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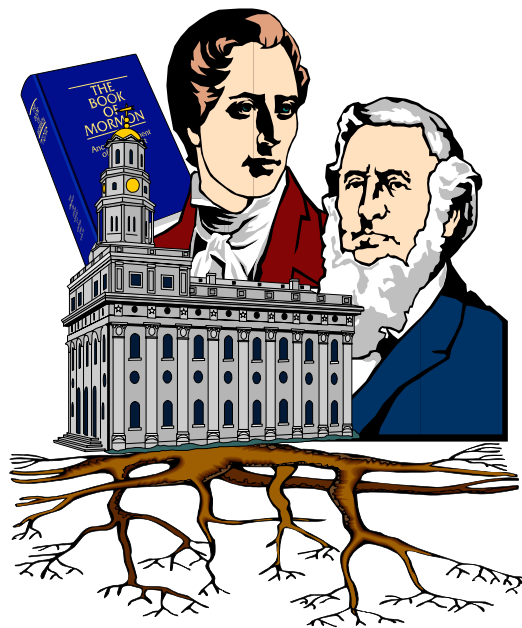
EDITOR: KEITH A. MORSE

## The Fruit of the Root Mormonism's Fundamentalist Fanatics

by Robert L. Griffin

In that portion of the Sermon on the Mount in which our Lord Jesus gave warning to "beware of false prophets," He used the simile of fruit trees, and averred that a "good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. ... Therefore by their fruits you will know them" (Matthew 7:15-20). A modern expression of a similar idea is found in the adage, "The fruit doesn't fall far from the tree."

Often, man-made religions go further and further to extremes and false doctrine engenders more false doctrine. Those who tend toward Galatianism become ensnared in a trap that sweeps them into deeper involvement in "works" salvation and legalism. Rejection of the doctrinal tenets of the Christian faith often begets rejection of its moral tenets. The best explanation for these phenomena is, "by their fruits you will know them." There is a natural process of reaping the fruit of the root. Paul's admonition in Galatians 6:7, "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap," certainly applies to individuals, as is evident from the context. But the principle is also operative for movements as well: they *do* reap



what they sow.

In approaching this subject, it should be observed that there are

distinct differences between those groups that come from a solid Christian heritage, and then forsake that heritage (whether through gradual devolution or sudden abandonment), and other movements that from their very foundation have been rife with error. Those familiar with Church history are often shocked at positions taken by certain leaders in mainline denominations. Such giants of the faith as John Wesley, John Calvin, Martin Luther, William Tyndale, and others would be aghast at positions taken by some who claim them as spiritual forefathers. The phenomenon of a formerly orthodox body sliding the slippery slope of skepticism, liberalism, and compromise into gross unbelief is tragic indeed, but that tragedy is not the basis of this article.

Here we will focus on movements that from their birth have been based  
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# Editorials

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## WHY NO ACCOUNTABILITY?

Late last summer, a brief news item with a Cuba dateline appeared in newspapers across the country. The headlines were along the line of "Nation honors Castro on his 79th birthday." The Aug. 14 article said:

"Cuba honored President Fidel Castro's 79th birthday Saturday, revisiting his nearly five decades in power on the communist island with tributes in state-run newspapers and documentaries. Dozens of children danced and cut an enormous blue-and-white cake for Castro, the world's longest-ruling head of government. Castro maintains a busy schedule — including speeches that can stretch to six or seven hours — and has shown no interest in retiring."

Some may wonder what this news report has to do with apologetics. It has a lot to do with one very prominent modern day "prophet" and his ability to seduce the undiscerning (Matthew 24:24). It is a decisive and emphatic testimony to a false prophet.

Throughout the years, Benny Hinn has tantalized his faithful with numerous prophetic words. The most outrageous of his purported divine revelations was his sermon at a New Year's Eve service in 1989 at the Orlando Christian Center, his former church in Florida. Hinn told his congregation — and the world through

audio media — a dramatic sequence of "prophecies" concerning events in the next decade.

Hinn entered a trance-like state, heightening the effect by interspersing tongues — "*Ta-Kaa-Pa Kaa-Paa Daa*" — throughout his homily. Hinn covered a wide range of future events, including the Church, economics, domestic and world politics, and the claim, "The Lord also tells me to tell you in the mid-nineties, about '94 or '95, no later than that, God will destroy the homosexual community of America."

It was also here that Hinn declared, "The Spirit tells me Fidel Castro will die in the nineties. Oh my. Some will try to kill him and they will not succeed. But there will come a change in his physical health and he will not stay in power."

Considering just a couple of the statements in the news report, such as Castro being "the world's longest-ruling head of government" and his keeping "a busy schedule... [with] no interest in retiring," demonstrates just how far afield Hinn's prophetic declaration is from the facts. God's Word reminds His people that the word of the prophet that does not come to pass is a word that He did not speak (Deuteronomy 18:21). Words which truly come from God are infallible and inerrant. God's objective in speaking through the prophets was to communicate His sure and certain word to His people. There is no room for or possibility of error.

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## HINN HELPS PROMOTE TV SERIES SCAM

Benny Hinn again has demonstrated his lack of discernment by promoting a non-existent television show that is now the subject of a major fraud case in Southern California.

In November 2003, the TV evangelist had Joseph “Jo-Jo” Medawar on his *This Is Your Day* show, where the Lebanese native spoke of a series he was creating about homeland security agents.

“The Lord is doing some wonderful things around the world and also at home and in Hollywood,” Hinn said on the show.

Medawar said the show would be called “DHS: The Series.” He said it would follow the experiences of two agents who are “truly born-again Christians.” He told viewers it was to be “a Christian program, but a mainstream program.” Appearing with Medawar on the show were the three primary actors of the series: Alison Heruth-Waterbury, Tim Cavanaugh, and Stephen Owens.

Medawar claimed to have government approval and the endorsement of President Bush. “The amount of the advisers that have joined the show is almost mind-boggling,” Medawar told Hinn’s audience. He also said that the actors portraying the central figures in the series have undergone “some very high-level training.” While the claims sounded good, court documents allege that they were a scam.

According to a Copley News Service report, Medawar was arrested this past Sept. 23 at his Century City, Calif., office on charges of mail fraud and obstruction of justice. The report said that during the past 30 months, Medawar allegedly had “scammed about 70 investors, many of them linked to Southern California churches.” Medawar, CEO and Executive Producer for his Steeple Distributions production company, is accused of defrauding investors of \$5.5 million.

Medawar had produced a trailer to promote his series, but officials said the piece was made up mostly of video segments from other programs and movies that Medawar had neither produced nor had permission to use. Hinn used the promotional piece on his broadcast. Court documents said Medawar did have “several dealings” with a homeland security official, but that the official told Medawar the DHS name and seal could not be used without permission.

Medawar stated that Matt Crouch, son of Trinity Broadcasting Network founders Paul and Jan Crouch, would be the executive producer of the show. He also claimed that a deal was in the works to allow TBN to simulcast the series as it aired on network television. Medawar told Hinn that at the series premiere, Hinn would be there walking arm in arm with the program’s actors.

“The Lord is a part of the program,” Hinn told his audience. He then highlighted a “revelation” given by Ruckins McKinley, of Life Church in Mission Viejo, Calif., on his Sept. 22, 2003, broadcast. Hinn said, “God is putting Hollywood on the altar. That was the word God gave that night, and it’s happening.” He further offered a word of prophecy of his own that the actors from the series will reach other Hollywood actors for Christ.

Those who have monitored Benny Hinn’s broadcasts and healing campaigns are familiar with his propensity to name-drop and publicize his encounters with celebrities and world leaders. Yet, as with his providing Medawar a worldwide platform for his television scam, he does so at the risk of his friends and viewing audience.

—MKG

## RALSON RETIRES AS NCVC DIRECTOR

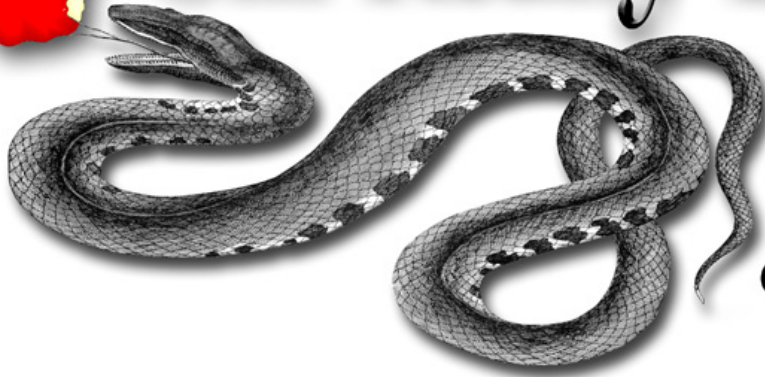
Colleen Ralson, who headed up the Nauvoo Christian Visitors Center in Nauvoo, Ill., has retired as the center’s director. Ralson, a fourth-generation Mormon who was born and raised in Utah, was director since the center opened in 1988. She became a Christian in her early 20s after rejecting Mormonism. Ralson left a successful career in nursing when she signed on to become the NCVC’s director.

The NCVC was a joint mission project established by Watchman Fellowship and Personal Freedom Outreach. In 1987, the two ministries purchased a building in downtown Nauvoo and launched the NCVC. Ralson was enlisted as director and began converting the structure, which previously had housed a hair salon, the office of the city’s newspaper, and residential apartment, into a place to provide a Christian witness in a community steeped in the skewed faith, facts, and history promulgated by the Mormons.

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# Sin Really Does Matter



## The Deadly Consequence of Man's Nature

by David M. Tyler

"Abandoning the language of sin will not make sin go away. Human beings will continue to experience alienation, deformation, damnation, and death no matter what we call them," writes religion teacher Barbara Brown Taylor.<sup>1</sup>

Similarly, theology professor Henri Blocher observes, "We cannot avoid facing the riddle of original sin itself. We have observed that the doctrine, as stated and unfolded, sheds light on the human predicament."<sup>2</sup>

Yet, even more consequential are the words of Scripture, "When Jesus heard it, He said to them, 'Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance'" (Mark 2:17).

### THE NEW EVANGELISM

In 1946, the federal government took responsibility for promoting American's mental health. Some of the initiatives included the National Mental Health Act (1946), the National Institute of Mental Health (1949), the National Mental Health Study Act (1955), and the creation of the Joint Commission on Mental Illness and Health (1955). The landscape of American society would be dramatically transformed with the building of new mental health centers, the incorporation of training programs, as well as countless locations disseminating mental health principles.

On Feb. 5, 1963, President John F. Kennedy delivered a national speech on mental health. He referred to mental health as the nation's number one health problem. In order to confront what was considered a mental health care crisis, Kennedy signed into law the Community Mental Health Centers Act on Oct. 31, 1963. The diseasing of America and calling sin sickness now had the backing of the federal government.

In 1977, President Jimmy Carter organized the Commission on Mental Health. The agency studied the state of the nation's mental health and concluded a quarter of all Americans needed mental health services. In the 1980s, an eruption of 12-step programs provided a disease label for virtually anyone who wanted one.

The television talk shows capitalized on and added to the success and growth of the disease model. From "Donahue" to "Oprah," everyday people and celebrities alike have poured out their heart-wrenching stories of co-dependency and other addictions, disorders, and compulsions. No segment of society has been exempt. Therapeutic holidays such as National Depression Screening Day, National Anxiety Disorder Day, and National Eating Disorders Awareness Week were created. Local malls provided a convenient venue on these special days where people could be diagnosed and learn more about their

disease. For those who were too busy to go to the malls, a program of mental health education and screening for early detection and intervention was available online or by telephone.

Out of this milieu came one of Satan's master strokes of deceit: people began believing that happiness and feeling good was the end and psychological healing was the means. The Church, not wanting to be left out, jumped on the bandwagon. Sin was whitewashed and attributed to disease. A therapeutic gospel was born where feelings, happiness, self-esteem, and psychological healing were sacred. Mental health education was incorporated into ongoing church programs. Support and recovery groups claiming to be Christ-centered became the new evangelism. Conversions in main-line denominations have been falling ever since.

The psychiatric community long has recognized the Church's potential influence among its members and others in the community and, therefore, the strategic position the Church is in to advance the "health-engendering" philosophies of psychology. Today the Church of Jesus Christ is one of the nation's leading disseminators of mental health principles. Promoting mental health, through countless support and recovery programs, has become a major ministry of the local church. The emphasis and driving

force is a belief that spiritual and mental health is inseparable. During the years of modern psychology and psychiatry there was a compartmentalization of the spiritual and psychological. Christ said the greatest commandment was to love God and the second was to love one's neighbor. Today's wisdom says that people who are mentally ill have an impaired ability to give and receive love. Therefore, helping them recover from their disease has spiritual implications.

### THE LANGUAGE OF DISEASE, GOD'S LOVE, AND GRACE

The Church's devotion to psychology has led to many additions to and subtractions from the language of faith. The argument is, because science has provided us with new insights into human nature, the old words simply do not work anymore. Words such as "damnation," "repentance," and "sin," when spoken out loud, sound inappropriate. They are words from an earlier time when man's relationship with God was associated with guilt and punishment. They are words that judge us and leave us feeling uncomfortable, anxious, or depressed. For far too long, the Christian message is said to have been distorted in ways that cause emotional hurt rather than healing. Howard J. Clinebell, Jr. wrote:

"Through the centuries, religious leaders have been handling psychological dynamite with little awareness of the tremendous power for good or ill in their hands."<sup>3</sup>

He went on to explain how behavioral science has given us a "fresh revelation about man,"<sup>4</sup> which has been beneficial in helping us to interpret the Christian message in a way that will not do psychological harm. The obvious solution is not to use psychologically harmful words. That is exactly what has happened. Ministers are encouraged to check their sermons against mental health criteria for dangerous language.

One pastor said it was helpful to him to interact with a professional therapist in his congregation before preaching some of his sermons.

Other pastors use the books of famous Christian and secular psychologists and psychiatrists. Whatever the situation, sin-talk is out and the focus is on "disease," God's love, and grace. Love and grace are said to be more positive and life-affirming. However, discarding the language of sin weakens and softens the full impact of grace. The grace of God is cherished most by those who realize their sinfulness most. The parable of the prodigal son illustrates the point.

The Scriptures said the prodigal son "came to himself" (Luke 15:17).

He had been unconscious of his true condition. He had replaced bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter, darkness for light and light for darkness. It was as if he had been in a sinful trance and now he was awakened. All boasting of his supposed rights and claims were gone. He had been full of pride, but now he was humbled and had given up all ideas of self-justification. He could only hope to be treated like a hired servant. And so, full of shame and remorse, he began his long journey home.

The Scripture begins describing the reunion with his father in verse 20: "His father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him." The prodigal son confessed, "Father, I have sinned." His father said to the servants, "Quickly bring out the best robe." The son said, "I am no longer worthy to be called your son." The father joyfully declared, "Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. And bring the fatted calf here and kill it, and let us eat and be merry." Each gift was a token of his father's love and forgiveness. The son was guilty. He knew he was guilty and deserved nothing but his father's retribution (v. 19). It was his guilt that heightened his awareness of his father's goodness and love.

When one realizes that he has sinned, the stakes go up dramatically. Sinning sounds much more serious than saying, "I have made a mistake, a poor choice, or I have an obsessive-compulsive disorder." Paul

wrote, "For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:7-8). One may conceivably be persuaded to die for a good man, that is, good in human terms. In God's estimate all are useless and have turned aside into rebellion. Paul also wrote, "There is none righteous, no, not one" and "There is none who does good, no, not one" (Romans 3:10, 12). Christ died for neither the righteous nor the good, but for the ungodly. His dying transcends all human instances of self-sacrifice for others. His dying is all the more wonderful and amazing in that it proves His love beyond what is common among men.

Sin matters. Grace and forgiveness can only be adequately experienced and understood when man's wickedness and sin is understood. The goodness and mercy of the prodigal son's father could not be understood apart from the son's rebellion and rejection of the father. It is a story of sin and grace. It is not just a story of a merciful and good father. It is also about a rebellious son. Peter wrote in his first epistle, "But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9).

The wonderful light can only be comprehended when one knows darkness. Therefore darkness is our only hope of knowing light. Sin is our only hope of knowing life-giving grace. Men will not know their need for grace and mercy apart from knowing their sin. The crucifixion, the crowning act of mankind's wickedness, was God the Father's crowning example of grace. It was sin's most infamous moment and grace's most supreme moment! In man's most wicked deed we see God's most gracious act.

Sin and grace are both magnified in the story of the woman who washed and anointed Jesus' feet:

“And behold, a woman in the city who was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at the table in the Pharisee’s house, brought an alabaster flask of fragrant oil, and stood at His feet behind Him weeping; and she began to wash His feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head; and she kissed His feet and anointed them with the fragrant oil” (Luke 7:37-38).

While some identify her as Mary Magdalene or Mary of Bethany, most agree that she was neither. Her name is not mentioned. The woman was distinguished only by the title of “a sinner.” However, she was not just a sinner in a superficial, everyday sense of the word, but a sinner in the blacker and filthier sense. She was a well-known sinner. She was a sinner marked and labeled because Simon immediately recognized her as one of the town’s many prostitutes (v. 39). Persons of decent character would not associate with her. Like a leper, she was cut off from society. However, she was the object of grace.

The story begins with the woman hearing that Jesus was at the house of Simon. Earlier in the chapter Jesus had been preaching to the people. Perhaps it was then, attracted by the crowds, she first heard the good news. As Christ spoke of the abounding mercy and willingness of God to accept as many as would come to Him, the tears ran down her cheeks. She became a new woman, desirous of better things, anxious to be freed from sin. She truly believed Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah who had come to earth to forgive sin. She rested on Him for the forgiveness of her sin. However, there was still the nagging question, could she, would she, truly be forgiven? She did have faith, however feeble, and desired an opportunity to pay Him homage and possibly receive a word of assurance and confirmation.

When she learned He had come to her town she thought, “Here is my opportunity.” And so, uninvited, she entered the house of Simon. When she came through the door, Jesus was reclining at the table (according to the

Oriental custom) and perhaps His feet were toward the door. She had noticed Simon had not paid Christ the ordinary courtesy of washing His feet. This broke her heart. With all sensitivity of her sinful past she began to wash His feet with her tears and then wiped them with her hair. Her beautiful hair, her chief adornment that attracted many men for sinful purposes, was the means of service to the Son of God.

She was as penitent as she had been a sinner. Love and grief was mingled together in her actions. First, she thought of her wicked life and then she would think of His grace and mercy. She kissed His feet. She took the alabaster vial filled with a costly perfume, which she had undoubtedly purchased to anoint herself and enhance her beauty, and poured it upon His blessed feet. She did not say a word. Her actions proclaimed her gratitude with a loud voice. Jesus defended and praised her to the self-righteous Pharisee. Jesus said to Simon, “her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little” (v. 47). Turning to the woman He said, “Your sins are forgiven” (v. 48). The Lord’s words sealed her pardon. From that day on she had full assurance of faith.

Grace gives attention to the most unlikely cases in order to show it to be grace. Grace finds a dwelling place in the most unworthy heart that its freeness might be better seen.

Grace removed brazenness from her face, flattery from her lips, and lustful desires from her heart. And though she had been recently awakened of her sinful state, she did not comprehend all the heinousness of her guilt. Jesus allowed her to wash His feet with her tears even though He knew of the shameful things her eyes had looked upon. Our Lord permitted her lips to kiss His feet even though He knew the foul and licentious words that had come from those lips. He knew her heart had been full of unhallowed and unchaste desires for He spoke of “her sins which are many” (v. 47). The Savior knew her best and yet He did not cast her

away. He did not move His feet. He did not rebuke her. He was delighted and refreshed by her sense of sin and grateful sense of forgiveness.

There can be no grace where there is no guilt. There can be no mercy where there is no sin. If man is not a sinner, then God cannot show mercy toward him. One must have sin or one cannot have grace. Leaving grace out of the story will ultimately lead to legalism, empty ritual, and men trying to earn what can never be earned. On the other hand, grace rings hollow, insignificant, and trivial without sin. The one cannot be understood or measured without the other.

The Apostle Paul said all men are “by nature children of wrath” (Ephesians 2:3). We are not born neutral. We are not evenly balanced with the possibility of going either way, good or bad. Man is evil. For example, David analyzed himself and was awakened to his wicked behavior (Psalm 51). He committed adultery with Bathsheba and murdered her husband to cover up his sin. How could David, a man after God’s own heart, do such a thing? What made him capable of such vile and horrendous actions? There was only one answer, as he wrote, “Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me” (v. 5). David refers to his conception and birth with the clear understanding that his very being is permeated with the tendencies that produced the fruits of adultery and murder.

## SLAVERY TO SIN

Something is terribly wrong with the world. The widespread and pervasive occurrence of human evil cries out for explanation. Oswald Chambers wrote:

“When we read the history of the race, our thoughts must fit into one of two fundamental categories: either we are wonderful beings in the making or we are wonderful ruins of what we once were. The latter is the view of the Bible.”<sup>5</sup>

Because the world is not self-explanatory, an explanation must be

sought from its Maker. Without His assurance and clarification the world appears to be full of absurdities and contradictions. The Creator says man is a sinner. The doctrine of Original Sin and its transmission has always been a Christian assessment of reality. Sin is why people do what they do. Everyday experience heightens its relevance. On one hand, we boast of the great progress that man has made. On the other, there is this tragic breakdown in personal relationships. It is one of society's major moral and social problems.

In spite of the fact that there are more institutions and organizations than ever giving instructions concerning things about which people were never instructed in the past, problems persist. For instance, there are available today countless books, classes, and seminars on marriage. Up until a few decades ago, men and women were married without this expert advice. Then, there is the collapse of the relationship between one group and another group resulting in industrial and economic problems. On even a higher level, there is the relationship between nation and nation. The threat of war is always present somewhere in the world. This is proof that there is something wrong with the world.

The inclination is to lose sight of the fact that we are sinful apart from our actions. Sin is not just separate acts of the will. Sin is in us. It is part of our very nature. Jesus said, "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies" (Matthew 15:19). The trouble is with man's heart. Paul said, "For I know that in me [i.e., in my flesh] nothing good dwells" (Romans 7:18). Man himself is corrupt. The Bible tells us repeatedly that sin is not just wrongdoing, it is wrong-being. When men look at sin psychologically, sin becomes defective development or disease. Sin is neither a disease nor is it something we catch in public. Though it is inherited, sin is not genetically transmitted like cystic fibrosis or Tay-Sachs disease. Sin is within man's nature and his nature is sinful. Man's intellect can never fill in the gaps; only God can provide. The

Bible speaks of man's sinful disposition or heart. It is the heart of man that the atonement addresses:

"Then I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within them, and take the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh" (Ezekiel 11:19).

"Cast away from you all the transgressions which you have committed, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit. For why should you die, O house of Israel?" (Ezekiel 18:31).

"I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh" (Ezekiel 36:26).

The trouble with modern statements concerning sin is that they make sin far too trivial. Sin is a mistake, an imperfection, an error, someone else's fault, broken neurotransmitters, or low serotonin. Committing sin is easy, while confessing it is difficult.

A man will sin without a tempter, but he will not acknowledge his guilt no matter how much he is begged. Although his sins stare him in the face he still pleads his innocence. He proudly lifts up his head, challenges his accuser, and rebuts responsibility. He argues had it not been for extenuating circumstances or providence itself, he would have not been compelled to sin.

Aaron, when confronted by Moses concerning the golden calf, acted as if his sin was an accident. Aaron said the people gave him their gold and "I cast it into the fire, and this calf came out" (Exodus 32:24). Saul ignored the instructions of Samuel the prophet and offered a burnt offering. Saul shifted the blame to Samuel, whom he accused of being late, and the people, whom he accused of getting restless. Saul said to Samuel, "Therefore I felt compelled, and offered a burnt offering" (1 Samuel 13:12).

Sin, culpability, and guilt are hard to determine in a world where people color and cloak their sin in all kinds of psychological language. A shoplifter has kleptomania. A child isn't

willfully selfish; he has Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD). An arsonist has pyromania.

Theologians over the centuries have spoken metaphorically of sin as an infection, infirmity, or disease. While the metaphor may be helpful and descriptive, it may also be very seductive. Losing sight of the metaphoric distance between sin and sickness is an imaginary reality in evangelicalism of our time. Disease may be very similar in some ways to sin and sin to disease, but they are not the same. The phenomenon of "slavery to sin" does, in fact, exist.

One may, as is the practice today, call slavery to sin a sickness, but there are reasons one should not do so. For example, the possibility to sin is often seen as being exciting and pleasurable; sickness is not. Men do not pursue multiple sclerosis or streptococcus the way they pursue adultery (James 1:14-15; 1 John 2:15-17; Titus 3:3; Hebrews 11:24-26; 1 Corinthians 10:6; Ephesians 2:3). People become infected with diseases not because they want them, but because of a bacteria or virus.

People in sin often seek ways to justify continuing in their conduct, however, no one tries to justify continuing a disease. Unlike disease, sin is something we can avoid and overcome (1 Corinthians 10:13; Philippians 4:13; James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:8-9; Ephesians 6:1-18). People involved in sinful behavior often encourage others to participate in the activity with them (Genesis 3:6). People don't encourage their friends to get cancer or arthritis. God punishes people for their sin. People are not punished for physical diseases which are beyond their control. The Bible teaches that an individual can choose to repent and put off his sinful behavior. No one has the ability to simply quit having influenza.

Slavery to sin is apparent in that, after sinning over time, people find their sin no longer pleasurable. Nevertheless, they may continue to sin. They have become habituated to the sinful behavior. They are "hooked" and find it difficult to quit. It is this

aspect of behavior that in some way makes it feel like a disease. The disease metaphor can be useful because it emphasizes the way one can feel controlled by something other than one's own will. However, the disease metaphor ignores the biblical teaching of man's bondage to sin, which is rooted in his relationship to Adam.

Sin entered the world through Adam (Romans 5:12-21). The disease metaphor also overlooks the fact that the bondage man experiences is intentional and willful. Sin's mastery over man is voluntary. The preference of sinners is to give themselves over to their desires. They choose slavery to sin. Sin is not part of DNA. Adam and Eve sinned in the garden and their DNA was perfect. Lucifer, an angel, was created as the "model of perfection," and he has, as far as we know, no DNA. Thus, while the Fall is the cause of all sickness in the flesh, sin is not embedded in man's DNA. Sin is the result of our capacity, being made in the image of God, to think in abstract terms and to exercise our fallen will over God's perfect instructions for living and behavior. A perfect example is addiction.

### ADDICTION: SIN OR SICKNESS?

Stanton Peele and Archie Brodsky, in *The Truth About Addiction and Recovery*, write:

"Every major tenet of the 'disease' view of addiction is refuted both by scientific research and by everyday observation. This is true even for alcoholism and drug addiction, let alone the many other behaviors that plainly have little to do with biology and medicine."<sup>6</sup>

The growth of addiction treatment, based on the idea that alcoholism and addictions of all kinds are diseases, has spread like a wildfire throughout America. All sorts of recovery and self-help programs such as Gamblers Anonymous, Emotions Anonymous, Overeaters Anonymous, Debtors Anonymous, Depressives Anonymous, Impotence Anonymous, Grief

Care, Women Who Love Too Much, and others have sprung up in churches of all denominations. Christian radio and television programming feature confessed work-, sex-, and shop- "aholics." Christian bookstores are filled with books on addiction and recovery. Most of these apply the well known 12-step model to a whole host of assorted behaviors.

Our descent into calling sin sickness has brought us to the absurdity of defining any activity, involvement, or sensation a person finds consuming as a disease. Even good and worthy behavior, such as loving others, can be categorized as a disease. For example, Susan Peabody in *Addiction to Love* tells how she became interested in the subject of obsessive behavior in relationships. Her interest grew when she read Robin Norwood's book, *Women Who Love Too Much*. Peabody said the book helped her recognize many of her own patterns of obsessive behavior (i.e., sin). Ready to make the appropriate changes in her life, she began to look for a "Women Who Love Too Much" support group. There was none in her area and so, using Norwood's book, she started her own meeting. Peabody wrote, "I became interested in teaching others about the 'disease' of 'loving too much.'"<sup>7</sup> Scripture warns us against the dangers of self-love, but never warns us of the harm of excessive love toward others.

The doctrine of sin is the place one must begin when trying to understand addictions. Sin is foundational to any consideration of human behavior. However, when every human problem is considered a disease or addiction, the suggestion that sin may be the trouble is often met with raised eyebrows and sharp criticism. To bring sin into the discussion, even among evangelicals, is considered negative, insensitive, and counterproductive.

In a culture where self-esteem is something "*we must have ... and when it is unattainable, everybody suffers*,"<sup>8</sup> talking about sin seems to be an attack on the psychological well-being of everyone. It is obvious to those who hold the disease-oriented perspective that those who question the

disease model are confused or simply poorly informed.

Although we may not like to be reminded of it, we were all born in sin and sinning is what we do best. We enjoy sinning. We sin more than we think. We sin even when we would rather not sin (Romans 7:18-19). It is difficult for some to concede, in a day so immersed in psychology, that personal sin is the root and cause of most of their problems.

Nevertheless, the reality that man sins and sin is the source of many of his problems is just stating a fact. To ignore the truth that there is something spiritually wrong with man, because it is believed it will harm his mental well-being or self-image, is to practice self-deception.

Today, Christians do not rely on Scripture to shape their view of addictions and other sinful behaviors. While they admit the Bible does speak negatively about drunkenness, the prototype of all addictions, they insist alcoholism as a disease was not known in Bible times, much like diabetes was not understood.

Years ago, people believed what today is called alcoholism was the result of the repeated sinful use of alcohol. Heavy drinking eventually led to addictive drinking. It was the same with drug users who eventually became addicts. Drunkards and addicts were therefore considered to be immoral and sinful. They were active agents, not passive, of their addictions. Today, the sin-model of addictions has been replaced by the sickness-model. Recent surveys have concluded approximately 80 percent of all Americans believe that alcoholism is a disease.

The core belief of the disease model of alcoholism is that alcoholics cannot control their drinking. They do not have the ability to drink moderately. Once they start drinking, they will inevitably drink until they become intoxicated. At the same time, alcoholism is seen as a progressive disease. This simply means it unalterably proceeds from its early stages to its ultimate true form. Stanton Peele, a psychologist, health-care researcher,

and leading figure in the addiction field and Archie Brodsky, senior research associate at Harvard Medical School wrote:

“At first, it seems hard to understand what is meant by saying that something a person regularly does (such as drinking alcohol) is a disease. Habitual, voluntary behavior of this sort does not resemble what we normally think of as a disease, like cancer or diabetes. What is more, A.A. — and even hospital programs for alcoholism — don’t actually treat any biological causes of alcoholism.”<sup>9</sup>

Peele and Brodsky go on to say that after decades of claiming to have discovered a biological connection to alcoholism, there is not one usable treatment. Hospitals for the past 50 years have been using the same old techniques — discussion groups and exhortations — that they have always used. They continued:

“Nor is any biological method used to determine whether someone is an alcoholic other than by assessing how much that person drinks and the consequences of this drinking. And if we have no special biological information about treating or identifying alcoholism, we surely know nothing about the biological causes of ‘diseases’ such as compulsive gambling, shopping, and loving, which have nothing to do with drugs or alcohol.”<sup>10</sup>

Peele and Brodsky continue by saying that when these ideas and theories concerning alcoholism are examined, they seem contrary to common sense. The disease concept takes a set of precepts invented by a small group of severe, long-term drinkers back in the 1930s, and applies them in an inappropriate way to people with a wide range of drinking and other problems.

The fact remains that there is no identifiable biological or genetic mechanism to account for addictive behavior. However, if a gene were found to be the source of addiction to alcohol, would the same gene cause other addictions such as drugs, smok-

ing, compulsive gambling, and over-eating? If so, everyone with these addictions would be genetically altered. An individual without an addiction would be the notable exception. Peele and Brodsky continue:

“How could an addiction like smoking be genetic? Why are some types of people more likely to smoke than others (about half of waitresses and car salesmen smoke, compared with about a tenth of lawyers and doctors)? And does believing that an addiction like smoking is genetic help the person quit (are all those smokers who quit not ‘genetically’ addicted)? Returning to alcohol, are people really predestined biologically to become alcoholics and thus to become A.A. members? Think about the rock group Aerosmith: all five members of this group now belong to A.A., just as they once all drank and took drugs together. How unlikely a coincidence it is that five unrelated people with the alcoholic/addictive inheritance should run into one another and form a band! ... The question is: ‘If addiction isn’t a disease, then what is it?’ An addiction is a habitual response and a source of gratification or security. It is a way of coping with internal feelings and external pressures.”<sup>11</sup>

The “hook,” Peele and Brodsky go on to say, is that the behavior gives people a gratifying sensation they are not able to get any other way. The sensation is the payoff that keeps people coming back. It helps them forget their pain and discomfort. It distracts them from the overwhelming problems and difficulties of life and helps them to feel better.

The Bible has much to say about drunkenness. Drunkenness is never referred to as a sickness, but always as sin. For example, Noah planted a vineyard, drank of the wine, and became drunk (Genesis 9:18-23). The consequence of his sin was shame. In his drunken state he did not cover himself, but lay naked exposing himself to his sons. Lot became drunk and committed incest with his daugh-

ters (Genesis 19:30-38). Men do things when they are intoxicated that, had they been sober, would sicken and disgust them. The sinfulness of drunkenness is clear in Paul’s words to the Church when he wrote:

“But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a *drunkard*, or an extortioner; not even to eat with such a person” (1 Corinthians 5:11, emphasis added).

Paul continued:

“Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor *drunkards*, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Corinthians 6:9-10, emphasis added).

And:

“Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, *drunkenness*, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God” (Galatians 5:19-21, emphasis added).

Solomon describes the irresistible appeal, cravings, irrationality, and awful consequences of heavy drinking:

“Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has contentions? Who has complaints? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? Those who linger long at the wine, Those who go in search of mixed wine. Do not look on the wine when it is red, When it sparkles in the cup, When it swirls around smoothly; At the last it bites like a serpent,

And stings like a viper. Your eyes will see strange things, And your heart will utter perverse things. Yes, you will be like one who lies down in the midst of the sea, Or like one who lies at the top of the mast, saying: 'They have struck me, but I was not hurt; They have beaten me, but I did not feel it. When shall I awake, that I may seek another drink?'" (Proverbs 23:29-35).

Paul emphasized the choice one makes when he wrote, "I will not be mastered by anything" (1 Corinthians 6:12, NAS, emphasis added). Paul's emphasis is on the will. The continual willful use is what would finally bring a person under the power, so to speak, of a substance. Drunkenness is a lordship problem. It is a worship problem. It is a heart problem. Will God be your Master or will your desires rule over you? It boils down to the ancient command, "You shall have no other gods before Me" (Exodus 20:3). Addiction of any kind is the result of a person's willful, sinful behavior.

A virus or bacteria, which people do not want to have, is very different from addiction. Addictions are a form of self-worship and are pursued by a person because they desire it (James 1:14-15). A drunkard drinks because of the benefit he receives from drinking. There is always a payoff. A person drinks for social reasons. His friends drink so he wants to be accepted by them and so he drinks. He drinks in order to forget his problems. Drinking temporarily alleviates the pain of a difficult situation or traumatic event. The desire to forget one's troubles or loneliness may be the reason for drinking. Pleasure is oftentimes the reason people drink. Others drink to relax. There is always a perceived reward. There is always a purpose to drinking. Self, not God and neighbor, is always the focus.

This does not mean that there is not a feeling of having been overcome by something outside of oneself. Addictions are mistaken for real diseases because there are certain similarities. A loss of control is a feeling one has

when he has a disease. One feels powerless to invading bacteria. The problem lies when people stop using the word figuratively and begin using it literally. They substitute the words "addiction is like a disease" for "addiction is a disease."

### THE PROBLEM IS IDOLATRY

The subject of idolatry is a prominent topic throughout the Bible. The first two commandments address it:

"You shall have no other gods before Me" (Exodus 20:3).

"You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God" (Exodus 20:4-5).

The declaration was against having gods other than Yahweh. Idolatry was not just a temporary or momentary danger to the Israelites, or something they would overcome. Idolatry was a constant temptation and perpetual threat. It was a tendency they would never outgrow. The Old Testament books of Judges and Kings chronicle the repeated falling away of Israel into idolatry. Again and again we read of "high places" and "false gods." Again and again we read of captivities and chastisements on account of idolatry. In the New Testament, we read of the Apostles' expectations of the rise of idolatry in the Church:

"But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; not even to eat with such a person" (1 Corinthians 5:11).

"And do not become idolaters as were some of them" (1 Corinthians 10:7).

"Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry" (1 Corinthians 10:14).

"Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry" (Colossians 3:5).

"Little children, keep yourselves from idols" (1 John 5:21).

The vulnerability toward idolatry lies deep in the human nature. Idolatry is natural and easily runs downhill. Worship of God runs against the grain of man's sinful nature and runs uphill. No man is safe from the dangers of idolatry. It is not an old-fashioned sin into which we will never likely fall. Those whom God has brought to Himself need to be reminded over and over again that He is master. Jesus has put it as plain as it can be put, "No man can serve two masters." To depend on something other than God is a peril into which we are all liable to come. Pride makes a god of self. Covetousness makes a god of money. Sensuality makes a god out of the body. Whatever is esteemed, loved, feared, served, delighted in, and depended upon more than God, is made a god.

Idolatry best illustrates both the in-control and out-of-control experience of addiction. It is outside the boundaries of God, in turning to idols, that the individual seeks to find happiness, peace, and contentment. Manipulating the idol for one's own benefit is the purpose of all idolatry. Idolaters do not want to be ruled by their idols. The idol is a means to an end. For example, the Bible says the prophets of Baal "leaped about the altar which they had made" and "they cried aloud, and cut themselves" in order to manipulate Baal to do their will (1 Kings 18:26, 28). Biblical counselor Elyse Fitzpatrick wrote:

"An integral part of false worship is learning how to get false gods to give us what we want. In essence, we make covenants with them, expecting them to bless us if we act in certain ways. ... It wasn't idolatrous for Rachel to desire children [Genesis 31]. No, she was idolatrous because her

desire for children was the foremost desire in her heart. 'Give me children, or else I die!' is the cry of an idolater."<sup>12</sup>

It is not the goal of modern idolaters to be ruled by alcohol, drugs, love, people, food, sex, gambling, or work. The goal of the idolater is to get what he wants. His desire is for the substance or activity to give him good feelings, a sense of power, to forget his troubles or his past. Whatever his heart is craving is the purpose of the idol. Consequently, idolatry always has been rooted in the heart. Ezekiel wrote, "Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their hearts, and put before them that which causes them to stumble into iniquity" (Ezekiel 14:3). Idolatry is a heart issue. From Adam and Eve's lust to be like God and eat that which was forbidden, to the inordinate craving and lust for love, food, sex, or alcohol, mankind is guilty of idolatry.

When God created man, He gave him certain desires and needs which, when kept in an appropriate context, would give him pleasure and joy. However, it is Satan's goal to exploit natural wants and desires so that the physical desires rule. Satan reverses God's order. Instead of people controlling their desires, their desires become idols that control them. They become habituated, enslaved, and cannot say "no."

### DESIRES OF THE HEART BECOME HABITS OF BEHAVIOR

"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is

in you is darkness, how great is that darkness! No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon" (Matthew 6:19-24).

One of the mistakes people make in interpreting the above passage is they think Jesus is exclusively referring to money (mammon). We must avoid interpreting this only with respect to money. "Treasures" is a very large and all-inclusive term. It includes not only money, but also the things money can buy. However, Jesus is not so much concerned about possessions *per se* as He is concerned about one's attitude toward possessions, food, sex, etc. His warning is against worldly-mindedness; against getting satisfaction in this life from things that belong only to this world. We are all guilty of it, oftentimes without realizing it. Worldliness is so subtle it can infect even the most holy thing in life. Everyone has treasures or idols in some shape or form. Therefore, the command "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth" is aimed at poor people as well as the rich.

Our Lord gives a very common sense argument against laying up treasures on earth. Treasures on earth do not last. Jesus also said, "where moth and rust destroy." There is an element of decay in earthly treasures. There is always something wrong with the things of this world. Idols never fully satisfy us. There is a tendency to get tired of these things. Although a man may appear to have everything he could desire, he still wants something more. That desire is why we are often talking about and seeking new things.

Jesus continued, "where thieves break in and steal." There are many thieves in this life that threaten and make us feel unsafe. Illness can steal health. A business loss can take life's savings. Corporations collapse and leave many without jobs. Finally, death comes to steal life itself.

Worldliness has an effect on man's entire personality. Jesus said, "For

where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." The heart is the first thing He mentions. Earthly things have an awful hold and power upon us. They grip our feelings, affections, and all our sensibility. We love them. John wrote, "And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil" (John 3:19). We are absolutely gripped by these treasures.

Worldliness not only grips our heart, but it controls our thoughts. Our Lord said, "If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!" (Matthew 6:22-23).

Jesus uses the eye to illustrate the two ways we look at things in the world. First, the "good eye" sees things as they truly are. The good eye has single vision as opposed to double vision that distorts reality. Second, is the "bad eye." The bad eye is characterized by blurry and double vision. The bad eye is tinted by certain prejudices, lusts, and desires. Most people's thinking is based on these earthly treasures. Many of the beliefs and ideologies people hold are controlled entirely by prejudices, desires, and not by clear or pure thinking.

Finally, treasures affect man's will. Jesus said, "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon" (Matthew 6:24). As soon as one mentions the word "serve," one is talking about the will; man's actions. Our behavior is logically preceded by our thinking. In other words, the exercise of will is determined by thinking. Thinking is determined by the heart. Therefore, earthly treasures have a very powerful influence upon the whole man. Treasures seize hold of the heart, mind, and will. Ultimately, they affect and determine our relationship with God. Matt-

hew states an obvious truth. Worldly things make a totalitarian and tyrannical demand on our lives. They command all of our love. It is *either or*; there is no compromise. They want all our devotion. They expect us to live exclusively for them, but so does God.

Jesus warns us about these things to spare us the horrific effects of sin. Sin has had an alarming and disconcerting effect upon man. Man's terrible predicament is that he is no longer governed by his highest faculties (pre-Fall), but by something else. He is controlled by something secondary, inferior, and substandard to how God created him. He is controlled by his desires, his affections, and his lusts. That is the effect of sin.

Sin blinds mankind in certain vital respects. Sin blinds the mind of man to things which are perfectly obvious. For example, take the teaching concerning worldly treasures. It is obvious that treasures on earth never last. Everything is running down and wearing out. A woman may glory in her beauty, but beauty fades. A man may take great pride in his wealth, but there is always the danger of losing it. Everyone will die.

These are obvious facts every person needs to face. However, the simple truth is people tend to live with the opposite assumption. Most are not conscious of these truths.

The terrible and tragic thing about sin is its ability to enslave. Things that God has given mankind to enjoy, worldly things, tend to become our god. Our hearts become enthralled and captivated by God-given appetites such as hunger, thirst, and sex. We end up serving the very things God meant to serve us.

Our failure to recognize these things is the trouble with the world today in calling sin sickness. One can be mastered, bound, or enslaved to any sinful behavior, attitude, or thought. Scripture constantly warns us of the danger of becoming habituated to sin of all kinds:

“Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away

with, that we should no longer be *slaves* of sin” (Romans 6:6, emphasis added).

“Therefore do not let sin *reign* in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. And do not *present* your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, ... For sin shall not have *dominion* over you” (Romans 6:12-14, emphasis added).

“For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, *servicing* various lusts and pleasures, *living* in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another” (Titus 3:3, emphasis added).

“For everyone who partakes only of milk is *not accustomed* to the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food is for the mature, who because of *practice* have their senses *trained* to discern good and evil” (Hebrews 5:13-14, NAS, emphasis added).

“Not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the *habit* of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more, as you see the day drawing near” (Hebrews 10:25, NAS, emphasis added).

“Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily *ensnares* us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us” (Hebrews 12:1, emphasis added).

God made man with the capacity to formulate habits. If man did not have this ability he would have to think about *everything* he does or says. Every action would have to be thought out and performed in a methodical, meticulous, and laborious way. The ability to create habits allows people to carry out complicated tasks comfortably and automatically. Habit allows a person to write a letter to a friend without having to relearn how to write the letters of the alphabet. Habit allows people to walk, talk, and do thousands of different things and combinations of

things without thinking about every detail.

Over time, and by practice, people become habituated to tasks, behaviors, and attitudes. For example, greed is a learned behavior. Peter wrote, “Having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin, enticing unstable souls. They have a heart *trained* in covetous practices, and are accursed children” (2 Peter 2:14, emphasis added). Some people are never satisfied or content. Paul was one of those people, but he said he learned how to be content. He wrote, “Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have *learned* in whatever state I am, to be content” (Philippians 4:11, emphasis added). People who have sinful habits can change. Jeremiah wrote, “You also do good who are *accustomed* to do evil” (Jeremiah 13:23, emphasis added). Paul wrote to Titus concerning believers who had been enslaved or habituated to sinful practices, but had changed. He said, “For we ourselves *were* also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, *servicing* various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another” (Titus 3:3, emphasis added).

When Paul wrote to the Corinthian believers, he reminded some of them about their past sinful practices, which they had successfully put off. He wrote:

“Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

While habits can make life easier and more comfortable, they also can be a curse. Sinful habits are the source of many of people's problems. People become habituated to sinful behaviors and attitudes. Sanctification involves

helping believers put off sinful habits and put on the biblical alternative habits. It is putting off the deeds of the flesh and putting on the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5). Habits are learned ways of living, and therefore can be unlearned and replaced.

The gradual descent into idolatry begins somewhat innocently until eventually the idol serves more and more purposes in a person's life. It takes a focal point or center stage and becomes the axis of everyday living. The tendency of our psychologized culture is to talk about the uncontrollable characteristic of "addiction." They reason about the external thing controlling them. The Bible brings in the crucial element of the heart. The heart controls man. Man is responsible. We desire and pursue the behavior or substance. The tantalizing call to sin is rooted in the heart and as it is practiced over a period of time becomes a habit. That is the fundamental nature of sin. All people sin, all people sin differently, all people sin habitually.

What psychology calls addictive behavior, the Bible calls habitual sin. The addict is said to be sick and his disease is theorized to have a biological or genetic cause. In the sin-model the heart is the center of behavior. The heart, which is biased against God and for self, is the source of the problem. It is not an outside force that has invaded one's body; it is one's own desire. The problem is not God or the circumstances; it is the individual himself. Lust, not biology or genetics, is the principal problem.

James demonstrates the progression from temptation to sin and how this leads to habitual behavior, writing:

"But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death" (James 1:14-15).

The process of sin begins with an event that stirs a desire within a person. By allowing the situation to stir an inner desire, the individual

creates the temptation. Thus, God does not tempt. James said "each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his *own* desires and enticed" (James 1:14, emphasis added). At this point the temptation can be cut short by changing one's behavior (Philippians 4:8). For example, if the temptation is a beautiful woman at the mall, a man may turn and begin talking to his wife. He may walk to a different area of the store where the woman is no longer visible. The emphasis is on changing thoughts by changing behavior. If he does not change his behavior and allows himself to contemplate carrying out the sin, it will lead to adultery in the heart.

Again James wrote, "Then, when desire has *conceived*" (v. 15, emphasis added). James uses the analogy of a woman giving birth to show how temptation evolves into outward sin. Conception, or sin of the heart, occurs on the inside. This stage can be cut short by repenting of the inner sin (sin in the heart) and changing behavior. However, if one allows oneself to continue, it will lead to an outward act of sin. James wrote "it gives birth to sin" (v. 15). Thus, sin has manifested itself in an outward action.

The inner consideration of an improper desire will lead, in time, to the conception and birth of an outward act of sin. Left unchecked, an outer act of sin will become a continuous practice of a person's life.<sup>13</sup> Paul warns, "Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts" (Romans 6:12). Paul said he had to "discipline [his] body and bring it into subjection" as opposed to being a slave to the desires of his body (1 Corinthians 9:27).

### SIN IS OUR ONLY HOPE

To abandon the recognition of sin is to abandon hope. Sin is the hinge on which hope turns. Modern statements regarding sin will prove how often we are more sympathetic with psychological explanations than biblical ones. To deviate, even the smallest amount, from the truth about sin will lead to wrong thinking and a loss of hope. Once settled regarding the

doctrine of sin, good reasoning and hope follow.

One would think calling sin sickness is so contrary to Scripture that evangelicals everywhere would rise up and expose the error. Unfortunately, the disease-model has squeezed out the sin-model not only in the minds of unbelievers, but believers. The consequence has had a devastating effect on evangelism and sanctification. Both Christians and non-Christians with problems of living, who seek help from the Church or a Christian agency, are likely to be told their problem is a psychological disorder or illness. They will be referred to a psychiatrist or psychologist and/or will be encouraged to attend a Church-based recovery program that is touted to be "Christ-centered." The person is, or is well on his way to becoming a patient in much the same way as if he had pneumonia or a broken leg.

The sickness-model of behavior has a defeating and disheartening effect in people's lives. Many people fail to understand when a psychiatrist or psychologist makes what is believed to be a medical diagnosis, it is in reality only the identification of observable behavior or experience. Consider, for example, how diseases are diagnosed as compared with how psychological problems are diagnosed. A patient complains of certain symptoms. His physician suspects a particular disease. However, before the doctor gives a definitive diagnosis, he performs several objective tests (x-ray, blood test, MRI, etc.). The tests will confirm or repudiate his suspicions. The physician does not make a diagnosis based solely on his patient's symptoms or complaint, but on verifiable evidence concerning both the cause and nature of the problem.

Contrary to what many people believe, this is not how psychological problems are diagnosed. A psychologist assumes because a person has certain feelings, thoughts, or behaviors over a prescribed period of time, he has a psychological problem. This is assumed even though the cause has not been proven, nor can it be, by scientific methods. The problem lies

in the foundations of psychological theories. These foundations are simply not amenable to scientific examination. Nevertheless, the decision is uncritically accepted. The diagnosis may sound plausible, but it never moves beyond the subjective into the realm of objective truth.

This is true, generally speaking, of the historical psychologies, as well as biological psychiatry which dominates counseling today. Biological psychiatrists seek to explain life through an interpretation that excludes God, sin, Christ, and sanctification. In turn, people begin to think the primary solution to their problem is not spiritual, but physical or materialistic in nature. The biopsychiatrist says, when it comes to responsibility for actions, *you* are not really you. You are just a body and a body part has malfunctioned. You can be fixed from the *outside* by a drug. The psychologist attributes your unpleasant emotions and bad behavior to a painful past, low self-esteem, or an empty love tank. The solution to your problem is "talking treatment."

A notorious component of sin is the loss of man's sense of responsibility. Adam and Eve ran, hid, covered up, and shifted the blame. Adam said, "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate." Eve said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate" (Genesis 3:12, 13).

Psychology destroys a person's capacity to know and feel he has sinned. It figuratively and literally drugs man to where he feels no guilt or responsibility. It numbs the conscience, dulling the voice of the Holy Spirit in the life of a Christian. It feeds our natural bias toward self-exaltation. It makes us feel we are sick when we are perfectly well. And by the ingenious trickery of our own heart, we boast that our blindness is true sight and *we are ourselves* absolutely fit to meet our moral and spiritual needs. The reasoning is, because man understands man, go to man for the solution. All this is accomplished by Satan's old but proven scheme of usurping God's

truth and promising to man god-likeness and superior knowledge. However, only in the confession, "I have sinned," can hope be found:

"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. *If we confess our sins*, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us" (1 John 1:8-10, emphasis added).

"God is light and in Him is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5), and consequently God cannot have fellowship with darkness. The nature of light is to illuminate and to make things known. God is light and therefore, all things are known by Him. God is light and therefore He is truth. God cannot speak falsehood. For his own purpose, man devises and concocts things that are not true. God creates irrefutable facts. We see things as they *appear* to be. God, who is light, sees things *as they exist*. God never misrepresents. Light illuminates what *is*. Man is always rushing around with his paint and glitter trying to make things appear to be equal to the precious and valued. Man works hard to make the imitation look like the real thing. All this is contrary to the way of the Lord.

The natural tendency of the sinful heart is to try to be what it is not. The love of praise compels us to pretend we are better than we are. Fear of condemnation and reproof is an equally powerful means of producing hypocrisy. We must, by all means, strive against psychological thinking that tells us we have not sinned when God clearly tells us we have. To say rebelliousness, drunkenness, lying, stealing, fornication, etc., is not sin when God clearly calls it such, is a fearful delusion that must be put off. Pretending the deeds of the flesh (Galatians 5:19-21) are diseases makes God a liar. To attempt to defend these ideas is abominable. To embrace them, by implication or innuendo, is contemptuous. To cling to such a lie is to call light darkness and darkness

light. One may say he has fellowship with God, but the facts do not correspond to the words.

Realizing something is wrong is the first step toward setting it right again. Jesus said the prodigal son "came to himself." It was the turning point in his relationship with his father. Had he never realized his true condition, he would have remained a prodigal. His life would have been a warning to all, instead of encouragement and instruction. His confession, "Father, I have sinned" led to a precious reception described by Luke, "And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and *ran* and fell on his neck and kissed him" (Luke 15:20, emphasis added). Under a burden of shame, the prodigal son came slowly and fearfully toward his father's house. By contrast, when his father saw him, he ran to meet him, and while others loathed to touch him for he had just come from feeding swine, the compassion of a loving father greets him with arms of mercy and overwhelms him with affection.

The parable teaches us that true penitents are dear to God and welcomed by the Lord Jesus Christ. However, there is no such reception when one has been deceived and is convinced he is sick when he is sinful. Where there is no sensibility toward sin, there is no repentance of it and no forgiveness granted. There is no help for those who admit no need for help. Our Lord's words to the Pharisees who murmured against Him were fitting and in perfect order. Jesus said, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick" (Matthew 9:12).

Those who are not sick do not need a physician. A legitimate physician does not prescribe medication for, nor does a surgeon perform surgery on, a person who is perfectly well. To go to the doctor's office to tell him you are perfectly fine and you have never felt better in your life is silly. In the same way, it is silly to think one would repent if he is physically sick while being morally fit. If one's bad behav-

ior is a disease, he will not go to Christ for cleansing. If, on the other hand, one decides to call sin sin, he has made a major shift in his perception of reality. He has acknowledged, like the prodigal son, that something is wrong with himself. The confession requires responsibility on one's part. Had the son shifted blame to his circumstances or attributed his anxiety to a condition other than sin, he would have spiraled deeper and deeper, as do so many nowadays, into depression and despair. Repentance and being absolved of his sin reversed the spiral of gloom and despondency.

A physician should be where there are sick people who need his service. It was obvious the Pharisees felt themselves morally whole, as do those who attribute their sinful behavior to illness. People who call sin a disease and treat it as such with talk therapy and/or medication become mired in an endless cycle of more talking and more chemical manipulation of feelings and thoughts. There is no hope; there is no cure. In his book, *Diseasing of America*, Stanton Peele wrote:

"People's belief that they have a disease makes it less likely that

they will outgrow the problem. For this reason, disease approaches are most inappropriate and dangerous for the young. Treatment programs for chemical dependence stress to young substance abusers that they will always have a drug-taking or drinking problem. This almost guarantees that relapses will be frequent, when under ordinary conditions the vast majority would outgrow their youthful excesses. Treatment thus serves mainly as an impediment to the normal process of 'maturing out' of addiction."<sup>14</sup>

We must recognize sin as our only hope. When sickness is substituted for sin, the emphasis is on diagnosing instead of judgment or rebuke. Treatment is the focus instead of repentance, forgiveness, and biblical change. To cherish the illusion that sin is sickness is to forfeit forgiveness and restoration of fellowship with God. For the Christian, sanctification is thwarted; for the unbeliever eternal damnation is assured.

#### Endnotes:

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 6. Stanton Peele and Archie Brodsky, *The Truth About Addiction and Recovery*. New York: Simon & Schuster (A Fireside Book), 1991, pg. 26.  
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 12. Elyse Fitzpatrick, *Idols of the Heart*. Phillipsburg, Pa.: P&R Publishing, 2001, pp. 24, 25.  
 13. For a detailed exposition of James 1:13-15 on the stages of temptation read Jay Adams' excellent book, *A Thirst for Wholeness, How to gain wisdom from the Book of James*, (Woodruff, S.C.: Timeless Texts, 1988).  
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## THE FRUIT OF THE ROOT

(continued from page 1)

on extrabiblical and/or anti-biblical belief systems.

### CAN A LEOPARD CHANGE ITS SPOTS?

It should also be observed that at times religious movements founded on various aberrations seem to make determined efforts to change, to deny their history, or at least de-emphasize portions of it. Such efforts often may be merely cosmetic or public-image driven, but they are nonetheless evident. Examples are plentiful.

For instance, to cite an extreme case, multitudes of Muslims and their willing apologists claim that Islam is a "religion of peace." They try to convince the public that Al-Qaeda terror-

ists and Palestinian suicide bombers come only from marginal, misguided sects that have perverted the true teachings of Mohammed, and to portray non-violent Muslims as his rightful spiritual heirs. They make every effort to convince the world that Allah is the one true God, and that he is synonymous with the God of the Bible.

How often it is heard, "We all worship the same God, we just call Him by different names." While it is evident that not all Muslims are radical terrorists, the truth is that Mohammed was a product of his times, his culture, and his demonic delusions, and that he achieved many of his goals by violent means. That which is widely known of how he confronted opposition and dealt with "infidels" (i.e., those who resisted his

religion) justifies the inference that if he had possessed high-tech equipment and weapons of mass destruction, he would have used them in much the same way as do modern Islamic terrorists. There is no good reason to believe that he would not have followed the instructions he placed in Surah 4:91:

"You will find others who desire that they should be safe from you and secure from their own people; as often as they are sent back to the mischief they get thrown into it headlong; therefore if they do not withdraw from you, and do not offer you peace and restrain their hands, then seize them and kill them wherever you find them; and against these we have given you a clear authority."

It was this and other teachings found in the Koran that was the basis for the fatwa issued in 1998 by the "Islamic Front for Jihad Against Jews and Crusaders" (their name for Christians), of which Al-Qaeda is a part:

"To kill Americans and their allies, both civil and military, is an individual duty of every Muslim who is able, in any country where this is possible."

Osama bin Laden and other extremists are following the example set by Mohammed in his establishment of their religion. They are simply manifesting the *fruit of the root*.

In an entirely different vein, one of the most remarkable developments in the history of modern cults has been the array of doctrinal changes that occurred during the decade of the 1990s in Herbert W. Armstrong's Worldwide Church of God. Regardless of one's views about the validity of the transformation,<sup>1</sup> it is undeniable that sweeping changes took place — so sweeping that a *Christianity Today* article claimed, "Never before in the history of Christianity has there been such a complete move to orthodox Christianity by an unorthodox fringe church."<sup>2</sup>

But it must not be forgotten that close to one-half of the WCG membership withdrew in the '90s, many of that number aligning with the various offshoots that arose: the United Church of God, the Church of God International, God's Church Worldwide, the Church of God (Pasadena), the Philadelphia Church, the Living Church of God, and others. Regardless of where the parent body lands, tens of thousands in these newer cults are still bound in Armstrong's strange amalgam of doctrines drawn from Mormonism, Jehovah's Witnesses, Seventh-day Adventism, British Israelism, and his own fertile imagination, with the imposition of Old Testament regulations, denial of the Trinity, belief in conditional immortality, and the frustration of works-centered salvation. Thousands of Armstrongites continue to reap the *fruit of the root*.

Or, consider the Seventh-day Adventists and their efforts to gain the recognition of evangelical bodies. Their emphases on health, nutrition, weight-loss, benevolence, and personal responsibility are impressive. Yet, they cannot escape their indebtedness to Ellen G. White. Nor are they willing to break away from her erroneous writings, many of which have been shown to have been plagiarized. They claim to believe in the full authority and sufficiency of the Scriptures, but in practice they give equal allegiance to White's books and letters. They ascribe to her the role of Prophetess and use the term "Spirit of Prophecy" as a synonym for her writings. And, they do so while assiduously avoiding public discussion of many of her stranger pronouncements. While they claim to believe in salvation by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus, they remain bound by the implications of her teachings of works salvation and requirements to observe Old Testament law. They are reaping the *fruit of the root*.

#### THE PROGENY OF JOSEPH

These and other possible examples notwithstanding, there *is no* religious body that has more difficulty in dealing with its roots than the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and its various offshoots. Almost from the beginning, even while Joseph Smith, Jr. was still alive, and much more so after his death, they began disputing and backtracking on key doctrines, leading to the formation of a succession of Mormon splinter groups.

Former First Counselor to Smith, Sidney Rigdon, when rebuffed in his efforts to succeed the former "money digger," "scryer," "peep stone gazer"<sup>3</sup> turned "prophet," formed a "Church of Christ," and later the Church of Jesus Christ of the Children of Zion in Pennsylvania, neither of which is extant. Another close follower of Smith, James J. Strang, claimed to have a letter from Smith naming Strang as his successor. When he could not derail the ascendancy of Brigham Young, Strang led his followers, including many of Joseph

Smith's family members, in forming a rival Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Strangites), and proceeded to excommunicate Young and the members of the Mormon First Presidency. Strang was assassinated in Michigan in 1856, but a small group of Strangites today has a church headquarters in Wisconsin.

For two decades after Smith's assassination in 1844, other Young-rejecters formed splinters headed by Lyman Wight, Alpheus Cutler, William Smith, Aaron Smith, and David Whitmer. In 1860, Joseph Smith's widow, Emma, and son, Joseph III, left the Strangites to lead in the formation of The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (now known as the Community of Christ). Three years later, several other small groups combined to form The Church of Christ (referred to as Temple Lot), naming Granville Hedrick as their leader. These latter two groups still exist and both are headquartered in Independence, Mo. They both claim ownership of the place specified by Joseph Smith, Jr. as the site of the temple to which Christ will return to establish his millennial kingdom (Temple Lot has actual possession).<sup>4</sup>

These latter two groups were different from most of the splinter groups in one respect: They did not accept or promote polygamy. Other than that, all of the various Mormon groups were simply fighting for the right to name the successor to their founder and "prophet," and to have the authority to preside over heresy.<sup>5</sup>

In the first 68 years of the LDS, there were four presidents: Joseph Smith, Jr. (1830-1844); Brigham Young (1847-1877); John Taylor (1880-1887); and Wilford Woodruff (1889-1898).

The relatively long periods between the death of a president and the elevation of his successor no doubt were related to the infighting that was commonplace in the movement, and this in turn spawned the withdrawals of various groups who gave their allegiance to the losing candidates. But for over a century now, the procedures have been so fine-tuned that only on one occasion has it taken

more than one week for the new president to be installed. That was in 1995 when it took nine days for Gordon B. Hinckley to move officially from the position of First Counselor to replace deceased President Howard Hunter. Hunter had served for only nine months, which apparently slowed the succession machinery.<sup>6</sup>

But for the most part in the 20th century there were no extended power-vacuum that invited the machinations of interlopers. However, pull-outs by groups of dissidents did occur regularly — so regularly that today there are more than 100 Mormon sects — and almost as many splinter sects that no longer exist<sup>7</sup> — almost all claiming to be the restored one and only true church. The largest of these is the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, or, United Effort Plan (UEP), based in Colorado City, Utah (actually straddling the Utah-Arizona border). The current president of the FLDS is Warren Jeffs. Utah State authorities have offered a \$10,000 reward for information leading to his arrest on felony sex charges involving a minor.<sup>8</sup> He is also under indictment in Arizona.<sup>9</sup> Most of these breakaway groups continue to hold to some or all of several practices from the early years of Mormonism which have been abandoned, or at least publicly disavowed by the Salt Lake City hierarchy.

Of course, polygamy — “The Principle” — was one of these. Joseph Smith, Jr. taught it and practiced it surreptitiously. Brigham Young taught it and practiced it blatantly. John Taylor, the third president of the LDS, defiantly swore that it would never end. Wilford Woodruff, the fourth president, publicly acquiesced to governmental pressure, while the First Presidency privately advised the “saints” to continue to practice it discreetly. Only in more recent days has the practice been forsaken by mainline Mormonism. But the fundamentalist groups continue to promote it and doctrines related to it.

## CONTINUING DIRECT REVELATION

One of the first of Joseph Smith’s

teachings to be forsaken by his church was his original teaching that all Mormons should seek direct impressions from the Lord. Biblically oriented Christians believe in the infallibility, reliability, and sufficiency of God’s Word, the Bible. But for Mormonism to exist, there had to be authoritative extra-biblical revelation. While that was acceptable for Smith, he soon realized that if everyone were free to fantasize as he had done, he would quickly lose control. Thus he announced in 1830, the year of the formation of his church, that God had given him a new revelation: only Joseph Smith, Jr. was authorized to receive God’s revelations. Since those days the president of the church has held the titles of “President, Prophet, Seer, and Revelator.”

Almost every instance of a new Mormon sect emerging has originated with some disaffected group going back to their roots, with some new prophet getting a later word from the Lord. Many times this prophet will also claim to be the fulfillment of Section 85 of *Doctrine and Covenants* (the second of Mormonism’s “triple combination” of “inspired” works, along with *The Book of Mormon* and *The Pearl of Great Price*), which included the prophecy:

“Yea, thus saith the still small voice, which whispereth through and pierceth all things, and often times it maketh my bones to quake while it maketh manifest, saying: And it shall come to pass that I, the Lord God, will send *one mighty and strong* [who would have power] ... to set in order the house of God” (vv. 6-7, emphasis added).

It is frightening to consider what evil may fester forth from wicked, deranged individuals who believe they are the “one mighty and strong” and that they are receiving instructions directly from God.

One example was seen on March 12, 2003, when Brian David Mitchell was arrested and charged with the kidnapping and rape of 14-year-old Elizabeth Smart, who had been abducted from her home in Salt Lake

City nine months earlier. When arrested in the company of his wife, Wanda Barzee (a former Mormon Tabernacle organist<sup>10</sup>) and Smart, Mitchell had in his possession a 27-page booklet called the *Book of Immanuel David Isaiah*. It turned out that Mitchell, a former Temple worker in Salt Lake City, had declared himself to be a prophet and had chosen the name Immanuel David Isaiah. The book was a collection of documents numbered one through seven, with an addition titled “Plus One.” Mitchell claimed that the writings were oracles that he had received by “the voice of the Lord.” It has been pointed out that the style and content is very similar to that found in *Doctrine and Covenants*.

It was this direct revelation by “the voice of the Lord” that emboldened Mitchell to carry out the kidnapping of Elizabeth Smart, to “seal” her as his wife, and to protest after his arrest that he had done nothing wrong.

LDS apologists universally condemned Mitchell, Barzee, and their actions. But *Sunstone* magazine writer John-Charles Duffy warned:

“Little wonder that mainstream Saints have concluded that Mitchell’s beliefs are ‘bizarre,’ even delusional. Yet the worldview laid out in *The Book of Immanuel* is not the product of lunatic imaginings on Mitchell’s part. Mitchell’s worldview is entirely derivative. Everything about *The Book of Immanuel* that is likely to strike mainstream Saints as bizarre has a precedent in beliefs that thrive on the margins of the LDS community itself.”<sup>11</sup>

Immanuel David Isaiah, aka Brian David Mitchell, with his “new revelation” from the Lord, was a sad illustration of Mormons reaping the *fruit of the root*.

## “BLOOD ATONEMENT”

For genuine believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, the biblical doctrine of blood atonement is precious indeed. In the words of Andrew Murray:

“...the blood of the Son of God, in which there was the life of the

Eternal Spirit, has been given, and has now wrought an eternal redemption! He did, indeed, bear our sins, and take them away. **He put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.** The life He poured out in His blood-shedding was a life that had conquered sin, and rendered a perfect obedience. The blood-shedding as the completion of that life, in its surrender to God and man, has made a complete atonement, a covering up, a putting away of sin. And so the blood of the new covenant, in which God remembers our sins no more, cleanses our heart to receive His law so into it, that the spirit of His law is the spirit of our life, and takes us into full and direct fellowship with Himself."<sup>12</sup>

The writer of Hebrews said in 9:22, "...without shedding of blood there is no remission." This must be understood in light of its context, which clearly refers to the blood of Christ (see verse 14, "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?").

In discussing the phrase, "without shedding of blood," A.T. Robertson wrote:

"The author seems to have in mind Christ's words in Matt. 26:28: 'This is my blood of the covenant which is shed for many for the forgiveness of sins.' The blood is the vital principle and is efficacious as an atonement. The blood of Christ sets aside *all other plans* for pardon."<sup>13</sup>

These clear statements of the teaching of Scripture are quite different from what Mormons have meant historically by the term "blood atonement." In the words of Will Bagley:

"Perhaps the most troubling aspect ... was the Mormon leadership's obsession with blood. ... Joseph Smith taught that certain grievous sins put sinners 'beyond the reach of the atoning blood of Christ.' Their 'only hope [was] to

have their own blood shed to atone.' ... Of all the beliefs that laid the foundation of Utah's culture of violence, none would have more devastating consequences."<sup>14</sup>

This Mormon understanding of "blood atonement" was the basis on which Orrin Porter Rockwell, who at times acted as bodyguard to both Joseph Smith and Brigham Young, filled the role that earned him the appellations "Destroying Angel" and the "Mormon Samson." In light of Smith's instructions, Rockwell must have felt completely justified in avenging Mormon grievances by "blood atonement." It is widely accepted that he was the culprit in the attempted assassination of Missouri Gov. Lilburn Boggs in 1842, after the Mormons had fled Missouri for Illinois; the murder of Lieutenant Frank Worrell in 1845; and many other acts of bloodshed. (Rockwell was also the scout that led Brigham Young and the Mormon wagon train into the valley of the Great Salt Lake in 1847.<sup>15</sup>)

This novel but deadly concept of "blood atonement" also was advanced by Brigham Young's Second Counselor, Jedidiah Grant, known as "Jeddie, Brigham's Sledge Hammer." Grant preached in September 1856 that the "saints" had the "right to kill a sinner to save him, when he commits those crimes that can only be atoned for by shedding his blood." He elaborated that there were sinners among them who ought "to have their blood shed, for water will not do, their sins are of too deep a dye."<sup>16</sup>

This is the background to the grisly episode known as the "Mountain Meadows Massacre" in 1857. A wagon train of settlers, mostly from Arkansas and usually referred to as the "Fancher party" was traveling across Utah toward California. It was made up of four groups that had combined to travel together, plus an assortment of apostate Mormons that had joined the train to flee the Utah Territory. Altogether there were more than 140 individuals, with cattle, horses, and all of their worldly possessions. Almost half of the party were children and adolescents.

All but 17 of the group (those under five years of age) were massacred by what was at first declared to be Paiute Indians. Later, both eyewitnesses and participants told a different story of the slaughter. Their accounts were that John D. Lee, an adopted son of Brigham Young, had entered the circle of wagons of the emigrants under flag of truce, and in two hours had persuaded them to trust him, surrender their weapons, and to depend on him for safe passage and protection from the "Indians." This reminds one of another tactic encouraged by Mormon leaders for dealing with "Gentiles": It was perfectly permissible to lie and otherwise deceive if it would aid in achieving a desired goal.

The now weaponless party was divided into three groups: The youngest children and several of the wounded led the way in a wagon; the women and older children followed on foot; the men came along several hundred yards behind, each closely escorted by an armed Mormon guard. Within a few miles, on the command, "Do your duty," each of the guards fired point-blank into the head of the man he was escorting, and others, some disguised as Indians, shot and bludgeoned the women, older children, and wounded men to death. The children under five years of age were spared and placed in Mormon homes. In 1859, United States authorities located all 17 of them and returned them to family members in Arkansas.<sup>17</sup>

The point is not merely to recount gruesome history. Sadly, these "roots" have produced fruit in the present.

On July 24, 1984, a day observed by Mormons worldwide as "Pioneer Day," in remembrance of the arrival of Brigham Young and the Mormon emigrants from Illinois in what is now known as Salt Lake City, Ron and Dan Lafferty forced their way into the home of their sister-in-law, 24-year-old Brenda Wright Lafferty, to fulfill a "removal revelation" Ron had received from "the Lord." Allen, the youngest of the six Lafferty brothers, was Brenda's husband.

All of the Laffertys had been raised in a strict Mormon home, but in adulthood they had left the main LDS body to embrace what is called Mormon “fundamentalism” — usually meaning those who accept Joseph Smith’s and Brigham Young’s teaching about direct revelation from God, “blood atonement,” defiance of civil authority, and, perhaps most of all, polygamy (at times called “plural marriage,” “celestial marriage,” or “spiritual wifery”). Ron Lafferty’s delusions convinced him that he was the “one mighty and strong,” prophesied

firm against the brothers and had encouraged their wives to resist their determination to begin taking other wives. This wrath led to the horrible murders of both Brenda and her 15-month-old daughter, Erica, whom they described as a child of perdition who would grow up to be like her mother.

Both Laffertys were convicted of first-degree murder. Ron was sentenced to death, and is still in the process of legal appeals. Dan was sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole. His cellmate at Utah State Prison is Mark Hofmann,

historic writings of the founders of their church. They did nothing that Joseph and Brigham did not condone — *at least* in principle, if not in gory detail. They were reaping the *fruit of the root*.

### WHY NOT OPEN THE ARCHIVES?

*Under the Banner of Heaven* author Jon Krakauer states that the more than 60,000 Mormon missionaries roaming the globe claim that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is “mankind’s ‘one true church’” and that all other religions are false. He offers:

“It seems to me that if Mormons are willing to make such a strong assertion — if Mormons aspire to convince non-believers that their religion is more valid than other faiths, and that the doctrines of Joseph Smith are truly handed down from God — Mormons should be equally willing to open the archives of the LDS Church to all interested parties, and to actively encourage a vigorous, unfettered examination of the church’s rich and fascinating past.”<sup>18</sup>

LDS leaders, however, do all in their power to keep many aspects of their history and their beliefs hidden from their own adherents, and even more so from the public. Perhaps their reasons are clearer when one considers the reaction of a former loyal Mormon who, with his brother, decided to study his religion’s roots. Brad L. Morin wrote specifically concerning Brigham Young’s teachings about “blood atonement”:

“Although she [referring to Dan Lafferty’s estranged wife whom he had met while her husband was in prison] expressed a loathing for the doctrine, I did not take the opportunity to learn what she was talking about. For another thirteen years, I knew next to nothing of this doctrine. In spite of the occasional, dark insinuations, I remained certain that Brigham Young was not responsible for leading anyone into sin. His word carried the



*The Original 911 — The Mountain Meadows Massacre Grave Site Memorial in Southern Utah. It was here, on September 11, 1857, that at least 120 unarmed men, women, and children were murdered in cold blood by Mormons and local Indians.*

in *Doctrine and Covenants*, and thus qualified to execute the “removal revelation.” In fact, he had also intended to “remove” a longtime friend of his former wife and the president of the LDS Highland Stake, both of whom he believed were complicit in his wife divorcing him. These two were spared because the Laffertys decided to flee to Reno before carrying out the rest of the revelation.

But the principal target of his wrath was his sister-in-law, Brenda, whom he accused of inducing his wife to leave him and of emasculating her husband, Allen. Brenda had stood

who sold the LDS church forged documents, including the famous “Salamander Letter,” and was later convicted of murder in a car bombing.

Mormons were filled with revulsion at the deeds of the Laffertys, and have led the way in condemning them. For the most part, the authorities who have vigorously prosecuted the Laffertys and others in “fundamentalist” sects are mainline Mormons. Most of them, however, have steadfastly refused to consider objectively the fact that the cold-blooded murderers (and other such criminals) were acting out what they had learned from the

weight of scripture. I continued to believe that on the important issues, 'The prophet will never lead the Church astray.' By the end of 1998, my examination of the early Church publication, *Journal of Discourses*, had shattered my naivety. Further research of Utah history in the 1800s exposed Mormon atrocities that left me reeling."<sup>19</sup>

Morin continued:

"These teachings, found throughout the *Journal of Discourses*, were acknowledged and defended by Church leaders in my lifetime, including Joseph Fielding Smith, who became the tenth president of the Church in 1970, and the more recent apostle Bruce R. McConkie."<sup>20</sup>

Beginning in the mid-1980s, Morin began a detailed study of Mormon documents, of which he said:

"I read each of Brigham's statements several times. They were too clear and there were too many of them to dismiss. They came from the *Journal of Discourses*, speeches given to the Church membership in the 1800s, recorded by and preserved by the early Mormon Church. At one time Church members were encouraged to read these discourses, but that encouragement has long since ceased."<sup>21</sup>

After a study and struggle of over 13 years, Brad Morin, and six months later his brother Chris (they have nine other siblings), officially left the LDS church, to the utter dismay of family and friends. *Suddenly Strangers* is the account of their journey. Sadly, when they rejected the error in which they had been steeped, they replaced it with more error (they are self-described as "humanists"). Chris Morin describes their current state:

"I do not make the claim that there is no God; it is simply that I no longer accept what I once thought was compelling evidence for the existence of God. I do not claim to know that this life is all there is; I only admit to myself that I see no more evidence of an

afterlife than I see evidence that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God."<sup>22</sup>

So much for Krakauer's appeal for LDS leaders to "actively encourage a vigorous, unfettered examination of the church's rich and fascinating past," and little wonder that those leaders are bent on keeping it hidden.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints does not just need to encourage examination of their past. They desperately need to repent of their past, and their present, else they continue to reap the *fruit of the root*.

### Endnotes:

1. For discussions of the changes in the WCG, see the following articles in *The Quarterly Journal*: "New Wine in Old Wineskins—Has the Worldwide Church of God Really Moved from Cultism to Orthodoxy?" (July-September 1995), "From The Plain Truth to the Real Truth" (October-December 1995), "The Two Faces of the Worldwide Church of God" (January-March 1997), "Transforming the Truth: The Worldwide Church of God Continues to 'Make' History" (July-September 1998; this issue also has an editorial, "The Worldwide Church of God's 'Orthodox' Bandwagon"), and "Being Saved After Death is Still Alive in the Worldwide Church of God" (October-December 2001).
2. Ruth Tucker, "From the Fringe to the Fold," *Christianity Today*, July 15, 1996, pg. 27.
3. Terms used in the early 19th century to designate one who used black arts such as gazing into "magic" crystals to find the location of buried treasure. Some of Smith's earliest problems with law enforcement came when he sold his services for payment in advance and then failed to produce the promised results.
4. The web sites of these groups are: [www.strangite.org](http://www.strangite.org), [www.cofchrist.org](http://www.cofchrist.org), and [www.churchofchrist-tl.org](http://www.churchofchrist-tl.org).
5. This article focuses on some of the more "far out" practices of historic Mormonism. It is not intended to deal with the many other non-Scriptural teachings that are common to all branches of the LDS, having to do with their perversion of the nature and character of God and the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, their corruption of the way of salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone, and their rejection of the absolute infallibility, reliability, and sufficiency of the Word of God, the Bible.
6. This data is found at the "General Authorities & LDS Church Information" web site compiled by Michael Taylor,

Provo, Utah ([http://home.comcast.net/~mdtaylor md/prophet.htm](http://home.comcast.net/~mdtaylor/md/prophet.htm)).

7. This would be denied by the Salt Lake City LDS, because in their view dissidents cease to be Mormons when they separate from the mother body.

8. See the web site of *The Principle*, a publication of The Center for Public Education and Information on Polygamy ([www.polygamyinfo.com/frontdoor.htm](http://www.polygamyinfo.com/frontdoor.htm)).

9. Paul Foy, "FBI says fugitive Warren Jeffs possibly spotted at reservoir," *The Arizona Republic*, Oct. 25, 2005. Document available at: [www.azcentral.com/arizona\\_republic/local/articles/1025fugitive\\_25.html](http://www.azcentral.com/arizona_republic/local/articles/1025fugitive_25.html).

10. See *Sunstone*, Issue 130, December 2003. Document available at: [www.signaturebooks.com/excerpts/smart.htm](http://www.signaturebooks.com/excerpts/smart.htm).

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11. John-Charles Duffy, "The Making of Immanuel: Brian David Mitchell and the Mormon Fringe," *Sunstone*, Issue 129, October 2003, pg. 36.

12. Andrew Murray, *The Holiest of All: An Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews*. Old Tappan, N.J.: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1960, pp. 316-317, bold in original.

13. A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1932, Vol. V, pp. 402-403, emphasis added.

14. Will Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets: Brigham Young and the Massacre at Mountain Meadows*. Norman, Okla.: University of Oklahoma Press, 2002, pg. 50, brackets in original.

15. The Mormon view of Rockwell may be found in *Orrin Porter Rockwell: Man of God, Son of Thunder* by Harold Schindler, (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1993).

16. Jon Krakauer, *Under the Banner of Heaven: A Story of Violent Faith*. New York: Doubleday, 2003, pg. 204.

17. Three primary sources for information on the massacre are: *A Mormon Chronicle: The Diaries of John D. Lee, 1848-1976*, (San Marino, Calif.: Huntington Library, 1955, 2 volumes); Juanita Brooks, *The Mountain Meadows Massacre*, (Norman, Okla.: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991); and the work by Will Bagley cited above.

18. Jon Krakauer, "A Response from the Author." Document available at: [www.randomhouse.com/features/krakauer/response.html](http://www.randomhouse.com/features/krakauer/response.html).

19. Brad L. and Chris L. Morin, *Suddenly Strangers: Surrendering Gods and Heroes*. Self-published, 2004, Chapter 16. Document available at: [www.suddenlystrangers.com](http://www.suddenlystrangers.com).

20. Ibid.

21. Ibid., Chapter 5.

22. Ibid., Chapter 17.

Also, giving heed to Paul's admonition to "weigh carefully" a prophet's words (1 Corinthians 14:29), what do we find? We find a false prophet intoxicated by the visions of his own heart and not from the mouth of the Lord (Jeremiah 23:16).

And what do we further find? We find a man who continues to reach new heights of popularity every year. We encounter one who is never held to any measure of biblical accountability for his erroneous proclamations. Rather than receiving the rebuke called for in Scripture, Hinn is adored. "Christian" book publishers continue to print and sell his writings and — with little surprise — "Christian" television networks, such as the Trinity Broadcasting Network, provide an ongoing visible platform for Hinn. Even *Charisma* magazine, with its facade of displaying the banner of discernment, remains voiceless in exposing Hinn for what he is. All of this points to a Church that has lost its will and ability to discern. It is a sad commentary and God's people are suffering as a result. Truth is to be guarded by the Word.

Or how about Hinn's more recent prophetic utterance, given a full decade following his prophetic word for the 1990s? Hinn informed Paul and Jan Crouch and their TBN viewing audience:

"You're going to have people raised from the dead watching this network. You're going to have people raised from the dead watching TBN. ... I'm telling you I see this in the Spirit. It's going to be so awesome. ... I'm telling you, I feel the anointing talking here. People are going to be canceling funeral services and bringing their dead in their caskets, placing them — my God, I feel the anointing here — placing them before a television set, waiting for God's power to come through and touch them. ... The word will spread that if some dead person be put in front of this TV screen, they will be raised from the dead — and they will be, by the thousands. You wait. Now the Lord just told me — and I don't know whether this is true or not... I see — I see quite something amazing. I see rows of um, cas— of caskets lining up in front of this TV set. And I see them bringing them closer to the TV set. And as people are coming closer, I see actually loved ones picking up the hands of the dead and letting them touch the screen and people are getting raised as their hands are touching that screen" (Benny Hinn, *Praise the Lord* show, Oct. 19, 1999).

In the time between Hinn's utterance of that statement and the present, two esteemed Charismatics have succumbed: Word Faith teacher Kenneth Hagin and Evelyn Roberts, the wife of Hinn's mentor Oral Roberts. Yet, it is safe to contend that the Hagin and Roberts families did not give heed to Hinn's "anointing" as he instructed a postponement of funeral services, and to place the body

in front of a television set so that the corpse would "be raised from the dead."

Christian people need to wake up and have the courage to hold Hinn responsible for his declarations. The Church need not be afraid of speaking out against false prophets. Men like Jerry Falwell need to stand firm and apply the Scriptures, exposing Hinn for what he is. Indeed, as Paul declared, "For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear" (2 Timothy 4:3).

Former PFO director, the late Bill Cetnar, often said, "Time is the enemy of a false prophet." However, for Hinn and his followers, time can sometimes be an ally, allowing his forecasts to be forgotten. Yet news articles like the one cited above and the fact that people are still burying their dead should be a reminder as to why Hinn, and others like him, should be rejected as prophetic voices — and called into accountability.

—MKG

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## NEWS UPDATES

(continued from page 3)

Ralson's personal history in the LDS faith, along with her knowledge of Mormon theology, doctrine, and terminology, helped make her an outstanding director. Likewise, her artistic talents afforded her the skill necessary to create the displays and resources necessary for the NCVC. She is the author of *The Christian Companion to The Triple Combination*, a guide to using the Mormons' own scriptures as witnessing tools.

"Watchman Fellowship and Personal Freedom Outreach had the easy role in establishing the Center. All we did was to secure the building and select a director for the Center. Ralson is the sole individual responsible for making the Center what it is today through all her hard, dedicated, and selfless work," according to PFO director Kurt Goedelman.

In late October, a farewell banquet was given to recognize Ralson and her 18 years of service to the NCVC. "Without her vision, work, and sacrifice, the Center would have never been possible," Angela Goedelman stated during an address honoring Ralson. "It is so hard to leave, I could cry when I think about it, but I believe it is time," Ralson said.

The NCVC Board of Directors have appointed Rocky and Helen Hulse as the new directors for the Center. Rocky is a fifth-generation Mormon. He and his wife are also the founders and directors of Mormon Missions Midwest Outreach.

—MKG

## INSP NETWORK DROPS CULT'S PROGRAM

After receiving protests for nearly a year, the Inspiration Network has removed an anti-Christian program from its airwaves. The *Armor of God* broadcast, the program canceled by the network, is produced by the Church of God International, the Tyler, Texas-based church founded by the late Garner Ted Armstrong.

In a letter to those who had objected to the program, John E. Roos, Senior Vice President of Marketing for the network, said his company "took the action after it conducted an extensive review of the program in response to the concerns."

According to James Kieferdorf, airing of the *Armor of God* program over the INSP Network ended last September. Kieferdorf was responsible for sounding the alarm that a heretical sect was being allowed to air its programs over a Christian network, and for rallying ministers and ministries to voice complaint for such a lack of discernment by INSP.

The Church of God International promotes a number of unorthodox teachings, including a vigorous denial of the Trinity and the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ. Armstrong, who died in 2003, developed much of his theology from his father, Herbert W. Armstrong. The younger Armstrong was exiled from the group in 1997, stemming from charges of sexual misconduct. The following year he established the Intercontinental Church of God. Two decades earlier, he had suffered the same fate, having been excommunicated from his father's Worldwide Church of God amid charges of sexual improprieties.

The INSP Network is headed by David Cerullo, son of healing evangelist Morris Cerullo, and is based in Charlotte, N.C.

—MKG

## JESUS SEMINAR MARKS 20TH ANNIVERSARY

The Jesus Seminar marked its 20th anniversary at its annual meeting last fall. The controversial group of New Testament scholars, founded by Robert Funk, first met in 1985 to subjectively determine the validity of the words and conduct of Christ.

The group concluded that of all the words attributed to Jesus in the four Gospels, only 15 sayings (or 2 percent) could be authentic. The group further concluded that about 82 percent of what is in Scripture and attributed to Christ was not actually spoken by Him and that the other 16 percent was probably not authentic. The Jesus

Seminar, based upon its judgments, claims to present the historical Jesus as opposed to the Jesus of faith.

The council is made up of liberal Catholics and Protestants, Jews, and atheists. The work of the body has long been criticized. Jesus Seminar board member Andrew Scrimgeour has noted that "fundamentalists and even evangelicals are hostile to the work of these scholars" and that "books, conferences, and Web sites [are] devoted to debating and debunking the work of the Seminar."

Verdicts issued by the group have been published in two books, *The Five Gospels* and *The Acts of Jesus*. The group said it also will make future evaluations of the Acts of the Apostles and Paul's epistles. In addition to its annual meeting, which is open to the public, the group presents more than a dozen weekend seminars annually in churches and on university campuses across the country.

—MKG

## A "LIAR" WHO STAYED TO HELP?

Brennan Manning, author of the best-selling book, *The Ragamuffin Gospel*, and the contemplative prayer guru whom *Christianity Today* labels as "evangelicals' favorite Catholic," was lauded by the magazine for his heroic deeds in the wake of hurricane Katrina.

In a published interview titled "A 'Coward' Who Stayed to Help," Manning described how he sat out the hurricane in his apartment, 15 minutes south of the French Quarter in New Orleans. "The whole issue of staying ... I don't mean it to sound heroic. Because I'm not, I'm basically a coward. But I thought maybe I could help somebody who stayed through the hurricane," Manning told the magazine.

And help is just what he did. "I did see an elderly black woman, somewhere in her 80s, standing on a street corner. I stopped and asked where I could take her. She said, 'Please take me to my sister's house.' I drove her out there and reassured her of how proud I was of her and what a gift it was to be her neighbor," he said in the interview. Manning also says he was able to contact authorities to help identify a child whose picture was broadcast on television and who was one of many children who had become separated from their parents. It's all the conduct of which heroes are made. The only problem is that it wasn't true.

One week after publishing the initial interview, *Christianity Today* posted on its web site a brief editorial note at the beginning of the article. It read, "We regret to inform our readers that, following this on-the-record conversation, Brennan Manning called our office to

apologize. He reiterated that he had been 'disoriented, confused, and depressed' lately and that certain details he provided were not true. He did not help identify a child from his apartment complex. He did not help an elderly woman get a ride. And while he was the last one to leave his complex, 'the truth is that there was nobody around here for me to help,' he said in a voice message to *Christianity Today*. "The essential truth: I lied."

Manning's ensuing apology for his lies, due to his being "disoriented, confused, and depressed," possibly should also be called into question, because in the interview he responded to the magazine with detail and distinctness. Perhaps Manning's embracing of contemplative prayer may be a better explanation. The technique calls for one to empty one's mind, then fill it with imaginative experiences and allowing Christ to be the source of our words and actions.

Hurricane Katrina was not the first disaster Manning has encountered since moving to New Orleans in 1982. In January 2004, a fire engulfed his home. Despite the loss of personal property, Manning escaped the fire unharmed.

—MKG

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## BOOKS IN REVIEW

(continued from page 24)

that Wicca presents. A full chapter deals with the topic, "Whose Word You Gonna Trust?" While many confuse Wicca with Satanism, the author points out that there are distinctions while remembering the two religions' denial of the truth.

The book is an informative work written either for a searching parent or for a teen who is either dabbling in the craft or who has a friend enticed by it. In addition to discussion questions with Scripture references, there are several appendices with very helpful information, including a glossary of wiccan/witchcraft terms, symbols, and holidays.

—AMG

## **UNDER THE BANNER OF HEAVEN:**

**A Story of Violent Faith**

by Jon Krakauer

Doubleday, 399 pages, \$26.00

Award-winning author Jon Krakauer has ventured into the world of religion for the first time with this remarkable book about Mormon Fundamentalism, and

its historic ties to Joseph Smith, Jr., Brigham Young, and others revered by mainstream Mormons.

Krakauer, whose earlier works on mountain climbing and wilderness adventure have been acclaimed for their thorough research, richness of detail, and air of suspense, was intrigued by the brutal 1984 murders of a young woman and her 15-month-old daughter, in American Fork, Utah. Within hours of the crime it was determined that the murderers were two of the woman's brothers-in-law, Ron and Dan Lafferty, who hated her because she influenced her husband not to submit to the demands of their cult. She also had encouraged her sisters-in-law to reject their husbands' pressure to accept plural marriage.

Most appalling of all was the fact that Ron Lafferty fancied himself to be the "one mighty and strong" who had been prophesied by Joseph Smith, Jr., (*D&C*, Section 85), and claimed that the murders were in obedience to a direct "removal revelation" from the Lord.

The title of the book is taken from a sermon preached by LDS President John Taylor in Salt Lake City, on Jan. 4, 1880, in which he said, "God is greater than the United States, and when the Government conflicts with heaven we will be ranged under the banner of heaven and against the Government. The United States says we cannot marry more than one wife. God says different. ... Polygamy is a divine institution. It has been handed down direct from God. The United States cannot abolish it. No nation on earth can prevent it, nor all the nations of the earth combined; these are my sentiments and all of you who sympathize with me in this position will raise your right hands. I defy the United States; I will obey God" (pg. 250).

The principal value of this book is Krakauer's description of salient aspects of the history of the LDS church and the powerful way in which he ties the practices of more than 40,000 self-proclaimed Mormon fundamentalists with the origins and the historical development of the Mormon church.

Cautions for potential readers are needed in two areas: Krakauer is not a believer, and in his view all people of faith have the potential to commit the same atrocious acts that the Laffertys acted out for their "religious" convictions. He wrote, "All religious belief is a function of nonrational faith. And faith, by its very definition, tends to be impervious to intellectual argument or academic criticism" (pg. 68). To him, there is an equivalence between fundamentalist Mormons, Catholics, Pentecostals, Evangelical Christians, and members of Al-Qaeda.

Also, *be forewarned* that because of the nature of the crime being reported, descriptions at times are gruesome. And, because of the nature of the criminals, quotes from them are extremely coarse, lewd, and blasphemous. With these cautions in mind, for its historical value and well-written style, this is a significant book.

—RLG



# Books in Review

## THE BIBLE VS. THE BOOK OF MORMON

by Living Hope Ministries

66-minute video, \$19.95

The folks responsible for the impressive presentation using DNA evidence against *The Book of Mormon* have delivered another excellent video production. Mormons have long claimed that *The Book of Mormon*, their most well-known scripture, is superior to the Bible. Living Hope Ministries, in their latest undertaking, examines whether *The Book of Mormon* is really greater than — or even comparable to — the Bible. Enlisted are the testimonies of archaeologists, anthropologists, geographers, and linguists in response to that question. The effort comprises about 40 interviews in the United States and six foreign countries.

The presentation begins with a brief historical background and timeline of both the Bible and *The Book of Mormon*. The viewer is then confronted with fact after fact as to the lack of evidence for the Mormon scripture. Among the facts presented:

- No maps of the lands and locations described in *The Book of Mormon* are available because they cannot be established. The Latter-day Saints church is silent on the geography of its scripture.
- It is impossible that the vast civilizations portrayed in *The Book of Mormon* could have existed without leaving an archaeological trace.
- *The Book of Mormon* is wrong in its details of the agriculture, animals, and weaponry of the early American continent.
- *The Book of Mormon* is lacking any manuscript evidence, thereby revealing itself to be a 19th-century creation. Likewise, linguists discount “Reformed Egyptian,” the language from which Joseph Smith, Jr. is said to have translated his scripture.

When these findings are contrasted with what scholars know about the Bible, it is confirmed as authentic, while *The Book of Mormon* is discredited as a fraud. *The Book of Mormon* is ultimately asked to be taken on faith, but faith

is not a belief *against* the evidence, but a *response* to it. As one scholar noted, *The Book of Mormon* has absolutely no authority or integrity whatsoever.

The video also contrasts the Jesus of the Bible with the Jesus of *The Book of Mormon*. The conclusion is that the Jesus of *The Book of Mormon* is a product of Joseph Smith, Jr., and does not relate to the Jesus Christ of the Bible. This statement is denied by most Mormons, but is sanctioned by current LDS prophet and president Gordon B. Hinckley.

This is a wonderful presentation, not only to entreat Mormons to consider and weigh the facts, but also for Christians to ponder and comprehend. It is available in both DVD and VHS formats.

—MKG

## WHAT'S THE DEAL WITH WICCA?

by Steve Russo

Bethany House Publishers, 192 pages, \$11.99

Wicca, or witchcraft, is increasingly attracting teens across the country. Television shows such as *Sabrina* and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*; movies such as *The Craft* and *Harry Potter*; “Goddess” t-shirts, jewelry, and other pop-culture items all make it possible for a person to become immersed in the witchcraft theme. Celebrities such as Tori Amos, Stevie Nicks, Sarah McLachlan, Cybill Shepherd, Roseanne, Chrissie Hynde, Olympia Dukakis, Marianne Williamson, Deepak Chopra, Erica Jong, Camille Paglia, and Fairuza Balk all add to the saturation.

Gone is the black-hatted, pointy-nosed wicked woman riding into the night sky on a broomstick. Now it is the attractive, sensible teenagers portrayed as either Sabrina or Buffy or the clever Samantha of *Bewitched*. These characters, with the help of a complete shift through various media images, have given Wicca a positive appeal. Wicca has become the girl-friendly religion of magic and psychic powers, which emphasizes feelings and experiences.

Russo points out the differences between Wicca and Christianity, and throughout his work brings the reader back to what the Bible teaches regarding various issues

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**Editor's Note:** The publications featured in PFO's *Books in Review* section are available from **Personal Freedom Outreach** (P.O. Box 26062, Saint Louis, Missouri 63136). Please add \$2.00 to the price listed for shipping and handling. Due to occasional price changes by the publishers, the retail amounts listed are subject to change without notice. These publications are also available to those who help to financially support the work of PFO. Please see our funds appeal flyer for details.