gone by had something to offer us. The Bible was abandoned and experiments and experiences ruled the day.

Occasionally, the mystics (such as Madame Guyon¹⁰) took mysticism to such levels that even the Catholic Church excommunicated them. Some mystics believed they were merging with God or Jesus. Extreme forms of mysticism are pure pantheism, teaching that all is God and God is all.

Other mystics of the Middle Ages claimed stigmata (crucifixion wounds in the hands, feet, and head) as if they were suffering as Jesus. B. B. Warfield called it a "morbid neurosis" and "pathological phenomena."¹¹ We know from Hebrews 10 (esp., v. 10) that Jesus only suffered once, so if there was no fraud, our only option would be stigmata or wounds which are the work of demons. Even the staunch Roman Catholic priest Ignatius Loyola declared that stigmata "might just as well have been the work of the devil as of God."¹²

We have considered the earthquake that was *Perfectae Caritatis* and its far-ranging and pervasive effects on the Catholic world. We must *secondly* consider the emergence of Catholic mysticism in our time.

Unfortunately, there are shallow and imprecise clichés that obscure meanings and confuse greatly. For instance, Warren Wiersbe quotes favorably an inaccurate statement of G.

Campbell Morgan which says, "Christianity is mysticism."¹³ That is as wrong as saying all doctors practice medicine. Doctors of Music, Sociology, or Theology do not practice medicine. Generalizations in this area really confuse things. Belief in the supernatural or in miracles does not make one a mystic.

Though there are elements of true Christianity that are miraculous, mysterious, and mystical, this in no way constitutes mysticism. With pure mystics, feelings and experiences are first, foremost, and, in most cases, the only thing necessary. Mysticism is about the mystic; very little external content is required. It is a truncated view of the devotional life. With pure mysticism, doctrine is in most cases unnecessary, ignored, and considered something for unspiritual people. They refer to God and Jesus, but forge God and Jesus in subjective constructs.

Though mystics may tip their hat to the Bible, they believe that the presence of God is more direct and real *inside* them. It is not based on definitions of God, but on experiences *with* God that are better left undefined. They define God as undefinable, therefore unknowable, although they do not realize it. They believe that God is what one "feels" Him to be. They do not consider that God Himself wishes to be known in biblical categories, yet that is the way He Himself declares, discloses, and defines Himself.

They meet who they say is God through centering in, quieting down, and meditating in a trance. Followers are often told to "journal" these feelings and impressions, which they think may be God. The "journal" messages are not seen to be self or demonically inspired, but God's Word to and for them. Certainly this is a bogus re-enactment of revelation and inspiration; that is, in no other terms, new revelation. This is what the cults claim with their channel of divine communication and additional "scriptures" such as *The Book of Mormon*.

Mystics believe, or are told, that God is so accessible in this way that we can become absorbed into His being. They stop short of saying we

become God, though some mystics suggest this is possible.¹⁴ This is supposedly more than just receiving inner joy from the truths of the Gospel and the promises of God. This is subjective immersion into God Himself, or vice versa. At times, it obscures Creator and creature, and has the clay somehow climbing into the potter, or just the opposite.

So the mystic wants direct, immediate, unmediated access to God *within himself* and believes God will talk to us from inside of ourselves. This is far removed from the biblical truth that all God's children can enjoy His promises and step into His throne room through prayer. We have been freed from ourselves to go to the Word and to our Heavenly Father in prayer. Mysticism is the equivalent of the child's, "My daddy loves me far more and gives me far more than all my brothers and sisters." Yet with it comes the added baggage of "But I am not quite sure of who my daddy is or what he looks like, and you can't be, either."

Winfried Corduan offers D.D. Martin's definition of mysticism as "an experienced, direct, nonabstract, unmediated knowing of God, a knowing or seeing so direct as to be called union with God."¹⁵ It is a funhouse mirror distortion of elements of Christianity. Yes, God works in us as we work out our salvation (Philippians 2:12-13), and though that is marvelous and mysterious, it is not what the mystics are saying.

Mysticism is directed inward. True spirituality, while nurturing the inner man through the Bible and prayer, is primarily directed outward to God in worship and to service and holy living. Mysticism tries to be all Mary, all the time, while true spirituality seeks a balanced life of being both Mary and Martha.

One would think that the Christian would be leery of mysticism because forms of mysticism are embraced by Hindus, Indian medicine men, and Cabalists.¹⁶ Scripture declares that what's inside us is a sinful heart and — in the case of Christian believers — an old nature. Our feelings are untrustworthy. Thinking (or really non-

thinking) without content is dangerous and may open the mind to deception or demons.

Unfortunately, throwing around clichés like "God spoke to me," "God told me," or the "Spirit spoke to me" are forms of mysticism¹⁷ and a far cry from getting rich blessing and motivation to worship and grow from the Bible. Believers must not dismiss the subjective side of Christianity, but should not elevate it beyond what it is. Emotions are the "cart" as it were, and the Scriptures must be the "horse."

Though Jesus may communicate to us at deep levels, it is only as the Holy Spirit illumines the Word to our minds and spirits that we find real direction. Mystics do in fact (though quoting the Bible for support) marginalize the Bible, which is a serious and destructive thing. Healthy Christian growth must be directed by the Bible (Psalm 119). Real information and solid objective knowledge of God and Christ must come from God's Word, which gives us propositional revelation for life and godliness (2 Timothy 3:15-17, 2 Peter 1:3-4). It is only in a manner of speaking that we say God speaks to us through the Bible. We must process internally what God has given us externally. It is then to be lived out.

Real meditation always involves thinking deeply on God's work, God's ways, and God's Word. We must also remember the believer's direct relationship with God through mediation. Corduan reminds us:

"It is obvious that mediation plays a crucial role in the Bible. Paul states that the Old Testament law was mediated (Gal. 3:19-20). But most important, Jesus Christ is our mediator to God (1 Tim. 2:5). There is no access to God, except through him. Therefore it would appear that no unmediated link to God is possible for us."¹⁸

Jesus said, "No man comes to the Father but through Me." He did not say, "You can take the direct route on the express bus called meditation and contemplative prayer." Contemplative

prayer is a misnomer for trance-like quietness. No words are needed.

The Old Testament people could not live for one minute in the unmediated presence of God and shook with fear at Sinai. God gave them Moses, priests, a Tabernacle, sacrifices, and His Word to shield them, as it were, from His blinding awesome justice and holiness. Isaiah shares that his experience of God (with God obscured behind angels' wings) had him on his face in fear crying for cleansing (Isaiah 6).

A softening-up process was going on at the margins of Catholicism in the early 1900s with the writings of Evelyn Underhill (1875-1941). Her literary efforts exerted great influence. She is described by Willard Weinrich in this way:

"Underhill became an internationally recognized authority in mystical theology, and her book *Mysticism* (1911) became a standard text in that discipline. In *Worship* (1936), Underhill studied the nature and forms of Christian worship."¹⁹

OUT OF THE SHADOWS

Catholic mysticism grew out of the ignorance and superstition of the Middle Ages and began to emerge in larger measures in the 1960s because of Perfectae Caritatis. It is no coincidence that the Catholic Charismatic Movement (CCM) gathered huge momentum at that time. The CCM was a stepsister to mysticism and had many claiming deeper devotion to Mary and dead saints, along with more commitment to the sacraments, the Eucharistic host, and the other mystical elements of priestcraft and the Eucharist.

Vatican II opened Roman Catholicism to pluralism or the validity of each and every person's experience. The German priest Karl Rahner stepped up with a new, all-embracing view. With John Paul II validating Rahner's cliché of "anonymous Christians" (that is, everyone in the world has grace even if they don't know it), a new universalism emerged. Rahner became "one of the most influential theologians of Vatican II."²⁰ Cathol-

cism embraced the world, therefore the world was a Catholic of some sort whether it realized it or not.

To demonstrate Rahner's influence and longevity, one must only read Pope John Paul II's manifesto, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*:

"There is only one community and it consists of all peoples. ... trusting hearts, can become capable either of reaching a state of perfect liberation, or of attaining, by their own efforts or through higher help, supreme illumination."²¹

The Pope further said, when discussing Hinduism and Buddhism, there is "the existence of the so-called *semina Verbi* (seeds of the Word), present in all religions. ... a kind of common soteriological root present in all religions. ... with God, man 'creates' his personal salvation."²²

It was a shoo-in. Perfectae Caritatis, Rahner, and the Pope then and now were the axis of influence and power to create new fault lines in the Roman Catholic world. There are now a number of different Catholicisms.

Incidentally, during this period (1950s and 1960s) Paul Tillich, Rudolf Bultmann, and James M. Robinson introduced existential philosophy to the interpretation of the New Testament.²³ At the same time, biblical history was being dumbed down in neo-Orthodoxy.

The existential mindset (what works for each individual is acceptable) reasoned that because all experiences were valid and we could give subjective interpretations to them, the medieval mystics who scraped themselves inside and had superior experience with God, were perhaps deeper and more authentic versions of Christianity. No one thought or suggested that sleep-deprivation or malnutrition left them mentally unbalanced and emotionally unstable.

What eluded these experimenters was the fact that direct revelation and inspiration were unique in God's program. For instance, we would never want the plagues of Egypt repeated. Neither would we want local

churches emptied out (starting with the pulpit) with the Ananias and Sapphira treatment (Acts 5). Walking on water and multiplying food is a little unusual. Dipping in the Jordan no longer cures leprosy.

It is no surprise then to hear Catholic writer William Johnston (1991) say that "we are witnessing a spiritual revolution of great magnitude in the whole world ... the rise of a new school of mysticism within Christianity ... It is growing year by year."²⁴ Johnson calls this so-called revolution "Christian Zen" because of its affinity to Buddhism.

The underlying presupposition here is that we can only know God through the mystical path. After all, one pope said go experiment and another gives his approval to Hindus. To get onto the mystical path we just need to practice contemplative prayer. We can shut our minds down and wait for a peak experience or a *eureka* moment when we merge into God. Not only is it spine-tingling fun, but it is sure a lot easier than Bible study.

WHERE IS GOD — REALLY?

Being born again is an act of God (John 1:12, 5:24) in which God changes us within and the new life is worked out in many practical ways. Because God's work in salvation is mysterious, it does not mean we have to constantly try to climb back into ourselves to try to find God there. As we think of the wonderful blessings of God, our prayer goes upward and outward. Prayer that works on a boomerang principle is not prayer at all. Prayer expresses trust and dependence, and if God blesses our prayers, it is only by His mercy and grace.

The cry of the mystical movement is that we must get back into the contemplative life. Catholic apologist Thomas Keating declared that, "The Pontiff declared that unless the Church rediscovered the contemplative life, renewal couldn't take place."²⁵ According to the Pope, there can be no genuine spirituality without mysticism.

Contemplative prayer is nothing more than the exercises of eastern religions and New Agers. It is slip-

ping into a trance-like state by quieting the mind. One may focus on some symbol or even chant a mantra, even though Jesus said that we are not to be involved with vain repetitions (Matthew 5:5-8).

One mystical trainer said it best:

"The classical experience of enlightenment as described by Buddhist monks, Hindu gurus, *Christian mystics*, Aboriginal shamans, Sufi sheiks and Hebrew kabalists is characterized by two universal elements: radiant light and an experience of oneness with creation."²⁶

The LSD trippers and sacred mushroom consumers in the 1960s and 1970s did the same thing.

Thus, it is no big surprise then to see books like *Zen Contemplation for Christians* by Roman Catholic nun Elaine MacInnes or *Zen Catholicism* by Dom Aelred Graham. On the Catholic side, other writers carried the flag. John Main, Brennan Manning, and Matthew Fox are three of many.

We should be saying, "There is no evangelical that would be fooled by all this — not us." However, a number of so-called evangelicals are taking us down the road to the Contemplative Life. As evangelicalism abandons the belief in the sufficiency of Scripture, their undirected minds will be overtaken by mystical fads and trends.

Author Ray Yungen affirms:

"...moving towards the contemplative camp is the so-called mainline Protestant tradition (Episcopalians, United Methodists, Presbyterians, Lutherans, United Church of Christ, etc.). ... A sales person at a bookstore that caters to these denominations once told me the contemplative prayer view has found a large audience in the Protestant mainstream and many pastors are open to these practices."²⁷

WEDDING EVANGELICALISM TO MYSTICISM

The more Evangelicalism creates problems arising from Bible abandon-

ment, the greater it will lust for its new bride as an answer. There are many bridesmaids and groomsmen. And while there is not enough space to catalog all of them, a limited sampling will be offered with a focus on one considered evangelical as a representative example. Our example is Richard Foster. We will see how Evangelicalism progressed — or rather digressed — to sanction Foster.

Bridging the way was M. Scott Peck. Peck was a Buddhist when he wrote his best-seller *The Road Less Traveled*. Nevertheless, this book, with its unbiblical concepts, ended up in Christian bookstores. Even though mammoth sales were the primary reason for its prominence in Christian bookstores, Peck gave the merchants another reason by claiming a conversion to Christianity. No one listened when PFO²⁸ and others issued sharp critiques. Even Wayne House and Richard Abanes' 1995 book-length critique *The Road Less Traveled and the Bible* was largely ignored. The two authors documented that when Peck was not "meditating," he was into swearing, pornography, and extra-marital sex.²⁹

Peck was happy to write about his escapades in subsequent books. The above shows us that the mystical way is not a more deeply spiritual way. Peck softened up undiscerning minds to the free-for-all.

No one except the largely ignored counter-cult ministries stopped to check and uncover that Peck had simply moved toward old forms of mysticism that were beginning to emerge in Protestantism. His later books gave away the secret and it was too late for Christian bookstores to apologize. The money was already made.

Not surprisingly, the books of Trappist monk Thomas Merton began to sell briskly. Merton, who died in 1968, became the new spearhead of Catholic mysticism. He had been making forays into eastern mysticism for years. He was a profound mystic who ultimately became a recluse. His ideas were so old that many thought they were new. Merton merged Buddhism and Hinduism with non-violence and

Christianity, although Christianity got short shrift. His *The Seven Storey Mountain* (a spiritual autobiography) "became a world best-seller."³⁰ Marketing pushed Merton into formerly evangelical bookstores.

It is amazing that nearly no one objects when Merton is quoted favorably by one considered evangelical, namely Richard Foster.³¹

It came as no surprise to this writer when a brochure arrived from that former bastion of Methodism, the Ocean Grove Camp Meeting Association, advertising an interfaith seminar on two models of spiritual life and practice. The two-day seminar is called "Thomas Merton and Henri Nouwen as Brothers: Contemplation, Community, and Compassion."³² Nouwen, also a priest, has written on contemplative prayer. We can be assured that John Wesley, if he were alive, would have had a massive coronary.

Neither was it a surprise to read in the *Christian News* that Fatima was to become an interfaith shrine. The shrine's rector, Msgr. Luciano Guerra, met with contingents of Jews, Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists, and even African Pagans. At the ecumenical celebrations, Father Jacques Dupuis declared:

"The other religious traditions in the world are part of God's plan for humanity ... The universality of God's kingdom permits this, and this is nothing more than a diversified form of sharing in the same mystery of salvation. In the end it is hoped that the Christian will become a better Christian and each Hindu a better Hindu."³³

Christianity Today reported that contemplative guru Brennan Manning is "arguably, evangelicals' favorite Catholic" and goes on to report: "Later this year, *CT* will feature an article on the way Manning has endeared himself to evangelicals. Among them are spiritual director and psychotherapist Larry Crabb, and musicians Michael W. Smith and Michael Card."³⁴

Very few realize that the "Chicken Soup" series slips in stories that favor

metaphysical and New Age concepts. Also, modern mystical writers appeal to some of the somewhat mystical statements of people like John Wesley to soften criticisms, though Wesley was a universe away from Hinduism and the like.

The wedding day was getting close. Peck and Merton carried the momentum generated by *Perfectae Caritatis*. More joined the wedding party with evangelicalism and eastern mysticism/meditation/centering prayer.

There are numerous other lesser-known writers and books, but one of the more obvious, as noted, is Richard Foster. He is a paradigm of the rest and a key figure in the marriage. Foster is the most insidious because he is the most widely accepted. He tries to be careful to massage and finesse his terms, but there is only so much he can do. He mentions sacraments and such things, and his *Renovare* (renewal) movement is highly ecumenical, encouraging all-inclusive community.

Foster is highly committed to Merton and the writings of French priest Fenelon (1651-1715). Fenelon was a fellow traveler with Madame Guyon. Foster was trained at George Fox College, which is a Quaker school and may explain some of his propensities. Quakers, also called The Society of Friends, were founded by George Fox (1624-1691), and taught "mystical theology" and had an emphasis on "the illumination of human minds by God's 'inner light' [which] led to a belief in continuing revelation."³⁵ In short, Quakers listen to God in their hearts, not necessarily in their Bibles. For them, faith comes not from the Word of God (Romans 10:17), but from somewhere inside.

Others certainly have sounded the warning about Foster. In his incredible book, *Occult Invasion*, Dave Hunt brings us the following:

"Richard Foster, whom we will discuss in more detail in a later chapter, became a new guru to evangelicals with his 1978 best-seller *Celebration of Discipline*. It opened many Christians to the occult by instructing readers in occult techniques (including vi-

sualization of Christ). Foster advocated 'centering down' through Eastern mystical techniques and meditating upon nature."³⁶

Hunt further writes:

"Richard Foster advocates the visualization of Jesus, as do David Seamands, H. Norman Wright, and other Christian psychologists. Christians are badly deceived when they imagine that Christ will forsake the Father's right hand to appear to them when they visualize Him."³⁷

Foster says, "*We of the New Age can risk going against the tide. Let us with abandon relish the fantasy games of children. Let's see visions and dream dreams.*"³⁸ Foster also gives kudos to occultist Agnes Sanford, saying, "I have been greatly helped in my understanding of the value of the imagination in praying for others by Agnes Sanford."³⁹

Foster is a promoter of contemplative prayer. Contemplative prayer is:

"...the universal concept of becoming totally silent, of listening to 'God.' Used by Buddhist monks, Rosicrucians, the early Church mystics, New Agers, and many Christians, contemplative or meditative prayer is a method of becoming deeply quiet and going into the 'center of oneself, in order to merge with the divine.' The 'center' is an altered state of consciousness. The divine varies, according to one's belief."⁴⁰

Foster advocates practices that are familiar to occultists. Among them is a form of almost astral projection, meditation, visualization, and guided imagery.

Consider Foster's own words in his *Celebration of Discipline*:

"...lie down on your back looking up at blue sky and white clouds. ... After awhile there is a deep yearning within to go into the upper regions beyond the clouds. In your imagination allow your spiritual body, shining with light, to rise out of your physical body. Look back so that you can see

yourself lying in the grass and reassure your body that you will return momentarily. Imagine your spiritual self, alive and vibrant, rising up through the clouds and into the stratosphere. Observe your physical body, the knoll, and the forest shrink as you leave the earth. Go deeper and deeper into outer space until there is nothing except the warm presence of the eternal Creator. Rest in His presence. Listen quietly, anticipating the unanticipated. Note carefully any instruction given."⁴¹

Because this exercise is never commanded or advised in Scripture, it is frightening to imagine what realm we are putting ourselves into and who may be addressing us. However, because God has not instructed us that He communicates to us in this way, all that is left is ourselves — or demons — talking to ourselves.

Modern mystics think nothing of using Bible verses taken out of context. One is: "Be still and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10).

However, take notice that the whole Psalm is dealing with the judgment of God and directed outward, not inward. Not a word here is spoken about finding God's voice in our soul. The verse does not say be still and hear something, but rather be still and know. Knowing is cognitive. Our minds are still to be operating.

The word "still" in Hebrew is literally *harpou*, which means to cease. The verse in context means that we should not provoke God or question His dealing, especially in judgment. We need to stand back and let God work without questioning His sovereignty and rights over His creation. We are to really think about who God is in all His power. We are to shut our mouths, as it were, when it comes to God's right to act and punish evil.

We could paraphrase it: "Just keep your mouth shut and realize Whom you are dealing with." It could be said to be an Old Testament equivalent of Romans 3:19, "that every mouth may be stopped and the whole world guilty before God."

In fact, God is so in charge we don't even have to fear if mountains are moved and the seas are troubled (Psalm 46:1-2). Verse 8 says, "come behold the works of God," not center in to listen for that still, small voice. We can relax because God is in control. This is anything but self-focused — it is clearly God-focused.

Our *final point* is extracting ourselves from the mire of mysticism. The wedding is an unbiblical marriage and we should not attend it, hang out at the reception, or welcome its babies.

We may be asked the following by a mystic: "If Jesus is in us, that is, if He really indwells every believer, does it not make sense that we can talk to Him and He to us inside of us? Inside of us is really where we get turned on and tuned into God. Inside us is really where all the action is."

This seems to be Foster's approach. After quoting a number of Catholic mystics — not the Bible — he writes:

"One way to nurture simplicity is through the discipline of silence. Society is dominated by the inane notion that action is the only reality. Please, for God's sake and your own, don't just do something, stand there! Come in and enjoy his presence. Sink down into the light of Christ and become comfortable in that posture. Open the subterranean sanctuary of your soul and listen for *Kol Yahweh*, the voice of the Lord. To do so gives us focus, unity, purpose."⁴²

So we are to be still and God's voice somehow will speak in us or to us from somewhere inside. We just have to sink down into Christ. This is terrible advice. One's Christian life does not consist of looking at what the world is doing and then going to the opposite extreme. If so, then it really means believers are still taking their cues from the world. As such, the world is still a mirror and springboard. This kind of ping-pong existence is never advised in the Bible. Doing the opposite of what everyone else is doing may still be wrong. Slowing down is fine and less stress in life is fine as well. However, Foster

is not advocating just having less stress in our lives.

Yes, Christ is in the believer (Colossians 1:27), but He is in us for regeneration and salvation, not communication. The Bible does not say that the indwelling Christ is there for communication, but it does say He is there for regeneration and, one day, glorification (John 1:12-13, 10:10). He is the quiet house guest, doing His work unseen.

In Galatians 1:16, Paul says, "God revealed His Son *in me*." Paul does not make even the slightest suggestion that the indwelling Christ is in Him for communication. This is not for a mystical *tete-a-tete* that Paul has in view. God's Son in him equaled salvation, according to verse 15. Christ's power in salvation would empower Paul to preach Jesus to others (v. 16). Paul is outer-directed.

In Galatians 2:20, Paul says that Christ living in him allows him to live out a Christ-like life. No hint of mystical messages from inside.

The Church has always understood that Jesus' indwelling was for regeneration. Daniel Whittle's chorus from his wonderful hymn, "Christ Liveth in Me," says, "Christ liveth in me, Christ liveth in me, O what a salvation this, that Christ liveth in me." Whittle knew exactly that Christ indwelt Him — and *why*.

It is very wrong to say that because we cannot find God's voice in the bustle of the world then, *Voila!* We will find Him speaking inside of us.

The lines of communication are abundantly clear in the Bible. God addresses us and directs us, and metaphorically we could say He *speaks to us* through the Bible. We speak to Him in prayer. We should not want more than God has given us.

When Jesus talked in John 10:16 about "hearing" His voice, He was saying "those that are real sheep will obey my voice" or "obey my orders." The Greek root used for hear is *akouo*, which is a term of intimacy and indicates they really get the whole message of who Jesus is as Savior and Shepherd, as well as its implications. Once again, we have no indication

that we are to hear an inner voice. Moreover, where are His orders found? In the Bible, of course. Note that Jesus did not say the origin of His voice is inside His sheep.

In Matthew 28:20, He said we are to "observe all things that I have commanded," that is, found in all of Scripture. He will address us there. We should love "hearing" from our Savior in His Word.

The contemplative-prayer movement is a subtle way to rob us of the Savior's words and a life of obedience. It is a form of false godliness, lacking clear biblical direction and power. One may ask, "Does God ever speak to you?" My answer is "Yes — all the time — in the Scriptures." It is wonderful to encounter God in dynamic ways immersed, for instance, in Psalm 119.

Some would teach that if we knew nothing of the Bible and the words of Christ, it would not be all that bad. According to Foster, we would not necessarily need that since God's primary and deepest way of "speaking" to us is somehow inside us. If God truly speaks words from inside of us, why even bother going to the Book? Yet the Bible teaches that faith can only come by the Word of God (Romans 10:17).

We must remember and affirm that Jesus is primarily in the believer for regeneration and salvation, not communication. Our communication to God is through prayer. God's established mode of communication with us is His inspired Book, illumined by the Holy Spirit.

Romans 8:1-14 is very instructive. The figure is turned around and we are said to be in Christ (v. 1) with regard to position and safekeeping. His being in us regards His giving us life and dynamic for change along with giving us His fulfillment of the Law (v. 4). With Jesus and His Spirit in us, we now really belong and it is an eternal belonging (v. 9). Christ regenerates us and gives us life, and ultimately glorification (vv. 10-11). Such a wonderful message — so much more exciting and fulfilling than the mystic's dream — should make us want to serve Him.

Some might protest, saying, "What about, 'For we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones' (Ephesians 5:30)? Does this not mean there is a mystical intertwining and some kind of mystical merging going on? It sounds almost like we become Christ in some sense."

That kind of reasoning shows a lack of understanding of both context and Jewish metaphor. The context of Ephesians 5 is marriage. To push the metaphor into the mystical realm would require the husband to become the wife and vice versa, or for the two to blend into an asexual being.

The contextual meaning is that Paul is speaking of our covenantal union with Christ and so, marriage is to be a sacred covenantal union. As the bride and groom function in individual roles of submission and nurturing, it illustrates the covenantal union of Christ and believers. They are to be one in mind and purpose while maintaining their individual roles and personalities.

It is no accident that Paul quotes Genesis 2:24 for his illustration. Adam said Eve was "bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh." This was a way to describe covenantal union and Adam knew that he did not become Eve and she did not become him. Ephesians 5 is evidence against mysticism, not for it. Friends can say of our children, "I can see their mom and dad in them," and we know what they mean. Or we say, "They are our flesh and blood" and others understand. Our union with Christ gives us position and covenantal union, not literal absorption into Christ or Christ into us.

One very strange spin-off to all of this could be called post-mortem mysticism, in which some suggest that merging into Christ and one another would happen at the resurrection. Here would be the loss of all identity as the bride becomes Christ. These kinds of quirks need not even be addressed. Scripture verifies personal identity after death and into eternity.

All we have to do is connect the historical dots and we will know where we are and how we arrived. The teaching of Scripture is a far cry from the mystics' message that leaves

us in a fog of feeling, listening for voices when we should be looking for verses. The Bible way gives us more — not less — than the mystic's way, which is truly empty. It is spiritually harmful to think that one has latched into God when one is merely talking to one's self or, far worse, to demons.

Endnotes:

1. John MacArthur, *The Truth for Today: A Daily Touch of God's Grace*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson/Countryman Publishers, 2001, pg. 350.
2. An excellent perspective on N.T. Wright, John Armstrong, and covenantal nomism is "Justification: What's New?" by John G. Reisinger from the 32nd Annual Sovereign Grace Bible Conference (Sept. 9, 2003). Available from: Sound of Grace, P.O. Box 185, Webster, N.Y. 14580.
3. See further, *Catholic Almanac*. Huntington, Ind.: Our Sunday Visitor, Inc., 1983, pg. 135.
4. Joyce Milton, *The Road To Malpsychia*. San Francisco: Encounter Books, 2002, pg. 141.
5. David F. Wells, *Revolution in Rome*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1972, pp. 10, 96.
6. Brett M. Decker, "The Vatican II Sham." (Decker's article is a review of *The Great Facade*, a book by Christopher A. Ferrara and Thomas E. Woods, Jr.) Reprinted in *Christian News*, Jan. 12, 2004, pg. 11.
7. *The Road To Malpsychia*, op. cit., pg. 145.
8. See further, Benjamin B. Warfield, *Counterfeit Miracles*. Carlisle, Pa.: Banner of Truth Trust, 1972, pp. 1-100.
9. See further, Henry C. Sheldon, *Pantheistic Dilemmas*. New York: The Methodist Book Concern, 1920, pp. 244-246.
10. See further, G. Richard Fisher, "The Mindless Mysticism of Madame Guyon," *The Quarterly Journal*, January-March 1997, pp. 4, 12-15.
11. *Counterfeit Miracles*, op. cit., pg. 87.
12. Ignatius Loyola quoted by Warfield, *ibid.*, pg. 85.
13. Warren Wiersbe, *Real Worship*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 2000, pg. 26.
14. See further, "The Mindless Mysticism of Madame Guyon," op. cit.
15. D.D. Martin quoted by Winfried Corduan, *Mysticism*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991, pg. 23.
16. *Ibid.*, pp. 33-37.
17. See further, M. Kurt Goedelman, "A Journey into Mysticland," *The Quarterly Journal*, January-March 2003, pp. 5-10; and G. Richard Fisher with M. Kurt Goedelman, "Experiencing Mysticism — Critiquing the Teachings of Henry Blackaby," *The Quarterly Journal*, July-September 2003, pp. 4-16.

18. *Mysticism*, op. cit., pg. 123.
19. Willard Weinrich in John Piper and Wayne Grudem, Editors, *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*. Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 1991, pg. 269.
20. J.D. Douglas, Editor, *Twentieth-Century Dictionary of Christian Biography*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1995, pg. 311.
21. John Paul II, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf Publishers, 1994, pp. 78, 80, italics in original.
22. *Ibid.*, pp. 81, 195, italics in original.
23. See further, Ben Witherington III, *The Jesus Quest*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1997, pp. 9-13.
24. William Johnston quoted by Ray Yungen, *A Time of Departing*. Silverton, Ore.: Lighthouse Trails Publishing Company, 2002, pg. 33, ellipsis in original.
25. Thomas Keating quoted by Yungen, *ibid.*, pg. 42.
26. Michael J. Gelb quoted by Yungen, *ibid.*, pg. 53, italics by Yungen.
27. *Ibid.*, pg. 43.
28. See further, G. Richard Fisher, "The Road Not Traveled," *The Quarterly Journal*, January-March 1994, pp. 1, 14-15.
29. H. Wayne House and Richard Abanes, *The Road Less Traveled and the Bible*, Camp Hill, Pa.: Horizon Books, 1995, pp. 232-233.
30. *Twentieth-Century Dictionary of Christian Biography*, op. cit., pg. 252.
31. Richard J. Foster, *Freedom of Simplicity*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1981, pp. 56, 138.
32. Conference brochure for the Ocean Grove Camp Meeting Association.
33. Jacques Dupuis quoted in "Fatima to become interfaith shrine," *Christian News*, Dec. 1, 2003, pg. 10.
34. Agnieszka Tennant, "Brennan Manning's Trial by Fire." Posted on *Christianity Today's* web site (www.christianitytoday.com), Jan. 9, 2004, article currently indicated as not available.
35. J.D. Douglas, Editor, *New 20th-Century Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1991, pg. 343.
36. Dave Hunt, *Occult Invasion*. Eugene, Ore.: Harvest House Publishers, 1998, pg. 204.
37. *Ibid.*, pg. 475.
38. Richard Foster quoted by Hunt, *ibid.*, pg. 482, italics in original.
39. Richard Foster quoted by Hunt, *ibid.*, pg. 504.
40. Brenda Scott and Samantha Smith, *Trojan Horse*. Lafayette, La.: Huntington House Publishers, 1993, pg. 109, italics in original.
41. Richard J. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978, pg. 27.
42. *Freedom of Simplicity*, op. cit., pg. 89.

And the crusade crowd cheered for what they perceived was Hinn's noble strategy to take a former drug addict and make him a pastor — all the while ignorant of the Holy Spirit's command in 1 Timothy 3:6.

The confused judge: A Hinn devotee wrote to PFO defending him as "a true man of God." As she told PFO not to "throw stones" at Hinn unless we ourselves were "without sin," she employed what she thought was the biblical example of "the woman at the well when the people accused her of adultery." The writer confused two separate Bible accounts, the Samaritan woman at the well in John 4 and the woman caught in adultery in John 8. She also missed the context of John 8: that "stones" should not be cast against repentant people. It has nothing to do with discerning false teaching. Her letter also included — based upon Matthew 7:3-5 — the admonition for PFO not to judge. However, she missed the contradiction in that she was judging us for judging Hinn.

Hinn often seems as mixed up as his followers. Take, for example, the time he told a Trinity Broadcasting Network audience about the sermon he preached in which he made a correlation of Moses with the two disciples who met the risen Christ on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24).

"And I compared Moses and his boldness to ask, 'What is your name?' to God, and took the story of the two on the road to Emmaus who never once said, 'Who are you?' When Jesus was walking with them, there [was] not one time [when] they said, 'Well, how do you know all this?' and 'Where are you from?' And frankly missed an incredible opportunity. *And the Holy Spirit made it so clear to us that these two were never mentioned again in the Bible. It's almost like they were dis—dishonored. We don't even know who they are. To this day we do not know their names.* And it's very clear that God Almighty, seeing that they've missed their incredible opportunity to say, 'Who are you Lord?' *God wouldn't even honor them to give us their names"* (emphasis added).

Note first that Hinn — as he is accustomed to doing — attributes his interpretation to the Holy Spirit. Yet the account in Luke 24:13-35 is quite different from Hinn's. There are several basic facts that anyone with a rudimentary understanding of the Bible would have known and, as such, objected to Hinn's own ignorance of Scripture and irresponsible interpretation.

Consider just six facts from Scripture that Hinn omitted from his sermon: 1) One of the disciples *is* named: Cleopas (v. 18). 2) Their inability to discern that it was the Lord who walked with them was a result of divine intervention (vv. 16, 31). 3) The Lord went to great lengths to teach the pair from the Word (v. 27). 4) Their hearts burned as the Lord revealed the fulfilled Scrip-

tures to them (v. 32). 5) The two disciples were not dishonored, but are again distinguished to witness the resurrected Lord when He appeared to His group of apostles (vv. 33-36). 6) Although not by name, these disciples are mentioned again in God's Word, as they would certainly be part of the collective number who witnessed the resurrected Christ described by Paul (1 Corinthians 15:5-8).

It is, without doubt, ironic that Hinn would contort this exact scriptural record. In verse 27, Luke tells us, "And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, He *explained* to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning Himself." The word "explained" in the text is the Greek word, *diemeneuo*, which is a strengthened form of the word for hermeneutics. Luke says Jesus carefully and thoroughly interpreted and explained the Word of God. Hinn does not.

But apparently ignorance breeds ignorance and this is why Hinn is able to get away with the above fractured exegesis, not to mention his declaration that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit each have a body, spirit, and soul ("If I can shock you and maybe I should, there are nine of them."), the Red Sea divided by turning into ice, and that he is a little Messiah walking on earth.

Scripture repeatedly calls believers to discernment. Those who follow "God's Generals" miss this mandate and fall prey. While the adage states, "ignorance is bliss," ignorance has consequences. The biblical call for sound teaching is a call for healthy teaching. Sound doctrine has a good effect on the spiritual health of the Church and believers. It is a susceptible and sick Church that allows or embraces sick doctrine. No matter how charismatic these false teachers are in their personalities, Christians must never allow this magnetism to interfere with a desire to protect the integrity of Scripture and a demand for proper interpretation.

We're not saying that the Bible is calling all believers to earn doctorate degrees in theology, but it does charge that we correctly handle the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15). We do this in our own lives in personal study and by those to whom we look for spiritual instruction. Paul, by trade, was a tentmaker. He knew that in making a tent, all the pieces had to be cut straight and exact to fit together properly. So, too, with Scripture: if you don't cut the pieces right, the theology doesn't fit.

Laurel Warwick, in the discernment devotional, *Water Round the Altar*, offers an applicable commentary on Ephesians 5:15 and a fitting conclusion:

"'Walk circumspectly,' the King James Version says. That is, we are to exercise careful consideration to avoid error or harmful consequences. 'Not as fools, but as wise... understanding what the will of the Lord is.' We must know Him, know His Word, and know His will."

—MKG

circulated before the faith healer even set foot on Indian turf.

Tension before Hinn's meetings also escalated when, on Jan. 18, police arrested a team of missionaries from Kanyakumari whom they identified as "Benny Hinn agents." Police cited the group for creating a riot and assaulting local youths in efforts to proselytize. A judge remanded them to judicial custody until Feb. 2, according to a *Star of Mysore* news report. Kanyakumari is located at the southernmost tip of the Indian subcontinent, about 300 miles directly south of Bangalore.

The day before the meetings began, Hinn and his entourage arrived at the Bangalore Airport in his private jet. Two full floors in the Leela Palace hotel where Hinn stayed were kept vacant for security reasons. Additionally, the city deployed 10,000 police during the days of the meetings.

As the "prayer meetings" were set to begin, violent protests broke out in the city. An article in *The Times of India* reported "widespread arson and stone-pelting across the city which left several persons injured." The report also stated that "angry mobs forcibly shut down shops and blocked traffic" and that over 110 buses and many private vehicles were damaged. One city bus was stopped by a mob, its passengers forced to get off, and the vehicle was then set on fire. Other buses parked in the terminal were also set on fire. At least 100 people were arrested in the fracas.

Despite the event's name change, on stage it was the same old Benny Hinn show. The musical prelude, the divine messages, and the bogus claims of healing were all part of the program. According to the *Star of Mysore*, "Benny Hinn is reported to start his show while the people in the large gathering were made to experience increased heart-beats due to loud music blaring through the speakers. He makes dramatic declaration saying, 'Christ has come. He is entering your body. You now have acquired a rare kind of strength.'"

When Karnataka Chief Minister Dharam Singh appeared at the meeting, Hinn singled him out and summoned him onto the platform. Once on stage, Hinn embraced the Chief Minister saying, "In your presence, I too feel that I am an Indian." Hinn then proceeded to prophesy over Singh, claiming that he is going to "experience a big change shortly." According to the *Mysore* newspaper, as Hinn spotlighted the official, "Dharam Singh seemed slightly taken aback as he reluctantly climbed on to the dais [raised platform]."

When it came time for the miraculous, there were many "who publicly announced that their illnesses were cured by the grace of Christ in the prayer meeting." However, an investigation by a fact-finding committee revealed that the only ones making professions were

Hinn's volunteers. "The volunteers who had mingled with the people in the large gathering to take part in the prayer meeting rushed to the raised dais soon after Benny Hinn's show started and also openly declared that they were suffering from specific illnesses which were cured by him, the Committee revealed," according to a further report in the *Star of Mysore*.

The report also emphasized, "The Committee members also found out that the volunteers, who could be seen everywhere among the large audience, were none other than the volunteers of the evangelist keeping company with him after dusk."

Other news sources in India questioned Hinn's claim of divine healing powers. The *Deccan Sunday Herald* reminded readers of a 2001 HBO special:

"One of Benny Hinn's miracles is worth recalling, as it involves an Indian family. The Prakash family converted to Christianity so that Benny Hinn could heal their son who was dying of a brain tumor. ... Benny prayed and assured the family of a miracle. Prakash felt that God was speaking to him during the service, and immediately pledged \$2,000 to the miracle man. The boy was dead seven weeks later."

The secular media appear to exercise a greater level of discernment regarding Hinn and a better biblical understanding than do many who claim Christianity. One Indian news report, drawing attention to Hinn and his meetings in Bangalore, warned, "Therefore, discernment is of utmost importance. Present day healing mass melas do not resemble healing as recorded in the Bible. While in the Old Testament there were only a few episodes of healing, in the New Testament, the miracles of Jesus were to the whole man. It was not just a physical healing, but a moral renewal and a call for total commitment of faith. Many times Jesus said, 'Tell no one,' because he knew people would follow him with wrong motives."

—MKG

BROOKLYN WATCHTOWER EXPANSION PLANNED

Brooklyn residents found themselves in what appears to be another losing battle with the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society. Late last year, a Brooklyn City Council's zoning subcommittee approved the religious organization's plan to develop a three-acre waterfront parcel into a virtual residential nucleus. Two weeks later, the City Council approved zoning changes thereby allowing the Watchtower to clear its last major hurdle to begin the project.

For years, residents in what is known as the DUMBO (Down Under the Manhattan Bridge Overpass) neighborhood have fought in vain to stifle the incursion of the Watchtower's high-rise structures which, they say, de-

stroys the character of their neighborhood. The village, nestled between the Manhattan and Brooklyn Bridges, features cobblestone streets framed by two of the most famous bridges in the United States. The local community was united and relentless in its opposition. Residents sent city council members 1,500 signed postcards, 400 signed petitions, and thousands of e-mail messages.

The Watchtower's current plan calls for a complex consisting of four towers, the tallest of which will be 20 stories high. Another will rise 18 stories. The two other towers will be nine stories high. Originally, the Watchtower proposed all four towers to be 14 stories or higher. The new complex will be a residence for another 1,600 Jehovah's Witnesses who move to Brooklyn to work at the sect's international headquarters. According to one report, the organization currently has about 3,500 members living and working in DUMBO. The buildings will also contain a welcome center, a dining hall, a 1,100-car underground garage, and a three-story auditorium or Kingdom Hall.

According to the Watchtower's proposal, the city will benefit from the development. The sect says it will renovate two neighborhood parks adjacent to the new campus and will install security cameras at a nearby subway station. The zoning subcommittee voted 15-1 in favor of the Watchtower's plan. Charles Barron, the dissenting committee member, cited his opposition to all developments that disregard community concerns. Likewise, residents say the development will make traffic more dangerous and its new residents won't support or add to the local economy. The 51-member City Council's vote weighed in with three dissenting votes: Barron and two council members whose districts overlap the Watchtower's project.

Construction could begin as early as this year.

—MKG

BAD, BAD CLINT BROWN

The pastor who inherited the Orlando Christian Center, the Florida-based church founded and built by faith healer Benny Hinn, has had his "lavish lifestyle" exposed by a local television news report. Citing financial records stemming from their divorce transcripts, WFTV Channel 9-TV revealed that the Rev. Clint Brown and his wife Angie utilized large amounts of church money to finance their extravagant lifestyle.

According to the news report, the \$1.4 million home in which Brown and his estranged wife lived carries a \$7,000 a month mortgage paid by the church. Utilities, lawn care, and pool maintenance are also underwritten by Faith World. The home is in Alaqua, the same gated community where Hinn lived. Angie is said to drive a \$95,000 Mercedes-Benz paid for with church funds. In addition, the couple reportedly spent hundreds of

thousands of dollars of church donations during exorbitant shopping sprees at Neiman Marcus and other exclusive stores.

Atop of all the "fringe benefits," Brown is reported to have received a salary of more than \$500,000 last year from the church.

And it's not just the Browns who profit from the generosity of Faith World members. According to the divorce records, Brown purchased more than \$70,000 of merchandise from women's clothing stores during a twelve-month period and it was paid for by the church. Brown's attorney told WFTV news that the money was spent by Brown on gifts for women ministers at various churches where he appears as a guest.

Brown moved to Central Florida in 1993, after being a music minister for Rod Parsley in Columbus, Ohio. He started and was pastor of Faith World, a church first located in a strip mall. In 1999, Hinn pulled up his Florida roots to move his ministry to Texas, following his personal move to California. Brown and his Faith World congregation merged with Hinn's church, then known as World Outreach Church. Brown and Faith World received Hinn's WOC facilities on 30 acres of property and assumed a near \$6 million debt. Some contend that Brown "bought" the congregation and property from Hinn, but both say they "loathe" the suggestion that Hinn "sold" his congregation to Brown.

—MKG

ATHEIST FLEW ADMITS A CREATOR

Antony Flew, the British author of *Atheistic Humanism*, *Darwinian Evolution*, and *A Rational Animal*, and an avowed atheist for over 50 years, has acknowledged he has reconsidered his former philosophy and has moved toward a theistic belief. Flew is a former professor at Oxford, Aberdeen, Keele, and Reading universities in England. The 82-year-old professor now says that scientific evidence has led him to a belief in God.

For many years, Flew had ongoing public debates with Christian apologist Gary Habermas on topics such as the existence of God and the validity of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Their 1985 debate on the resurrection was published in book form, *Did Jesus Rise from the Dead?* Habermas is currently the chairman of the department of philosophy and theology at Liberty University in Lynchburg, Va.

Habermas, who has remained friends with Flew throughout the years, told the Baptist Press that Flew told him he was "really rethinking theism" and considering arguments from the "intelligent design" movement. "He was going back and forth as to whether he should

be a theist or not," Habermas said. "By early 2004," according to the news service, "Flew completed his transition to theism and indicated his change of mind to Habermas in a telephone conversation."

Flew admits he can now best be described as a deist. A deist is one who believes in a God who created the universe, but maintains that this Deity is not actively involved in the lives and subsistence of His creation. Flew also states it is doubtful that he would ever embrace the Christian faith, citing the problem of evil as his primary contention with the God of Christianity.

—MKG

CRYSTAL CATHEDRAL CONDUCTOR KILLS SELF

A holiday celebration turned tragic for the Rev. Robert Schuller and his Crystal Cathedral. Rather than kicking off its annual nativity pageant, "The Glory of Christmas," the church found itself with a nine-hour standoff between police and its longtime musical conductor who eventually barricaded himself in a church bathroom and committed suicide.

Two hours before the start of its Christmas show on Dec. 16, Johnnie Carl reportedly got into an argument with another church employee, then went to his office, retrieved a handgun, and fired four shots. A police

SWAT team was called to the Garden Grove, Calif., church complex and began searching its offices for Carl. Police initially made contact with Carl by phone, but later lost communication. The church was evacuated and electrical power to the building was cut off. About 100 members of the show's cast were already at the church preparing for the first of the day's two presentations.

Schuller came to the church in an effort to help persuade Carl to surrender. Schuller taped a personal message to Carl, but the police were not able to play the minister's plea or another message recorded by Carl's wife.

As the SWAT team approached the office where Carl was holed up, he escaped to one of the church's restrooms where he shot and killed himself. Authorities indicated that Carl had struggled with depression for a number of years.

Carl had been the musical conductor at the Crystal Cathedral for nearly three decades and had arranged or recorded music for such renowned artists as John Tesh and Celine Dion. Schuller issued a statement saying, "Johnnie was a beloved member of our church family and a close personal friend."

Although the Christmas program for Thursday evening was canceled while police attempted to resolve the situation, the holiday show was performed as scheduled the following day.

—MKG

PERSONAL FREEDOM OUTREACH — STATEMENT OF BELIEF

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



Books in Review

THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO CHRISTIAN DENOMINATIONS

by Ron Rhodes

Harvest House Publishers, 397 pages, \$13.99

Ron Rhodes has done it again with another handy — and valuable — reference work. His latest effort, *The Complete Guide to Christian Denominations*, will help readers better understand some of the more prominent denominations of the 300 or so in existence today. The religious terrain he covers includes Roman Catholicism, Protestantism, the Orthodox Church, and much more.

The book's chapters comprise 17 broad groupings or major headings of particular religious bodies. Then, within these general classifications, the reader is furnished with an overview of particular or specific denominations. For instance, the second chapter (the heftiest chapter in the book) covers "Baptist Churches" wherein Rhodes covers over a dozen different Baptist denominations. Be it Baptist, Catholic, Lutheran, Methodist, or any of the other religious families, each individual entry is supplied with relevant information as to when it was founded, membership, and congregations.

This volume is not intended to be an apologetic critique, but rather to furnish a history and doctrinal sketch of an individual denomination's teachings on the Bible, God, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, sin and salvation, church polity, sacraments, and eschatology. The data is easy to digest with each entry two to three pages in length. Additionally, at the end of each entry is a web site address for further information.

Rhodes' book is also full of other helpful information. Throughout the chapters are multiple interesting charts called "Fast Facts On ..." Included, for instance, are charts on Arminianism, Calvinism, Liberal vs. Conservative Christianity, Biblical Hymnology, Ministries of the Holy Spirit, Millennial Views, Famous Christian Creeds, and the Trinity, just to name a few. Of great help are the various indexes in the back of the book. They include an Index of Denominations, an Index of Persons, and a Chart Index of "Fast Facts On ..." Each provides quick retrieval of the helpful information. The extensive bibliography for those who might want to do additional research is also quite beneficial.

In addition to broadening one's knowledge of various prominent denominations, this book is full of nuggets of information and is well worth its price.

—AMG

GROWING BY GRACE

by Jay E. Adams

Timeless Texts, 96 pages, \$9.99

A distorted view of sanctification is not limited to cults and aberrational groups. The error of "higher life" and "holiness" teaching can be found within the Church. In his book, Jay Adams cuts through the myths and errors, stating that sanctification is the ongoing process a person goes through from the time he is saved until death. Understanding how this process takes place is just as important as the need for sanctification.

Adams explains that within the sanctification process there are three forces that work together to help achieve this goal. They are the Holy Spirit, the Word of God, and the regenerated saint. The Holy Spirit uses God's Word to enable the believer to practice the commandments given. The process of sanctification is performed solely by God. And although the Holy Spirit does give us the power to follow God's instructions, we should not simply just sit around and wait for results. God has given us the intelligence and responsibility to do what He wants us to do.

Adams underscores this balance: "It is important, then, to develop from the Bible the doctrine of human responsibility for sanctification. But always make it clear that part of that responsibility is to call upon God for the wisdom and strength to obey" (pg. 38).

Adams does a great job of stating why we will never reach a point of perfection in this life. As Christians we need to learn that we are required to be a follower of Christ and not be Christ. If we try to be Jesus, we will never make it and will always fall short. It is a goal no one can achieve; a burden no one can bear. Subjective perfectionism always leads one down a path into pride, judgmentalism, and elitism.

Growing by Grace clearly and succinctly lays out the biblical view of sanctification for its readers. It is a work which also defines how sanctification and counseling go together and therefore can be used not only for self-edification, but to help others grow closer to the Lord.

—MG

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