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Demonic Operation The Deliverance Game of Modern Day Exorcists

by G. Richard Fisher

The Apostle Paul instructed, "Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them" (Romans 16:17).

A popular conviction among Pentecostals and Charismatics is the idea that believers can be demonized or indwelt, possessed, or occupied by a demon spirit or spirits. Likewise such a notion can even be found among some Evangelicals. Yet others within the Pentecostal, Charismatic, and Evangelical camps — including cessationists (those who believe sign gifts ceased at the end of the first century) — take issue with the concept that Christians can be indwelt by demons or be demonized.

For example, one of the tenets of the Assemblies of God denomination is that believers cannot be indwelt by demons. *The New Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, states:

"Classical pentecostal writings have traditionally made a distinction between demon possession and demon influence. While allowing for demonic affliction, pentecostal commentators have been adamantly

against any possibility of demon possession among believers."¹

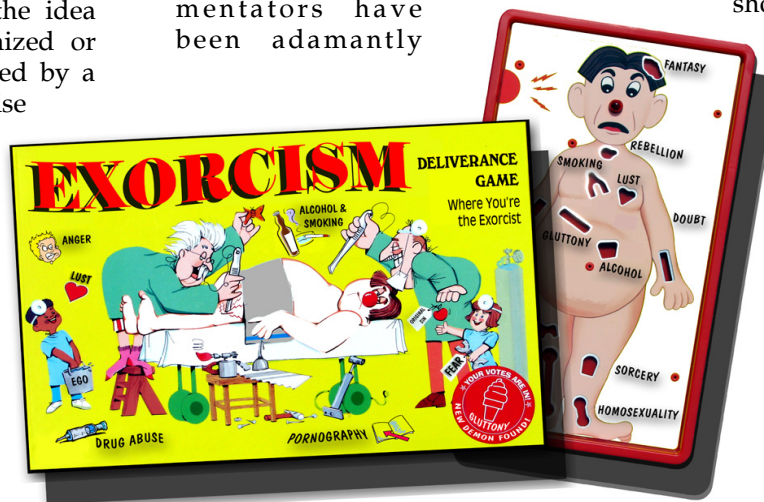
By now, because of contradictory claims by modern exorcists, some have learned to discern and are starting to catch on to the fact that these

showmen are in a subjective and silly guessing game.

This discernment comes, in part, as a result of the varied and contradictory locations as to where the demons are supposed to be positioned in the Christian's body. Yet the discernment level is far from where it should be.

WELCOME TO THE CIRCUS

Sideshowes called "exorcisms" can be moved to the
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Editorials

CHARISMA JUST DOESN'T GET IT

Few things are as annoying to the discerning Christian as the editorial content of *Charisma* magazine. From this publication a mutual admiration society of self-appointed and self-annointed apostles and prophets disseminate their spiritual error onto a beguiled readership.

The July 2006 issue of *Charisma* is a clear example. It contains articles by pragmatist Joyce Meyer, prosperity guru Gloria Copeland, and boisterous televangelist Paula White. It carries advertisements promoting the ministries of Oneness preacher T.D. Jakes, faith healer Benny Hinn, "singing prophet" Kim Clement, angel enthusiasts Charles and Francis Hunter, and many more.

What makes all this so puzzling is the magazine's claim that it holds itself to a high standard of biblical integrity, and will even criticize unorthodox Church leaders. Yet, *Charisma's* editorial board just doesn't get it.

Readers of *The Quarterly Journal* are familiar with the doctrine and practice of *Charisma's* contributing author Joyce Meyer. Meyer claimed a divine revelation when she taught the heretical doctrine of the spiritual death of Christ (i.e., "born-again Jesus"). In the first edition of her booklet, *The Most Important Decision You Will Ever Make*, she alleges, "You cannot go to heaven unless you believe with all your heart that Jesus took your place in hell" (pg. 37).

Meyer even used *Charisma* to deny she ever taught this doctrine. This leads one to wonder if she no longer believes or teaches this heresy, or if she lied about receiving a divine revelation, or if she later lied to *Charisma's* readers in denying what God supposedly revealed to her.

Meyer may be popular, folksy, and a best-selling author, but her teachings incorporate heresy, mysticism, flawed exegesis, suborthodoxy, experientialism, pragmatism, and plain nonsense. Example: Meyer and her pastor, Rick Shelton, supposedly riding piggyback on an overweight, demon possessed woman, trying to exorcise the demonic spirit. Yet despite all this, *Charisma* calls her "one of the world's leading practical Bible teachers." Full-page, full-color advertisements for her publications appear frequently in *Charisma*. Her success may come by topping the best-selling book charts — but it certainly doesn't come from a careful and faithful exposition of God's Word. That's an issue *Charisma* just doesn't get.

And then there is Paula White. White heads up Paula White Ministries and is the co-founder along with her husband, "Bishop" Randy, of the Without Walls International Church in Tampa, Fla. She also fancies herself as a motivational speaker, a celebrity life coach, the host of a daily television broadcast, and a liaison to worldwide humanitarian efforts. White recently demonstrated her lack of integrity and discernment when she and her

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LARSON MAY HIT THE SMALL SCREEN

The occultic experiences claimed by talk show host-turned-exorcist Bob Larson may find their way to prime-time television. Last summer, CBS gave “a pilot commitment to an exorcism-themed drama from ‘Joan of Arcadia’ creator Barbara Hall and producer Joe Roth,” according to a Reuters news report. The show would draw from Larson’s purported demonic encounters.

Larson touts himself as “an expert on cults, the occult, and supernatural phenomena.” He previously asserted he was “the foremost authority” on cults and the occult, a claim which nearly all apologetic and counter-cult ministries rejected. In 1992, he divorced his wife Kathryn and shortly afterward married a ministry staff member many years his junior. Larson counters criticism of his life, doctrine, and practice by stating that there are web sites “devoted to attacking our ministry.” “Be aware that these sites contain misinformation, disinformation, twisted facts and outright lies,” he warns.

Larson is pastor of the Phoenix Spiritual Freedom Church and hosts “Spiritual Freedom Conferences” across the country, where he spreads his teachings on spiritual warfare and performs exorcisms.

Hall is currently writing the television script. Roth, who has production credits for several supernatural-themed box office films, including *The Exorcist III* and Walt Disney’s *Angels in the Outfield*, will co-produce the program.

—MKG

PERHAPS BOYD DIDN’T SEE IT COMING

The Rev. Gregory A. Boyd, who has become notorious within fundamental Christian circles for being one of the chief proponents of open theism — the teaching that God does not know the future — has found that distancing himself from conservative political issues has a steep price to pay. In Boyd’s case, it cost him 20 percent of his church’s membership.

In recent years, Boyd has refused requests from his congregation to rally against gay marriages, promote the work of pro-life organizations, or even hang an American flag in his church’s sanctuary. While Boyd argues that he is no liberal, his retreat from political and moral

issues led to a series of six sermons entitled “The Cross and the Sword.” The substance of his sermons maintained that “the church should steer clear of politics, give up moralizing on sexual issues, stop claiming the United States as a ‘Christian nation’ and stop glorifying American military campaigns,” according to a report in *The New York Times*.

By the time Boyd completed his series, 1,000 of his 5,000-member congregation had departed the Woodland Hills Church in suburban St. Paul. Boyd started the church in the mid-1990s, growing it from 40 members to its present megachurch status.

From the dissident side came the argument, “If we contain the wisdom and grace and love and creativity of Jesus, why shouldn’t we be the ones involved in politics and setting laws?” Others, speaking from the majority who stayed, called Boyd’s perspective “liberating.”

The *Times* report also indicated that according to church staff members, “those who left tended to be white, middle-class suburbanites.” The defection has been costly in other areas as well. Only \$4 million of a recent \$7 million fund-raising campaign was received, seven members of the church’s fifty-plus staff were laid off, and according to the Woodland Hills family pastor, 20 volunteers who were the backbone of the church’s Sunday school have resigned.

—MKG

NBC SPOTLIGHTS PEARSON’S INCLUSIVISM

The digression into inclusivism by the Rev. Carlton D. Pearson received further national media attention last August when NBC featured a segment on the Pentecostal-turned-universalist pastor during its *Dateline* news broadcast. Following his drift in the late 1990s into inclusivism — the teaching that nearly everyone will go to heaven apart from a personal saving faith in Jesus Christ — Pearson was exposed for his heretical bent by Christian publications such as *Charisma* and *Christianity Today*, and, more recently, by the secular news media, where he was profiled in *The Dallas Morning News* last spring.

The NBC broadcast pitched that Pearson’s inclusivism resulted from “an inspiring message” given to him by God. “Clear as a bell, says Carlton, he heard God telling him to preach this new message that hell is a place in
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The Grave and Beyond

A Biblical Look at What Happens After Death

by J. Greg Sheryl

In the original “Star Trek” episodes — the ones with William Shatner and Leonard Nimoy — at the beginning of each episode, Shatner intoned, “Space: The final frontier.” However, this article is about the *real* “final frontier;” what Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* referred to as the “undiscovered country”¹ — death. Until Jesus returns, we all must die. Death is a fact of life. As C.S. Lewis observed, “the statistics on death are impressive — so far it is one out of one!”²

On Nov. 20, 2005, following the morning service at my church, the associate pastor there shook my hand. That night, he moderated our church’s Thanksgiving dinner. Looking at him, he was the picture of health. The next day, I received a call from a friend of mine, one of the deacons at the church. He told me that the associate pastor had died earlier that day. He was only 47. This article is dedicated to him.

MEDIUMS, CHANNELERS AND NEAR-DEATH EXPERIENCES

Our beliefs about what happens after death must be informed only by what the Bible says. For instance, mediums and channelers claim to talk with the dead, and may even give information that only the dead person could have known. It is possible that such occurrences are either the results of human deception and/or demonic spirits masquerading as the dead.

Scripture says, “For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light” (2 Corinthians 11:14). The Scriptures, including Leviticus 19:31; 20:6; 20:27; Deuteronomy 18:10-12; 1 Chronicles 10:13-14; and Isaiah 8:19-20, make it absolutely clear that to try to communicate with the dead is very displeasing to God.

Similarly, we must judge by the Scriptures the experiences of those who have had near-death experiences. Experiences can be deceiving — both to those who have them, and to those who hear and/or read of them. Douglas Connelly explains:

“I certainly do not have a complete explanation for every near-death experience, nor am I questioning the integrity of those who tell their stories. I do believe, however, that we need to be gently skeptical of the accounts we hear. Such individual experiences do not *prove* anything about the afterlife. Personally I am convinced that much of what we hear regarding such encounters is our enemy’s deliberate attempt to deceive people about what really lies beyond death’s door. The prospect of death and of personal accountability to God has often moved people to seriously consider the claims of Christ and their own destinies. If people believe, however, based on [hearing or reading] a few

near-death encounters, that death will lead them to a place of warmth and love and acceptance regardless of their relationship to Christ, they will no longer be moved to evaluate their lives. Satan will have masked their fear of death and removed another element that might have brought them to repentance. The attraction of the saving power of Christ fades if a person is deceived into thinking that he or she does not need saving.”³

This is a real danger, for as Connelly says, “Most contemporary accounts of near-death experiences stand in direct contradiction to the Bible’s teaching.”⁴

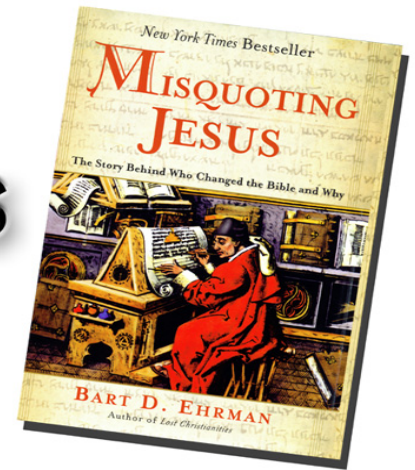
Satan could conceivably use positive near-death experiences of non-Christians to deceive those who believe them into thinking that God will not call them to one day account to Him for their lives, as the Scripture teaches (e.g., Romans 14:10-12; 2 Corinthians 5:10).

In addition to possible demonic deception, there is the possibility of deliberate human deception. A person might claim to have had an experience that he didn’t have, or embellish an experience he did have, or sugarcoat a bad experience. Whatever the reason, some people deceive others for their own ends (e.g., Deuteronomy 13; Ephesians 4:14; 1 Timothy 4:1-2;

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The Misguided and Misleading Teachings of Bart Ehrman

by G. Richard Fisher



During his plenary talk at the Saint Louis Conference on Biblical Discernment last spring, Dr. Paul Maier lamented:

“Did somebody uncork something? ... Challenges to the faith of all kinds. One book coming out worse than the next. We thought *The Da Vinci Code* was bad enough. ... One thing after another, it’s just amazing what’s happening.”¹

No doubt, the writings of Bart D. Ehrman would be included in Maier’s list of the recent wave of deplorable publications.

While Bart Ehrman is not exactly a household name, he is a relentless critic of the Bible and describes himself as a “happy agnostic.”² As name recognition goes, he does not have the public recognition of erstwhile agnostics David Hume or Immanuel Kant. However, he is a prolific writer and is becoming more widely recognized. Apologists and pastors need to become better aware of him because his books are the academic face for popular authors such as *The Da Vinci Code*’s Dan Brown. He also adds to the fodder of feminist Bible scholar Elaine Pagels and a host of other infidels who deny the inerrancy of the Scriptures.

Ehrman chairs the Department of Religious Studies at the University of North Carolina. One of his latest books is titled, *Misquoting Jesus – The Story Behind Who Changed the Bible and Why*.³ Anyone hoping to find credible

information about Jesus will be disappointed. Daniel Wallace, Executive Director of the Center for the Study of New Testament Manuscripts, writes:

“Ironically, almost none of the variants that Ehrman discusses involve *sayings* of Jesus. The book simply doesn’t deliver what the title promises.”⁴

Ehrman, as we will discover, has an agenda. Some of *Misquoting Jesus* is merely a rewrite of his earlier work *Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*. Like that volume, which was first published in 1993, the subtitle of *Misquoting Jesus* (“The Story of Who Changed the Bible and Why”) reveals his low view of Scripture.

TRANSMISSION REMISSION

According to Ehrman’s past statements, all attempts to know what Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John wrote are out of reach:

“Interpreters of the NT are faced with a discomfiting reality that many of them would like to ignore. In many instances, we don’t know what the authors of the NT actually wrote. It often proves difficult enough to establish what the words of the NT mean; the fact that in some instances we don’t know what the words actually were does more than a little to exacerbate the problem. ... As I’ve pointed out, it’s impossible for interpreters to explain what Luke’s words mean if they don’t know what these words were.”⁵

What is truly amazing is that after instructing us that in many places we do not know what the New Testament writers wrote, therefore cannot know what they meant, Ehrman will educate us what they wrote — and what they meant! If his premise that the New Testament material is largely inaccessible is true, then his books are of little use. Ehrman has little or no confidence that the copying and providential transmission of the Bible could have been carried out successfully and without numerous and serious errors and corruptions. Ehrman does not call those of historical orthodoxy bad guys, but he contends that those who orthodoxy sees as heretics are just as valid as the good guys. In Ehrman’s view, those we traditionally call “orthodox” and those we call “heretics” are all just guessing and none is better than any other.

THE GHOST OF EHRMAN PAST

Ehrman describes his early years as an upbringing that was “nothing out of the ordinary.”⁶ And during the year he was in fifth grade, he notes that “we were involved in the Episcopal church in Lawrence, Kansas.”⁷ He claims a conversion experience as a sophomore in high school after an encounter with Campus Life and Youth for Christ clubs. There a leader named Bruce told him:

“If we would only ask Christ in, he would enter and fill us with the joy and happiness that only the ‘saved’ could know. ... I

eventually got to know Bruce, came to accept his message of salvation, asked Jesus into my heart, and had a bona fide born-again experience."⁸

Ehrman may have accepted Bruce's message, but there seems to be nothing of a realization of the Gospel's message, that is, one being a sinner in desperate need of a Savior. Ehrman excludes any mention of repentance or confession of sin. The whole experience sounds like peer pressure and frothy conformity because whatever Ehrman did, it did not last. Though he may have appeared as a genuine believer, even enrolling in Moody Bible Institute in the fall of 1973, Ehrman's view of Scripture underscores a thinking far removed from one who was truly saved. He presently says of the Bible that "what we have are the error-ridden copies of the autographs,"⁹ and that even if the original autographs were in fact God's words, we could not know them because all we have are copies which were "inadvertently or intentionally"¹⁰ changed and altered by scribes. So God's Word is irretrievably lost in Ehrman's view.

KINDLING CYNICISM

Ehrman later enrolled in Wheaton College and studied Greek, yet became more cynical. He then moved on to Princeton Seminary, where his cynicism became even more acute:

"If learning the 'truth' meant no longer being able to identify with the born-again Christians I knew in high school, so be it. I was intent on pursuing my quest for truth wherever it might take me, trusting that any truth I learned was no less true for being unexpected or difficult to fit into the pigeon holes provided by my evangelical background."¹¹

Ehrman refers to a "turning point"¹² at Princeton. It came when Professor Cullen Story said of a passage in Mark 2, "Maybe Mark just made a mistake."¹³ Ehrman recounts that the remark "went straight through me."¹⁴ He concluded that maybe Mark did make a mistake and that "Once I made that admission, the

floodgates opened."¹⁵ Ehrman had some kind of negative epiphany. He is convinced and states repeatedly that because we do not have the original autographs of Scripture, all hope of having or knowing God's Word must be abandoned.

As one reads of Ehrman's drift into skepticism and agnosticism, the words of the Apostle John resonate:

"They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us" (1 John 2:19).

Thus, by Ehrman's own admission, his professed evangelical commitment laid shipwrecked as a result of the remark of an unbelieving Princeton professor based on what he said was a discrepancy with Mark 2:26. In this verse, Jesus spoke of David eating showbread in the days of Abiathar the High Priest. The reference goes back to 1 Samuel 21:1-6, and the implied contradiction derives from the High Priest Ahimelech, who is the one who actually gives the bread to David. Yet there is no insurmountable difficulty in the passage, and it is easily explained by Walter Kaiser in the following way:

"The further problem of Jesus' reference in Mark 2:26 to Abiathar being the priest when David asked for the shewbread is answered not by a dispute about how many days after Ahimelech, who actually gave David the bread, did Abiathar become priest, but by allowing the evangelist Mark to speak. He said that it was 'in the days of Abiathar the priest' and thereby denotes only the period when he served as priest, including those while his father was living. It may also be a more convenient reference for the people of Jesus' day, since the priest associated so long with David was more famous than his father."¹⁶

Jesus did not say Abiathar gave David the bread, only that the event occurred in the days of Abiathar.

Ehrman rejects the Bible on the basis of what *he says* the Bible is saying, when it is, in fact, not really saying that at all. Mark did not make a mistake, and neither did Jesus. A similar situation occurred during the days of Jesus with Caiaphas, the actual high priest, and Annas, his father-in-law who was the power in the shadows. Luke 3:2 mentions the high priesthood (singular) of Annas and Caiaphas.

Ehrman also inquires as to why Mark can say Jesus died after the Passover meal was eaten and John can say Jesus died before it was eaten.¹⁷ This may indicate that Ehrman is unaware of recent scholarship in the Dead Sea Scrolls and the strong possibility that Jesus ate Passover in keeping with the Qumran calendar, which would have allowed Him to do exactly both what John and Mark say.¹⁸ We do not have to give up on the Bible just because our full grasp of first-century background is deficient. Our understanding is what is lacking, not the pages of Holy Writ. Jesus could have died after one Passover and before the other.

EHRMAN'S PRESUPPOSITIONS

As earlier noted, Ehrman's line of reasoning appears to be that if God could not miraculously preserve the Bible letter for letter, then He probably did not perform a miracle in originally inspiring the words of the Bible. Ehrman makes much of the fact that the copies of Scripture handed down contain differences, but admits that "Most of these differences are completely immaterial and insignificant."¹⁹ Ehrman will not even concede the possibility of inspired originals and reliable copies.

One need not wonder why God did not allow the original autographs to be preserved. Certainly well-meaning religionists would be revering or perhaps worshiping them as holy relics. We can be glad we only have copies. The real issue then is the accuracy of transmission.

Ehrman seems to contradict himself. Though he admits the "differences are completely immaterial and insignifi-

cant," he argues that we still cannot trust the Bible. He writes:

"...my faith had been based completely on a certain view of the Bible as the fully inspired, inerrant word of God. Now I no longer saw the Bible that way."²⁰

His new view, he says, is:

"This was a human book from beginning to end."²¹

Ehrman misleads us here. The reader is asked to believe that because the Bible is a human book, it is by default corrupt and untrustworthy. Ehrman's premise is not necessarily true. Humans can write things that are true, honest, reliable, factual, and essentially on target.

Ehrman also tries to sabotage inspiration when he picks apart some of Hal Lindsey's wrong interpretations in *The Late Great Planet Earth*²² — as if that is germane to the issue. There is a world of difference between inspiration and interpretation. Inspiration and transmission of Scripture are not the same as hermeneutics. However, the uninformed may be caught in this muddle and think because Lindsey was wrong in his interpretation and date-suggesting, that Scripture is to blame. This is not fair play on Ehrman's part and it is one of his weakest points.

Ehrman, through his study of textual criticism, believes the text of the Bible cannot be totally trusted. Reminiscent of the claims of Dan Brown, Ehrman says that the copyists modified New Testament books "to make them more clearly support orthodox Christianity and more vigorously oppose heretics, women, Jews, and pagans."²³ Yet there are many fine Bible scholars, well-schooled in textual criticism, who remain evangelical and write excellent studies on the sufficiency of Scripture. These biblical teachers see no evidence of the tampering with, and corruption of, Scripture that Ehrman sees. There has to be more to it for Ehrman than just the study of textual criticism.

Ehrman would have us believe that ancient scribes were impulsive and unrestrained with the biblical text:

"That's what the scribes of the New Testament did. They read the texts available to them and they put them in *other* words."²⁴

And:

"Anyone reading a book in antiquity could never be completely sure that he or she was reading what the author had written."²⁵

Comparisons of hundreds of early texts show that scribal copying was done with great care. Any differences in texts are minor and have to do with spelling, word order, or a deleted letter or letters. These minor variations in no way affect any major doctrines. Christians believe that the text of the New Testament was preserved in essential purity. G.I. Williamson states:

"Actually, there are thousands of hand-written manuscript copies of the Biblical text. ... But in spite of the complexity of the matter ... a diligent study of the many textual witnesses remaining from the ancient world, by just such a process as we have sketched here, the text of the Greek New Testament stands before our eyes today with assured integrity. ... so that we do now actually possess before our very eyes the 'authentic' text of the Word of the living God."²⁶

Dedicated Bible scholars of the past such as Sir Frederick Kenyon, B.B. Warfield, A.T. Robertson, and even Bruce Metzger (who Ehrman calls his "mentor" and "Doctor-Father"), all say that the New Testament has come down to us substantially sound and that the wealth of textual materials was handed down from generation to generation without essential loss. We must always give the benefit of the doubt to the Bible, not to its critics. Ehrman turns scriptural difficulties into major road blocks and insurmountable objections.

Another aspect that has incredible weight is the testimony and Bible citations of the early Church Fathers. Bruce Metzger concludes:

"Indeed, so extensive are these citations that if all other sources

for our knowledge of the text of the New Testament were destroyed, they would be sufficient alone for the reconstruction of practically the entire New Testament."²⁷

New Testament Greek professor J. Harold Greenlee also does not agree with Ehrman:

"Although all sorts of variants may be found among the thousands in the extant MSS, these are minutiae in the total text of the MSS. The scribes generally copied the text with great care, even when the text may not have seemed to make sense. ... From a practical view, however, the difference involved in most variants is so slight that little or no difference of meaning is involved. One may safely conclude, then, that when sound principles of textual criticism are judiciously followed, a NT text may be said, in the words of Sir Frederick Kenyon, that 'we have in our hands, in substantial integrity, the veritable word of God.'"²⁸

Incredible and contradictory as it appears, it is a mystery as to why Ehrman offers such a rousing endorsement of Greenlee's volume, *Introduction to New Testament Textual Criticism*.²⁹

Ehrman implies a guilt by semblance by pointing to ancient *secular* documents that show manual error.³⁰ So his readers are supposed to believe that all and every ancient document had the same kind of evolutionary deterioration and degrading. The difference that he ignores, or does not take into account, is that the handling of what were considered sacred books would have been far different and the copying done more carefully, painstakingly, and responsibly. As well, Ehrman ignores any thought of Holy Spirit inspiration as claimed by the Bible itself.

When Ehrman shows the complaint of early Church Father Origen³¹ regarding faulty copies with mistakes, he really makes the case for the other

side. Origen couldn't have known manuscripts were faulty unless he had correct, standardized, fixed editions to compare them with. There must have been solid exemplars for comparison. Origen gives the answer and then we understand what he was addressing was heretics who corrupted the text. Ehrman admits that the prohibition in Revelation 22:18-19 is first and foremost directed to copyists who would change the meaning and intent of Scripture passages. No copyist would take that lightly.

A MOUNTAIN OUT OF A MOLEHILL

Ehrman surely overstates the case of scribal mistakes. Careful comparison of texts and variants overcome many of the inadvertent copyists errors. If one has 11 manuscripts of the same text to compare (and there are thousands of times more than that for the New Testament) and if five of the ten the writers spelled the word "because" properly, but in six others it was misspelled as *becuase*, *becaus*, *becuas*, *beccause*, *bcause*, and *beecause*, most everyone would know the word is *because*. Words like those illustrated above make up thousands of the variants and are insignificant.

Ehrman properly conveys the thoughts of Richard Bentley:

"...the thirty thousand variants uncovered by Mill do not detract from the integrity of the New Testament; they simply provide the data that scholars need to work on to establish the text, a text that is more amply documented than any other from the ancient world."³²

The problem with variants or small differences in texts is not as acute as Ehrman makes out. By his and others' count there are approximately 5,800 texts of the Greek New Testament dating from the 2nd to the 15th century A.D. Some are fragments, while others contain whole books of the New Testament or numbers of books of the New Testament. If there are 30,000 variants, as Ehrman suggests, that is an average of fewer than six variants per manuscript or fragment.

While Ehrman may claim that evangelicals have a problem being unable to show that the earliest manuscripts agree with the originals, he has the problem as well. He cannot show that the earliest manuscripts significantly disagree with the originals and so has no less a problem. He is inclined to say in many places that texts written against heresy or those written that strengthen orthodoxy are probably not original. He could not know that because he has not seen the originals. Ehrman's view that early copies of Scripture do not preserve the integrity of the originals is just as much a faith position as those who commit to belief that God preserved His Word through later copies.

"PERHAPS"

Another of Ehrman's major premises against inspiration is not only outlandish, but erroneous. He writes:

"Therefore, the texts that are closest in forms to the originals are, perhaps unexpectedly, the more variable and amateurish copies of early times."³³

It is cunning for Ehrman to shroud his premise with "perhaps," as his statement is completely unprovable. He could neither know nor substantiate that. Ehrman, at times, seems to write just to create doubt.

Contrary to Ehrman's claim that as far as textual criticism, there "is scarcely a single book written about it for a lay audience" and that his volume is "the first of its kind,"³⁴ there are a number of easily read books on the topic. Most Bible encyclopedias and Bible dictionaries have information on textual criticism, transmission, and early versions of the Bible. Eldon Ladd's *The New Testament and Criticism*, along with James Williams' *God's Word in Our Hands* are just two for starters. In addition, Bruce Metzger's writings are not beyond the grasp of the average reader. And Josh McDowell's *More Evidence That Demands a Verdict* is a classic critique on destructive textual criticism.

As far as the Canon of the New Testament and what books were seen as inspired and belonging to the

Canon, the Church has always held that it was not just apostolic authorship, but rather apostolic authority, content consistent with apostolic doctrine, and the response of the churches (i.e., was the writing accepted and used). F.F. Bruce states that:

"When at last a Church Council — the Synod at Hippo in A.D. 393 — listed the twenty-seven books of the New Testament, it did not confer upon them any authority which they did not already possess, but simply recorded their previously established canonicity."³⁵

A reading of the Church Fathers between A.D. 100 and 300 shows that they held as authoritative and inspired the writings that later were acknowledged as canonical. David Roach agrees:

"By the end of the first century more than two thirds of the present New Testament was viewed as inspired, and the remaining books were known and quoted as authoritative. A mutilated fragment from A.D. 175 lists books that were accepted as canonical by that time and contains 23 of the 27 New Testament books. The books that Christians today recognize as the New Testament first appeared together on a printed list in A.D. 367 but were recognized as the authoritative rule of the church for more than 250 years prior to that date."³⁶

RESURRECTING THE Gnostics

Another of Ehrman's admissions is his commitment to the Gnostic gospels:

"Four such Gospels became most widely used — those of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John in the New Testament — but many others were written. We still have some of the others: for example, Gospels allegedly by Jesus's disciple Philip, his brother Judas, Thomas, and his female companion Mary Magdalene."³⁷

The fact that Gnostics were called Gnostics and not Christians says something. Ehrman identifies Gnostics as Christians even though they taught a defective Christology and that the divine Christ left the human Jesus at His crucifixion. He writes:

“This separationist Christology was most commonly advocated by groups of Christians that scholars have called Gnostic. The term Gnosticism comes from the Greek word for knowledge, *gnosis*. It is applied to a wide range of groups of early Christians who stressed the importance of secret knowledge for salvation. According to most of these groups, the material world we live in was not the creation of the one true God.”³⁸

The above thinking — that Gnostics are Christians — should offend any Bible believing Christian. Such a view is akin to an apologetic organization calling the Jehovah’s Witnesses or Mormons “Christian.”

Ehrman’s argument, that the proto-orthodox were changing passages to try to ward off Gnostics who said the Christ separated from Jesus at the cross, makes no sense. If that were the case they would have left out passages such as “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” (Matthew 27:46), which was later twisted by Gnostics and misused. If this had been the case, the early Church should have left out the baptism account (Matthew 3:16-17) that the Gnostics purportedly said revealed the divine Christ joining the human Jesus. The simple answer is there was no text-tampering by copyists, only text-twisting by later separationist Gnostics.

The Gnostics had very evil and distasteful mythologies. One branch taught that there were female deities and that one of these deities had sexual relations with God the Father and the Son to bring forth Christ. Irenaeus reports in A.D. 180:

“They also call this Mother by the names of Ogdoad, Sophia, Terra, Jerusalem, Holy Spirit, and (with a masculine reference)

Lord. Her place of habitation is an intermediate one.”³⁹

Ehrman would have us believe that there was no fixed doctrine early on, but only subjective views of what was correct. He says that groups gathered around certain beliefs and castigated each other:

“...we have learned by relatively recent discoveries of ‘heretical’ literature, in which the so-called heretics maintain that their views are correct and those of the ‘orthodox’ church leaders are false.”⁴⁰

For all the years that Ehrman spent at Moody Bible Institute and Wheaton College, he should know better than this. There was a fixed body of doctrine called “the Apostles’ doctrine” (Acts 2:42), as well as “the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3). There is a pattern of doctrinal belief and a fixed body of non-negotiable propositions throughout the New Testament. Paul made sharp distinctions between true doctrine and false doctrine. One has only to read the books of 1 Timothy, 2 Peter, and 2 John to clearly see this.

In an interview with Deborah Caldwell of Belief Net, Ehrman appears to say that it was only by chance that what we now know as “Christianity” won out over competing versions and survived. His revisionist and hypothetical reconstruction says:

“It depends on which of the other sides had won. ... It’s a little hard to know with the Gnostics, because there were so many different kinds of Gnostics competing among themselves as well as competing against the Christians who ended up winning out over the others. ... If Gnostics had become dominant, Christianity would have been quite different from what it is now. ... To some extent they won because they were better debaters. Each of these groups was fighting all the other groups on various fronts, but the proto-orthodox seemed to have been better organized than the other groups and seemed to have been

more intent on establishing a worldwide network of similar people.”⁴¹

Ehrman’s argument, which states the present view of orthodoxy was that which just happened to prevail, is also strongly expressed in *Misquoting Jesus*, especially chapter 6. Ehrman would not hold that there were actual heresies as opposed to orthodoxy, but that “Christians” of all stripes and all beliefs debated, argued, fought, and struggled until one group happened to win out over the others.

Thus we see in Ehrman’s view, the proto-orthodox, that is, what we would identify as the early Church Fathers, managed to subdue the Gnostics, out-debate them, obliterate their writings, and through sheer power and will defeat all contenders and become winners. It was simply the survival of the fittest and the Gnostics happened to be the losers. According to Ehrman, it had nothing to do with truth, the Holy Spirit, the Word of truth, and the power of God. This certainly is revisionism at its best — or worst.

Had the Gnostics won, we would have an unknowable God, a spiritualized Jesus, no Savior, we would be worshiping the goddess Sophia, and have little concern for moral standards. In short, we would be in a real mess if we had even survived as a species. It is a relief to know the Gnostics lost. Most Bible students believe it had more to do with the will of God and the gates of hell not being able to ultimately prevail against the Church than some chance occurrence.

Gnosticism was exposed, refuted, and laid to rest in the early centuries of the Church. This is well-documented in the writings of the Church Fathers between 100 and 300 A.D.⁴² Only in modern times has the grave been reopened.

BACK TO THE SOURCE

In Ehrman’s 2003 book, *Lost Scriptures: Books That Did Not Make It Into The New Testament*, he, like feminist Elaine Pagels and novelist Dan Brown, argues there are gospels from the Gnostic library which belong in

the Bible — or are at least as good as those in the Canon of the New Testament. This is not a new notion, but was argued as far back as the 1930s by German critic Walter Bauer. Bauer died in 1960 and his major tome was translated from German into English and published in 1971 under the title, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity*. Bauer “developed his thesis that in earliest Christianity, orthodoxy and heresy do not stand in relation to one another as primary to secondary, but in many regions heresy is the original manifestation of Christianity.”⁴³

Philip Jenkins sums up Bauer’s claims and says that Bauer:

“...argued that numerous interpretations of Christianity coexisted across the Greco-Roman world, and in many areas, so-called orthodoxy was weak or nonexistent. ... Bauer claimed that in parts of Syria and Mesopotamia, the term ‘Christians’ long referred to what we would call a heretical school of thought, probably Marcionite. ... orthodoxy did not triumph until it received the imperial seal of approval under Constantine in the fourth century.”⁴⁴

Ehrman appears to be the male counterpart of Elaine Pagels. Both have resuscitated ancient heresies via German critic Walter Bauer. Gnostic writings, already defeated and buried by the early Church, tried to make a comeback in the late 1800s and early 1900s through a number of esoteric cults and strange religions like that of Madame Blavatsky and Aleister Crowley, but did not have the sociological, political, or academic setting for a serious widespread revival. People were still not buying into heresy in large numbers. It took the feminist movement and an era of Bible illiteracy, such as what we have today, to really relaunch the Gnostics. Of course, the discovery of an ancient Gnostic library in Nag Hammadi, Egypt, in 1945 and its translation from Coptic into English in 1977 made the ancient Gnostic heretics seem larger than life.⁴⁵ Now their materials were available in large quantities. Then

along came Dan Brown with the rest of the story. On the heels of that came *The Gospel of Judas*, which is not a gospel, was not written by Judas, and simply perpetuates more Gnostic nonsense.

It is startling to think that anyone could opt for the credibility of the Gnostics. Professor Carl Raschke of the University of Denver writes:

“During the second century there was a ferocious struggle between the Gnostics and those who are now recognized as the precursors to orthodox Christianity over the meaning of Jesus’ life, his message and his mission. The Gnostics believed that Jesus neither died on the cross nor was resurrected. Instead they regarded him as a kind of California-style guru with mystical insight and magical powers who imparted to his apostles a type of ‘secret knowledge,’ or gnosis, which ordinary people were incapable of grasping. The Gnostics were denounced by ancient church leaders, not only because so much of this secret knowledge seemed silly and absurd, but because it justified what many believed was an ethically perverted view of other human beings. The Gnostics were self-styled religious aristocrats who held the masses of humanity in the utmost contempt and resembled what today we would call ‘racists.’ They were also decidedly ‘anti-Semitic,’ insofar as they regarded the values and traditions of Judaism as spiritually corrupt and inferior. In particular, the Gnostics regarded the biblical demand for good behavior as ignorant and unenlightened. Very often the Gnostics would reputedly perform morally outrageous acts, such as murder or infanticide, in order to prove that their spiritual superiority placed them, as the philosopher Nietzsche would later say, ‘beyond good and evil.’”⁴⁶

As far as so-called “gospels” produced by the Gnostics, Raschke writes:

“Many of the Gnostic gospels were not intended as ‘gospels’ at all in the sense of the ‘good news’ for those seeking salvation, as the etymology of the English word suggests. On the contrary, they served mainly as internal ‘cult’ propaganda designed to authorize and reinforce an insider perspective.”⁴⁷

Jenkins concurs:

“Since the Gnostics had little regard for objective historical truth, their retellings of the story of Jesus claimed not a particle of historical authenticity. Founders of Gnostic schools happily composed their own gospels.”⁴⁸

EHRMAN’S OTHER PROBLEMS

Ehrman accents the questioned John 7:53-8:12 passage with respect to the woman taken in adultery.⁴⁹ Even with these verses absent in the oldest manuscripts, it does not change one iota of what we know about Jesus’ love, mercy, compassion, forgiveness, and grace. This being a disputed passage is certainly no surprise to Bible students because nearly all modern versions alert us to the probability of that account being absent from the text. To then go to the extreme of questioning all of John’s Gospel is an overreaction, but one that Ehrman might create.

Ehrman also takes up the possible exclusion of Mark 16:9-20.⁵⁰ Again his disclosure is nothing new. Modern translations once more bring to our attention the omission of these verses in the oldest manuscripts. Moreover, the words found in these dozen verses are not contrary to the tenor of the New Testament. Even if the section was a later addition, it in no way detracts from the resurrection of Jesus, affirmed in Mark 16:6, and put forth in numerous instances throughout the other Gospels, Acts, and the Epistles. Nothing is lost or gained regarding this uncertainty in Mark’s ending. Ehrman is misleading here as some will assume that all changes, whether spelling or word order, are of the same magnitude. There are changes — and there are changes. This may be lost on Ehrman’s readers,

but the fact that we can talk about errors, mistakes, and so forth, means we know they are there and can correct a large portion of them. Saying something is an error must mean we know what the correction should be. To know an error is to know the non-error. It is not at all as hopeless as Ehrman makes it sound.

Ehrman also proceeds through a series of verses he claims were altered intentionally by copyists.⁵¹ In each case he spins an interpretation which makes his audience think there may have been an alteration. However another interpretation, or view of the verse, may show something altogether different from what Ehrman alleges. The verses he cites may not have been altered at all when they are looked at through a different interpretive lens. Dealing with all of these verses would require another complete article. One clear example of how Ehrman handles — or mishandles — Scripture is his remarks on Luke 5:38-39 where he puts the words, “the old is better,” in the mouth of Jesus when the text is clear that “they say.” This misinterpretation by Ehrman is not a copyist’s insertion or error. The text is clear, “they say,” but Ehrman asks, “How could Jesus indicate that the old is better than the new?”⁵² The simple answer: Jesus didn’t.

If Ehrman’s views of the Gnostics are driven by Bauer, possibly his views and presuppositions on the New Testament text are driven by the work of John Mill.⁵³ Mill, who lived during the 1700s, viewed the text of the New Testament as precarious, if not untrustworthy. J.A. Bengel, a scholar from Mill’s era, came to different conclusions after studying Mill’s work:

“His lifelong study led him to the important conclusion that the thousands of textual variants did not bring into question any article of evangelical doctrine.”⁵⁴

Ehrman paints Bengel as a bit bizarre and a crank because of his prophetic views, but allows that “Bengel was a classically trained, extremely careful interpreter of the

biblical text. He is possibly best known as a biblical commentator: he wrote extensive notes on every book of the New Testament, exploring grammatical, historical, and interpretive issues at length, in expositions that were clear and compelling — and still worth reading today.”⁵⁵ It is obvious that Ehrman is committed to a historical rationalistic approach to the Bible much like Mill’s view.

SPURNING DOCTRINE

One might suspect that Ehrman would get mileage out of 1 John 5:7-8. In a massive overstatement he claims:

“Without this verse, the doctrine of the Trinity must be inferred from a range of passages combined to show that Christ is God, as is the Spirit and the Father, and that there is, nonetheless, only one God.”⁵⁶

These two verses from 1 John are called the *Comma Johanneum*. They are contained primarily in the King James Bible. The New King James Version has footnotes as to their exclusion from the earliest texts. The issue of being a late addition by Erasmus is a fairly well-known fact, and their exclusion does absolutely nothing to the doctrine of the Trinity, which is clearly embedded in both the Old and New Testaments. Ehrman may be trying to excavate problems where they don’t exist.

James White writes:

“The *Comma Johanneum* is extremely important. Here we have a phrase that everyone will admit is manifestly orthodox. What it says is obviously true. Yet, we are in no way dependent upon the phrase for our knowledge of the Trinity or the unity of the three Persons: Father, Son, and Spirit. The doctrine of the Trinity does not stand or fall upon the inclusion of the *Comma*. Beyond this, however, we have a phrase that is simply not part of the ancient Greek manuscripts of John’s first epistle.”⁵⁷

Matthew 24:36 is seen by Ehrman as something which places New Testa-

ment theology at stake, especially the Deity of Jesus. Ehrman postulates that “if Jesus does not know the future, the Christian claim that he is a divine being is more than a little compromised.”⁵⁸ Certainly one verse — or at least Ehrman’s interpretation of that verse — cannot somehow negate all that is said of Jesus in large portions of the Gospels and in multitudes of other verses. The obscure must always be interpreted in light of the plain. Daniel Wallace points out Ehrman’s fallacy:

“...the idea that the variants in the NT manuscripts alter the theology of the NT is overstated at best. ... *significant textual variants that alter core doctrines of the NT have not yet been produced.*”⁵⁹

Ehrman writes that Matthew’s passage regarding Jesus’ statement originally read, “concerning that day and hour, no one knows — not the angels in heaven, nor even the Son, but only the Father.”⁶⁰ The verse is also nearly identically recorded in Mark 13:32. Jesus speaking of His own constrained knowledge of the prophetic is not a problem for believers.

Deity could opt for self-limitation in the flesh and for a short length of time. Deity presupposes the ability to do whatever Deity wishes to do. However, there is much more to it than that. Certainly Philippians 2 alerts us to the voluntary and temporary self-limitation of Jesus. Dr. Harry Ironside informs:

“It is useless to try to work out some chronological system in order to locate the time of His coming. This is a secret, unrevealed even to angels, and as Man on earth the Son Himself chose not to know. It is the Father’s prerogative to set the time, as Jesus declared in Acts 1:7.”⁶¹

Adam Clarke alerts us to much more on this issue in his commentary of Mark 13:32:

“Neither the Son - This clause is not found either in Matthew or Luke; and Ambrose says it is wanting in some Greek copies in

his time. To me it is utterly unaccountable, how Jesus, who knew so *correctly* all the *particulars* which he here lays down, and which were to a jot and tittle verified by the event — how he who knew that not *one* stone should be left on *another*, should be ignorant of the *day* and *hour* when this should be done, though *Daniel*, chap. ix. 24, & c., could fix the very *year*, not less than five hundred years before it happened: how he in whom the *fullness of the Godhead dwelt bodily*, and all the treasures of *wisdom* and *knowledge*, should not know this *small matter*, I cannot comprehend, but on this ground, that the Deity which dwelt in the man Christ Jesus might, at one time, communicate less of the knowledge of futurity to him than at another.”⁶²

As Clarke tells of his personal struggle, he also suggests:

“However, I strongly suspect that the clause was not originally in this Gospel. Its not being found in the parallel places in the other evangelists is, in my opinion, a strong presumption against it. But Dr. Macknight, and others, solve this difficulty in the following manner. They suppose the verb *oiden* to have the force of the Hebrew conjugation *Hiphel*, in which verbs are taken in a *causative*, *declarative*, or *permissive* sense; and that it means here, *make known*, or *promulge*, as it is to be understood in 1 Cor. ii. 2. This intimates that this secret was not to be *made known*, either by *men* or *angels*, no, not even by the Son of man himself; but it should be *made known* by the Father only, in the execution of the purposes of his *justice*.”⁶³

Simply put, Jesus was not making known the heavenly timetable — a fact repeated in other places in the New Testament.

SOME CONCLUSIONS

In summary, Ehrman knows full well that textual criticism is not abso-

lute, but based on internal and external probabilities. He does admit that “a lot of judgment calls have to be made,” and that “different scholars invariably come to different conclusions ... about matters of major importance, matters that affect the interpretation of an entire book of the New Testament.”⁶⁴ He further admits:

“The evidence is often ambiguous, capable of being interpreted in various ways, and a case has to be made for one solution of the problem over another. ... To be sure, of all the hundreds of thousands of textual changes found among our manuscripts, most of them are completely insignificant, immaterial, of no real importance.”⁶⁵

One could only hope that Ehrman realizes these admissions, and, for his readers, they do not get lost among the overstatements in his book.

Ehrman seems perfectly willing to accept the verses in the Gospels and Epistles where they happen to agree with his agenda. For example, all the verses, no matter where they are found in the New Testament, which agree with his view on women he favorably accepts. However, any verses which circumscribe a woman’s role in any way he writes off, asserting, “This seems a long way from Paul’s view.”⁶⁶ The verses which modify Ehrman’s view in any way are simply seen as later scribal insertions or copyists’ changes. Somehow it becomes obvious that Ehrman is not really doing objective research here. When verses written by Paul disrupt his scheme, he is bold to say, “There are good reasons for thinking that Paul did not originally write these verses.”⁶⁷ The reason is because Paul’s statements do not agree with Ehrman. Ehrman brings his prejudices to the Scripture. The verses which do not fit his bias are labeled “intrusive” and are “anomalous with what Paul explicitly says elsewhere.”⁶⁸ He is not coming to the Scripture to develop his points, but like a cultist just twisting Scripture to say what he wants. Ben Witherington describes Ehrman as having taken a “left turn” and declares:

“I am however glad Bart is honest about his pilgrimage. If only he could be equally honest and admit that in his scholarship he is trying now to deconstruct orthodox Christianity which he once embraced, rather than do ‘value-neutral’ text criticism. In my own view, he has attempted this deconstruction on the basis of very flimsy evidence — textual variants which do not prove what he wants them to prove.”⁶⁹

In all, perhaps Ehrman’s book might have been more correctly titled, *Misconstruing Jesus and History*.

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THE GRAVE AND BEYOND

(continued from page 4)

2 Timothy 3:13; Titus 1:10-11; 2 Peter 2:1-3; 1 John 2:26; 4:1).

The *New International Version* of the Bible vividly translates the first half of 2 Peter 2:3 as: "In their greed these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up."

As Connelly writes:

"If a person's experience or teaching is in harmony with what God has said in his Word, we can accept it. If what we are told is not in harmony with Scripture, even if it comes from an angel from heaven, we are to reject it (Galatians 1:8-9)."⁵

AFTER DEATH: CONSCIOUSNESS OR SOUL SLEEP?

Some people, including Jehovah's Witnesses and Seventh-day Adven-

tists, have espoused the doctrine of "soul sleep." This is the belief that a person, upon dying, passes into a state of unconsciousness prior to the resurrection. There are some Old Testament passages, which when taken in isolation, can seem to suggest this.

Mark Hitchcock, a pastor and author of the book *55 Answers to Questions About Life After Death*, explains, "The main biblical support for the doctrine of soul sleep is found in several Old Testament verses."⁶

Hitchcock further states:

"The main verse used by advocates of soul sleep is Ecclesiastes 9:5: 'For the living know they will die; but the dead do not know anything, nor have they any longer a reward, for their memory is forgotten.' Two major problems arise when you try to use this verse to prove soul sleep. First, the book of Ecclesiastes frequently states things that only

appear to be true from the human perspective — from the limited vantage point of 'life under the sun.' Second, interpreting Ecclesiastes 9:5 in this way can't be harmonized with other statements made in the same book. Solomon clearly believed that the soul continues on in conscious existence after death. He writes, for instance, "Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it" (Ecclesiastes 12:7)."⁷

It is true that the Scriptures will sometimes say that so-and-so "slept with his fathers" (e.g., 1 Kings 2:10; 11:21; 14:20; 14:31). Or, the Bible often refers to a dead person as "sleeping," being "asleep," or "having fallen asleep" (e.g., Matthew 9:24; 27:52; Acts 7:60; 1 Corinthians 11:30; 1 Corinthians 15:6). Jesus Himself used such language to describe death (e.g., Mark 5:39; John 11:11-14). A dead body can appear to be a sleep-

ing person. And, as Hitchcock points out, the body is in a dormant state until the resurrection.⁸ These two factors make “sleep” an appropriate figure of speech to describe death.

However, in view of the Scripture’s teaching about death, such language should be understood as figurative. One passage cited by both Hitchcock⁹ and also by Christian scholar and author Robert Morey¹⁰ to demonstrate the consciousness of a person after death is found in Revelation:

“When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, ‘How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?’” (Revelation 6:9-10)

THE BIBLE AND LIFE AFTER DEATH

In his book, *One Minute After You Die*, Erwin Lutzer has written:

“One minute after you slip behind the parted curtain, you will either be enjoying a personal welcome from Christ or catching your first glimpse of gloom as you have never known it. Either way, your future will be irrevocably fixed and eternally unchangeable.”¹¹

Death — it doesn’t get any more basic than that. What can we know about death? What does the Bible tell us about what happens when we die? While the Bible doesn’t tell us everything we would like to know about everything, it does tell us what God has *wanted* us to know about certain things. And, although what it tells us about life after death is somewhat sketchy, it does give us some information on this topic; and that is what we want to examine in this article. A key Scripture related to our topic is Luke 16:19-31:

“There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day. But there was a cer-

tain beggar named Lazarus, full of sores, who was laid at his gate, desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man’s table. Moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham’s bosom. The rich man also died and was buried. And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. Then he cried and said, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.’ But Abraham said, ‘Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us.’ Then he said, ‘I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him to my father’s house, for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment.’ Abraham said to him, ‘They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.’ And he said, ‘No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.’ But he said to him, ‘If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.’”¹²

Unfortunately, both the *King James Version* and the *New International Version* of the Bible translate the word correctly rendered “Hades” in the *New American Standard Version* and the *New King James Version* (cited above) as “hell” in verse 23. The *New International Version*, however, does give the Greek word Hades in a text note. But to translate Hades as “hell” is misleading for this reason: Hell is

the final abode of the unbelieving dead; it is the lake of fire; whereas (as we will see below) Hades is the intermediate abode of the unbelieving dead — the place where unbelievers go immediately after death, and prior to the Last Judgment.

Likewise, in some Christian churches’ version of the Apostles’ Creed, there is a line after the statement that Christ “was crucified, died, and was buried” where they insert the words, “He descended into hell,” before the words, “And rose again from the dead.” Again, Christ did not descend into what we would call “hell,” (i.e., the lake of fire), but He descended into Hades, the intermediate abode of the dead. And that is what that rendering of the creed means; and, unfortunately, renders as “hell.”

SHEOL AND HADES

In order to understand what happens to us after we die, there are three words that we need to understand: *Sheol*, *Hades*, and *Gehenna*.

Sheol is the Hebrew word, used in the Old Testament, to describe the abode of those who have died, both righteous and unrighteous. *Hades* is the New Testament Greek word for *Sheol*. Think of the words *Sheol* and *Hades* as synonyms. In an Old Testament translation from Hebrew into Greek made before the birth of Christ — a translation called “the Septuagint” (LXX) — the translators nearly always translated *Sheol* (the Hebrew word) as *Hades* (the Greek word).¹³

In his book, *Death and the Afterlife*, Morey explains a further insight which will help us in understanding the Luke 16 passage above. He writes:

“During the intertestamental period [i.e., the 400-year period of time between the Old and the New Testaments], the Jewish concept of *Sheol* had progressed to the stage where it was believed that *Sheol* had two distinct compartments, or sections. One section was a place of torment to which the wicked went while the other was a place of conscious bliss, often called ‘Abraham’s

bosom' or 'paradise,' to which the righteous were carried by angels. The rabbis even discussed how many angels it took to carry the righteous to Abraham's bosom. The rabbinic understanding of Sheol is the basis for Christ's illustration in Luke 16:19-31. While only the rich man was directly said to be 'in Hades' (v. 23), the phrase 'Abraham's bosom' to which the angels carried Lazarus (vv. 22, 23) must be interpreted as the section of Hades reserved for the righteous."¹⁴

Morey also points out that some people understand the story of the rich man and Lazarus to be a parable, while others view it as an actual event.¹⁵ Although Morey himself does not believe that the story was literal, but that Christ was simply relating this story according to a common rabbinic method of teaching, he gives three reasons why some people treat this story as literal.

First, the beggar must have been a real historical character because his name was given. Second, Abraham was a real historical character. And third, in parables names are not given.¹⁶

In any event, whether this story records an actual event or is merely a rabbinic-style story, it does reveal certain things about what happens after death. In so doing, it corroborates some things we learn about what happens to people after death that are illustrated in two Old Testament passages, which we will merely cite, but not examine in this article: Isaiah 14:9-10 and Ezekiel 32:18-32. Here is a list of things we find that the New Testament story of the rich man and Lazarus has in common with those two Old Testament passages just mentioned. These features are presented and elaborated on by the late Derek Prince¹⁷ in his book *The End of Life's Journey*:

"1. There is no indication that those departed souls had any knowledge of current events on earth. ... 3. There is a definite persistence of personality [i.e., personality continues after

death]. 4. There is recognition of one person by another. ... 6. There is an awareness of the present conditions in Sheol."¹⁸

Prince then writes:

"First, there is a recollection of previous conditions on earth. Abraham actually said to the rich man, 'Remember that in your lifetime you received your good things' — so clearly, there is remembrance of previous conditions on earth.¹⁹ Second, there is a persistence of personality. Lazarus was still Lazarus; Abraham was still Abraham; the rich man was still the rich man, though no longer rich. Third, there was recognition of one person by another. The rich man recognized both Abraham and Lazarus. Fourth, there was a consciousness of present conditions. Particularly, the rich man was very conscious of the agony and the torment in which he found himself."²⁰

Prince continues:

"However, there is one important extra feature that is added in this account by Jesus [that is not in the passages from Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 32 alluded to above]: there is a complete separation between the righteous and the unrighteous. Though both are in this place reserved for the souls of the departed, they are in completely different sections of that place, and there is a great difference between what is happening to them. The wicked man is in torment — he is being tormented in flame. But the righteous poor man is in a place of rest that is described as Abraham's bosom. ... One other important feature is included in the account given by Jesus: God's angels took charge of the soul of Lazarus. Angels carried him to his place of rest."²¹

We noted earlier that the rabbis viewed:

"One section [of Sheol or Hades] was a place of torment to which

the wicked went while the other was a place of conscious bliss, often called 'Abraham's bosom' or 'paradise,' to which the righteous were carried by angels."²²

And that:

"The rabbis even discussed how many angels it took to carry the righteous to Abraham's bosom."²³

And so we understand that Lazarus was in the "good" section of Hades, while the rich man was in the "bad" section. We also note that the rich man was conscious of his tormented condition; and it seems likely that Lazarus was also conscious of his condition of blessing. So the Bible seems to indicate that, after we die, we are either in a state of conscious bliss or agony.

Now, after death, our bodies are in the grave and will not be resurrected until the resurrection. (The term, "the resurrection" refers to the resurrection of the body, not of the soul.) So, our soul, or personality, remains conscious, as it is even now as we live in our bodies. At death, our soul separates from our bodies, but remains conscious. Derek Prince has said that once we are given consciousness at birth, we remain conscious forever.²⁴ Obviously, there are exceptions to this, such as when we are asleep, or if we fall into a coma at some point in our lives.

William Orr writes:

"The first five minutes after death will make several facts exceedingly clear. First, the person who has departed this life will be completely conscious, alert and aware of everything that is happening to him. Next, he will know which of the two distinct destinies he has chosen. The entire impact of his fate will at once be unmistakably clear."²⁵

THERE GOES THE NEIGHBORHOOD!

Although at the time of Christ there were two compartments in Hades, the Bible seems to indicate that after the resurrection of Christ, He emptied the

“good” section of Hades so that now when believers die, they go directly to heaven. The Scripture passage where this may be indicated is Ephesians 4:8-10:

“Therefore He says: ‘When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, And gave gifts to men.’ (Now this, ‘He ascended’; what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.)”

We just want to focus on the phrase, “When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive.” The captivity Christ led captive were apparently those people who resided in the “good” section of Sheol or Hades. Note that it also mentions that Christ had descended into the lower parts of the earth — that is to say, into Sheol or Hades. This is confirmed by the Apostle Peter, when, in the second chapter of Acts, Peter says, “For David [in Psalm 16:10] says concerning Him: ‘... For You will not leave my soul in Hades, nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption” (Acts 2:25, 27). Peter points out that David, in saying this, could not have been speaking about himself, because David’s tomb was there among them. Peter further states that David, as a prophet, was speaking — not about himself — but about Christ not being abandoned to Hades, nor His flesh undergoing decay (Acts 2:29-31).

In any event, after the resurrection of Jesus, it appears that Jesus emptied the “good” section of Sheol (or Hades), so that only unbelievers go to Hades now — there is no “good” section of Hades anymore.

Parenthetically, it should be noted that this section of Scripture, Ephesians 4:8-10, is a difficult passage of Scripture for more than one reason. It is therefore not surprising that not all conservative Bible scholars agree with the interpretation above that Christ’s descent was a descent into Sheol or Hades. Bible commentator Adam Clarke (ca. 1762-1832), for instance, suggested that Christ’s descent men-

tioned in Ephesians 4:9 merely had reference to “His incarnation, humiliation, [and] death.”²⁶

Likewise, not all conservative Bible scholars believe that the “captives” Christ led in Ephesians 4:8 refer to believers previously confined to the “good” part of Hades. For instance, although Christian apologist Ron Rhodes, among others, holds to this view,²⁷ he notes that Bible scholar Charles Ryrie does not;²⁸ nor does Norman Geisler in a book he co-authored with Rhodes.²⁹ In that book, the authors state, “When Christ ‘led captivity captive,’ he was not leading friends into heaven, but bringing foes into bondage. It is a reference to his conquest of the forces of evil.”³⁰

Similarly *The NIV Study Bible* states that, “Probably Paul applies this [phrase] to the spiritual enemies Christ defeated at the cross.”³¹

However, regardless of whether one believes that Ephesians 4:8-10 refers to Christ descending into Hades; and regardless of whether the phrase in this passage about Christ leading captivity captive refers to Christ bringing believers into heaven or leading spiritual enemies in procession; indeed, whether the Scriptures even teach that Hades was formerly divided into two compartments — a belief that some Christian scholars likewise deny³² — and regardless of these areas of debate among sincere Christians, the Scriptures clearly teach that today, upon their death, believers go directly to be with Christ.

WHERE BELIEVERS GO

We will here cite three Scriptures which emphasize the fact that, upon death, a believer is at home in heaven with Jesus. The first Scripture is in Acts 7, when Stephen is testifying before the Sanhedrin:

“But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, and said, ‘Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!’ ... And they cast him out of the city ... And they stoned

Stephen as he was calling on God and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit” (Acts 7:55-56, 58-59).

Stephen expected his spirit to go to be with Jesus, Whom he had seen standing in heaven at the right hand of God.

The second Scripture we will note is in Philippians, where the Apostle Paul wrote:

“For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. For I am hard pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. Nevertheless to remain in the flesh is more needful for you” (Philippians 1:21-24).

Notice that Paul says that dying is gain for him. Then he says that his desire is “to depart and be with Christ.” In other words, Paul expected that, at death, he would be immediately present with the Lord.

The third Scripture we will look at is also from the pen of the Apostle Paul:

“So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. For we walk by faith, not by sight. We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord. Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him” (2 Corinthians 5:6-9).

Notice here that Paul says, “while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord.” Then he says that we prefer “rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.” So, according to the Apostle Paul, to be absent from the body (i.e., dead) is to be present with the Lord. And the Lord is in heaven.

Thus, we conclude that, at death, unbelievers today go to Hades, which is now only a place of torment; but the believer goes immediately to

heaven, into the presence of the Lord there.

GEHENNA

We have discussed Sheol and Hades, and have seen that they are synonyms. Gehenna is the word used to describe the final abode of the wicked. Gehenna is the lake of fire, or hell.³³

Morey explains:

“The word Gehenna is the Greek equivalent for ‘the valley of Hinnom’ (Josh. 15:8; 18:16; Neh. 11:30). It thus originally referred to the valley of Hinnom, which was just outside the city of Jerusalem.³⁴ According to *Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon* (p. 111), it was the place where idolatrous Jews gave human sacrifices to pagan deities (2 Kings 23:10; 2 Chron. 28:3; 33:6). Because of these horrible idolatrous practices, the Valley of Hinnom was hated and considered ‘unclean’ by pious Jews. In Christ’s day, this hatred of the Valley of Hinnom caused the valley to become the town dump where all the garbage of Jerusalem could be thrown. Unclean corpses as well as normal garbage were thrown into it. Because garbage was constantly being thrown into the valley, the fires never stopped burning and the worms never stopped eating. ... Gehenna came to be understood as the final, eternal garbage dump where all idolators would be thrown after the resurrection.”³⁵

Morey adds:

“Out of its twelve occurrences in the New Testament, Gehenna is found no less than eleven times on the lips of the Lord Jesus himself.”³⁶

The twelfth time Gehenna is used in the New Testament is in the epistle of James, in James’ description of the tongue. As Dr. John Walvoord noted:

“The expression occurs also in James 3:6 but does not occur in the book of Revelation. However,

it is clearly equivalent to the lake of fire, or the eternal punishment of the wicked.”³⁷

In Revelation, we read these words concerning the lake of fire, which seems synonymous with Gehenna, or hell:

“The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire” (Revelation 20:10-15).

The passage says that the devil was thrown into this lake of fire, where the beast (i.e., the Antichrist) and the false prophet (i.e., the Antichrist’s representative) already are at the future point in time that Revelation is describing, and that all three beings will be tormented forever. The passage also says that if anyone’s name is not found written in the Book of Life, they are thrown into this lake of fire.³⁸

Related to this, we also note the latter part of Matthew 25, when Christ judges the nations, dividing the sheep from the goats:

“Then He will also say to those on His left, ‘Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels.’ ... And

these [on Christ’s left, the goats] will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life” (Matthew 25:41, 46, NASB).

This is the same fire spoken of in the Revelation 20 passage cited above. It is the fire “prepared for the devil and his angels.” Notice also that there are three eternal things mentioned in these two verses from Matthew 25. The fire is eternal; the punishment of the wicked is eternal; and the life for the righteous is eternal. The New Testament Greek word for eternal is the same word in all three instances. It is the Greek word *aiōnios*, which means “agelong, eternal.” Thus, if the life for the righteous is eternal, so is the punishment for the wicked.

Some teach that the wicked are not punished forever; but, rather, they are annihilated. However, the Scriptures do not teach that, despite appeals to Matthew 10:28, where Jesus says, “And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.”

Morey points out the fallacy of those who hold this view, saying:

“The conditional immortalists assume that the word ‘destroy’ means to annihilate. In addition to this being an erroneous understanding of the Greek word *apollumi*, as we have already demonstrated, the Gospel parallel of this passage in Luke 12:4, 5 uses the word *ballw* (cast) as the synonym for *apollumi* (destroy). ‘Cast into hell [Gehenna]’ (Luke 12:5). ‘Destroy ... in hell [Gehenna]’ (Matt. 10:28). The wicked are ‘cast’ or ‘destroyed,’ i.e., delivered up unto eternal misery (Lit. Gk.), in Gehenna in the sense of being delivered up to eternal torment. The use of *ballw* as the synonym for *apollumi* makes annihilation an impossible interpretation.”³⁹

Again, others believe that hell is only temporary, a place where the wicked will only suffer for a period of time and then either pass out of existence or go to heaven. However,

as we have seen above, the same word “eternal” (or “everlasting”) is used in Matthew 25:46 for both the life of the righteous and for the punishment of the wicked. Additionally, the Bible never teaches that people will be given a second chance to accept Christ after death. Instead, Hebrews 9:27 plainly states, “it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment.”

Others teach that, because God is love — which He is — that He could never send people to hell. While it is difficult to reconcile the Scripture’s teaching of the love of God with the Scripture’s teaching on hell, the Bible clearly teaches both. Just think of the cost to God to save us from going there — it cost Him the death of His own Son. One would think that if there were any other way for God to save us from hell, He surely would have done so. And the Bible does indicate in the passages that we have looked at in this article that there will be *people* in hell, along with the devil and his servants. Hell is not an enjoyable doctrine by any means; however, the Bible does teach it.

DEGREES OF SUFFERING IN HELL

The Scriptures also seem to indicate that there will be degrees of suffering in hell. For instance, we read in Matthew 11:20-24:

“Then He began to rebuke the cities in which most of His mighty works had been done, because they did not repent: ‘Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you. And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades; for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say to you that it shall be more tolerable for

the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you.’”

Notice the words of Jesus, when he says in this passage, “it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you” and, again, when He states, “it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you.” These statements of the Lord seem to indicate degrees of punishment in hell. Also, it would seem to accord with justice that those who are very wicked would suffer more than someone who had lived a relatively decent life, although not trusting in Christ for salvation. Citing the above passage from Matthew 11, Morey states that Christ reveals:

“...there will be degrees of punishment in hell. All sinners in hell will be *perfectly* miserable but not *equally* miserable.”⁴⁰

Morey cites Matthew 10:15 and Hebrews 10:29 as further evidences of degrees of punishment in hell,⁴¹ and comments, “Since there will be degrees of punishment [i.e., in hell], God’s justice will be revealed.”⁴²

According to the book of Revelation, “And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire” (20:15). How does your name come to be written in the Book of Life? Acts 16:31 tells us, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved.” So, to avoid hell, the lake of fire, you must believe — that is, *trust* — in the Lord Jesus as your personal Savior, the one who took your place and my place on the cross. And the Scriptures promise that if we trust in Jesus as our Savior, we shall be saved.

To quickly review the main points we have covered: After a person dies, he remains conscious (or, if he was in a coma, or otherwise unconscious, he becomes conscious); and, depending upon their relationship with Jesus, they either go immediately into His presence in heaven; or, if they are not related to Jesus by faith, they go to Hades, a place of torment, until the resurrection of the dead. And at the resurrection, those in Hades are cast

into the lake of fire, where they undergo eternal punishment, just as the righteous go into eternal life.

William W. Orr gives a fitting conclusion to our subject when he says:

“The essence of a Christian’s death is that of a graduation. Life has been a school. Lessons have been learned. Much attention has been paid to study. Examinations have been given, but all is now past. In the perfect will of God, a believer has attained the experience and knowledge of important truths. Now comes the day of his graduation. He will be promoted to life — the exceedingly abundant life.”⁴³

WHERE ARE YOU HEADED?

Lutzer says, “One minute after we die we will be either elated or terrified. And it will be too late to reroute our travel plans.”⁴⁴

If you have already trusted in Christ as your personal Savior, you can rejoice in your future life; for when you die, you will go to be with Him. And, because we never know when the Lord will call us from this life, we should pray, as Moses prayed in Psalm 90, “So teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom” (Psalm 90:12). We just don’t know when or how we might die. It might be in an accident; it might be the natural result of old age; it might be the result of an illness, like cancer; it might be the result of an act of violence; it might be in our sleep. The Scripture clearly warns us against presuming on the future (e.g., Proverbs 27:1; James 4:13-17; see also, Luke 12:15-21).

Lutzer has written that:

“Aristides, a first-century Greek, marveled at the extraordinary success of Christianity and wrote to a friend, ‘If any righteous man among the Christians passes from this world, they rejoice and offer thanks to God, and they escort his body with songs and thanksgiving as if he were setting out from one place to another nearby.’”⁴⁵

Shortly before he died, the famous 19th-century evangelist D.L. Moody declared, "Soon you will read in the papers that Moody is dead. ... Don't believe it ... for in that moment I will be more alive than I have ever been."⁴⁶ Or, as Pastor Tony Evans says, "Have a good time at my funeral, because I'm not going to be there!"⁴⁷

But perhaps you are reading this today, and realize that you are headed for Gehenna and everlasting punishment. It's not too late to change your destination. Trust in Jesus today as your Savior, and you won't need to fear ending up with the lost in hell. As mentioned above, we never know when the Lord will call us from this life. You may live for 70 or 80 years, or even longer; on the other hand, you might die today or tomorrow or next month or next year. Just as my church's associate pastor didn't realize that that Sunday in November would be his last full day on earth, you never know when the Lord will call you. Are you ready? You can be. Perhaps the Lord has allowed you to encounter this article today so that you would be ready.

If you have never trusted in Jesus as your Savior, you can do so today in the quiet of your own heart. Then you, too, can rejoice that you will spend eternity in heaven with Jesus.

Endnotes:

1. *Hamlet*, Act 3, Scene 1, Line 87.
2. Erwin Lutzer, *One Minute After You Die*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1997, pg. 120.
3. Douglas Connelly, *After Life: What the Bible Really Says*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1995, pg. 35, emphasis added.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 37-38.
5. *Ibid.*, pg. 33.
6. Mark Hitchcock, *55 Answers to Questions About Life After Death*. Sisters, Ore.: Multnomah Publishers, 2005, pp. 47-48.
7. *Ibid.*, pg. 48, italic in original.
8. *Ibid.*
9. *Ibid.*, pg. 52.
10. Robert A. Morey, *Death and the Afterlife*. Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1984, pg. 214.
11. *One Minute After You Die*, op. cit., pg. 9.
12. Although it is off our topic here, it is interesting to note that Someone — namely Jesus — did in fact rise from the

dead, and the Pharisees who were listening to Him say these words (Luke 16:14) weren't persuaded by Him, despite this fact. Jesus had already pointed out to them that, "...if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote about Me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?" (John 5:46-47).

13. In his book, *Death and the Afterlife*, Morey notes that of the 66 times that Sheol is used in the Hebrew Old Testament, the Septuagint (LXX), the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament translates Sheol as Hades 64 times (pp. 72, 81).

14. *Death and the Afterlife*, op. cit., pp. 83-84. Morey also notes that this story is the first time that the word Hades is used in the New Testament, *ibid.*, pg. 84.

15. *Ibid.*, pp. 84-85.

16. *Ibid.*, pg. 84.

17. The use of this material by Derek Prince does not by any means connote a blanket endorsement of all of Prince's teachings. In addition to holding to some good, sound teaching, unfortunately Prince also espoused a number of eccentric and aberrational teachings, which this author rejects. By its appearance here, this author intends only to endorse the particular material by Prince that is here quoted.

18. Derek Prince, *The End of Life's Journey*. Charlotte, N.C.: Derek Prince Ministries International, 2004, pg. 104.

19. Another example of this point, not mentioned by Prince, is that the rich man remembered that he had five unsaved brothers (Luke 16:28).

20. *The End of Life's Journey*, op. cit., pp. 107-108, italic in original.

21. *Ibid.*, pg. 108.

22. *Death and the Afterlife*, op. cit., pg. 84.

23. *Ibid.*

24. Prince says, "Once we attain consciousness, it continues forever and ever" (*The End of Life's Journey*, op. cit., pg. 145).

25. William W. Orr, *The First Five Minutes After Death*. Wheaton, Ill.: Scripture Press Publications, 1973, pg. 24.

26. Adam Clarke, abridged by Ralph Earle, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1967, pg. 1179.

27. Ron Rhodes, *Heaven: The Undiscovered Country*. Eugene, Ore.: Harvest House Publishers, 1996, pg. 43.

28. *Ibid.*, pg. 202, note 10.

29. Norman L. Geisler and Ron Rhodes, *When Cultists Ask: A Popular Handbook on Cultic Misinterpretations*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1997, pp. 252-253.

30. *Ibid.*, pg. 253.

31. Kenneth Barker, General Editor, *The NIV Study Bible*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1985, pg.

1795, from study note on Ephesians 4:8.

32. Ron Rhodes has written, "There are also Bible scholars who deny the two-compartment theory of Hades. Theologian Charles Ryrie is one of these" (*Heaven: The Undiscovered Country*, op. cit., pg. 202, note 11). Likewise, the late Christian scholar John Walvoord observed that theologian William G.T. Shedd also denied the two-compartment understanding of Sheol, in opposition to his contemporary, theologian Charles Hodge, who held to this view (William Crockett, Editor, *Four Views on Hell*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992, pg. 15).

33. A Christian evangelist, Ralph Woodrow makes a helpful corrective statement when he accurately observes, "You may have heard that 'Jesus spoke more often about HELL than he did HEAVEN.' I have heard this repeatedly over the years — often from well-meaning preachers during evangelistic meetings. ... [But] Jesus definitely used the word heaven more than he did the word hell" (Ralph Woodrow, *Over 500 Amazing Discoveries Within the Book of Books*. Palm Springs, Calif.: Ralph Woodrow Evangelistic Association, 1995, pg. 66, upper case in original).

34. The late Bible prophecy scholar John F. Walvoord notes that this valley was "located south of Jerusalem" (John F. Walvoord, *Major Bible Prophecies: 37 Crucial Prophecies That Affect You Today*. New York: Harper Paperbacks/Zondervan Publishing House, 1994, pg. 487).

35. *Death and the Afterlife*, op. cit., pg. 87, italics in original.

36. *Ibid.*, pg. 89. Also Walvoord lists the eleven occurrences of Gehenna from the lips of Jesus: "Matt. 5:22, 29-30; 10:28; 18:9; 23:15, 33; Mark 9:43, 45, 47; Luke 12:5" (*Major Bible Prophecies*, op. cit., pg. 488).

37. *Major Bible Prophecies*, op. cit., pg. 488.

38. Because this scene of judgment occurs in the future, after Christ's return, this author agrees with Erwin Lutzer that no one has gone to hell yet (*One Minute After You Die*, op. cit., pg. 40). However, doubtless, there are souls in Hades today, as was the rich man in Jesus' story.

39. *Death and the Afterlife*, op. cit., pg. 153, italics, parenthesis, ellipsis, and brackets in original.

40. *Ibid.*, emphasis added; cf, pg. 250.

41. *Ibid.*, pp. 153-154.

42. *Ibid.*, pg. 154.

43. *The First Five Minutes After Death*, op. cit., pg. 29.

44. *One Minute After You Die*, op. cit., pg. 42.

45. *Ibid.*, pg. 79.

46. Moody quoted in *ibid.*, pg. 70, ellipsis in original.

47. Evans quoted in *ibid.*, pg. 96.

center ring because Christians have become drama-hungry and uncritical of anything. An absence of discernment — even though it is a spiritual gift — and the departure from the functional authority of Scripture for all of life, doctrine, and practice, leaves us with an emotionally driven adrenalin circus.

The premise of a believer being demonized or indwelt by demons is completely faulty. There is not a verse in the New Testament that can be quoted warning believers about demon possession or demon infestation. Added to that are the details of spiritual warfare given by the Apostle Paul in Ephesians chapter 6, which are devoid of any hint or suggestion that such an encounter can happen. There are many warnings in Scripture about many things, but not one warning against the possible takeover by demons in the life and body of the believer. Satan may tempt, but he is always external to the believer.

Dave Hunt makes this distinction as he writes:

“C. Peter Wagner believed he had a demon because John Wimber, Neil Anderson, Fred Dickason, Charles Kraft, Mark Bubeck and nearly all those promoting strategic-level spiritual warfare believe Christians can be demonized. Those advancing this doctrine admit that the Bible has neither teaching nor example of Christians having demon spirits.”²

GREATER IS HE...

Not only is there the absence of any teaching or warning about demon infestation of believers, there are verses indicating otherwise. We know that the Apostle John affirms, “he who has been born of God keeps himself and the wicked one does not touch him” (1 John 5:18). Kenneth Wuest taps the Greek nuances of this verse and renders it, “the Pernicious One does not lay hold of him.”³

John also writes, “He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world” (1 John 4:4). If the whole world is under the sway of the wicked one, in that Satan and his demons are loose in this world (1 John 5:19), then Christ in us is greater and more powerful than false prophets and false teachers in our world (1 John 4:1). Again, Wuest catches the full force of the meaning of 1 John 4:4 when he translates it, “As for you, out of God you are, little born-ones, and you have gained a complete victory over them and are still victors, because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.”⁴

If *nothing* can separate us from the love of Christ as Romans 8 declares, Christ would not hand us over to demons. The logic of redemption, and our position and security in Christ, argue against demon squatters in the believer.

Further, the Apostle Paul reminds us that our bodies are temples which house the very Spirit of the Living God (1 Corinthians 3:16). Paul also teaches in Ephesians 4:30 that the Holy Spirit seals us until the day of redemption.

THESPIANS OF THE DEMONIC THEATER

Based on the above, one can see why exorcisms on believers are simply an exercise in wild imagination and theatrics. This comes across in full force when we see the modern Charismatic and Evangelical exorcist doing gnostic-like contortions, incantations, and wild guesswork as to just where the demons are located. All of them disagree and contradict each other as to just where those pesky spirits seem to be residing. Consider the following sample of the confusion and contradiction.

Jessie Penn-Lewis could be considered the mother of all demonologists.⁵ There is no doubt that she was unbalanced and obsessed with demons. According to Penn-Lewis, no part of the human body was safe:

“...[demons] bury themselves in the very structure of the human

frame, some acting directly upon the organs or appetites of the body, others upon the mind or intellect, sensibilities, emotions and affections, and others more immediately upon the spirit. In the body they specially locate themselves in the spinal column, nervous system, and deepest nerve centres, through which they control the whole being; from the ganglionic nerve centre located in the bowels, the emotional sensibilities, and all organs affected by them, to the cerebral nerve centre in the head, the eyes, ears, neck, jaws, tongue, muscles of the face, and delicate nerve tissues of the brain.”⁶

The above is so bizarre and so extrabiblical it is mind boggling. Penn-Lewis’ views are like the Sci-Fi channel, *The Outer Limits*, and horror pulp fiction all rolled into one. She was wrong about the timing of our Lord’s Second Coming and was wrong about demons in believers, but she is still hailed by many — within all Christian camps — as a great saint.

Penn-Lewis offers no Scripture for her teaching because there is none. Yet her book has become a “bible” for some false teachers and she is often quoted as being credible.

Rebecca Brown has suggested that demons can get into our kidneys and create kidney stones.⁷ She also suggests that demons can come by way of “inserts” and lodge under the skin when she writes that, “Inserts are just about anything that gets inserted under the skin or into the body that has a demon ... attached to it.”⁸

On page 102 of her *Becoming a Vessel of Honor in the Master’s Service*, Brown provides a crude drawing depicting how one exorcises demons out of a person through the fingertips. She illustrates that by running a ring of oil around the arm above the wrist one can squeegee the demons down (by gripping above the wrist) and out of the fingers. This is what one would expect from Brown, who earlier instructed believers to anoint their pets with oil and preach the Gospel to them if they suspected that their pet

may have the spirit of a satanist or a demon who has taken residence in the animal.⁹

Are there demons in your kidneys? Under your skin? In your wrists and fingers? Or even in your pets? These are very unhealthy fairy tales from a very unsettled and troubled imagination. Obsession and preoccupation with demons is the hallmark of the current batch of exorcists.

Ed Smith is the originator of what is called Theophostic Counseling. The term *theophostic* is constructed from *theos*, meaning God, and *phos*, meaning light. It is supposed to be God's light on problems. Smith, like all who spread unbiblical teachings, retreats to a claim of some kind of direct revelation for his system. Theophostic Counseling is seen by critics and many discernment ministries as simply a reworking of the old inner healing and visualization ideas, with a demon thrown in for good measure.¹⁰

Inner healing, which was popularized in the 1970s by Ruth Carter Stapleton (the late sister of President Jimmy Carter), promotes the idea that we can never get rid of certain past hurts or grievances without special rituals of visualization or exorcism. Some, but not all, inner healers associate demons with our bondage to the past. In reality, we can either focus on the past or present responsibilities (Philippians 3:12-15). Smith says he has found the location of demons in believers. He joins the game of "Demons, Demons, Where are the Demons?" Yet, distinct from Penn-Lewis, Smith says that demons cannot enter the *spirit*, but that they can enter the *mind* of the believer. How he knows this is never made clear.

It is easy to see why Smith can assert things that are not in Scripture

because he believes that "God reveals truth in many different ways: word pictures, audible comments, visual images and forms that proclaim freeing truths, and/or objects and items with symbolic value."¹¹ Smith further states that, "God has not limited His works and actions to the events of His written Word."¹²

While God may be at work in providence today, He is not giving

"The ability of demons to influence or even possess Christians is one of the most striking doctrines of Theophostic Ministry. Smith admits that Scripture does not supply an abundance of information regarding demon affected thinking. He encourages 'discernment' and 'experiential data' to join with Scripture in creating an approach to the demonic. Again,

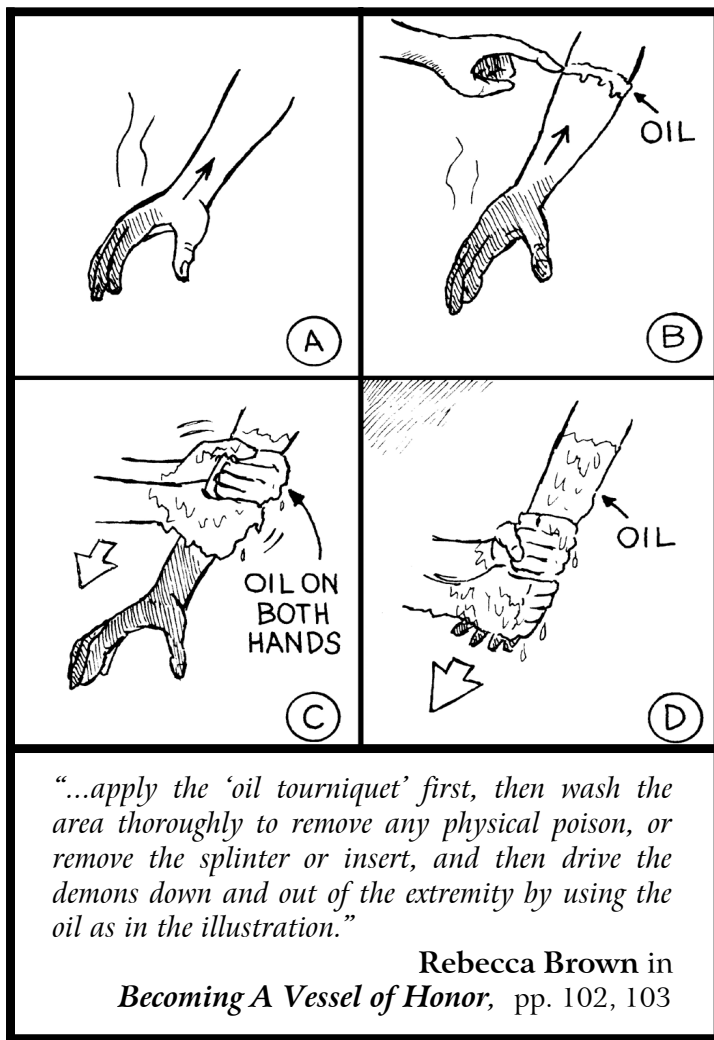
Smith's trichotomy supplies the foundation for his belief. He boldly asserts that the minds of Christians can be influenced and inhabited by lie-engendering demons. 'It is here in the mind inside the memory banks, (that) the demonic spirits dwell.' These, he asserts, manifest themselves in many different ways that a trained Theophostic minister can recognize and confront."¹³

Thus, Smith parts company with all of his colleagues and dogmatically argues that the demons occupy the memory bank of the mind.

In recent months, Smith has made repeated changes to his Theophostic Prayer Ministry approach. However, the core of his teaching on demons, past memories, inner healing, and visualization has not changed.

What has changed is that Smith now directs that his "TPM facilitator should avoid all forms of guided imagery and/or directed visualization."¹⁴ To this he adds:

"A TPM facilitator should not attempt to interpret or give explanation to ANY information, visual or other inner mind reality that you report. Rather, he or she should encourage you to listen and receive understanding from



new revelations, adding new truths, or in any way contradicting His Holy Word. He has given in Scripture all we need for life and godliness (2 Timothy 3:16-17, 2 Peter 1:3), and we do not need new esoteric insights or counseling practices which are foreign to the Bible.

Biblical counselor Tim Ackley informs us of the details of Smith's system and methodology:

the Holy Spirit. A TPM facilitator should not interpret your dreams or visions you may experience outside the ministry session, but rather will only encourage you to identify and embrace any negative emotion that may surface as a result of having these experiences and seek to identify any lie-based thinking that may be related to such."¹⁵

This all is really distinctions without a difference. Smith's counselors are to *encourage*, but not *guide* or *direct* imagery and visualization. It is hard to see a difference between what he says is listening and receiving understanding from the Holy Spirit and guided imagery and directed visualization, because they lead to the same subjective place. The underpinnings of New Age visualization and the secular repressed-memory theory is still there, but there is a tiny bit of rerouting as to how one gets there. There is also no word from Smith that he has dropped the demons-in-the-mind teaching.

Smith also admitted that he would not alter the foundation or basic principles of Theophostic Prayer Ministry when he stated:

"I will avoid changing, augmenting or repackaging the Theophostic Principles and seek to apply the principles as they have been taught in as pure a form as possible."¹⁶

This is merely playing with words. Theophostic Prayer Ministry facilitators are to be a little less hands-on and more gentle in their guidance, but the foundation is still the same. Smith, by his own admission, has kept the basic "principles" while repackaging the methods only slightly.

Frank and Ida Mae Hammond, in their three-decade-old "cult classic" *Pigs in the Parlor*, have hardly a body part or a human emotion that cannot be hijacked by a demon. And once the demons are "in," the Hammonds seem to know that the demons most often take only one way "out" of the body of the believer or the unbeliever. For some reason, a respiratory path

seems to be the main route. They write:

"When demon spirits are cast out they normally leave through the mouth or nose. Spirits are associated with breathing. ... When evil spirits depart we normally expect some sort of manifestation through the mouth or nose. Undoubtedly the most common manifestation is coughing. The cough may be dry but is often accompanied by the bringing up of phlegm. Phlegm may be brought up in excessive amounts. Similar material may be brought up through vomiting, drooling, spitting or foaming. ... It is not unusual for this material to flow out of a person for an hour or longer."¹⁷

Unfortunately, for the Christian who exercises discernment in the realm of the demonic and would question such teaching, the Hammonds provide a listing of demons including "skepticism."¹⁸

Bob Larson takes exorcisms way beyond the Hammonds when he says, "Generally, demons come and leave through the orifices; now, that's just the way it functions. Don't ask me why; that's just the way it works."¹⁹ Skeptic Danny Barnett adds that "Deliverance ministers have documented demons being expelled through screaming, coughing, crying, and even flatulence."²⁰

Neil Anderson, in neo-gnostic fashion, locates the indwelling demons in our nervous system claiming that "demonic influence is not an external force in the physical realm; it is the internal manipulation of the central nervous system."²¹

How could Anderson know this for sure? Anderson claims to have received such insight from respected biblical linguist Franz Delitzsch. Anderson explains:

"Bible commentator Franz Delitzsch describes how demonization simply involves demons intruding themselves between the person's own spirit and body and taking over the person's

nervous system in order to express demonic actions."²²

However, not only is Anderson's view of demonization suspect, he misreads Delitzsch in an effort to warrant his concept. Delitzsch actually stated that "demons intruded themselves *between* the corporeity — more strictly, the nervous body — and the soul of man."²³ So in Delitzsch's view, the demons took over some netherland deep in the recesses of the human body *between* what he called "the nervous body" and "the soul of man." And because the Bible has left those kind of details out, neither Delitzsch, nor Anderson drew such teaching from Scripture. While Anderson's dogmatic assertion stems from misunderstanding another writer, it is gospel to some.

Mark Bubeck is a former Moody Bible Institute professor. Unfortunately, this author saw a few students come out of Moody twisted and confused after having been exposed to Bubeck. Bubeck claims to have discovered a demon of nausea in his 11-year-old daughter. Bubeck asserts that he was able to bind the demons and cast them out of his daughter's innards.²⁴

It is easy to see why Bubeck is also obsessed with demons in body parts because he highly recommends Penn-Lewis' *War on the Saints*. Once one buys into the zany, extrabiblical wildness of Penn-Lewis, the rest is self-fulfilling. Truth be known, neither Bubeck nor any of these self-promoting exorcists knows where the demons are. God has not told them in Scripture, and demons are not in believers anyway. Modern exorcists are living in a self-fulfilling delusion. Without a proper verifiable medical diagnosis, no one really knows what Bubeck's daughter had.

Joyce Meyer is all over the map with her demonology. She explains her bizarre and unbiblical demonology in an eight-tape series entitled, *How to Fight the Devil and Win!* On one tape she informs her students that, "Demons have been known to inhabit rocks."²⁵

Meyer also identifies poverty as a "spirit." She then says:

"I mean, a poverty spirit just plain stinks. When I get people at the altar that got [sic] a poverty spirit on them they almost always have bad breath and body odor."²⁶

One can see that Meyer, who is very wealthy, has little respect for those without. Meyer also warns us that cysts can be generational spirits.²⁷ If that is true, then we can just have a doctor get rid of our demons. This kind of logic, however, is overridden by sensationalism.

It is also apparent that Meyer will go to any lengths to titillate an audience. She claims that she has had the demon possessed in her home, hitting her, spitting on her, throwing up on her, socking her in the face, and running crazed through the house. On one occasion she and her pastor, Rick Shelton, supposedly rode a large demonized woman piggyback around her house while the woman vomited on every towel Meyer had in the house.²⁸

The level Meyer lives at and the cost and quality of her homes makes it hard for one to believe she would allow the filth and chaos in so lavish a living space, let alone the fact that what she is describing is nonsensical and unbiblical.

Because all of the above is not biblical and has no parallel to the ministry of Jesus or the apostles, many wonder where it comes from. Technically, Jesus did not do exorcisms, but simply dismissed evil spirits *from unbelievers* with a word. No long incantations, or hours or days of theatrics. He never rode anyone piggyback, or let them vomit on Him. So where might all of this come from if it obviously does not come from Scripture?

MANY DARK AND QUESTIONABLE SOURCES

It may come from one another. Today's exorcists often quote other exorcists — both their contemporaries and those of bygone years. They refer

to them as "other experts" or "experts in the field." They seem to only select "experts" who agree with them. There is so much cross-pollination and borrowing, yet they still cannot agree on exactly where the demons lodge and an exact method of how to get rid of them. Some caution to never address a demon or never lay hands on a demon possessed believer, while others, like Joyce Meyer, are all over those declared demon possessed. If all of them are even partially right, there is not an inch of the human anatomy that is safe and we all need to live in fear. It seems obvious that the genesis of most of the above is the

There are elements of the Christian life that have warfare in them, but we fight from strength, from the high ground, from victory in what can be seen as a "mop up" operation. We fight the world, the flesh, and the devil, but we rest in the fact that, "He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love" (Colossians 1:13). We rest in the fact that we "are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power" (Colossians 2:10). We are to cast down imaginations and use the weapon of the Word, along with prayer and the armor of Ephesians 6.

*It should not go without notice that some of the best known manuals and books for modern exorcists (such as Mike Warnke's *The Satan Seller*, Lauren Stratford's *Satan's Underground*, Rebecca Brown's *He Came to Set the Captives Free*, among others) have been debunked and proven bogus.*

dark mind of Penn-Lewis, as she is subtly given more credence than the Bible.

The implied error in the exorcist mind set may be classified as a radical dualism, where God and Satan are equals and the exorcist must tip the scale. This is a heresy which has been condemned by the Church for centuries. Modern exorcists would deny they are radical dualists, but in practice they are at least functional dualists. God who lives in the believer is Almighty and all-powerful while "dualism is a doctrine which maintains that the world and man are both like a battle-ground where two equal and opposing forces are continually at war."²⁹

There are many other metaphors for the Christian life which show balance; that we do not have to think of ourselves in the trenches every second of every day. The other metaphors help us to keep this balance when we remember we are beloved children, a royal priesthood, witnesses, servants of Jesus, and so forth.

It may come from wild imagination and self-diagnosis without objective proof. Anyone can claim anything without having to prove it and then go about acting as if it is true. Willing subjects help the process along. The whole exercise becomes like the lie that repeated often enough is believed as truth. It should not go without notice that some of the best known

manuals and books for modern exorcists (such as Mike Warnke's *The Satan Seller*, Lauren Stratford's *Satan's Underground*, Rebecca Brown's *He Came to Set the Captives Free*, among others) have been debunked and proven bogus.

It may certainly come from folklore and the mythology of the Middle Ages. Medieval history is replete with superstitious books and writings that are little more than fiction. Even Martin Luther never fully escaped this and believed that Satan could assume visible forms at will and appear as a "dog or a hog or a goat, or as a flame or star, or as a man with horns."³⁰ If we go back to the Middle Ages and stop there we have not gone back far enough. We need to go back to the New Testament and construct a balanced, biblical view of demonology.

It may be generated from the naive and faithful followers. It is obvious that many go along with the show. Peer pressure and the forceful personality of the leader massage followers' personalities and create the group dynamics for fireworks. Faith healer Benny Hinn creates his healing campaigns in this manner. Modern day exorcists create their deliverance campaigns in the same way. They all are persuaded to "see" as the "expert" exorcist "sees."

Richard Gardner's words apply:

"And there is also the phenomenon that is best described as *mass delusion*. Here, pre-delusional people, those who are prone to develop psychotic symptoms, take on the delusions of others. This is especially common in the context of mass hysteria situations. ... Human beings are extremely suggestible. Even those who claim immunity to such influence are more suggestible than they would like to believe. ... Suggestibility is one of the factors operative in one's susceptibility to becoming involved in mass hysteria. It enables individuals to suspend disbelief and accept as valid the exhortations of persuasive leaders, especially

those whom we make charismatic (charisma is much more in the eye of the beholder than in the body of the person beheld). We select those leaders (when we have the opportunity) who share our aspirations and who we believe have the power to bring about their fulfillment. If the desire for such fulfillment is strong, we may attribute to our leaders powers that go far beyond what actually exists and may even attribute to them magical and supernatural powers. ... When one combines human suggestibility, magical thinking, and the desire for a powerful leader (to compensate for our feelings of impotence), the ground is set for mass hysteria. ... Sweeping up a group of people — even to fanatic levels — to espouse some cause is not difficult."³¹

It may come as a result of lies and fakery. There are those, such as Marjoe Gortner — and his parents — who have made a career out of lying, hype, exaggeration, and fabrication. In Gortner's case, he confessed it gleefully and then made an Academy Award-winning motion picture about it.³² Christians are a very naive and gullible lot. There are deceivers who have no consciences. They create outlandish spin without blushing. Kathryn Lindskoog writes about what she calls the "Pinocchio Syndrome" and quotes Ben Bradlee:

"Lying has become just another tool for making deals, for selling beer, or war, soap, or candidates."³³

One recent faker launched a "miracle car" scam where he offered new cars (that did not exist) only to true believers and spent the millions at gambling tables in Las Vegas. He is now spending his days in prison and the faithful have lighter bank accounts.

Having explored several of the human sources and elements which sustain success for the exorcist, we must stop and ask, "Is Satan involved at all?" The answer, without any hesitation, is, "Yes!"

It may come from Satan or demons. All this confusion and contradiction certainly does not come from God because He is not the author of contradiction or confusion (1 Corinthians 14:33, 40). The success of a good magician lies in his skill to misdirect. It is the primary instrument for his ability to captivate and deceive. Perhaps Satan and demons are in the chaotic mix in a little different way. They are not really there to possess believers, but to misdirect and confuse them into fighting imaginary battles and wasting precious time in unreal skirmishes with demons while the preaching of the Gospel and the teaching of Scripture is being neglected. Neglected as well is the whole area of progressive sanctification and other doctrines. Satan and demons create a wrong focus and consume people with imagined obsessions. Demons may seem to do a short-term good only to create long-term harm.

Finally, it certainly comes from defective and faulty theology. In the above systems there is an absence of balance and any kind of systematic theology or consistent doctrine. The doctrine of the fall, human depravity, sin, and human responsibility are almost always ignored. Neil Anderson, for instance, may tip his hat to our position in Christ, but then takes it away. It is always a demon behind the sin. The unfolding of the magnitude and meaning of ongoing grace is ignored. Satan is seen as almost, if not as powerful, as God. It is obsession with one doctrine, that of demons, but even that one doctrine is twisted beyond recognition and magnified out of proportion.

FEEDING OFF IGNORANCE

What feeds modern day exorcists is ignorance among believers of the ramifications of the doctrine of redemption. To have "redemption," we must be redeemed from something. Sadly, many Christians do not understand that we are delivered and freed from the direct control of demons *and from the past* by Jesus when we are saved. We may have memories

of the past, but we no longer have to live in the past or feed those memories. Philippians 3:13 advises that we work at forgetting the things that lie behind and concentrate on present responsibilities. Philippians 4:8-10 commands us to focus only on the good, pure, noble, and virtuous things of life. I have an old cesspool in my backyard. Yet I have no desire to visit it and wallow in it. If I did, I could understand why I would feel dirty and depressed. Christians who wallow in the cesspool of the past — in violation of Scripture — feel horrible. All too often they, rather than repenting and taking up a biblical approach to the past, seek out an exorcist to try to adjust their feelings and lift their depression. A lack of obedience, not demons, leads to quack exorcists.

In the end, because modern exorcists are teaching things that are not found in the Bible, claiming insights they do not have, and contradicting one another, they need to be met with skepticism and then rebuked. If there is no repentance, they should be rejected (Romans 16:17-18).

Endnotes:

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2. Dave Hunt, "The New Spiritual Warfare Strategies," *The Berean Call*, May 1997, pg. 2.
3. Kenneth Wuest, *The New Testament: An*

- Expanded Translation*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: William Eerdmans Publishing, 1961, pg. 574.
4. *Ibid.*, pg. 571.
 5. See further, G. Richard Fisher, "Pressing Truth to the Extreme - The Errors of Jessie Penn-Lewis," *The Quarterly Journal*, April-June 2000, pp. 1, 11-20.
 6. Jessie Penn-Lewis, *War on the Saints*. New York: Thomas E. Lowe Limited, 1998, pp. 162-163.
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 17. Frank and Ida Mae Hammond, *Pigs in the Parlor*. Kirkwood, Mo.: Impact Books, 1973, pp. 51-52.
 18. *Ibid.*, pg. 114.
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 20. *Ibid.*
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22. Neil T. Anderson and Robert L. Saucy, *The Common Made Holy*. Eugene, Ore.: Harvest House Publishers, 1997, pg. 350.
23. Franz Delitzsch, *A System of Biblical Psychology*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1966, pg. 354, emphasis added. Also see, G. Richard Fisher, "Demons, Demons, Where Are the Demons? The Unchanged and Unchanging Neil Anderson," *The Quarterly Journal*, July-September 1997, pp. 1, 14-17.
24. Mark I. Bubeck, *The Adversary*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1975, pp. 117-122.
25. Joyce Meyer, "Deliverance & The Character of Satan," tape 6, side 2. From the series: *How to Fight the Devil and Win!* Fenton, Mo.: Joyce Meyer Ministries, no date.
26. Joyce Meyer, "Generational Curses & Deliverance," tape 5, side 1. From the series: *How to Fight the Devil and Win!*, op. cit.
27. *Ibid.*
28. See further, G. Richard Fisher and M. Kurt Goedelman, "Mired in Confusion and Mysticism - Demonology and Spiritual Warfare According to Joyce Meyer," *The Quarterly Journal*, April-June 2002, pp. 4-15.
29. Richard Kennedy, *The International Dictionary of Religion*. New York: Crossroad Publications, 1984, pg. 64.
30. Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans Publishing, Vol. 7, pp. 336-337.
31. Richard A. Gardner, *Sex Abuse Hysteria: Salem Witch Trials Revisited*. Cresskill, N.J.: Creative Therapeutics, 1991, pp. 29, 37, 41-42, italics in original.
32. *Marjoe* is a revealing and controversial documentary of the life of Marjoe Gortner, a young child groomed by his parents into a professional fire and brimstone preacher who hustled gullible worshipers for 25 years. It was the winner of the Best Documentary Academy Award in 1972.
33. Bradlee quoted in Kathryn Lindskoog, *Fakes, Frauds & Other Malarkey*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing, 1993, pg. 259. 

EDITORIALS

(continued from page 2)

"bishop" husband invited Joe Redner to address their congregation about Redner's campaign for a seat in Florida's Hillsborough County Commission District 5.

Apparently, when it comes to a starvation of integrity and discernment, the adage, "like pastor, like people" applies as White's congregation applauded Redner and then shouted "Preach! Preach!" to the political candidate.

The tragedy in this goes beyond the use of a worship service pulpit for political gain. Redner is a self-professed humanist who admitted in a federal lawsuit that he is a homosexual and that he owns a strip club in the Tampa area. In fact, the *St. Petersburg Times* calls Redner the "strip club king." Redner, during his 10-minute address, told White's parishioners, "I believe in a lot of things that are in the Bible. ... I just don't believe it was divinely inspired." He also said, "I have come to the conclusion that the loving God that is spoken of in the Bible does not exist. I would hold my God to a higher standard." White, in allowing

Redner a platform in her church, clearly violates 2 John 10. And — just as clear — *Charisma* just doesn't get it.

Another of *Charisma's* contributing authors is Gloria Copeland. In the magazine she tells readers, "learn how to position yourself for a miracle." Such instruction is not surprising because Copeland is one of the leading figures within the Word-Faith camp and is shameless in promoting the "God wants you happy, healthy, and wealthy" doctrine.

Copeland is an ardent exponent of the hundredfold return teaching. In one of her books, she alleges: "You give \$1 for the gospel's sake and \$100 belongs to you; give \$10 and receive \$1,000; give \$1,000 and receive \$100,000." Of course, when the formula fails to produce its full fiscal gain as Copeland promises, she absconds with: "The hundredfold return on all our giving already belonged to us, but lack of diligence (failure to continually [sic] confess the Word and release faith for the hundredfold return) permitted the return to lay fallow in *Accounts Receivable*." In other words, if you don't cash in, it's your fault — it's not a result of bad doctrine and faulty exegesis on her part.

In times past, *Charisma* would suffer a recurrent bout of conscience in which it criticized such teaching as "self-absorbed" and "nauseating." Yet it allows a Word-Faith protagonist like Copeland to advance her career, ministry, and false teaching.

In all this there is a mish-mash of confusing signals being sent to the magazine's readership. *Charisma* isn't helping believers to be Bereans; it is the antithesis of cultivating biblical and doctrinal awareness. It is not surprising, therefore, that editor J. Lee Grady personally adds to the inconsistency with his own editorial.

In this same issue, Grady reflects upon his first visit to the erstwhile "Pensacola Revival" at the Brownsville Assembly of God church more than a decade ago. In its heyday, the meetings headed up by the church's pastor John Kilpatrick and evangelist Stephen Hill were said to be an "end times move of God." Yet all of this is now passé. Grady admits in his editorial that the "church that hosted hundreds of thousands of visitors [has] shrunk to a few hundred members." Grady further acknowledged the fact that the church now "owes millions of dollars for a building they can't fill" (*deja vu* Oral Roberts and his City of Faith), and "many people who were part of the Brownsville church [are] now hurt and disillusioned."

During the popularity of the revival meetings, the average collection for three of the four weekly services averaged \$12,500 nightly, according to a church representative. And the offerings from Friday evening services were given directly to evangelist Stephen Hill and averaged in excess of \$20,000 a week. It was during this time that luxury homes, a deluxe motor coach, and lavish salaries were received by the key players of the revival. Now the church sits in the shadow of the revival, millions of dollars in debt, and destitute for members.

Likewise, the Brownsville Revival School of Ministry, birthed as a result of the meetings and headed up by revival theologian Michael L. Brown, once had an enrollment of 1,200 students. In late 2000, Brown was ousted as president of the ministry school. Some estimated that nearly half the students left with Brown to create the Fellowship of International and Revival Evangelism (FIRE) School of Ministry. Today, the Brownsville Revival School of Ministry has withered to 120 students — 10 percent of its peak number. In May, the church announced that the school would be moving to Louisiana under the leadership and direction of Tommy Tenny. Tenny comes from a Oneness Pentecostal background and is himself confused on the very nature of God as he teaches no distinction between Creator and creation. Additionally, Tenny regards the Bible as "the moldy pages of what God has done." It is deplorable to think what view of God and His Word will emerge with these students. Perhaps it is a blessing that the enrollment has so vastly diminished.

Grady cites Brownsville's former pastor, who confessed, "People have been leaving for three or four years. Some are not in church at all, including some who were on staff. I don't know anyone who has not been hurt." Considering this, it is quite a sad legacy for a church which claimed for itself, "The Lord is raising up a model church for the remainder of this century and for the years to come."

Grady even acknowledges — but mutates — a prophecy about the revival given by South Korean pastor David Yonggi Cho. Cho, riding the crest of the revival, told those attending the Pensacola church that the revival "would last until Jesus comes." Rather than denouncing Cho and his false prophecy, Grady proposed, "Certainly the fruit of this revival will remain that long." Apparently to Grady, words mean little or can be altered at will. Cho was more direct in his prophetic utterance, saying the revival would continue, not its effects. Considering what the church's former pastor said above, the fruit, too, is rotten.

The Apostle Peter says, "For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God" (1 Peter 4:17). It is of interest to note that the Greek word for an intensive judgment (*anakrino*) is the same word for discernment. Likewise, the Apostle Paul commands, "Test all things; hold fast what is good" (1 Thessalonians 5:21).

Many of the popular teachers whom *Charisma* publishes within its pages have a confused understanding of the Bible and mislead their followers with aberrant teaching. These things are important to us — and should be to *Charisma* — as unchecked doctrine can and does affect the lives of those who follow such a teacher. James 3:1 warns that teachers will be more strictly judged.

Many Christians (new and old) do not have the ability or discernment to sort through all the heresy and nonsense. Christians need to be grounded, guided, guarded, and growing in the Word — not aroused by an

experienced-based theology where the focal point is personal enjoyment and happiness. Perhaps *Charisma* knows that sound doctrine and holiness are a much harder sell to the masses. And perhaps that's one matter *Charisma* does understand.

—MKG

NEWS UPDATES

(continued from page 3)

life, and that after death, everybody is redeemed. Everybody," *Dateline* correspondent Keith Morrison reported.

Pearson himself admitted that his move into universalism arose from a personal struggle he had that his own grandparents — who themselves were preachers — backslid into adultery and drunkenness. Pearson said, according to his former beliefs, his grandparents "therefore must be in hell." He also expressed a pressing apprehension about the lostness of heathens after watching a news story about refugees in Rwanda. "A man of God, a preacher of the Gospel, and evangelist, and I'm looking at those people assuming that they're probably Muslim and going to hell," he told NBC. That's when Pearson had his "revelation."

The *Dateline* broadcast shows to the discerning Christian a disgraced Pentecostal preacher who perhaps never

really understood the message of the Gospel and the mission of the Church. Pearson is ignorant of or ignoring the fact that Scripture declares that God will judge all men. And that this judgment comes upon men because they are sinners, not because they haven't heard the Gospel. The Bible reveals that man, apart from a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, is guilty and deserving of hell because he suppresses the truth, not because God has hidden the truth from him.

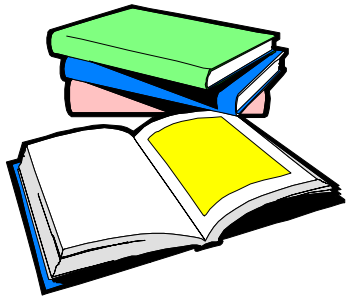
Pearson received his religious education at Oral Roberts University in Tulsa and was personally taken under the wing of Roberts, whom Pearson regarded as his mentor. Roberts even predicted that Pearson "would be the next great leader of his people." Pearson grew a tiny congregation in Tulsa to megachurch status with 5,000-6,000 people in attendance each week. His Higher Dimensions Family Church received offerings of up to \$60,000 per week and Pearson drew crowds of as many as 40,000 to his Azusa Conferences.

As a result of his fall from grace, all of that has now changed. The conferences ended in 2004 and he lost his former church. Pearson now meets on Sunday afternoons to lead a couple hundred of his diehard followers in worship at a borrowed Episcopal church in downtown Tulsa. He also accepted an invitation to be a "guest speaker at a small church in San Francisco at a place full of outcasts: lesbian pastor, a church of gays, AIDS patients, abused women." He told NBC that these are the "people who had experienced what I was experiencing."

—MKG

PERSONAL FREEDOM OUTREACH — STATEMENT OF BELIEF

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



Books in Review

THIS LITTLE CHURCH STAYED HOME

by Gary E. Gilley

Evangelical Press, 190 pages, \$13.99

In his earlier work, *This Little Church Went to Market*, pastor and Personal Freedom Outreach director Gary Gilley explored how pastors and congregations have “sold out” by buying into market-driven philosophy to build megachurches. Churches such as Rick Warren’s Saddleback Community Church in Southern California and Bill Hybels’ Willow Creek Community Church near Chicago have created a cultural phenomenon for pastors to envy and copy.

Gilley describes the scope of *This Little Church Stayed Home* in his preface: “It is not enough to identify what is wrong with the church; we must also offer an alternative — one firmly founded in the timeless Word of God rather than in the trends of tomorrow. If much of the modern church has sold its birthright and gone ‘to market’, what would a church look like that resisted these trends and ‘stayed home’? That is, what would a church be like if it drew its cues from Scripture — if it truly believed that God has a paradigm for the church outlined in his Word?” (pg. 13)

Gilley first gives his readers a brief survey of premodernism, modernism, and postmodernism — which entails a move from absolutes into relativism, deconstructionism, and a rejection of universal truth — and how all this has affected Western society and the Church. These factors, when combined with a yearning for success, constitute an unbiblical strategy for any local church. Gilley illustrates his point with an example of the growth-plan of an evangelical church: “...it was determined that the church must change its name because the term ‘Baptist’ was a turn off in the community. And people would only come to church if it were convenient, so it was necessary to relocate to a prime location off the freeway. ... On the other hand religious symbols, such as the cross, were offensive to some, so the symbols were expunged. Not only symbols but words are offensive as well; it became necessary, therefore, to eliminate terms such as redemption and conversion. Of course, negative

subjects such as hell and judgment had to be replaced with positive ones” (pg. 39).

Such subtle — but deadly — transitions will lead a pastor and congregation into inclusivism, mysticism, and pragmatism, as Gilley shows. He observes that this drift mutates our worship services — music, prayers, and sermons — into an effort “to arouse emotions and provide an experience rather than convey truth” (pg. 43). Contributing to the atrophy, Gilley writes, is the abandonment of church discipline. “Sin has been airbrushed out of the minds and hearts of Western society as well as the church,” Gilley says (pg. 63). Church discipline is a biblical practice which needs to be resurrected (or, in some cases, birthed) within local churches. Without it, one may have a “growing” church, but not a “healthy” church. The chapter, “Church Discipline and Church Growth,” is a fine primer along this line.

Gilley also targets the authority and sufficiency of Scripture, as well as briefly examining how it is used and misused by way of deficient hermeneutics and inexact Bible translations. This section also contains a valuable evaluation of Warren’s *The Purpose Driven Life* — which is a graphic model of poor hermeneutics and which uses questionable Bible translations.

The final section of the book presents “Pressing Challenges.” Here Gilley takes on what he currently sees as the two foremost issues facing the modern Church: mysticism and the emergent church movement. He provides for his readers excellent overviews of the primary issues and key players of these dangerous drifts. From mystical illumination (experiencing inner voices and visions) to contemplative prayer to visualization to labyrinth-walking to the decay of sound doctrine, Gilley has it all covered.

Where is all this leading? Gilley tells us, in the book’s Appendix, how some observers would answer that: “Some believe that the next wave will be the abandonment of the local church. Some are even calling for that abandonment, claiming that the local church has lost its influence in society as well as its power to transform lives. The local church is ready for the trash heap” (pg. 173). Despite what some are predicting, Christians can take comfort in the fact that our Lord said the gates of Hades would not prevail against the Church (Matthew 16:18). And Christians can also be forewarned and forearmed by a book such as *This Little Church Stayed Home*.

—MKG

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.