

The Quarterly Journal



THE NEWSLETTER PUBLICATION OF PERSONAL FREEDOM OUTREACH

VOL. 26, NO. 3

JULY-SEPTEMBER 2006

EDITOR: KEITH A. MORSE

You Lose!

The Detrimental Effects of the Decline of Doctrine

by G. Richard Fisher

Modern theology is in a crisis. The Evangelical and Charismatic churches have a huge identity problem and they do not even know it. Discernment is declining and there is no doubting that the Church at large has lost its way. For a number of years the American Church has been the target of marketeers interested only in profit. These hucksters will sell anything regardless of its content. We are inundated and buried under a deluge of fads, countless vapid books, and "Jesus junk."

There is even a recent book on praying backwards and the cover of the volume assures you that you can "transform your prayer life by beginning in Jesus' Name."¹ What Bruce Wilkinson's *Prayer of Jabez* did not do, this one may — and all one has to do is use the mantra "Jesus" at the beginning of the prayer. The marketeers get rich while the Church is facing doctrinal poverty. The Church at large is sick unto death. The plague of doctrinal ignorance is stalking the land. As Isaiah once said, "The whole head is sick, And the whole heart faints" (Isaiah 1:5b).



Commenting on the book of Titus and the problems in Crete, author and pastor James Draper observes:

"God put a divine order in the church. He gave the church his Word, the basis for all we do and say. If our interpretation or creed contradicts at any point with the Word of God, the Word of God is to be our authority. To make sure this is done, God gave the churches pastors and leaders in the church. They are to keep pure the teachings of the church. These heretics in Crete had no willingness to accept the authority of the Word of God or the apostolic authority within the church."²

WHICH SIDE ARE WE ON?

The most basic question is not being asked. It is an absolutely fundamental question. That question is, "Are Evangelical pastors and leaders staying

(continues on page 13)

Inside this Issue:

LYING KINGS	PAGE 2
PENTECOSTAL CENTENNIAL CELEBRATED	PAGE 3
THE JESUS DYNASTY	PAGE 4

Editorials

LYING KINGS

Anything can be published in a book today. The wilder and the more over the top, the better. Publishers in all fields have reached an all-time low in terms of what they advertise and print. The business is about making as much money as quickly as possible.

In this fast-buck environment, spiritual deception is marketed and sold at a blinding pace. Apologetics ministries cannot keep up with the heresies, false doctrines, errors, and deceptions that fly off the printing presses. Some of the fads are outright heresy while others are contentless pulp fiction. While some are trite, junk-food doctrines, others are truly poison.

Gnosticism is being hailed as "alternative Christianity." One trips and stumbles over the stacks of new "gospels" and *The Da Vinci Code* imitations that line the aisles at Barnes & Noble.

Baker Books, once trustworthy, now sells the latest version of God. He is learning and growing just like you and me. Poor God and poor us. Open theism is paraded as a viable point of discussion when just a few short years ago the promoters would have been ignored or disciplined off the scene. There is nothing sacred today; we can even tamper with God and sell the idea. It is frightening and blasphemous.

Thomas Nelson Publishers launched Benny Hinn's biggest seller. No problem that he is a false prophet,

promotes necromancy, teaches false doctrine, and has lied about his pedigree. "Prophets for profit" is acceptable today even if the prophecy is false. At least back in the days of Lauren Stratford, Crying Wind, and Mike Warnke, the publishers admitted they were frauds. Today no one admits anything. After all, these are postmodern times and everyone's story has validity, *even it isn't true!*

Charisma magazine's editor has no qualms about promoting Oneness Pentecostals who deny the orthodox view of the Trinity, scores of Word-Faith gurus, and a dual-covenant teacher. *Charisma* editor J. Lee Grady says, "Trinitarians must embrace our Oneness brothers" and calls for a "bridge" to be built "across the Pentecostal divide." Apparently Grady regards the understanding of God's nature, as revealed in Scripture, as a "theological molehill." The cover of his magazine has been graced by those who disgrace the Gospel, including Benny Hinn, Joyce Meyer, Rodney Howard-Browne, Rod Parsley, T.D. Jakes, and John Hagee. Grady and company serve up a deadly salad, a poisonous cocktail, a Berean's nightmare. Yet they subtitle their magazine "+ *Christian Life*."

Zondervan Publishers, another once-trusted publishing house, now publishes materials endorsing what is called the "emerging church." Most Bible scholars contend the Church already emerged in the book of Acts and got its doctrines and polity all together as far back as the time of the Epistles. The so-called emerging church should have named itself the Athens church as it seems only to exist

(continues on page 22)

PERSONAL FREEDOM OUTREACH

P.O. Box 26062 • Saint Louis, Missouri 63136-0062 • (314) 921-9800

Visit PFO's Web Site at: <http://www.pfo.org>

BOARD of DIRECTORS:

James Bjornstad	Cedarville, OH	Joan C. Cetnar	Kunkletown, PA
G. Richard Fisher	Bricktown, NJ	Gary E. Gilley	Springfield, IL
M. Kurt Goedelman	Saint Louis, MO	Robert L. Griffin	Gulf Shores, AL
Keith A. Morse	Denver, CO	David M. Tyler	Granite City, IL

BOARD of REFERENCE:

Dr. Jay E. Adams.....	Enoree, SC	Dr. Norman L. Geisler	Charlotte, NC
Dr. Ron Rhodes.....	Frisco, TX		

© 2006 – PFO. All rights reserved. ISSN: 1083-6853. These articles may not be stored on web pages or Internet sites without permission. *The Quarterly Journal* is the newsletter publication of PFO. Published by Personal Freedom Outreach, P.O. Box 26062, Saint Louis, MO 63136. PFO's *Journal* may also be obtained on CD-ROM in Portable Document Format (.PDF) for use with Adobe® Reader® software.

JOURNAL MARKS 100TH ISSUE

This issue of *The Quarterly Journal* achieves a milestone for the ministry of Personal Freedom Outreach. It marks our 100th issue. In 1981, PFO began publishing its quarterly newsletter. This periodical was developed to provide the Christian body with articles, editorials, news items, and book reviews on current cult-related and apologetic subjects. During the past 26 years some things have changed, including the design, size, and name of our newsletter publication, yet its purpose has remained unchanged.

TQJ has been called a tremendous resource to assist the Christian's spiritual discernment. It has been heralded by many within the apologetic community for its careful and thorough research and cutting-edge articles. PFO is grateful for the respect we've earned and for the accomplishment of one hundred issues in which to share, to serve, and to make a difference.

—MKG

DAN BROWN CLEARED OF PLAGIARISM CHARGES

Author Dan Brown escaped from his own drama involving a plagiarism case brought against him over his best-selling novel, *The Da Vinci Code*. In April, England's High Court dismissed the copyright infringement charges aimed at him.

Michael Baigent and Richard Leigh, two of the three authors of a 1982 fictional work, *Holy Blood, Holy Grail*, sued Brown claiming that he had stolen their central theme for his own volume. Following a five-week trial, the British court issued a 71-page ruling which stated, "Even if the central themes were copies, they are too general or too low a level of abstraction to be capable of protection by copyright law."

Baigent and Leigh's novel proposes that Jesus married Mary Magdalene and produced a child through the union whose lineage continues to this day. Brown's storyline in *The Da Vinci Code* closely parallels this thought, alleging that Jesus and Mary Magdalene were married, with Mary giving birth to a daughter following Jesus' crucifixion. During the trial, Brown admitted that *Holy Blood, Holy Grail* was just one of several sources which he utilized in study for his own work.

The court, by ruling in Brown's favor, cleared the way for an unimpeded May 19 premiere of *The Da Vinci Code* motion picture. If the court had ruled against Brown, the release of director Ron Howard's film adaptation may have been delayed. The movie, starring Tom Hanks, was budgeted at \$125 million. Columbia Pictures paid Brown \$6 million in June 2003 for the film rights.

Baigent and Leigh lost more than just the case when the court tossed out their charges. According to a Religious News Service report, the judge ordered the pair to cover 85 percent of the estimated \$2.25 million in trial expenses incurred by Random House, Brown's publisher. The judge also refused any right for Baigent and Leigh to appeal the court's ruling.

The Da Vinci Code was first published in 2003, has sold more than 40 million copies, and has been translated into 44 languages. News reports disclose that Brown is the highest-paid author in history and that he earned an estimated \$78 million in a single year.

—MKG

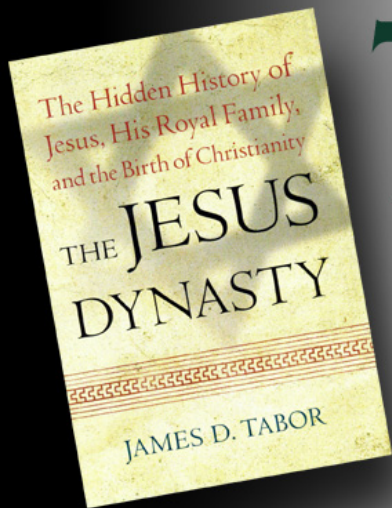
PENTECOSTAL CENTENNIAL CELEBRATED

Tens of thousands of people assembled April 25-29 in Los Angeles to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Azusa Street Revival, the event which is said to have birthed the Pentecostal movement. The first day of the historic gathering drew 25,000 people from more than 100 nations.

The five-day celebration featured over 150 speakers, including Benny Hinn, Kenneth Copeland, T.D. Jakes, Rod Parsley, Reinhard Bonnke, and Creflo Dollar. The roster also included names not generally recognized as prominent within Pentecostal or Charismatic circles. Rick Warren, pastor of Saddleback Church in Southern California, made a two-part presentation on the opening day in which he presented "the key characteristics of a Spirit-filled local church."

On April 14, 1906, Pastor William Seymour held the first service of his Azusa Street Mission in a converted livery stable. The principal attraction of the services was glossolalia, which the *Los Angeles Times* labeled a "weird babel of tongues" amid "wild scenes." Seymour, a disciple of Charles Fox Parham, a Holiness preacher from the Midwest, fostered the belief that tongues were a modern day sign of the baptism in the Holy Spirit. For

(continues on page 22)



The Jesus Dynasty

The Imaginary and Irrational Interpretations of James Tabor

by G. Richard Fisher

Professor of systematic theology Robert Strimple, in response to the charge that the Gospel writers *created* certain events in their narratives, asks, "Are we to believe that the Evangelists felt themselves free to alter radically the message of Jesus and to 'make up' events that never happened during his ministry, even though there were eyewitnesses still living who could point out their errors?"¹

The subtitle to James Tabor's book, *The Jesus Dynasty*, reads, "The Hidden History of Jesus, His Royal Family, and the Birth of Christianity." In the book, Tabor goes so far as to write:

"*The Jesus Dynasty* presents the Jesus story in an entirely new light. It is history, not fiction. ... *The Jesus Dynasty* proposes an original version of Christianity, long lost and forgotten, but one that can be reliably traced back to the founder, Jesus himself."²

He also writes:

"I truly believe that an understanding of Jesus and his family, and the dynasty that perpetuated his message, is one of the most important keys to completing our quest to know the historical Jesus and the origins of Christianity."³

He further claims:

"An understanding of the Jesus dynasty opens the way for us to

recover an original Christianity and its potent message for our times."⁴

However, the book does not live up to its subtitle and its claims. Instead it offers a lot of speculation and guessing. In short, Tabor believes that his particular refashioning and re-creation of Jesus is a key to the *real* Jesus that everyone so far has missed. There are so many caveats in the book we have to wonder whether Tabor believes his statement that it is "history, not fiction" or if the whole thing is publisher's hype. With the success of Dan Brown's reconstruction of Jesus in *The Da Vinci Code*, one can't help but wonder if it hasn't launched a new bandwagon.

TABOR'S OWN HIDDEN HISTORY

The dust jacket of Tabor's book says Tabor is "Chair of the Department of Religious Studies at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. He holds a Ph.D. in biblical studies from the University of Chicago and is an expert on the Dead Sea Scrolls and Christian origins." Tabor has written a few other books as well. But those weighty academic credentials are not the end of the story.

Tabor himself has a hidden history. Pointing this out leads to the realization that many of Tabor's views,

presuppositions, and biases can be traced to his early training and cultic indoctrination. Even Tabor admits this:

"All historians come to their investigations with selective criteria of judgment forged by both acknowledged and unrecognized predisposed interests and cultural assumptions. There is no absolutely objective place to stand. ... When it comes to the quest for the historical Jesus our need to be aware of our own prejudices seems particularly acute. ... I stand open to critique and revision."⁵

What the current biography does not tell us is that Tabor is a 1970 graduate of Herbert W. Armstrong's Ambassador College. Though originally baptized in the Church of Christ, Tabor says he "was baptized ... by Tony Hammer around Passover" into the Worldwide Church of God.⁶

Most are well aware that Armstrong led the Worldwide Church of God before his death⁷ and taught Sabbath keeping, salvation by law keeping, and British Israelism. It was a mixture of cultism, Judaism, legalism, and mutant Christianity with Armstrong the chief prophet and teacher.

Tabor became disgruntled after two years at Ambassador College and

turned his back on the Worldwide Church of God organization, if not all of its teachings. During the decade from 1970 to 1980, Tabor took a convoluted journey, which he describes:

"I was exposed to the most radical historical-critical biblical studies and gradually lost all faith in God, the Bible, or any idea of ultimate human purpose. I was reading, during all that time, dozens of books on philosophy, science, psychology, etc. I would characterize myself as a romanticized, bohemian, existentialist, nihilist — basically a follower of Freud and Nietzsche. ... Just about two years ago, for reasons it is difficult to fully explain, I began to turn back toward some kind of theism, and gradually, toward faith once again in the God of the Bible, and even in the Bible itself, but in a non-fundamentalist way. ... I don't like labels, neither Jewish (which I am certainly not), nor Christian (since I think what Jesus of Nazareth was all about has so precious little to do with Christianity)."⁸

Tabor can say that Jesus had "precious little to do with Christianity" because he has constructed a subjective and speculative idea of what early Christianity was like, and fabricated a Jesus who may have had a Roman soldier as a father.

B'NAI WHO?

It also appears that Tabor's more recent history has been hidden as well. He acknowledges that in the generally understood sense, he certainly is not a Christian. That is because Tabor is fully identified with and has been a spokesman for an obscure cult called B'nai Noah. They are also known as the Noahide group or the Rainbow Covenant group. This group has activities and conferences in Israel aiming to provide ecumenical fodder for Jews, Christians, and Muslims.

It is, therefore, not surprising to read Tabor admitting that "there is little about the view of Jesus pre-

sented in this book that conflicts with Islam's basic perception. The prophet Mohammed was in contact with Christian groups in Arabia, and there is evidence to suppose that the Christians he met might have been closer in their beliefs to the Ebionites than to the Western church."⁹ Tabor's Jesus is a mix of the Muslim view and Ebionite view, which we will examine shortly.

One of the more well-known leaders of B'nai Noah is Vendyl Jones:

"Vendyl Jones, who once served Baptist pastorates, has renounced his Christian faith (though he continues to minister!). He believes that the New Testament is a fraud contrived by the Catholic church in the fourth century from collections of apostolic writings with the intention of replacing Judaism. After moving for a time to Israel, divorcing his wife (leaving five children), and taking a younger Israeli wife, he started the *B'nai Noah* ("Children of Noah") movement. This group seeks ostensibly to teach Torah to Gentile Christians but in fact has disrupted local churches and attempted to make church members convert to Judaism. ... He stated that the New Testament, Jesus, and the idea of the Trinity of God are all false. He maintains that 'Jews are saved through the Abrahamic covenant, not Jesus!'"¹⁰

Jones also claims to know the location of the Ark of the Covenant.

In 1991, the *Jerusalem Post* reported that J. David Davis and James Tabor visited Israel to promote B'nai Noah teachings.¹¹

The "General Introduction To B'nai Noah," says:

"The B'nai Noah observe seven general and basic commandments. These commandments were given to Adam, the first God-fearer, and to the biblical character Noah, and are still followed by those looking for a place in the World to Come. ... What are the Seven Laws of

Noah? 1. Do not Blaspheme God's name. 2. Do not worship idols. 3. Do not commit immoral sexual acts. 4. Do not murder. 5. Do not steal. 6. Do not eat the flesh of an animal while it is still alive. 7. Creation of a judicial system. ... Noah - a 'God-fearer' - saved the human race from extinction because he followed this ancient path. Noah entered into the Kingdom of Heaven without the aid of a mediator. As the Torah specifically states that 'Noah found grace in the eyes of God' and not in the eyes of a mediator - and so this can apply to you today! ... All you have to do is ask God's forgiveness. God will forgive you if you ask Him and follow the laws with the right intent. The God of Noah, Abraham, and Israel is awaiting for all descendants of Noah to return back to the Ark. ... Many are called but few choose the original God-made path."¹²

An e-mail correspondence was sent to Tabor to ask if he was still associated and active with B'nai Noah. No answer was received before this article was published.

SUMMING IT UP

Tabor's main scenario of a Jesus family dynasty through James is not really new at all, but by his own admission is the borrowed story line of the Ebionites with a number of his own additions. From the standpoint of historic and orthodox Christianity, the Ebionites were severely heretical, but from Tabor's perspective:

"They were known subsequently by the term 'Ebionites,' which meant in Hebrew 'poor ones.' Eusebius knows of them, though he considers them heretics in contrast to the Christian orthodoxy that he championed. Among his charges was that the Ebionites made Jesus a 'plain and ordinary man,' born naturally from 'Mary and her husband.' Eusebius further stated that the Ebionites insisted on observance of the Jewish law or Torah and that they maintained that salva-

tion was by 'works' as well as faith, as the letter of James affirms. The Ebionites rejected the letters of the apostle Paul and considered him an apostate from the original faith. They used only a Hebrew version of the gospel of Matthew — now lost to us other than in fragments. Eusebius, allied with the emperor Constantine, who had turned to Christianity himself by A.D. 325, classified each of these Ebionite views as heretical. And yet ironically, their views are grounded in the teachings of Jesus himself, and that tradition passed on by his brothers."¹³

Tabor also believes that Jesus was an ordinary man and dismisses any Scripture that disagrees with this view. Like the "scholars" of The Jesus Seminar, Tabor picks and chooses what verses belong in the original Bible — apparently those that he agrees with — and what verses were added much later — apparently those he disagrees with.

DEJÁ VU DA VINCI CODE

Tabor's reconstruction of Jesus' life reads as such: Jesus was not born of a virgin. His father might have been a Roman soldier. Joseph married Mary anyway and died early on. Then Mary married Joseph's brother. Jesus became a follower of John the Baptist and saw John as greater than Himself. However, John was killed and Jesus, by default, had to take the leadership. Jesus then was crucified on the Mount of Olives and hastily buried there. His body was soon moved, accounting for the empty tomb. Jesus was reburied, perhaps in Jerusalem or maybe in Galilee near Safed. His Davidic dynasty was turned over to His family, namely in the person of James His brother who ruled the Church from Jerusalem. Later it was Simon, another brother, who headed the dynasty.

Paul, filled with Greek/Hellenistic ideas, began to promote a celestial Christ and the idea of Jesus' deity was fabricated by later Christians who made up various contradictory gospels from a corrupted oral tradition.

There is a Q source, which no one has ever seen, that supposedly is an original gospel underneath the Gospels. Tabor acts as if he knows the exact wording of this imaginary source.¹⁴

Tabor reveals his affinity for gnostic teaching when he calls the so-called *Gospel of Thomas* "clearly the most precious lost Christian document discovered in the last two thousand years."¹⁵ To call this gnostic fragment a "Christian document" is outlandish.¹⁶ It is not a "gospel," was not written by Thomas, and is not Christian. The gnostics did not even think of themselves as Christians.

The gnostics, who wrote long after Christ's death, resurrection, and

OSSU WHAT?

Ossuaries were limestone boxes that held the bones of the dead after the flesh had completely decayed, usually in about a year. These small boxes were as long as the longest bone and about half as wide as long. The bone boxes were usually placed in family tombs. Space constraints might have driven the practice when extended families needed more compact burial space. Hellenistic influence and the preserving of individual identities rather than being merged into the ancestral collective may be another reason for ossuaries.¹⁹

Ossuaries were used in the ancient world during the Hellenistic period. They have been discovered in Egypt,

Tabor reveals his affinity for Gnostic teaching when he calls the so-called Gospel of Thomas "clearly the most precious lost Christian document discovered in the last two thousand years."

ascension, displayed in their writings how anti-Christian they were. The early Church soundly refuted and rejected gnosticism in all of its mutant strains. Gnostics generally taught that God was unknowable, matter was evil, Christ was not divine, and He certainly was not the Savior of the world.¹⁷

Yet not everything in Tabor's book is suspect. He actually alerts us to some recent and intriguing archaeological discoveries. The Tomb of the Shroud located in the Hinnom Valley, south of the Old City of Jerusalem, reveals much about first-century life and burial practices.¹⁸ When and where Tabor stays with the facts, he is informative.

Northern Africa, and Israel, approximately 300-100 B.C. and even beyond A.D. 70, though there was a dramatic increase of use in the Jerusalem area during the reign of Herod the Great. This was probably due to the extensive quarrying for the temple, great amounts of cut limestone, and the number of stone masons available.²⁰

Having at least an introductory acquaintance with ossuaries will help us grasp part of Tabor's premise as we move through his book. Also one need take into account three major considerations as we look at *The Jesus Dynasty*:

1. *The Tentative Nature of Tabor's material.* Tabor's book is filled with

what can be labeled as fall-back language. His use of constant caveats strongly suggests that he is either uncertain or that he needs a back door if academic colleagues press him.

Consider his escape language: “presumably,”²¹ “the gospels imply,”²² “possibilities,”²³ “inconclusive,”²⁴ “possibility of it,”²⁵ “it is impossible to prove,”²⁶ “was likely buried,”²⁷ “new evidence might emerge,”²⁸ “One might assume,”²⁹ and “One has to assume.”³⁰

At one point, Tabor says of history that it involves an attempt “to retrieve and *imagine* a past”³¹ and “at this point there is no proof” and that “evidence might come to light.”³² These kinds of phrases are used repeatedly and things he proposes are possible or probable, but not certain.

He goes on to say that “there is much we can never know,” “some areas we are left to guess or speculate,” and that his explanation “seems reasonable” and “might have taken place.”³³ But Tabor is not finished, he adds “there is evidence to suppose” and “might have been.”³⁴ Based on this, no one should take this book seriously or think it offers objective and sure conclusions. It is not true history or even true archaeology.

The same James whom Tabor claims to hold in high esteem said, “But let your ‘Yes,’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No,’ lest you fall into judgment” (James 5:12).

MYSTERY!

This now takes the reader into a major campaign of Tabor’s book: what Tabor calls “The Mystery of the Talpiot Tomb.”³⁵ However, there really is nothing mysterious about the tomb’s find, its location, or its contents. There are many unanswered questions that Tabor admits simply because there was not enough evidence *in situ* to answer those questions.

Tabor begins his story this way:

“The tomb was in East Talpiot, just south of Jerusalem’s Old

City. The tomb had been uncovered when TNT was detonated by a construction crew putting up a new apartment complex. Israeli archaeologist Joseph Gath, now deceased, excavated it quickly so the construction could proceed.”³⁶

There were ten ossuaries. Six had names inscribed on the outside and four were plain. There was a Joseph, two Marys, Jude son of Jesus, Matthew, and a Jesus son of Joseph. Before we jump to unbiblical conclusions, as did Tabor, we must realize that there is no exact dating for the Talpiot Tomb and the span could run more than 150 years. The above names were so common that even Tabor has to admit such a grouping is “inconclusive.”³⁷

There is no way to know the exact relationship of the Marys to the others. Were they married to any of the men? Siblings to any? Parents? Offspring? Aunts? No one knows. Mary was the most common female name in that period and Joseph the second most common male name. The name Jesus, or Yeshua, also was very common. There was another “Jesus son of Joseph” ossuary discovered in Jerusalem around 1926.³⁸ Yet no serious scholar suggested it belonged to Jesus of Nazareth.

Tabor quotes Amos Kloner, who published a report on the Talpiot tomb. Kloner maintained that the “possibility of it being Jesus’ family [is] very close to zero.”³⁹ And Tabor himself admits that “it is impossible to prove that this particular tomb was related to Jesus of Nazareth.”⁴⁰ Yet Tabor somehow wants us to believe it might be, or that there just might be a Jesus family tomb in Jerusalem somewhere. It is an amazing exercise without an outcome. The bottom line seems to be to get our minds accustomed to the idea that there *might* be a tomb of Jesus somewhere in Israel.

Tabor works hard to inject a bit of sensationalism and mystery around the Talpiot tomb:

“The questions mounted: When had the tomb been discovered? Why had it not been immediately

reported to the public? Was there some type of cover-up due to the shocking contents of the tomb?”⁴¹

Like *The Da Vinci Code* author Dan Brown, Tabor is contriving a conspiracy for effect. The tomb was so uneventful and so unsensational that it added very little to archaeological research. There certainly was no cover-up, and we know when it was discovered.

NOT REALLY NEW

Moreover, Tabor was not the first to call attention to the Talpiot tomb. It was reported soon after it was opened. Joseph Gath released a public report in Hebrew in 1980, immediately following its discovery. The ossuaries were cataloged in *Levi Rahmani’s Catalog* in 1994, and available to the public for study. *Rahmani’s Catalog* of ossuaries is one of the “bibles” for ossuary study. He has cataloged almost 900 ossuaries. The actual Talpiot ossuaries are available to scholars and can be seen in Beth Shemesh, along with many others.

In 1996, the BBC aired an Easter special on the Talpiot tomb. So even to the English-speaking world, the information has been available for more than a decade. Also in 1996, a detailed report on the tomb with drawings was released by Amos Kloner. The report shows the discovery as uneventful and Kloner concludes, “This burial cave was probably used for three or four generations.”⁴² The exact relationship between the occupants of the tomb is impossible to determine.

Craig Evans’ informative book, *Jesus and the Ossuaries*, has an entire chapter called “Significant Ossuaries for Research in the Historical Jesus.”⁴³ Talpiot is not even mentioned.

There is no reason to think there would be a family tomb of Jesus in Jerusalem. A family from Nazareth would have its tomb in Galilee. Archaeologist Gordon Franz writes:

“According to early tradition, Joseph was buried in Nazareth. ... Early tradition also places Mary’s burial in Nazareth. ...

However, there is a 5th century AD tradition that places her tomb in the Kidron Valley near Gethsemane. ... The ossuary containing the bones of 'Yeshua' (704) could not be that of Jesus of Nazareth for two reasons. First, the New Testament is very clear, Jesus bodily rose from the dead. Since His flesh did not see corruption (Ps. 16:8-11; Acts 2:25-32), there could be no need for an ossuary. Second, ossuary No. 702 contained the bones of 'Yehuda, the son of Yeshua.' Apparently the Yeshua of ossuary No. 704 had a son named Yehuda. Again the gospels are clear, Jesus never married and never had children."⁴⁴

What makes little sense in the Tabor scenario is the hasty burial story he proposes with the body of Jesus later being moved. A Roman decree existed at that time making it a capital crime to desecrate a tomb and move a body.⁴⁵ The already fearful disciples would hardly want to add a capital crime to their resume just for a defunct hope and a corpse. Joseph of Aramathea would not have intervened had there already been a family tomb in Jerusalem; Mary and the beloved disciple would have taken care of the burial arrangements. Tabor's material is so speculative and tentative that no one should believe his conclusions.

2. The Deceptive Nature of Tabor's Material. Tabor makes much of a cave discovered in 1999 by Shimon Gibson. The cave is west of Jerusalem near Ein Karem. The cave also is referred to as the Suba Cave. It is about 70 feet long by 12 feet wide and 12 feet high.

Ein Karem is the *traditional* birthplace of John the Baptist. The cave, originally dug hundreds of years before Jesus, is an ancient cistern that *may* have been used by the Byzantine monks (A.D. 300-400) for shelter and cleansing rituals. There is a stick figure scratched into the wall that archaeologist Shimon Gibson suggests may be associated with John the Baptist, given the tradition of his

nearby birthplace. No one knows for sure what the figure represents or when it was put there or that John ever knew of the cave or ever visited it.⁴⁶ The Scriptures are clear and unequivocal that John baptized in the Jordan River east of Ein Karem, many miles away. There is no dispute that the area of the wilderness that was his ground for ministry was not the lush green hilly area of Ein Karem.

In 2004, Shimon Gibson's book, *The Cave of John the Baptist*, made a big splash because of the title and its subtitle, which claimed, "The Stunning Archaeological Discovery That Has Redefined Christian History." The book did not live up to the hype. The book fell flat and Gibson offered no evidence whatsoever that the cave had anything to do with John the Baptist in the first century.

Tabor tries to present a case that even Jesus used the cave for baptisms. In a section called "The 'Lost Years' of John,"⁴⁷ he strongly suggests the use of the cave by John and Jesus. In a later section, "Jesus in Judea,"⁴⁸ Tabor reverts totally to evasive language and imagination:

"I remember sitting outside the cave late one afternoon at sunset trying to *imagine* what could have occurred. Was it possible that Peter, James, John, and the other apostles, and maybe even Jesus' mother and brothers, had stood on this very ground and entered this very cave? ... Our Suba cave *might* well have been a central staging ground for Jesus' preaching and baptism campaign in late A.D. 27. That afternoon I found it easy to *imagine* Jesus and his followers at the Suba cave."⁴⁹

This seems to be an exercise in turning from the truth to fables. However, there were no ifs, maybes, mights, or imaginative scenarios in August 2004 when Tabor himself informed the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation that he was skeptical about the cave:

"James Tabor, who participated in the excavation with some of his students, is skeptical. He feels

there is no proof that John himself actually used the cave, located more than five kilometres from the New Testament preacher's hometown of Ein Kerem, now part of Jerusalem. However, both Tabor and [Shimon] Gibson agreed that the wall carvings — which depict a man wearing animal skins and holding a staff — tell the story of John the Baptist. The carvings are believed to have been made by monks in the fourth or fifth century."⁵⁰

Tabor just cannot seem to let go of a good tale:

"Since the discovery of this amazing site I have naturally wondered whether John the Baptist himself might have come to this cave. Clearly, short of an inscription, which we did not find, that can never be proven. However, it is far from unlikely and may even be probable."⁵¹

THE MAN BEHIND THE THEORY

Tabor also seems to relish introducing radical theories just for the sake of being novel. For instance, he writes that, "A more likely site for Jesus' crucifixion is on the Mount of Olives, east of the city."⁵² He offers neither historical nor archaeological evidence for this assertion. His references, "the Babylonian Talmud *Yoma* 68a; Mishnah *Sanhedrin* 6:1,"⁵³ written long after Christ, do not buttress the case and do not say that Jesus was crucified on the Mount of Olives. They only speak of the red heifer and the scapegoat. Unless Talmudic materials, which postdate second temple times, can be verified by earlier history and hard archaeological discoveries, they cannot be offered as firm proof.

There is far more historical evidence for the Church of the Holy Sepulcher as the crucifixion site, but even that is far from absolute. Tabor writes that Jesus "was hastily and temporarily buried in an unknown tomb."⁵⁴ The tomb is unknown today, but was known to His followers (Luke 23:55). Neither Tabor nor anyone else can

state that Jesus was buried on the Mount of Olives or temporarily, despite the inclusion in his book of "a 1st-century empty tomb on the Mount of Olives."⁵⁵

Tabor has borrowed this whole scenario from Ernest Martin, a former Worldwide Church of God fellow traveler. In the 1980s, Martin released a detailed study of his ideas based on vigorous text-twisting and heavy typology. Martin's paper has to do with the scapegoat being released over the Mount of Olives, east to the wilderness to die. To really press the typology, Jesus would have had to die in the wilderness somewhere near the Dead Sea. Martin identified the Mount of Olives as being "without the camp" (Hebrews 13:11), or outside the gate (v. 12).

What is the point of Hebrews 13:11-12 and the mention of Christ's sacrifice outside the temple and city? The point is not location, but identification. Where Christ was crucified is certainly not as important as why and its impact on us. Jesus identified with the ancient sacrifices and fulfilled them, being willing to suffer and die away from the temple. Now we who identify with Him should also be willing to identify with His rejection as verse 13 declares: "therefore let us go forth to Him outside the camp bearing His reproach." We are not called to go to the place of His sacrifice, but to boldly identify with Christ beyond the confines of the Jewish order. Martin made it all about location and made nothing of the main point of identification, which is the whole thrust of the context.

It is truly amazing what Martin does with Bible verses to fit his scenario. Somehow the Mount of Olives becomes *ros* or "head" from 2 Samuel 15:30,32, which he quickly shapes into the place of the skull. Patching verses together, Martin tries to form them into a shape to fit his theory. He, at times, selectively takes secondary meanings of Greek words to try to make a point. An example:

"So, if people wish to deny our new explanation, then interpret-

ing the words differently can give some evidence on their side. As stated before, almost all the words used in the description of the location and manner of Christ's crucifixion are capable of double interpretations — even triple or more meanings! This is the irony of the whole affair. It shows that God is capable of *revealing* absolutely, yet he can also *conceal* absolutely simply by choosing words to describe the events which can be differently interpreted!"⁵⁶

So if the Bible's words have two or three meanings and God conceals the meaning, then Martin would have us believe only he can tell us what the words really mean.

As with Tabor, Martin's view is not really a "new explanation," but one concocted by R.F. Hutchinson in the 1870s. It was ignored by the scholarly community and fell into oblivion until Martin tried to revive it.

Tabor does not go as far as Martin with the wilder typology. Martin contends that Jesus and the two thieves were all together crucified on the same tree trunk. This way they could look like a candelabra or Menorah with their arms extended up (though in crucifixion they were extended out), as well as look like and be a symbol of an almond tree, which represents the tree of life. He never explains why this typology is important.⁵⁷

3. The Distasteful Nature of Tabor's Material. Not only is Jesus denigrated and reduced to a failed Messiah, but Mary is seriously maligned. Tabor is correct when he says:

"For millions of Christians any suggestion that Jesus was conceived through the normal process of human sexual reproduction, even if somehow sanctified by God, is viewed as scandalous if not outright heresy."⁵⁸

Tabor then writes that we have two choices: either Joseph or some unnamed man was the father. Later, he names the "unnamed man" and suggests he has found his grave.

GOD'S GIVING BIRTH

Tabor throws out a red herring that, "This idea of humans being fathered by gods is quite common in Greco-Roman culture. There was a whole host of heroes who were said to be the product of a union between their mother and a god."⁵⁹ Here he is suggesting that early Christians just got confused and fell into mythology and legendary thinking. Neither the Bible nor early Christians ever suggested that Christ was the product of an intimate relationship of God with Mary. The cohabiting of gods in Greek mythology is quite unlike the annunciation story. The Bible is very discreet as it speaks of a miracle created within Mary by the Holy Spirit. Any suggestion otherwise is a gross distortion of the Bible's teachings and Christian belief.

The only modern group that comes close to that kind of thinking is the Latter-day Saints (Mormons). Former Mormon President Joseph Fielding Smith claimed that, "Christ was begotten of God. He was not born without the aid of Man, and *that Man was God!*"⁶⁰

All the tentative language in the world cannot mute where Tabor tries to take us. Chapter 3 is titled, "An Unnamed Father of Jesus?" Here Tabor alleges that later Christians tried to "'fix' the scandal"⁶¹ of Mary by altering Bible texts. Tabor leads his readers further along:

"So, if Jesus' father was not Joseph, who might it possibly have been? And what circumstances led Mary to being accused of fornication and labeled a 'whore'? In terms of any historical certainty we probably will never know. If we were filling out Jesus' birth certificate we would have to put down 'father unknown.' But the case is not entirely closed. There are stories and rumors that circulated quite early, and there is a name — *Pantera* — that seems to crop up here and there with some consistency."⁶²

Tabor says there is no certainty and we will probably never know because there are “stories and rumors.” Tabor then produces a name. The next section of the book is titled, “The Mystery of Pantera Solved.”⁶³

Tabor begins in A.D. 178, almost 200 years after the birth of Christ, and quotes an anti-Christian work called *On the True Doctrine* written by the Greek philosopher Celsus. At least we know where Tabor is coming from: He trusts pagan writers, but not the Gospel writers. He references the Babylonian Talmud and other questionable sources for Jesus, son of Panteri, though he admits the word and its meaning are obscure and has various spellings including “Pantira, Pandera, Pantiri, Panteri.”⁶⁴ He also gives no Talmudic context for the reference to Jesus, son of Panteri.

Tabor quotes historian Adolph Deissmann, who published an article on inscriptions from the first century that used the name Pantera/Panthera. Deissmann noted that a Pantera “had died in the middle of the 1st century A.D. and had come to Germany from Palestine.”⁶⁵ Tabor learned the tombstone was in Germany. He then muses about going there:

“Was it remotely possible that I would soon be standing before what might be an authentic relic of the family of Jesus?”⁶⁶

He then asks, “Is it remotely plausible that among all the thousands of tomb inscriptions of the period that this might be the tombstone of Jesus’ father?”⁶⁷ The short answer for the Christian is that it was not even remotely plausible or possible.

DOING THE MATH

Recalling that Deissmann said Pantera had died in the “middle of the 1st century,” Tabor says that Pantera died “at age sixty-two.”⁶⁸ Tabor also reveals that Pantera’s tombstone and the “other nine tombstones appear to date from around the same period — mid to late 1st century A.D., based on the coin evidence found in the cemetery.”⁶⁹ Jesus was born in 6-7 B.C., so if one just does

the math on Deissmann’s dates, Pantera would have had to have been five years old or younger when he met Mary or, as Tabor later suggests, raped Mary.⁷⁰ Based on Tabor’s “mid to late 1st century” date, Pantera may not even have been born, let alone cohabited with Mary in 6-7 B.C., the actual year of Jesus’ birth.

In his 535-page book, *Light From the Ancient East*, Deissmann gives just three-quarters of a page to the Pantera inscription, which demonstrates that he must have considered it insignificant. He says it was a common Roman name and appeared in late Jewish tradition “for the purposes of Jewish polemics.”⁷¹ What this means is simply that later Judaism made up a story of Jesus possibly being fathered by a Roman soldier.

All of Tabor’s ramblings and imagined stories are very distasteful and it is unfortunate to have to even address them. He certainly is opposed to the virgin conception — or miraculous conception — of Jesus, more commonly called the Virgin Birth.

Certainly the Bible gives us reason to believe that Jesus was conceived by and born to a virgin. For all the debate over Isaiah 7:14 and the Hebrew word *almah*, or virgin, the New Testament settles the issue when Matthew uses the Greek word *parthenos* and says, “Behold the virgin shall conceive and bear a son and they shall call His name Immanuel, which is translated ‘God with us’” (Matthew 1:23).

Luke confirms as well that Mary was a virgin (Luke 1:27). When the angel gives the message that, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you” (1:35), any Jewish mind would understand this as a creative act of God. Additionally, every Jewish mind would have had to connect Genesis 1 and the Spirit hovering over the waters in creation. Jesus was the beginning of a new creation. This creative act of God is alluded to in Hebrews 10:5, “a body You have prepared for Me.”

The idea of a miracle birth was not unfamiliar to Jewish thinking. The birth of the patriarch Isaac had a miracle element attached to it: “And the LORD visited Sarah as He had said, and the LORD *did* for Sarah as He had spoken. For Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time that God had spoken to him. And Abraham called the name of his son who was born to him — whom Sarah bore to him — Isaac” (Genesis 21:1-3, emphasis added).

Hebrew linguists Keil and Delitzsch call this “a miracle of grace ... the promise of God and the pledge of its fulfillment on the one hand, and the incapacity of Abraham for begetting children, and of Sarah for bearing them, on the other; and through this name, Isaac was designated as the fruit of omnipotent grace working against and above the forces of nature.”⁷²

In Hebrews 11 we find that Sarah’s faith is applauded, “By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised” (v. 11). The Jewish mind may have been accustomed to the idea of a miracle birth. Rabbinic teaching allowed for at least miraculous revitalization of the Matriarchs to conceive.⁷³

Robin Griffith-Jones explores the Gospels and suggests that Jesus is presented in Matthew as the new and greater Moses. The many parallels are striking. Of the many comparisons to Moses, Griffith-Jones points out a Jewish birth story of Moses and then compares it to Jesus’ birth in Matthew. It regards Moses and his father:

“‘Amram, a well-born Israelite,’ said Josephus, ‘fearing that his whole nation would be extinguished, and anxious for himself, for his wife was pregnant, was at a loss what to do; he prayed for God’s help on his people.’ We hear in other stories that the Jews in Egypt gave up all marital relations — anything to prevent the birth of children that Pharaoh would murder. The Jews’ re-

straint, of course, could have prevented the birth of just the one child that they needed; Moses himself. There is in one version of this story a clue that God himself ensured Moses' birth by a miraculous conception. Moses and Jesus may have even more in common than at first appears."⁷⁴

Surely the Gospels must have been circulating early since in A.D. 105 Ignatius declared Jesus "was truly born of a virgin."⁷⁵ The early Church and the early Church Fathers were all on board as far as the Virgin Birth. Justin Martyr (A.D. 160) echoed Ignatius, stating, "We even affirm that He was born of a virgin."⁷⁶

Irenaeus, in A.D. 180, said Christ "humbled Himself to be born of a virgin."⁷⁷ He also said that it was heretics who denied it. Clement of Alexandria (A.D. 195) believed "He who made the universe — assumed flesh and was conceived in the virgin's womb."⁷⁸ This is the universal voice of the historic orthodox faith that we call Christianity.

ANOTHER MAN BEHIND THE THEORY

If we use Tabor's tactics, we can selectively and subjectively dismiss any verse that does not agree with what we are trying to teach. This way we make the Bible say anything we want. We can torture the Bible to make it confess what we wish. We could say, as Tabor often does, that certain verses in the New Testament not fitting our particular scenario were added generations later, but that would be dishonest.

This all smacks of the obsolete theories of existentialist theologian Rudolph Bultmann (1884-1976). Bultmann, a German higher critic who lectured at Marburg, said that the idea of a suffering servant Messiah was unknown in first-century Judaism. Therefore, Bultmann said, references to Jesus as a suffering Messiah must have been written generations later. He did this with many Bible themes and dismissed the Bible as untrustworthy.

Now with the discovery and translation of the Dead Sea Scrolls, and the proliferation of knowledge of first-century Judaism, the theories of Bultmann have been discredited. Messianic ideas were part of the fabric of Judaism during the time of Jesus. A suffering Messiah was certainly in the thought processes of many Jews as shown by the Thanksgiving Scroll.⁷⁹

Just like Bultmann, Tabor relegates much of the material in the Gospels to the Byzantine era. He assigns less to the early Hebrew Christians in Israel and the few things left are attributed to Jesus. Bultmann taught in his principle of form criticism that oral tradition about Jesus, passed down for generations, became corrupted. In fact, Bultmann concluded that we can know almost nothing about the life of Jesus. All of Tabor's speculations are driven by Bultmann's presuppositions that a few stories of Jesus were handed down orally for many years and became seriously flawed. The post-apostolic Church corrupted them further by adding ecclesiastical material and mythology. The core assumption of Bultmann and Tabor seems to be that *there were no eyewitnesses* to Jesus. So we are to believe that the entire Church, after the first century, was involved in either massive delusion or deception. They just made up events — and the world bought it. Even if there was a long period of oral transmission (and we do not believe there was), why would we assume it was corrupted?

With the explosion of archaeology in Israel, especially in Jerusalem, we are lightyears beyond Bultmann in terms of knowledge about Jesus and first-century Judea.⁸⁰

NO DYNASTY HERE

The word "dynasty" may fit the Herods, but not Jesus. It may fit the Maccabean priests and kings, but not Jesus. It may fit Roman emperors, but certainly not Jesus. Jesus said that His kingdom was not of this world, but was rather a spiritual rule in hearts. He spoke about becoming like a child (Mark 10:15). He said, "You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them,

and their great ones exercise authority over them. *Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant*" (Mark 10:42-43 emphasis added). Jesus' kingdom was the opposite of this world. Not dynasty, but ministry. Not rule, but cross-bearing. Not lording it over others, but loving and serving others.

Tabor seems to think that James took precedence and became the ruler of the dynasty, but it was James who condemned exalting the rich and mighty and called partiality sin. According to James 2:1-9, the idea of a ruling dynasty would prove people to be transgressors of God's law. He also asserted, "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble" (4:6).

So we are to believe that verses which are a problem to Tabor were insertions into the Bible centuries after the fact by misguided Christians. With the discovery in Alexandria, Egypt, of ancient P fragments, the text of the Bible is virtually being pushed to the doorstep of the authors of the New Testament.⁸¹

Tabor plays a selective game with Scripture. The verses he disagrees with are brushed off as later insertions. This surely is not scholarship or objectivity, but sleight of hand making Tabor the sole arbiter of truth. It is a subjective exercise. Many of the so-called "Jesus scholars" do this and then try to tell us that though the New Testament cannot be trusted, the much later, heretical gnostic writings can be — because they have said so.

New studies of the texts of the New Testament by Carsten Thiede and others indicate that Matthew's Gospel dates to roughly A.D. 60. Before his death, Thiede was calling for a re-evaluation and redating of the New Testament text. Scholarly research is indicating a completion of the entire New Testament before A.D. 90, and some for a completion before the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. This certainly is not a closed issue.⁸²

Thiede's words are both perceptive and profound:

"One consequence of this ... has been the tyranny of theory and interpretation. If the Gospels are assumed to be unreliable, then the theorist becomes our only guide to the life of Jesus. It follows from this that almost anything can be — and has been — said about Jesus. If Jesus was not an Essene, then he was a Buddhist; or a profeminist and worshipper of the goddess 'Sophia'; or a Marxist revolutionary; or a politically correct left-winger who would feel at home on a university campus. It does not take much imagination to see that excessive use of theory makes us see Jesus as we want to see him, as a reflection of us, not as he was."⁸³

Endnotes:

1. Robert B. Strimple, *The Modern Search for the Real Jesus*. Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R Publishing, 1995, pg. 150.
2. James D. Tabor, *The Jesus Dynasty*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2006, pg. 4.
3. *Ibid.*, pg. 317.
4. *Ibid.*, pg. 311.
5. *Ibid.*, pp. 316, 317.
6. "James D. Tabor's Genesis 2000," *Ambassador Report*, March 1989, pg. 11. Document also available at: <http://thepainfultruth.org/ar/AR41.html>.
7. See further, Peter Ditzel, "The Two Faces of the Worldwide Church of God," *The Quarterly Journal*, January-March 1997, pp. 5-11; and Peter Ditzel, "Transforming the Truth - The Worldwide Church of God Continues to 'Make' History," *The Quarterly Journal*, July-September 1998, pp. 5-12.
8. "James D. Tabor's Genesis 2000," op. cit., pg. 12.
9. *The Jesus Dynasty*, op. cit., pp. 315-316.
10. Randall Price, *In Search of Temple Treasures*. Eugene, Ore.: Harvest House Publishers, 1994, pg. 146.
11. Haim Shapiro, "B'nai No'ach Delegation Visits Israel Tora Belt' Prospers Among American Baptists," *Jerusalem Post*, July 14, 1991, pg. 2.
12. Billy Jack Dial, "General Introduction to B'nai No'ach." Document available at: www.bnainoach.com/tiki-read_article.php?articleId=1.
13. *The Jesus Dynasty*, op. cit., pg. 303.
14. See further, Norman L. Geisler, *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1999, "Q Document," pp. 618-621.
15. *The Jesus Dynasty*, op. cit., pg. 63.
16. See further, G. Richard Fisher, "The

- Gospel of Thomas: Gnostic Nonsense?," *The Quarterly Journal*, January-March 1995, pp. 4, 10-11.
17. See further, J.D. Douglas, general editor, *The New 20th Century Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1991, pp. 358-359.
 18. *The Jesus Dynasty*, op. cit., pp. 6-15.
 19. See further, Bryon McCane, *Roll Back the Stone*. Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press, 2003, pp. 8-15, 40-47, 53-55.
 20. See further, Craig Evans, *Jesus and the Ossuaries*. Waco, Texas: Baylor Press, 2003, pp. 28-30.
 21. *The Jesus Dynasty*, op. cit., pg. 24.
 22. *Ibid.*
 23. *Ibid.*, pg. 25.
 24. *Ibid.*
 25. *Ibid.*
 26. *Ibid.*, pg. 27.
 27. *Ibid.*, pg. 33.
 28. *Ibid.*
 29. *Ibid.*, pg. 151.
 30. *Ibid.*, pg. 152.
 31. *Ibid.*, pg. 305, emphasis added.
 32. *Ibid.*
 33. *Ibid.*, pg. 308.
 34. *Ibid.*, pg. 316.
 35. *Ibid.*, pg. 22.
 36. *Ibid.*, pg. 24.
 37. *Ibid.*, pg. 25.
 38. *Jesus and the Ossuaries*, op. cit., pg. 94.
 39. *The Jesus Dynasty*, op. cit., pp. 25-26.
 40. *Ibid.*, pg. 27.
 41. *Ibid.*, pg. 23.
 42. Amos Kloner, "A Tomb with Inscribed Ossuaries in East Talpiyot, Jerusalem," *Atiqot* XXIX, 1996, pg. 21.
 43. *Jesus and the Ossuaries*, op. cit., pp. 91ff.
 44. Gordon Franz, "The Ossuaries of Joseph, Mary and Jesus Rediscovered in Jerusalem," undated paper, pg. 2, copy on file.
 45. *Jesus and the Ossuaries*, op. cit., pp. 35-37.
 46. See further, "Has John the Baptist's Cave Been Discovered?," *The Quarterly Journal*, January-March 2005, pp. 26-27.
 47. *The Jesus Dynasty*, op. cit., pp. 129-134.
 48. *Ibid.*, pp. 149-152.
 49. *Ibid.*, pg. 152, emphasis added.
 50. CBC Arts, "Archaeologists dispute discovery of biblical baptism cave," Aug. 16, 2004, copy on file.
 51. *The Jesus Dynasty*, op. cit., pg. 133.
 52. *Ibid.*, pg. 226.
 53. *Ibid.*, pg. 340.
 54. *Ibid.*, pg. 228.
 55. *Ibid.*, pg. 229.
 56. Ernest L. Martin, "The Place of the Crucifixion," *The Foundation Commentator*, September 1983, pg. 8, italics in original.
 57. *Ibid.*, pp. 9-12.
 58. *The Jesus Dynasty*, op. cit., pg. 59.
 59. *Ibid.*, pg. 60.
 60. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft Pub-

- lishers, 1954, Vol. 1, pg. 18, italics in original.
61. *The Jesus Dynasty*, op. cit., pg. 61.
 62. *Ibid.*, pg. 63.
 63. *Ibid.*, pp. 64-72.
 64. *Ibid.*, pg. 330, note 8.
 65. Deissmann quoted in *ibid.*, pg. 65.
 66. *Ibid.*, pg. 67.
 67. *Ibid.*, pg. 70.
 68. *Ibid.*, pg. 69.
 69. *Ibid.*
 70. *Ibid.*, pg. 70.
 71. Adolph Deissmann, *Light From the Ancient East*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1978, pg. 73.
 72. C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1985, Vol. 1, The Pentateuch, pg. 243.
 73. See further, Gerhard Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979, Vol. 5, pg. 835.
 74. Robin Griffith-Jones, *The Four Witnesses*. San Francisco: Harper, 2000, pp. 124-125.
 75. David Bercot, *A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs*. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1998, pg. 670.
 76. *Ibid.*
 77. *Ibid.*
 78. *Ibid.*
 79. See further, James Fleming, *The Messianic Idea in Israel*. LaGrange, Ga.: Biblical Resources, 2004; Israel Knohl, *The Messiah Before Jesus - The Suffering Servant of the Dead Sea Scrolls*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000; and Michael Wise, *The First Messiah*. San Francisco: Harper, 1999.
 80. To really understand how far we have come from Rudolph Bultmann, and for insight into post-Bultmannianism and the present Jesus Quest, consult *The Modern Search for the Real Jesus*, op. cit., and *The Jesus Quest* by Ben Witherington III. Both of these works are essential for a historical study of Jesus. The most complete and thorough refutation of Form Criticism and Bultmann was done in 1975 by Josh McDowell in *More Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, pp. 183-347.
 81. See further, Philip Wesley Comfort, *The Quest for the Original Text of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1992.
 82. See further, Carsten Peter Thiede, *Eyewitness to Jesus, Amazing New Manuscript Evidence About the Origin of the Gospels*. New York: Doubleday, 1996; and Carsten Peter Thiede, *The Emmaus Mystery*. New York: Continuum, 2005.
 83. *Eyewitness to Jesus*, op. cit., pg. 161, emphasis added.

true and affirming good doctrine?" Unfortunately, the answer is, "Not always," and that is a huge part of the problem. Ken Blanchard, for instance, is selling us seminars entitled, "Lead Like Jesus," but he himself has hardly been leading like Jesus. These seminars have the endorsement of leading Evangelicals and no one can fault the premise. The rub is that Blanchard, for many years, has been personally endorsing and even more than that, writing endorsements for New Age authors including Deepak Chopra. He has sung the praises of the Hoffman Process, which is of the occult. He is promoting enemy doctrine. We used to call it working both sides of the street.

help us. Subjectivity is a counterfeit Christianity. People are looking for inner voices when they should be finding appropriate *verses*.

The psalmist David so often struggled with his roller coaster emotions, but he knew that the direction he ultimately had to go was not within his "guts," but outside of himself. He knew his help was not from within himself or his fluctuating emotions and thought processes, but from the living, reigning Lord. He declared, "I will lift up my eyes to the hills; From whence comes my help? My help comes from the LORD, Who made heaven and earth" (Psalm 121:1-2). Again he says, "Unto You I lift up my eyes, O You who dwell in the heavens" (Psalm 123:1). God within, for meditation and communi-

church *per se*, but is largely a protest against fundamentalism, evangelicalism, and the past. What it will emerge into is a big question. Men like Brian McLaren, Rob Bell, Dan Kimball, and even the writings of the late Mike Yaconelli are telling us that the emphasis of churches should be almost entirely on tolerance, feelings, affections, experimentation, and experience — but not doctrine.

The emerging church, though an amorphous group, protests against conservatives and the previous generation of evangelicals as if they did nothing right. They seem to be orphans with amnesia and no past. After all, everything but their groups is outdated, they say. They alone understand current culture. Further out are sub-groups like Pete Ward's "Liquid Church" and Spencer Burke's TheOoze.com.⁵

In truth, the emerging church is simply repackaged liberalism and what was called higher criticism.

Rob Bell is typical of the emerging church mentality. He actually calls his church Mars Hill (located just outside Grand Rapids, Mich.), and has a membership of 10,000. Mars Hill (Acts 17) was a place that existed to discuss every thought and theory that man could concoct. Bell's new book, regrettably published by Zondervan, is entitled *Velvet Elvis*. His premise is that the Evangelical church, until now, is like an old, outdated Elvis picture painted on a velvet backdrop. Bell says he has one collecting dust in the basement. Bell's goal is to paint a new Jesus and a new Church. *The Grand Rapids Press* reported:

Blanchard's zero-percent discernment level can also be questioned in regard to his endorsement of Henri Nouwen. Nouwen, a deceased Roman Catholic priest, was sympathetic to Hindu and Buddhist beliefs. Blanchard quotes Nouwen's words favorably:

"To pray is to let that voice speak to the center of your being — to your guts."³

Is "that voice" in your "guts" the voice of God? Here both Blanchard and Nouwen confuse prayer, which is speaking up and out to our Heavenly Father, with working up inner voices and falling into the tangle of our imaginations and emotions. Dangerous indeed. If faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God (Romans 10:17), our "guts" will not

cation, is a Hindu construct and leads to the illusion of human godhood.

Blanchard has released a statement saying he would no longer write endorsements for New Age and occultic books, but will he also condemn New Age and Hindu philosophy as non-biblical? And then, too, will he withdraw existing endorsements as he should? Only time will tell. He needs to make a stand. Theology without apologetics is not the robust theology of the New Testament. When Jesus led, He affirmed truth and condemned error.

THEOLOGICAL BUFFET

Add to the above the fact that we are contending with the writings from what is called the emerging or emergent church movement.⁴ It is not a

"Bell also shakes up traditional evangelical beliefs. While calling Christ's way 'the best possible way to live,' Bell writes Jesus did not claim one religion is better than another when he said he was 'the way, the truth and the life.' Rather, he writes, 'his way is the way to the depth of reality.'"⁶

Because Zondervan is publishing books both for and against the emerging church, the publisher might need to be renamed Mars Press. In truth, the emerging church is simply repackaged liberalism and what was called

higher criticism. Paul had a dogmatic message to those at Mars Hill.

NOT REALLY SENSITIVE

Some make the mistake of lumping in the “seeker sensitive” churches with the emerging church. This is not to give a thumbs up to seeker sensitive methods necessarily, but only to state they predate the emerging church by decades. The emergent groups even accuse the seeker sensitive groups of being behind the times.

Jesus instructed us to keep on teaching His commands until the end of the age. Surely the age has not ended unless one believes Harold Camping!¹⁷ Paul taught a definite cause and effect in 2 Timothy 4:3-4 and that when people turn from the truth they *will* turn to fables, “The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears from the truth and be turned aside to fables.” The trend to abandon doctrine for fads and myths is being fulfilled before our eyes.

Harry Ironside comments:

“And we see the evidence of that on every hand. People turn away from the truth and take up with — what? With Spiritism, Theosophy, and all kinds of other weird systems and strange cults. They turn away from the truth to satanic doctrines that lead men down to perdition.”⁸

The New Testament repeatedly warns us of disregarding apostolic doctrine and promoting false doctrine. The early gnostics were adept at this in the pre-Nicene period and the history of the Church can be viewed from the standpoint of the struggle against false teaching and heresies. Heresy abounded in the first few centuries of the Church, but the leaders and writers were rock-solid apologists. This is no longer the case. The big names and highly visible writers of our times are helping to spread the confusion and apologists are few and far between. Doctrine

and discernment are out, mysticism and subjectivism are in. Apologists are out, flakiness is in.

GNOSTICISM RIDES AGAIN

Philip Jenkins makes us aware of the fact that gnostic myths long ago trounced and defeated by the Church are enjoying a comeback and replacing sound doctrine today:

“...dense mystical texts written 1800 years ago by obscure Syrian and Egyptian heretics have demonstrated real appeal for a modern mass audience. The alternate gospels play a central role in the ‘Jesus books’ published by the major commercial publishing houses, which give the impression that *Thomas, Peter*, and the rest do in fact represent gospel truth, that they even predate the famous four evangelists. The picture of early Christianities described here has been popularized not just through academic books and articles but through many popular presentations, in television documentaries such as the PBS series *From Jesus To Christ*, broadcast in 1998. Through such means, texts like *Thomas* have become a familiar presence in religious debate and consciousness. As one orthodoxy is established, so older ideas are relabeled as deviant or marginal: in terms of understanding early Christianity, the heretical has virtually become orthodox, and vice versa.”⁹

Greek scholar Kenneth Wuest shows us the Greek nuances and tenses and renders Paul’s words in 2 Timothy 4:3-4 as follows:

“...dominated by their own personal cravings, they, having ears that desire merely to be gratified, shall gather to themselves an accumulation of teachers. In fact, from the truth they shall also avert the ear, and [as a result] they shall receive a moral twist which will cause them to believe that which is fictitious.”¹⁰

So there is this horrible danger and a detrimental effect when doctrine is

ignored and that ignorance justified. Philip Jenkins adds:

“...the emphasis on the ‘real’ Jesus of the alternative gospels ‘appears to legitimate precisely the sort of religion that a large swathe of America yearns for: a free-for-all, do-it-yourself spirituality with a strong agenda of social protest against the powers that be and an I’m-OK-you’re-OK attitude on all matters religious and ethical. You can have any sort of spirituality you like (Zen, walking labyrinths on church floors, Tai Chi) as long as it isn’t orthodox Christianity.’ Some have given this eclectic creed the suspect title of ‘flexodoxy,’ flexible orthodoxy.”¹¹

WELCOME TO WONDERLAND

In *Through the Looking-Glass and what Alice found there*, Alice asks the Cheshire cat, “Would you tell me, please which way I ought to walk from here?” The cat responds, “That depends a good deal on where you want to get to,” to which Alice responds, “I don’t much care where.” The cat then says, “Then it doesn’t matter which way you walk.”

Well, it does matter. And for the true Christian, it matters a lot. The discerning believer wants to walk a biblical path, knowing that a biblical path is the only path that is ultimately safe and has God’s blessing. How strange then that from within the corridors of the Charismatic and Evangelical churches (as we’ll see), some are suggesting that we can live without direction and doctrine.

The Apostle Paul also said, “Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine” (1 Timothy 4:13). The Greek word for attention, *prosecho*, was used of a priest attending to God’s altar. It means to give devotion of thought and effort, and to be wholly devoted to doctrine. It involves thinking about doctrine and working at knowing it. It also carries the idea of perpetuating good doctrine for the sake of Christ and others.

The Evangelical and Charismatic churches have lost their way and are

awash on a sea of fads and emotions. They have in many cases surrendered their doctrinal road map to the devil. We need those who will rise up and help others find their way again. Let us progress systematically through the problem and the solution.

1. *There is a definite neglect of doctrine:* The Church has battled the issue of doctrinal neglect and false doctrine for centuries. In the book of Acts, Paul constantly countered false teaching with sound doctrine. From the beginning of the Church, Jenkins tells us, "Christian communities already believed there was true doctrine, and there was false, and such a dichotomy is evident throughout the New Testament, ... the concept is assuredly present, in the stark enunciations of 'deceivers,' 'antichrists,' and false prophets; ... For these early writers, it was quite conceivable for an intellectual current to place itself completely beyond the bounds of the Christian movement."¹²

SMALL BEGINNINGS

Those who neglect good doctrine *always end up in heresy*. However, when the good guys began to neglect doctrine, problems really mounted. In our day, there are those we thought were the good guys who are not only neglecting good doctrine, but denying it and denigrating it. Like the Israelites of old, good is being called evil (Isaiah 5:20).

The slippery slide among Protestants really began in the 17th century with George Fox and the Quakers. Apologist Ron Rhodes gets to the core of Quakerism and the "Inner Light" concept:

"This Inner Light doctrine ultimately meant that revelation was no longer limited to the Scriptures. Even though the Bible is to be valued, its words should not be taken as God's final and definitive revelation. New revelations could come today just as they did in the days of the apostles. After all, the men who wrote the Bible did so under the power of the Holy Spirit. Since that same Holy Spirit works

through us today, revelations can continue today."¹³

Here is the frightening part: While Quakerism was once a marginalized minority, it is *the face of and the working philosophy of the Charismatic and Evangelical church by and large today*. The Latter Rain Apostles and Prophets Movement is repackaged Quakerism with a vengeance. Henry Blackaby's "Experiencing God" is a euphemism for experiencing one's own emotions.¹⁴

Quaker Richard Foster is one of the hottest tickets today.¹⁵ Medieval Catholic mysticism is now being touted as a deeper and more spiritual way. Contemplative practices from the Dark Ages are being dragged out of the attic and dusted off and sold as the newest form of spirituality. Presbyterian feminist Mary Ann Lundy is right when she said that "yesterday's heresies are becoming tomorrow's Book of Order."¹⁶ And it is all under the guise of "evangelical" and "spiritual" and "deep."

Added to the mysticism that leavened Christianity since the time of the Quakers was the ferment in the Academic world called the "Enlightenment." Some would argue that the word enlightenment is a misnomer. It was more the "Endarkenment." The period of so-called "Enlightenment" was the "rationalist, liberal, humanitarian, and scientific trend of thought of the 18th cent[ury]."¹⁷ Names such as Voltaire (Francois-Marie Arouet), David Hume, Thomas Paine, and Immanuel Kant are associated with the movement. In essence, the idea that seemed most prevalent was that knowledge did not begin with God and the revelation of God in the Word, but with man. However, we know from Scripture that the inexorable law is that when man rules God out and is left to himself, he begins to invent superstitions. As John Calvin said, "man's nature ... is a perpetual factory of idols."¹⁸

Mysticism and "enlightenment" thought merge as man tries to figure things out apart from Scripture and

moves into all kinds of mystical subjective extremes. In some extreme Charismatic circles, clichés are being used comparing Scriptures to moldy bread, old words, and other such things. The "soaking" prayer centers of John Arnott, which are just repackaged and renamed Toronto blessing replete with altered states and visualization, encourage seeking God within emotions and experiences as not only an adjunct to the Bible, but superior to it. There is really nothing new in Toronto. Kits to set up your own soaking center can be purchased, of course.

NOTHING NEW UNDER THE SUN

We see here Quakerism and enlightenment at full tilt. Mystical writers are being touted as if they were Protestant saints. But it gets worse. Some people within the extreme wing of the Charismatics actually denigrate and despise doctrine. Trinity Broadcasting Network founder and president Paul Crouch has gone so far as to ridicule doctrine and call it "doo-doo." There is an obvious hatred and venom as far as doctrine is concerned. Crouch obviously has many other motives in trying to "deep six" Bible doctrine. Most of what is promoted on his TBN would fold if anyone there were observing what the Bible really says.

A more credible Paul, this one a true apostle, advises, "Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, *contrary to the doctrine which you learned*, and avoid them. For those who are such *do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ*, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple" (Romans 16:17-18, emphasis added). Paul also commands the elders to "labor in the word and doctrine" (1 Timothy 5:17). Additionally, Paul commands respect for doctrine, saying it is to be shown "integrity" and "reverence" (Titus 2:7).

Kevin Reeves, a former Charismatic extremist, in considering modern day false prophets and prophecies, expresses his concerns about the growing rejection of doctrine:

“Due in large part to a variety of powerful movements within the Church during the 1990’s, Christianity itself is undergoing a dramatic redefinition. Despite its description for the pure doctrine of the gospel once for all delivered to the saints (Jude 3), the word ‘orthodox’ has taken on almost profane connotations. For a Christian to stand up and declare a simple faith in the written text of Scripture is to invite almost certain ridicule in some sectors of the believing community. It is becoming an increasingly common practice to openly denigrate adherence to the Scriptures alone. The familiar mantra of ‘God is doing a new thing’, has effectively squelched sincere examination of certain doctrines making an impromptu appearance in the average congregation. The peer pressure to ‘jump into the river’, no matter how muddied the theological waters, has proven to be an impetus hard to resist. No one wants to be thought ‘unspiritual’, and that is exactly the inference applied if a church member refuses to ‘get with the program’ — even if the program is Biblically flawed.”¹⁹

MASS CONFUSION

Sensationalist author Jim Rutz gives himself to ranting and creates a straw man regarding doctrine when he claims that the Catholic Church has killed “25 million over the centuries ... for being heretics.” Whether this figure is accurate or not is not the point. Rutz argues the deaths occurred and it “all started with doctrine. Following the early church’s struggles with heresies, finely tuned systems of doctrine were hammered out. Eye-crossing, i-dotting precision was achieved, even in issues like the nature of the Trinity, the incarnation of Christ, and the conflict between predestination and free will, all of which are beyond the abilities of men’s minds to explain fully.”²⁰

Rutz needs to learn the difference between Roman Catholic dogma and biblical doctrine. That is, the differ-

ence between true doctrine and false doctrine. He also needs to understand that true doctrine did not lead to Catholicism’s programs and inquisitions, but rather their false view of having the power of the State and the power of capital punishment for all dissenters to Roman Catholic dogma and tradition. This was not about the Bible or Bible doctrine, but about everyone in those times being subject to the Pope and Rome’s whims. The Roman Catholic Church was willing to use sword and flame to force total compliance to their false teachings and authority. This certainly is a misplaced absolutism. For Rutz to equate sound doctrine in Scripture to Catholic heresies is a horrible distortion and is downright irresponsible. No wonder the people reading Rutz (mostly Charismatic audiences) equate true doctrine with evil.

And there are others. A true believer can only shudder as they hear the following from religious writer Frederick Buechner as he gives his opinion about the Bible:

“In short, one way to describe the Bible, written by many different men over a period of three thousand years and more, would be to say that it is a disorderly collection of sixty-odd books which are often tedious, barbaric, obscure, and teem with contradictions and inconsistencies. It is a swarming compost of a book, an Irish stew of poetry and propaganda, law and legalism, myth and murk, history and hysteria.”²¹

DEFINITION, PLEASE

Before proceeding, it is essential to pause and establish a definition of doctrine. The Greek words for doctrine are *didache* (pronounced did-ah-kay) and *didaskalia*. Both basically mean instruction, teaching, or what is taught. The Scriptures circumscribe the word so that we know what it is, and what it is not. It is not just teaching in general or just anyone’s teaching, but is the *teachings of the apostles and those authorized by the apostles*. Everett Harrison defines doc-

trine as “the teaching of Scripture on theological themes.”²² The following Scriptures reveal how we are to view New Testament doctrine:

“And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine” (Acts 2:42).

“That you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior”²³ (2 Peter 3:2).

“If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord” (1 Corinthians 14:37).

Fred Zaspel and Tom Wells elaborate on the uniqueness of the apostles’ teaching and doctrine, showing the centrality of the Holy Spirit and how the Holy Spirit gives their doctrine final authority:

“His promise is to his apostles. This is the task for which he had called them. *They* will be taught ‘everything.’ The Holy Spirit will remind *them* of ‘everything’ which Jesus had spoken. The Spirit will guide *them* into ‘all truth.’ This is the Spirit’s role. Jesus’ teaching ministry to his disciples was not complete when he died, but through his replacement, the Holy Spirit, he had provided for its continuation and completion.”²⁴

They continue:

“There is something of a parallel here. Just as the Son had come to speak for the Father, so also the Spirit would come to speak for the Son. ‘He will not speak on his own’; he will speak for and of Christ. This is his great role in the history of revelation. He is commissioned to ensure that these chosen men will recall all that the Lord had taught them when he was with them, to guide them into a fuller understanding of it, and to continue that teaching until it is complete. He will

give them illumination, fuller revelation, and new revelation. This 'other helper' will bring the climactic revelation of the Son to its culmination."²⁵

These authors then press home all the implications of the Spirit's special ministry to the apostles and why their *didache* is so singular and to be heeded by all the Church:

"Jesus, then, is emphasizing not only the uniqueness of the Holy Spirit, he is also stressing the uniqueness of the apostles. They are the repositories of God's full and final revelation. God has spoken fully and finally in no less than his Son. God's climactic word 'was declared at first through the Lord, and it was confirmed to us by those who heard him' (Heb. 2:3)."²⁶

That is why Paul can say to Timothy, "you may charge some that they teach no other doctrine" (1 Timothy 1:3). However, because so many in the Church today are ignoring these words, the Church has become a sieve instead of a fortress, and everything is getting through. The wall between true and false doctrine has become so porous that the average Christian is not only confused, but defenseless.

BY ANY OTHER NAME

Doctrine could be referred to as teachings, commands, and even the apostles' "tradition," or "our word" as in 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14. The apostles' traditions or literally teachings (*paradosis* is the handing down of instructions or laws) were ultimately written down in our New Testament.

F.F. Bruce clears up any confusion that might occur when we speak of the apostles' traditions:

"...revelation and apostolic tradition are but two sides of one coin. Jesus does not figure simply in apostolic tradition as Moses does in rabbinic tradition: as the ever-living Christ He maintains and authenticates the tradition throughout the apostolic age until it ceases to be oral tradition and becomes Holy Scripture. ...

Whereas Western Christians tend to set 'scripture' and 'tradition' over against each other, as though tradition were oral only and not written, there is no reason why tradition should not take written form. If it is apostolic tradition, in due course it takes written form and becomes apostolic scripture."²⁷

Another way in which doctrine is referred to is the "form" or "pattern of sound words." Paul says to "hold fast the pattern of sound words which you heard from me" (2 Timothy 1:13). In Romans 6:17, Paul says, "yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered." As Bernard Ramm suggested many years ago, apostolic doctrine was the pattern of authority for the Church.

Missed by some is the fact that when Paul refers to "*the faith*," he is referring to doctrine. To say *the faith*, is a way of referring not to our personal, individual, subjective faith, but rather the content of our faith, that is, what we believe. *The faith* is what we believe in. When faith is preceded by the Greek word *tas* (the), it is a synonym for doctrine or as Ernest Wilson states, it's a "synonym for the message itself. ... the doctrine believed."²⁸ It is "*the faith* once delivered to the saints" (Jude 3, emphasis added).

Listen again to Paul:

"Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from *the faith*, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, ... If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine which you have carefully followed" (1 Timothy 4:1, 6, emphasis added).

Nowadays no one seems to carefully follow doctrine, so no wonder the devilish doctrines are so prevalent. How fitting then for our Lord to have asked, "Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find

the faith on the earth?"²⁹ (Luke 18:8).

HUNG UP

New Age adherents and others often accuse believers of being "hung up" on doctrine. Would to God that more Christians were. The derogatory statements in regard to our attachment to doctrine should not throw us off from realizing that false teachers are following and espousing doctrine as well. The problem is it is false doctrine as Paul predicted.

Benjamin Creme pontificates on God:

"In a sense there is no such thing as God, God does not exist. And in another sense, there is nothing else but God, only God exists. ... This microphone is God. This table is God. All is God. And because all is God there is no God."³⁰

Realize it or not, that is doctrine. It is foolish, contradictory, and false doctrine, but it is doctrine nevertheless.

Pop-icon Madonna can obfuscate and play word games all she wishes when she says:

"I can disagree with doctrines and dogmas, and still celebrate them. I go to the synagogue. I study Hinduism. [Religion is] about realizing that all paths lead to God in the end, and that everybody decided ... to sort of segregate and say, 'No, these are my rules. No, I believe that God came from here. No, I believe that Jesus is not the Son of God. No, I believe in this, and I believe in that.' And the thing is ... they're all the same."³¹

Unfortunately like Creme, Madonna needs a course in logic. Something cannot be different and the same. This kind of rambling nonsense and stacking of contradictions is her own doctrine and dogma, as false, silly, and illogical as it is. Madonna may hate and reject biblical doctrine, but she is espousing false doctrine.

Across the board there is not only the neglect of apostolic doctrine, but

the despising and denigrating of that sound doctrine. This leads, as Paul says, to the promotion of mythical doctrine.

2. *Distinctions and nuances that need to be addressed:* One of the nuances that needs to be stressed is that a group may call its teaching doctrine, but that does not equate it with the Bible or the apostles' doctrine. The Bible is very clear that there is false teaching, heresy, and error contrary to the doctrines we have learned in the Bible. You can call something a rose, but if it looks like a dandelion and smells like one, it probably is a dandelion. That the apostles' doctrine was the bedrock of the orthodox Church and for the early Church Fathers and the Reformers, there is no doubt. It is only in these modern times of relativism and mysticism that the Church has moved away from propositional truth.

Ignatius, in A.D. 105, declared, "Study, therefore, to be established in the doctrines of the Lord and the apostles."³²

In A.D. 180, Irenaeus stated that the Church "is guarded and preserved without any forging of Scriptures, by a very complete system of doctrine."³³

Tertullian, in A.D. 197, asserted, "We hold communion with the apostolic churches because our doctrine is in no respect different than theirs. This is our witness of truth."³⁴

Cyprian, in the mid-third century, upheld biblical doctrine, stating, "So, then, neither the apostle himself nor an angel from heaven can preach or teach anything other than what Christ has once taught and that His apostles have announced. Therefore, I wonder very much from where this practice has originated. For it is contrary to the evangelical and apostolic discipline."³⁵

John Calvin reflects the Reformers and their realization of and insistence on the absolute necessity of a fixed body of doctrine:

"For if we reflect how prone the human mind is to lapse into forgetfulness of God, how

readily inclined to every kind of error, how bent every now and then on devising new and fictitious religions, it will be easy to understand how necessary it was to make such a depository of doctrine as would secure it from either perishing by the neglect, vanishing away amid the errors, or being corrupted by the presumptuous audacity of men."³⁶

How desperately we need the doctrines of Scripture. Sane voices in the Church echoed it over and over.

WORN OUT CLICHÉS

A second nuance is: Clichés that are often used in an attempt to silence us.

This "you are narrow" put-down is often thrown out along with the cliché that "doctrine divides." Yes it does; it divides truth from error, right from wrong, and good from evil.

Name calling is often used and discerning people are called "heresy hunters" or "Pharisees" or other derogatory names. A discernor is said to have a "religious spirit."

Another cliché is that doctrine is too narrow. Since Jesus talked of the narrow way (Matthew 7:13-14), that should not bother us at all. This "you are narrow" put-down is often thrown out along with the cliché that "doctrine divides." Yes it does; it divides truth from error, right from wrong, and good from evil.

Then we hear that doctrine boxes us in to exclusive truth claims. In a day of political correctness, claiming to

know truth is an abomination. When we hear that doctrine forces us into exclusive truth claims, our first response should be, "So what!" After all, we serve an exclusive Savior who will have no rivals. Acts 4:12 reminds us that, "There is no other Name under heaven whereby we must be saved." We do not hear Muslims apologizing for Allah and Mohammed. It is difficult to imagine the godly remnant of the Old Testament being convinced by the pagan Canaanites to abandon Yahweh because they were being too exclusive.

D.A. Carson says of an exclusive way of salvation:

"When all the world is appealing to the finality (!) of religious

pluralism, the insistence that there is only one way of salvation may be the mark of faithful witness, not least when those who bear the witness are willing to suffer and die for their confession of the truth. So it was during the first three centuries."³⁷

Our second response should be that we are not the only ones with claims of exclusive truth. All religions have them: Roman Catholicism, Islam, even Baha'i. If two plus two equals four, then so does mathematics. We should all be glad the next time we step onto an airplane or undergo a surgeon's scalpel, that there are exclusive truth claims in aviation and medicine.

Many years ago John Hatchard penned a children's book titled *Hedge of Thorns*. It told of a small village which had a huge thick hedge of thorns about ten feet high running through the village and all the way to the school. It protected the children from a sheer cliff on the other side.³⁸ In the mercy of God, He has given us sound doctrine as a hedge to protect us from the precipice of false teaching and deadly error. Good doctrine keeps us from teachings that would harm both physically and eternally. Absence of good doctrine always leads down the path of speculation. We flounder around looking for secular and cultural versions of truth and destroy the hedges that were meant to keep us safe.

Another practical nuance is that we must be careful never to put doctrines in conflict, but to hold them in balance. Yet writers make this error all the time. How so? Sometimes writers with a cultic agenda cast the love of God against the justice and truth of God as if they are in real contradiction. They suggest that hell could not be that real or that bad if God were all that loving. Yet how loving would God be if he dragged a Hitler, or a Judas, or a Stalin into heaven and subjected heaven to unjudged sin and unrepentant sinners? Revelation 22:11 assures us this is not the case. Doctrines must always be held in balance. One of God's attributes cannot be used to distort or silence His other attributes.

Doctrine cannot be put at the mercy of our emotions. Truth is truth and we cannot declare something true only if it agrees with us and makes us feel good. *There are no doctrines in conflict* because God is perfectly consistent.

Another almost unrecognized nuance is the realization that correct doctrine can be so layered over with incorrect doctrine that it puts the correct doctrine completely out of reach. A prime example is the Pharisees and the rebuke of Jesus, "These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips,

but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men" (Matthew 15:8-9). The point Jesus makes is also stated in verse 6, "You have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition." We can believe the right — wrongly.

AT THE CORE

Do we really get the point? At times we are told that we cannot critique a false teacher or group because they have an "orthodox core." No one had a more orthodox core than the Pharisees. Many false teachers talk about Jesus and even "accepting Jesus." An orthodox core does not ensure orthodoxy if one is kept effectively from that core.

Let me illustrate. I see a \$100 bill below a sewer grate in the street. It is a perfectly good \$100 bill and there is no doubt about it. I see it, I know it is there, so I lay down and slip my arm through the grate, but my arm is too short! The money is out of reach. Suppose I get a long stick and put some chewed gum on the end, but I notice the bill is laying precariously over the outflow and even slight pressure will only push it in. No matter how good that money is, it is unreachable to me. It is genuine, but I cannot really access it.

If someone offered you an apple that was all rotted and covered with green and black fuzz, there is little chance that you would want it, even if the core was okay.

You can have a correct theology (doctrine of God) and even a correct Christology (doctrine of Christ), but if you have a defective soteriology (doctrine of salvation), your arm is too short. I can have a correct Christ, but no way to reach Him. If a cult layers over the Savior with dozens of rules and regulations I could never fulfill, my arm is too short. Even if the Mormons adopted a correct view of God and Christ overnight, but still kept the blockades and steps to try to reach Him, their orthodox core would be layered over by the traditions of men, and my arm would still be too short.

A correct view of God is of no help if I have no correct way to reach Him and vice versa. If Jesus is layered over by Mary, saints, rituals, and dozens of other impediments, then my arm is too short. We need not only a correct Christ, but also a correct access to Him. This is another reason why doctrines must be held in balance.

Suppose one even talked about "accepting Jesus," but then has a skewed view of the Trinity and nature of God, as does T.D. Jakes. I have the wrong Jesus. I have a fictional Savior.

3. *The desperate need for doctrine:* We desperately need doctrine. This is urgent because doctrine directs, corrects, and protects us. As Paul stresses the importance of the inspired Word, he says it is profitable for, first of all, doctrine (2 Timothy 3:16). Without doctrine, there could not be reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness; things we urgently need. We would be left to our own imaginations and self-striving.

Jay Adams stresses the urgent and desperate need for doctrine along with responsible eldership:

"Sheep are naturally stupid. One theologian who lived with a shepherd in Palestine told me that they are so foolish that they will eat themselves lost. So long as they find grass they will go on eating it, regardless of where this may take them, even if they leave the rest of the flock behind. Sheep need the everyday oversight of a shepherd who lives with and guides them so as to see to it that they don't do such things. Isaiah attested to this 'straying' character of sheep when he wrote 'All of us like sheep have gone astray. Each of us has turned to his own way' (Isaiah 53:6, KJV). That is why the sheep often get 'lost.' Of course, poor shepherding itself also may lead to such a condition: 'My people have become lost sheep; their shepherds have led them astray' (Jeremiah 50:6)."³⁹

Adams stresses what good leadership is to be doing, "They not only 'teach' all that Christ 'commanded,' but assist the members of the flock to 'observe' those commandments."⁴⁰

Hear the urgent words of the Apostle Paul, "Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you" (1 Timothy 4:16).

Paul uses the word "save." Weren't Timothy and his hearers already saved? The Greek root for save is *sozo* and has a range of meanings. It can often mean to preserve or keep safe and healthy. Its range of meanings have to do with ongoing spiritual health and growth. Larry Dixon sees the issues clearly:

"It's commonly said that 'what you don't know can't hurt you' — but is that really true? If we don't know that God is everywhere, the resulting loneliness could cripple our Christian lives. If we know little about the doctrine of God's goodness, then we may struggle for years, afraid to surrender ourselves completely to Him. The doctrines of the Christian faith should not only inform us of what we need to know, but should also *form* us into the people we should be. Ignorance of the truths of biblical Christianity hinders growth in godliness."⁴¹

As a new believer, I did not know much. I encountered my first Christian Scientist when I was barely months in the Lord. Sitting in her living room she went on about the illusion of reality, the non-existence of matter, and sin as an error of mortal mind. In my naive innocence, I could already see through what she was saying because I, at least, knew Genesis 1:1 and that our God created the world.

I said to her, "You eat, right?" She responded, "Yes," with a puzzled look and I then asked her to explain why she was feeding a non-existent body. After gaining her composure she offered that she was not yet that

far along in her faith and went on sharing the views of Mary Baker Glover Patterson Eddy.

I again caught her off guard when I inquired about the picture of the pretty young lady on the mantle. It was, as I suspected, her daughter. I then completely flustered her once more when I asked how she managed to give birth to a non-existent baby. Her reply again was she had not gotten that far along in her faith yet. Though humorous at times, it can take on a more menacing tone. The denial of sickness could lead to more disastrous consequences. Some Christian Scientists have gone as far as withholding medical attention from their children with heart wrenching outcomes. Good doctrine keeps us spiritually healthy and helps us to not make foolish decisions when it comes to our physical and spiritual care.

How about those who have an incorrect doctrine of redemption and do not realize that they are freed from the past. They go on playing "old tapes" in their head and do not work at forgetting the things that lie behind as Paul commanded (Philippians 3:13).

If one goes on living in a cesspool mentally, he can expect to be down, depressed, and his growth stunted. He may come to believe that he needs an exorcist to heal his "woundedness" when what he really needs is a larger view of God, forgiveness, and the doctrine of redemption. He needs to rejoice daily that God remembers sin no more (Hebrews 8:12) and set his mind on true, noble, pure, and lovely things (Philippians 4:8). He is set free from the guilt and hold of his past. There is a desperate need for good sound healthy doctrine. It protects us because it is truth that sets us free and as well sanctifies us (John 17:17).

But not only does sound doctrine sanctify, correct, and protect us — it directs us. We need to study doctrine for our own spiritual health and growth, but also share it for the sake of others. We need to be sheep and shepherds simultaneously. We need

to "save" ourselves and those who hear us. Are we ready for that?

SHEEP, SHEPHERDS AND WORK

Mark Hamby ministers largely at homeschool conventions. He shares at one point in his life he had struggles in his marriage and had tough times parenting. Part of his struggle was his self-willed and controlling nature. His inability to totally control others often left him angry and frustrated. He was very hard and very heavy-handed, and it took God to break him and change him. He often had unexpressed expectations of others that set them up for failure. Worst of all, he thought he was always right. He would take his family for counseling to try to get the counselor to "fix" and "align" them to his own agenda.

One huge event in his life occurred while he lived on and managed a farm. It seemed to be an idyllic setting, but he drove his family with many of the farming chores. Hamby recalls how he had oversight of a flock of sheep, but they would never follow him. He knew he was a terrible shepherd. One winter evening he could not get them into the barn, and in total anger and frustration he left them out, and overnight they all froze to death. This was a terrible price to pay for his anger. As he dug a hole and began dumping the frozen carcasses in for burial, his daughter about eight years of age saw the sight and was traumatized. All she could say through her tears and sobs was, "Daddy, you are not a good shepherd — you are not a good shepherd!" For months after the incident the relationship between father and daughter was strained at best. This would be a lesson in the patience and love of God.

In the spring with a new flock of sheep, lambing time came. Hamby recounts how he and his daughter were midwives to a new lamb being born. However, it was obvious that the new born was in deep distress with its throat and nose filled with mucous making it unable to breathe. His daughter panicked and kept

pleading, "Daddy do something, do something, daddy, please do something."

DESPERATION TIME

In desperation, Hamby did all he could do. He pulled the lamb into his arms and put most of its little face into his mouth and began to draw out the mucous and spit it on the floor. He continued the unimaginable process until the lamb was breathing without difficulty. There was dead silence and for long moments the mother of the lamb just kept staring at Hamby. She tilted her head back and forth and stared. As Hamby got up to exit the barn the whole flock led by the mother followed him. Just amazing. As he strode out of the barn into the yard with the whole flock at his heels he said he felt like Moses crossing the Red Sea. Any direction he turned they followed. His daughter seeing all this could only say with proud admiration, "Oh daddy, daddy, you *are* a good shepherd — a very good shepherd."

Doctrinal illiteracy is pervasive. The consequences are disastrous. The task is arduous. Study takes work and acquiring doctrine takes even more work. Shepherding takes much hard work. To be good shepherds we may have to get into the dirt. Some are choking and dying because they have been digesting the foul mix of false teaching. They are choking and strangling on the swill of false prophets and false teachers. Who will help them? Who will offer them life?


We may have to intersect with people and situations that are uncomfortable and difficult. Our comfort zone may be violated. The sheep need to know we care. We have to get down to where they are and do some rescue work, even though it may be strenuous, dirty, unpalatable, and uncomfortable. Apologetics is about struggle and rescue. It's about shepherding. No one ever said it would be easy. It was not easy for Jesus, the Great Shepherd. We must, absolutely must, take seriously the dangerous decline in doctrine and the desperate need for sound doctrine. Know it, give it, and live it. It is our only hope,

and our only light out of a very dark place.

"So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified" (Acts 20:32).

Endnotes:

1. Advertisement, *Charisma* magazine, August 2005, pg. 28.
2. James T. Draper, Jr., *Titus Patterns for Church Living*. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers, 1978, pp. 32-33.
3. Henri Nouwen quoted in Ken Blanchard, *We Are the Beloved*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994, pg. 61.
4. See further, Gary E. Gilley, "The Challenge of the Emerging Church," *The Quarterly Journal*, April-June 2006, pp. 1, 17-26.
5. See further, D.A. Carson, *Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing, 2005.
6. Charles Honey, "Repainting faith: Dynamic pastor's new book encourages a fresh look at beliefs," *The Grand Rapids Press*, July 30, 2005, pg. D3.
7. See further, G. Richard Fisher, "The Hazardous Hermeneutics of Harold Camping — The End of the Church or His End?," *The Quarterly Journal*, Vol. 22, No. 2, pp. 1, 16-24.
8. H.A. Ironside, *Timothy, Titus and Philemon*. Neptune, N.J.: Loizeaux Brothers, 1965, pg. 237.
9. Philip Jenkins, *Hidden Gospels*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001, pg. 11.
10. Kenneth Wuest, *The New Testament*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: William Eerdmans Company, 1965, pg. 505, brackets in original.
11. *Hidden Gospels*, op. cit., pg. 17.
12. *Ibid.*, pg. 123.
13. Ron Rhodes, *The Complete Guide to Christian Denominations*. Eugene, Ore.: Harvest House, 2005, pg. 158.
14. See further, G. Richard Fisher with M. Kurt Goedelman, "Experiencing Mysticism — Critiquing the Teachings of Henry Blackaby," *The Quarterly Journal*, Vol. 23, No. 3, pp. 4-16; and G. Richard Fisher, "The Mindless Mysticism of Madame Guyon," *The Quarterly Journal*, Vol. 17, No. 1, pp. 4, 12-15.
15. See further, Gary E. Gilley, "The Lure of Mysticism — A Path to Spiritual Growth or Road to Deception?," *The Quarterly Journal*, Vol. 25, No. 4, pp. 1, 13-23; and G. Richard Fisher, "What a Marriage! Why Did Evangelicalism Marry Catholicism's Stepchild?," *The Quarterly Journal*, Vol. 25, No. 2, pg. 17.

16. Lundy quoted in *Hidden Gospels*, op. cit., pg. 151.
17. "Enlightenment," *The Columbia Viking Desk Encyclopedia*. New York: Viking Press, 1953, pg. 390.
18. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960, Vol. 1, pg. 108.
19. Kevin Reeves, "The Final Question?," *Discernment*, July/August 2001, pg. 3.
20. Jim Rutz, galley proofs of *The New Christianity*, no date, pp. 188-189. This is the original draft for his published book titled *Megashift*.
21. Buechner quoted in Larry Dixon, *DOCDEVOS*. Camp Hill, Penna.: Christian Publications, 2002, Section 2, day 8, "Real Life Says."
22. Everett F. Harrison, *Baker's Dictionary of Theology*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1960, pg. 171.
23. In this verse, Peter calls apostolic teaching "commandment." The apostles' words, teachings, commands, and doctrines are basically equivalent terms.
24. Fred Zaspel and Tom Wells, *New Covenant Theology*. Frederick, Md.: New Covenant Media, 2002, pg. 37, italics in original.
25. *Ibid.*
26. *Ibid.*
27. F.F. Bruce, *Tradition Old and New*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1970, pp. 32, 37.
28. T. Ernest Wilson, *Mystery Doctrines of the New Testament*. Neptune, N.J.: Loizeaux Brothers, 1975, pg. 15.
29. In the Greek of Luke 18:8, *thn* (the) proceeds *pistin* (faith) in Jesus' question.
30. Creme quoted in Brian Flynn, *Running Against the Wind*. Silverton, Ore.: Lighthouse Trails Publishing, 2005, pg. 104, ellipsis in original.
31. Madonna quoted in *ibid.*, pg. 106, brackets and ellipsis in original.
32. David W. Bercot, Editor, *A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs*. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1998, pg. 28.
33. *Ibid.*, pg. 28-29.
34. *Ibid.*, pg. 29.
35. *Ibid.*, pg. 30.
36. John Calvin, *Calvin's Institutes*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1957, Vol. 1, pg. 66.
37. *Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church*, op. cit., pg. 91.
38. *Hedge of Thorns* was written and first published by John Hatchard in 1819. It has been rewritten by Mark Hamby and is now published by Lamplighter Publishing (Waverly, Penna., 1999) as part of the Lamplighter Rare Collector's Series.
39. Jay E. Adams, *The Use of the Rod and Staff*. Stanley, N.C.: Timeless Texts, 2003, pg. 4, italics in original.
40. *Ibid.*, pg. 5.
41. *DOCDEVOS*, op. cit., Section 1, day 2, italic in original. 

to spend time, “in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing” (Acts 17:21).

The fact is that there are few safe publishers anymore. And “Christian” bookstores? Forget that myth. And it is not just minor errors. Heresies and false teachings are being sold by the barrel. Those who object are castigated and relegated to the nether world of “phariseeism” or called small-minded cranks or narrow-minded judges. Some really understand what is really going on: The most vulnerable area of a person’s body is his wallet pocket.

Actually, it is Acts 19 all over again: “For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Diana, brought no small profit to the craftsmen (v. 24). Demetrius called together all of his buddies and business partners and said, “Guys, we have a problem.” His point was, “You know that we have our prosperity by this trade.” The true Gospel was crippling the false teaching. The problem was not the false teaching and not the error. Paul had to go because this was about profit. Acts goes on to say that all that was produced was incredible confusion (19:32). And so it is the same today: Fighting error — especially profitable error — is never easy.

However, there is a cost not measured in dollars: The countless souls being misled, confused, and taken down not only perilous trails in life, but for eternity.

Here’s a plan, albeit a radical one: Because it is getting so serious and the sewage that is spilling through our land is often so vile and so sickening, we would do better to stay out of the “Christian” bookstores and realize that we are being marketed to death at every turn. It might be beneficial to limit the number of “Christian” programs we listen to (because there is a sales gimmick on most) and get back to some quantity and quality time just in our Bibles. It would also help if we attended a good, local Bible church more consistently. It will only cost us time and will pay off with great spiritual benefits. There is an organization called “Back To The Bible.” That’s a great idea on a personal level and perhaps a great slogan for the coming years.

We might do well to take seriously the words of David Kupelian:

“It’s often said the Christian church in America needs revival. But this doesn’t necessarily mean ever-bigger tents with tens of thousands of us swaying back and forth, singing songs, giving speeches, and getting pumped up — and then going home and watching television. America’s real revival and genuine rebirth will be much less dramatic in the beginning. We might never even realize exactly how it came about. But it can happen, and we must pray that it will. How will it come to pass? It’ll happen, dear friends, when we all simply go to our rooms, close the door, take a deep breath, and

take a good, long, hard, honest look at ourselves. And then, quietly and humbly and fervently, we ask the living God for help, for insight, for direction — for salvation. When that happens, the spell will be broken, the sun will shine again, and every marketer of evil will have to go out and get an honest job” (*The Marketing of Evil*, pg. 240).

—GRF

NEWS UPDATES

(continued from page 3)

the next three years, Seymour’s meetings grew in reputation and influence. Eventually strife between Seymour and other central figures of this new Holiness-Pentecostal experience, including Parham, eroded Seymour’s role as a leader in the movement. By 1914, the Azusa Street Mission had effectively become a local black congregation with an occasional white visitor. Seymour died in 1922, at age 52, from a heart attack.

Charisma magazine devoted much of its April 2006 issue to highlighting the 1906 revival, calling it the event that “rocked our world.” It is claimed that worldwide there are more than 600 million Pentecostal and Charismatic Christians whose roots can be traced to the Azusa Street Revival.

—MKG

**CHURCHES CELEBRATE
“EVOLUTION SUNDAY”**

Claiming that evolution and the Christian faith are compatible, over 400 churches across the United States commemorated the 197th birthday of Charles Darwin in February. The churches dedicated programs and sermons in an effort to stress that there is no conflict between biological evolution and the Scriptures.

The event was spearheaded by Michael Zimmerman, dean of the College of Letters and Sciences at the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh. Zimmerman’s campaign was directed against those he labels as “shrill fundamentalist voices” and “fundamentalist leaders” who contend that biblical faith and evolution are incompatible. “It’s to demonstrate, by Christian leaders and members of the clergy, that you don’t have to make that choice. You can have both,” he told the *Chicago Tribune*.

Churches from a wide spectrum of various denominations, including Baptist, Congregationalist, Episcopalian, Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian, Unitarian, and United Church of Christ, took part in the observance known as “Evolution Sunday.”

—MKG

The major religions are: Baha'i, Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, Taoism, Hinduism, Islam, Jainism, Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Shinto, Sikhism, and tribal religions.

There are thumbnail sketches of Aleph, Ahmahdiyya Islam, Cao Dai, Christian Science, Falun Gong, ISKCON (Hare Krishna), Jehovah's Witnesses, Juce, Mormonism, Nation of Islam, Rastafarianism, Scientology, Soka Gakkai, Tenrikyo, Unification Church, Wahhabite Islam, and Wicca.

If you have ever wondered what the red dot on an Indian woman's forehead means, or whether all Buddhist monks practice martial arts, or if all Jews want to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem, this is the book for you.

—GRF

SEARCHING FOR THE ARK OF THE COVENANT

by Randall Price

Harvest House Publishers, 226 pages, \$11.99

This is a great book. The author, Randall Price, is a Middle East expert (Th.M. Old Testament and Semitic Languages and Ph.D. Middle Eastern Studies) and has lived in Jerusalem doing graduate studies at the Hebrew University. He is president of World of the Bible

Ministries and author of numerous books including, *The Stones Cry Out*, *Secrets of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, and *The Battle For The Last Day's Temple*.

Price answers all the questions one might think to ask about the Ark of the Covenant and many that one might never know to ask. The book covers all of the Old Testament materials on the Ark in detail — following all its biblical journeys — and looks into archaeological studies as well. Price delves into Intertestamental history, Josephus, the Talmud, Jewish legends, and mythology. He crisscrossed several continents and interviewed Israel's leading archaeologists and rabbis in research for the book.

Price takes on the eccentrics such as Ron Wyatt, Graham Hancock, David Lewis, and the wild claims made by others. Some have wondered if the Ark was taken to heaven. Price deals with that issue. This book is an antidote to cults and cultic claims bolstered by Ark legends.

The joy of this book is its accessibility. The writing style is reader-friendly. Detailed, technical, and even heavy material is written so that any reader can grasp it. It is a page-turner and a pleasure to read. With its pictures, footnotes, and detailed index, it is the definitive work on the Ark of the Covenant. It could be used in a homeschool curriculum.

Get this book. You will not be sorry you did. It needs to be in the library of every Bible student and could even be grist for a group or church study.

—GRF

PERSONAL FREEDOM OUTREACH — STATEMENT OF BELIEF

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



Books in Review

CULTS, RELIGIONS, OCCULT & DENOMINATIONS PACK

by Rose Publishing

PowerPoint® Presentations, \$99.00

Teaching Sunday school or Bible study classes on the cults, occult, world religions, and even Christian denominations has never been easier, thanks to a series of three separate presentations by Rose Publishing. These excellent tools use Microsoft's PowerPoint® software (version 2001 or higher) and each has ample material to allow for several sessions. Each presentation includes teacher's notes and class handouts provided in PDF file format (viewed and printed through Adobe® Reader® software, version 4 or higher). PowerPoint® and Adobe® Reader® programs must already be installed on the computer. The presentations do not come with these applications.

The three presentations are available as a collection or individually. The titles and individual prices are: *Christianity, Cults & Religions* (\$49.99), *Christianity, Cults & The Occult* (\$39.99), and *Denominations Comparison* (\$39.99). The price for the collection is \$99.00.

The *Christianity, Cults & Religions* presentation examines the beliefs of 20 world religions and prominent cults. Making up the roster of world religions are Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism. Included in the cults section is Mormonism, The Watchtower Society, Scientology, Baha'i, Unity School of Christianity, and several more. One feature of the presentation is what is called the "Bible Button." When viewing a slide describing a particular cult's belief, the user can scroll the cursor to a Bible icon in the lower right of the screen. When the icon is clicked, a new slide appears describing the biblical position of this same doctrine. A "Go Back" icon in the lower right of the new screen will return to the previous frame.

The *Christianity, Cults & The Occult* presentation surveys beliefs and groups that slant toward the occult and supernatural. Eleven movements are examined and include Wicca, Satanism, Spiritualism, Voodoo, and Freemasonry. The origin, beliefs, practices, and symbols

of the various entities are shown. A section detailing the scriptural warnings against occultism is also provided.

The *Denominations Comparison* examines 12 major denominations and/or churches. The entries are divided into two groups: liturgical and non-liturgical. Included are Catholics, Lutherans, Presbyterians, and Methodists in the first group; and Adventists, Baptists (and Anabaptists), and Pentecostals in the second. Groups can be selected individually from an opening menu, or one can go through the entire program. Each group's positions on the Trinity, salvation, view of Scripture, sacraments, and heaven and hell are examined. Information on the denomination's founder and current membership also are provided. A final segment provides a historical time line, called the "Denomination Family Tree." Definitions for underlined theological terms can be obtained with a mouse click. A mouse click on the "Back" button returns the user to the previous slide.

These are outstanding resources for the Christian apologist to use and draw from. At the very least, they should be found on the reference shelf of every local church's library.

—MKG

POCKET GUIDE TO WORLD RELIGIONS

by Winfried Corduan

InterVarsity Press, 144 pages, \$7.00

This small-print book carries a huge amount of material in its 144 pages. It is a fast track to fast facts. Corduan, who is an evangelical Christian and professor of religion and philosophy at Taylor University in Upland, Ind., does not attempt to refute the religions he covers, but only inform. He does it well.

The author gives the name or names of the religion, the numbers of followers, key symbols, history, major beliefs, sub-groups, worship practices, clothing, diet, calendar, and much more.

For anyone needing quick facts and current information, this is the book to get. It is for busy people, as well as students and clergy.

The *Pocket Guide* introduces 13 major religions and gives brief descriptions of 17 other religious movements.

(continues on page 23)

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.