

# The Quarterly Journal



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## The Ape of God

### How New Age Spirituality Has Interlaced Into the Fabric of Evangelicalism

by David M. Tyler

Charles Spurgeon, Martin Luther, Saint Augustine, and others have called Satan “the ape of God.” As an ape will mimic a person’s actions, so Satan mimics God’s plan. God sends Christ; Satan sends false christs (Matthew 24:5). God sends prophets to lead and instruct; Satan sends false prophets to mislead and confuse (Matthew 7:15-23). God raised up men to become apostles; Satan has his own apostles (2 Corinthians 11:13). God gave us His Gospel; Satan gave another (Galatians 1:6-8). Satan’s plan is to convince men they are following God when they are actually following him.



attacked the Creator in all His works. He fouled creation. He dragged man down from his lofty place as steward and custodian of the earth and rolled him in the mire of depravity. But Satan was not content just to spoil the first creation; he attacked the second. Now Satan uses all his tactics, craft, and power to destroy man re-created in the image of Jesus Christ. There is no believer in Christ who will not find himself attacked by Satan or one of his demons. Satan is a formidable foe. He is not a myth or the product of our imaginations. He is as real today as when Christ met

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Theologian G.C. Berkouwer said, “There can be no sound theology without a sound demonology.”<sup>1</sup> From the moment man was created and placed in the Garden of Eden, Satan vowed perpetual opposition against the God of Heaven. He

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## WHAT IS IT? WHAT DOES IT DO?

King David penned in the psalms, "When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained; what is man that You are mindful of him...?" (Psalm 8:3-4).

Young David, at night when he watched his father's flock, had many occasions to "consider the heavens" and must have often asked himself, "What is man?" In comparison to an endless space, radiant moon, and host of sparkling stars, man seemed to the psalmist insignificant. Looking heavenward, David's pride was subdued by an overwhelming humility.

One of the distinguishing characteristics of puny and fragile man and the cause of innumerable conflict is pride. There is no attitude more out of place to the character and circumstances of man, made out of dust, whose follies are so numerous and glaring, than pride. Nevertheless, he struts in all his haughtiness and glories in his shame. This deplorable propensity in human beings is, at least for a moment, countered by a survey of the immensity of God's creation where man is as a grain of sand. "What is man?" What is sinful man, a creature so forgetful of his Creator, "that You are mindful of him?"

Man is honored, according to the abundant grace of God, and given a place near angels. "For You have made

him a little lower than the angels" (Psalm 8:5). Lower than angels because his body is made from dust (like the animals), but akin to the angels because he is spiritual and immortal. He is endowed with noble faculties and abilities, for God "crowned him with glory and honor" (Psalm 8:5). He was created and distinguished by God to rule and was given dominion over the inferior creatures. "You have made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet" (Psalm 8:6).

What David started with as a proposition in the first verse, he closes with as a well-proven conclusion, "O LORD, our Lord, how excellent is Your name in all the earth" (Psalm 8:9). What tongue can utter half the greatness of our God? All of creation is filled with His glory. His power and wisdom is visible everywhere. Descend into the depth of the ocean where no light penetrates, where the sand is motionless; even there are the wonders of God. From the myriad of stars in the vast expanse of space, to the creeping insects, to the crowning act of man, the miracles of God's power surround us.

What is man? Man is a creature. Man was created by God. Therefore, the meaning of man's life transcends man. It is impossible for man to interpret and understand himself and the universe apart from the Creator. The creator of a thing creates the thing with a plan and purpose in mind. It would be similar to a man, a thousand years ago, stepping into a time machine and

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## UNIFICATION CHURCH FOUNDER MOON DIES

The Rev. Sun Myung Moon died Sept. 3, two weeks after being hospitalized with pneumonia. He was 92.

In mid-August, the founder of the Unification Church “felt ill suddenly and was hospitalized in Seoul in ‘grave condition,’” according to a CNN report. The news article also stated Moon was “unconscious” and “breathing through a respirator.” The initial prognosis was described as “very critical” and gave him “only a 50% chance of survival.”

A few days before his death, his condition worsened and he was moved from Seoul’s St. Mary’s Hospital to a church-owned hospital near his home in Gapyeong County. He is survived by his wife, Hak Ja Han, and 10 children. He is preceded in death by three sons.

Upon his death, the Unification Church held a 13-day mourning period. The funeral was held Sept. 15 in a packed stadium at the church’s headquarters in Gapyeong. He was buried at Cheongseong Mountain, where his home is located. More than 30,000 church members attended the elaborate funeral, which equaled the pomp and circumstance of any head of state. Thousands of mourners flew to South Korea from overseas for the funeral. During the mourning period, prior to the funeral service, more than 150,000 came to the stadium passing by a massive portrait of Moon to offer their last respects to the self-proclaimed messiah.

Moon founded the Unification Church in Seoul in May 1954. He claimed that Jesus Christ’s mission to save mankind was thwarted when He was killed on the cross. Moon further claimed that in 1936 Jesus personally commissioned him to undertake and complete the mission of physical salvation for mankind. This is said to happen through devotion to Moon and his wife.

While religion was Moon’s fundamental ambition, the church acquired numerous businesses, including hotels, newspapers, fisheries, sports teams, universities, and hospitals. Some of the business concerns were lucrative; others were not. According to the Associated Press, “One expert said the church’s business prospects appear brighter than its religious future.” The Rev. Hyung-jin Moon, the youngest U.S.-born of Moon’s sons, was appointed to the church’s top leader position in April 2008 when he was 28 years old. Unification officials are tight-lipped about the exact worth of the entirety of church businesses, merely describing them as a multibillion-dollar enterprise.

Moon savored political relationships on several fronts. He developed associations with a number of conservative U.S. leaders, including Presidents George H.W. Bush, Ronald Reagan, and Richard Nixon. He also cultivated ongoing friendships with the late North Korean dictator Kim Jong Il, and Kim’s father, the country’s founder, Kim Il Sung. In 2004, more than a dozen U.S. legislators were part of a “coronation service” for Moon and his wife that declared Moon to be the savior of mankind. Following the event, those leaders maintained that they had been deceived as to the true purpose of the gathering.

For years prior to Moon’s death, internal conflict amongst many of the church’s business entities has existed. Those keeping a close eye on the church suggest that discord may now widen and accelerate. The Unification Church boasts a worldwide membership of 3 million members. However, non-members who are familiar with the church claim the number of followers at no more than 100,000.

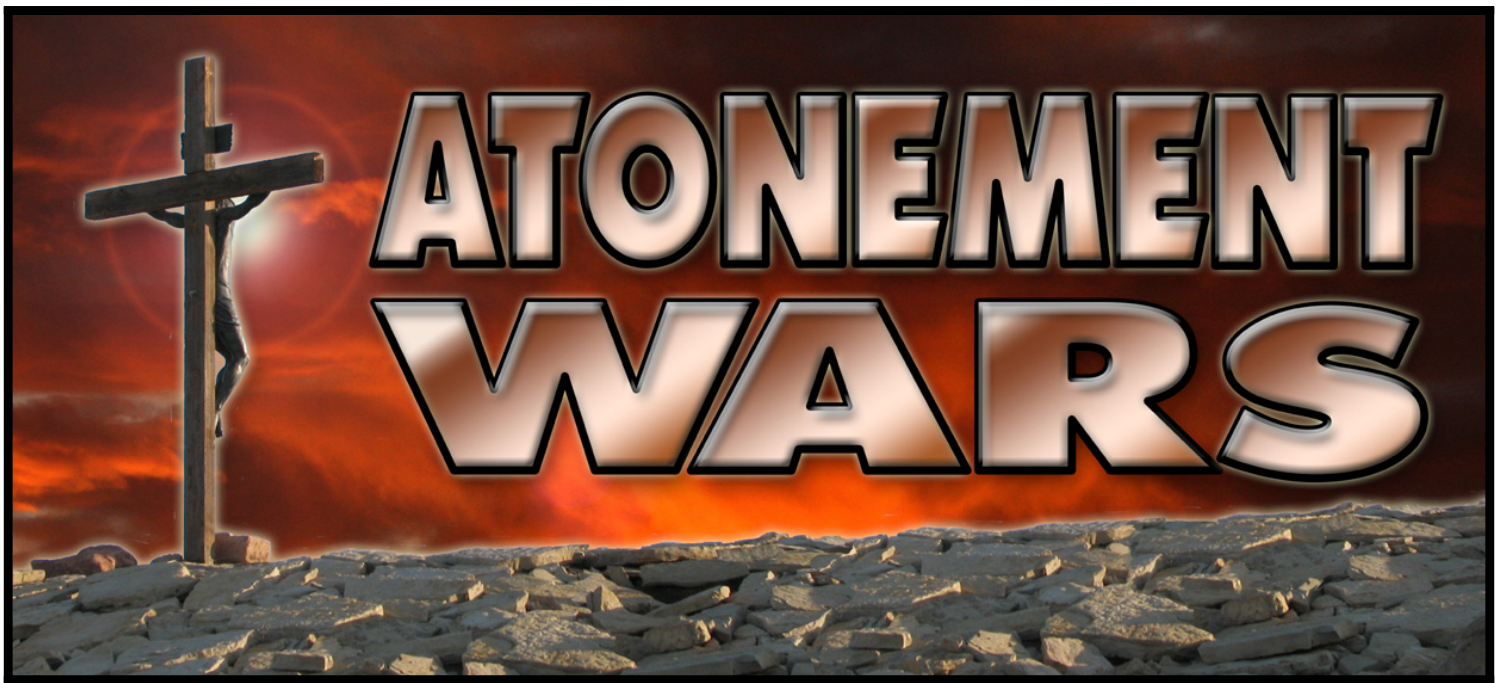
—MKG

## MORMONS CONTINUE TO ELIMINATE CULT DESIGNATION

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints continues to make progress in gaining acceptance and credibility, not only with the American public but within Christian circles. The candidacy for the U.S. presidency of Mitt Romney, a prominent LDS church member, has further eroded the Mormon church’s status of “cult” in both evangelical and charismatic camps.

*Christianity Today* magazine published on its website an article with the headline: “After Romney Meeting, Billy Graham Site Scrubs Mormon ‘Cult’ Reference.” The news story, which was posted exactly three weeks before the national election, revealed, “The Billy Graham Evangelical Association removed language labeling Mormonism a ‘cult’ from its website after the famed preacher met with Republican nominee Mitt Romney last week and pledged to help his presidential campaign. The removal came after a gay rights group reported that the ‘cult’ reference remained online even after Graham all but endorsed Romney, a Mormon, last Thursday (Oct. 11).”

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When Brian McLaren, Steve Chalke, and Alan Mann accused Evangelicals who believed in the substitutionary death of Christ of embracing a form of divine child abuse,<sup>1</sup> Christians everywhere did a double-take. Having sung with gusto for years that great line penned by Charles Wesley, “Amazing love, how can it be that Thou my God shouldst die for me,” Christians could not believe that they were being accused of promoting child abuse by men who claimed to be at least on the fringes of the evangelical community. What McLaren and Chalke had done was bring to the surface for all to see the longstanding debate by theologians about the meaning of the cross.

Almost no one in Christian circles doubts the historicity of the crucifixion, but *why Christ died* has long been contested. Of late, due to the rising popularity of everything from the emergent church to the Ancient-Future Faith movement to the New Perspective on Paul, the significance of Christ’s cross-work, often called the atonement, has regained traction. In particular what has often been called “penal substitution,” that the Son, “suffer[ed] instead of us the death, punishment and curse due to fallen humanity as the penalty for sin”<sup>2</sup> has come under intense attack.

by Gary E. Gilley

### ATONEMENT THEORIES

There are several major models of the atonement that have been held by assorted Christian groups at various times. While we do not believe any of these explains the primary purpose of the cross, a position we reserve for penal substitution, some of the views have a measure of biblical support and, when not pushed to the place of preeminence, enhance our understanding of the atonement.

**The Example (or Moral Influence) Theory:** There is no doubt that this is the most widely held view among old school liberals and emergents (new school liberals). The idea is that the death of Christ serves as the perfect example of love and Christians therefore are to emulate Christ’s love. Harry Emerson Fosdick, one of the most recognized popularizers of this theory among liberals in the first half of the 20th century, decried those who taught penal substitution as promoters of a “slaughterhouse religion.”

**Christus Victor Theory:** *Christus Victor*, or Christ the Victor, “argues that humanity’s main problem is that we are trapped and oppressed by

spiritual forces beyond our control. Christ’s death, then, is seen as a ransom that frees us from captivity. His death and resurrection defeats the evil spiritual forces.”<sup>3</sup>

This view has become popular today, especially in the Ancient-Future Faith movement and among those who take the New Perspective on Paul seriously.

**Ransom Theory:** This understanding is a subset of *Christus Victor* with the addition that, “At the cross, God handed Jesus over to Satan in exchange for the souls of humans held captive to Satan. Satan believed he could hold Jesus in death, but the resurrection proved him wrong as Jesus triumphed over Satan.”<sup>4</sup>

**Powerful Weakness Theory:** Emergent leader Brian McLaren articulates this interpretation, which fits well with his worldview. According to Trevor Craigen, who warns against the dark side of emergent soteriology, the lead character in McLaren’s fictional trilogy:

“...sees Jesus becoming vulnerable on the cross and accepting suffering *from* every one, Jew and Roman, and not visiting suffering *on* everyone in some sort of revenge. It puts on display God’s

loving heart which wants forgiveness, not vengeance. ... God rejects the violence, dominance, and oppression which have so gripped the world from the time of Cain and Abel until today's news headlines. The call of the cross is for mankind not to make the Kingdom come about through coercion but 'to welcome it through self sacrifice and vulnerability.'"5

**Healing Theory:** Popular among certain branches of Pentecostalism and at the heart of the prosperity gospel (Word-Faith movement) is the idea that not only did Christ's death provide for our salvation from sin but also physical healing is available in the atonement by request in this present life. Ultimately it is true that because of Christ's death the redeemed will be given glorified bodies free from all illness and suffering, however those clinging to the healing theory insist that such health and well-being are obtainable in this present life.

**Satisfaction Theory:** The satisfaction view is similar to penal substitution except that it understands Christ's death as a compensation for the honor of a holy God wounded by sin. The Son's death satisfied that offense to God's honor. Penal substitution, on the other hand, sees the issue as God's law in which "sin is primarily a violation of God's law, thus Christ's death pays the penalty for sins that God's holiness requires."<sup>6</sup>

**Penal Substitution:** Pastor and author Mark Dever explains that "our main problem is God's righteous wrath against us for our sinfulness, which puts us in danger of eternal punishment. ... Christ's perfect sacrifice for our sins is necessary to satisfy God's righteousness. Christ's death bore a divine penalty that we deserved. By taking our penalty upon himself, God satisfied his own correct and good wrath against us."<sup>7</sup>

## WHAT SAY THE SCRIPTURES?

Before we examine penal substitution in detail we need to give some careful and detailed attention to two

of the above theories, moral influence and *Christus Victor*, because of their popularity and because they have supplanted penal substitution in some theological spheres.

Concerning the moral influence theory, let's begin by gladly admitting that Christ's death serves as the greatest example of self-sacrificing love the world has ever seen. In addition, the New Testament points to this selfless act and tells us to live in like manner (Philippians 2:5-8).

Peter Abelard, who lived from 1079 to 1142 and was among the first to clearly articulate this view, taught:

"The work of Christ chiefly consists of demonstrating to the world the amazing depth of God's love for sinful humanity. The atonement was directed primarily at humanity, not God. There is nothing inherent in God that must be appeased before he is willing to forgive sinful humanity. ... Through the incarnation and death of Jesus Christ, the love of God shines like a beacon, beckoning humanity to come and fellowship."<sup>8</sup>

Yet the question needs to be asked: In what sense was Christ's death a demonstration of love? If Christ died randomly, without purpose, the cross is not an example of love at all. A person who steps in front of a car for no reason has not displayed love but foolishness. On the other hand, if one steps in front of a car to save another person's life, that death would be an example of self-sacrificing love. Likewise, for Christ's death to be an exhibition of love it would necessitate that He die accomplishing something of great value for others. That something, Scripture tells us, is paying the penalty for our sins as we are told in John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

By ignoring this simple reasoning and scriptural teaching, a large segment of Christendom has limited the cross-work to Christ merely setting

for us an example of love which we are to follow.

Abelard's view was later condemned by the Church and he was excommunicated, but his theory, in one form or another, has lived on. Most prominently we find this interpretation revived and updated in the modern liberal movement originating in the 18th century. The recognized fathers of so-called modernism were Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) and Albrecht Ritschl (1822-1889). These men and their followers sought to accommodate the teachings of Christianity to the worldview of those living in the time of the Enlightenment. The idea of a sacrifice for sin seemed barbaric and unsophisticated to the civilized mind, but that Jesus would offer us the perfect example of love — one which we were to emulate — played well with many.

It does not appear that Schleiermacher and Ritschl actually intended at first to circumvent the more conservative understandings of the Bible; they sought to update doctrine to make it more palatable to modern thinkers. But once the foundations of biblical truth were undermined, other doctrines began to fall through the cracks until not much was left of the Christian faith. One of the fundamental doctrines to suffer was that of the cross. Liberals could not easily deny that Jesus historically died on the cross — although some have done so today — but they could reframe the purpose of the cross. Man's great need was not redemption, not salvation from sin, not rescue from the wrath of God, but love. We need to love one another or else we will destroy the world and everything in it. But what does love look like? Christ came to show us. While the biblically-informed Christian would see this theory as incomplete, a Hindu such as Mahatma Gandhi would have no problem with this kind of sacrifice. He said, "His death on the cross was a great example to the world, but that there was anything like a mysterious or miraculous virtue in it, my heart could not accept."<sup>9</sup>

One of the real problems with the moral influence theory is that it does

not take sin seriously and therefore sees no remedy — nor any need for one — for guilt and judgment. Historian Tony Lane writes with respect to a main concern of this interpretation:

“Schleiermacher’s concept of the work of Jesus Christ is too low, because of his inadequate view of human sinfulness — he has very little to say about guilt before God, for instance. Jesus Christ came not to atone for sin but to be our teacher, to set us an example. His work is essentially to arouse in us the consciousness of God. ... The work of Jesus Christ, as perceived by Schleiermacher, makes his resurrection, ascension into heaven and second coming superfluous.”<sup>10</sup>

It is no wonder that H. Richard Niebuhr famously described liberal theology as “A God without wrath brought men without sin into a kingdom without judgment through the ministrations of a Christ without a cross.”<sup>11</sup>

Liberalism eventually permeated all the major denominations and ultimately defined most of them. As a result, liberal denominations today are on the decline as people have increasingly recognized that they have nothing more to offer than other benevolent organizations and social agencies. But in the 21st century a new brand of liberalism has arisen that has caught the interest of many. This is often called the emergent movement with leaders such as Brian McLaren, Tony Jones, and Doug Pagitt.

The emergent movement is essentially saying the same thing that old liberalism did, except that they are repackaging their message for a post-modern generation rather than a philosophically modern one. For example, where the Enlightenment proclaimed that truth could be found not in revelation but in the self, in reason, and in the scientific method, post-modernity can offer little more than uncertainty. Absolute, universal truth, the postmodern claims, is a myth.

Those within Christendom who have imbibed postmodern thinking

might not totally dismiss the concept of truth, but they have embraced uncertainty. Truth may exist but there is no way that we can be certain what it is. And if we did there would be no means of communicating it to others. When this mindset is transferred to the atonement we are delivered a diluted and contradictory message. The great accomplishments of the atonement as found in Scripture are banished, for they offend the sensibilities of 21st-century people. Nevertheless, while we can be certain that Christ did not die to satisfy the wrath of God or to defeat evil forces — so we are told — we can be certain that the cross gives us a powerful example of love. How the emergents, who deny certainty, can be so certain of this is not clear.

There is enough truth in what the liberals and emergents were/are saying to be confusing to some. Love is certainly the chief of the virtues. It is an attribute of God, and it was a motivation behind the incarnation and the cross (John 3:16). But while Christ came motivated by His great love, He came to provide more than an example of love. The real problem facing the human race is its alienation from a holy God who is righteously wrathful toward sinners. There was no remedy to this condition found within man or the world around him. The only solution rested in God. But God could not simply love man to Himself and ignore his sins. God had to provide a means of deliverance that was consistent with His own holy nature and which satisfied His wrath toward sin and sinners. This necessitated the sacrificial death of Christ.

### CHRISTUS VICTOR

Robert Webber, father of the Ancient-Future Faith movement, tries to establish that *Christus Victor* was the primary interpretation of the atonement for the first millennium of Church history.<sup>12</sup>

This view, in its present form, stems from a book by that name written by Gustaf Aulen in 1930. Aulen sought to offer an opposing view to the traditional understanding that Christ died to satisfy God’s justice and to make us

acceptable to Him. But he wanted to move beyond the theory that Christ died to change our attitude toward God and provide us with an example of pure love. Aulen saw Christ’s death as a means by which the Lord battled with and conquered the evil forces of this world, principally Satan and his demons.<sup>13</sup>

*Christus Victor* has much to commend it, most important of which is that it has biblical backing. One of the most consistent teachings in the Scriptures is that the Lamb of God came to set us free from all the corrupting, polluting, destructive, and enslaving powers that reign over mankind (Colossians 1:13-14). This includes sin, death, and Satan. Only the power of Christ through the cross can liberate us from such enemies and the Scriptures provide ample evidence that this is one of the reasons Christ died.

Biblical support for *Christus Victor* includes Colossians 2:15: “Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.” But the means by which Christ triumphed over these spiritual powers was by dying in our place and taking our penalty upon Himself. Verse 14 reads, “having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.” Therefore, without denying Christ’s victory over satanic forces at the cross, penal substitution remains central. Were it not for Jesus taking our sins upon Himself and paying our penalty, no victory would have been realized.

Hebrews 2:14-15 also supports this theory. “Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.” And 1 John 3:8 is also helpful. “For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.” Without question, in the atonement

Christ won a great victory over the forces of evil.

Unfortunately some take this interpretation too far. Webber explains *Christus Victor*:

- At the cross the power of Satan was dethroned. Christ's death exposed Satan's lies so that people can be set free from his illusions.
- At the consummation Satan's influence over the powers will be destroyed.
- Between the resurrection and the consummation Satan's powers have been limited.
- Creation ultimately will be reconciled to God.
- As for now, the kingdom of God, God's rule over all things, is manifested.<sup>14</sup>

As presently understood by men such as Webber, Satan still has power over this world but it is greatly limited. Therefore, according to this theory, the kingdom of God is here now, which leads to some very practical applications. Webber writes:

"Faith in Jesus Christ, who is the ultimate ruler over all of life, can break the twisting of political, economic, social, and moral structures into *secular salvation*. Because those structures that promise secular salvation are disarmed, they can no longer exercise ultimate power in our lives. The powers have been dethroned by the power of the cross."<sup>15</sup>

Why *Christus Victor* has gained popularity among emerging adherents and others who see the Gospel as including a social element is obvious. If the cross is designed to presently correct social, political, and economic structures, then the mission of the Church is to right the injustices in our world. We need not wait for the King to come to bring His kingdom because it is here. Our job is to administer His kingdom now in preparation for the final stage of the kingdom coming to earth. This understanding of the atonement radically transforms

the overall purpose of God's people from that of the Great Commission to the Cultural Mandate of fixing the planet. As Brian McLaren states:

"Jesus came to launch an insurgency to overthrow that occupying regime [a reference to aggression and injustice throughout the planet]. Its goal is to resist the occupation, liberate the planet, and retrain and restore humanity to its original vocation and potential. This renewed humanity can return to its role as caretakers of creation and one another so the planet and all it contains can be restored to the healthy and fruitful harmony that God desires."<sup>16</sup>

A mistake is often made when theologians attempt to force us to choose between the three main interpretations of the atonement. In fact, all three have biblical support and help explain the multifaceted beauty of Christ's great cross-work. The late John R.W. Stott expresses this truth well when he writes:

"In fact all three of the major explanations of the death of Christ contain biblical truth and can to some extent be harmonized, especially if we observe that the chief difference between them is that in each God's work in Christ is directed toward a different person. In the 'objective' view God satisfies himself, in the 'subjective' he inspires us, and in the 'classic' he overcomes the devil. Thus Jesus Christ is successively the Savior, the Teacher and the Victor, because we ourselves are guilty, apathetic and in bondage."<sup>17</sup>

While this is true, nevertheless the penal substitution of Christ is central, both in Scripture and in relationship to our salvation. Because the central teaching of Scripture in regard to Christ's cross-work is best defined as the penal substitutionary atonement (PSA), it is not surprising that it is facing resistance from many who would be happy to embrace the cross as a moral example of love or a victory over the forces of evil. Yet the

Bible teaches that while Christ's death was a great example and resulted in the defeat of evil forces, more importantly His death was necessary in order that our sins might be forgiven and we be reconciled to God.

## UNDERSTANDING PENAL SUBSTITUTION

Theologian Wayne Grudem provides this helpful definition:

"Christ's death was 'penal' in that he bore a penalty when he died. His death was also a 'substitution' in that he was a substitute for us when he died. This has been the orthodox understanding of the atonement held by evangelical theologians, in contrast to other views that attempt to explain the atonement apart from the idea of the wrath of God or payment of the penalty for sin."<sup>18</sup>

Millard Erickson wrote, "The idea that Christ's death is a sacrifice offered in payment of the penalty for our sins [sic]. It is accepted by the Father as satisfaction in place of the penalty due to us."<sup>19</sup>

He refines the doctrine writing, "By offering himself as a sacrifice, by substituting himself for us, actually bearing the punishment that should have been ours, Jesus appeased the Father and effected a reconciliation between God and humanity."<sup>20</sup>

Mark Dever, in an article, explains that PSA has come under attack in modern times for a number of supposed reasons such as:

- It is a medieval doctrine not found in Scripture.
- It is irrelevant and does not make sense to modern cultures because it glorifies abusive behavior.
- It is too individualistic, focusing on individual guilt and forgiveness while ignoring the bigger issues of social justice.
- And it is too violent, requiring of God a violence for redemption that He would condemn in humans.<sup>21</sup>

This final criticism of PSA has received much attention of late because of some blunt and shocking statements from a few claiming credentials in evangelicalism. For example, Joel B. Green and Mark D. Barker recently wrote *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross* in which they reject any notion of divine wrath besides that of allowing people to go their own way. They say, "The Scriptures as a whole ... provide no ground for a portrait of an angry God needing to be appeased in atoning sacrifice." PSA, therefore, is rejected as ridiculous, and as apparent proof Green and Barker cite a boy in Sunday school who said, "Jesus I like, but the Father seems pretty mean. ... Why is God so angry?"<sup>22</sup>

In similar fashion McLaren places the following words in the mouth of the main character in his fictional works: "if God wants to forgive us, why doesn't he just do it? How does punishing an innocent person make things better? That just sounds like one more injustice in the cosmic equation. It sounds like divine child abuse. You know?"<sup>23</sup>

### OLD TESTAMENT SUPPORT

While PSA of Christ comes into focus in the New Testament scriptures, the Old Testament clearly points to this truth through at least four means:

- The Passover at the time of the Exodus provided a glorious picture of what would ultimately be fulfilled in Christ (Exodus 12:3-13). Just as a lamb would be killed and its blood applied to the entryway of Jewish homes so that the inhabitants of those homes would be spared physically, so the Lamb of God would shed His blood so that we would be spared spiritually and given eternal life.

- On the Jewish Day of Atonement the lives of two goats would be substituted for the sins of the people. One goat was sacrificed and slain on the altar; the other, the scapegoat, would symbolically take away the sins of the people as it was released into the wilderness (Leviticus 16). So Christ would not only die for our sins but take them away as well.

- The direct prophecy of Isaiah foretelling the fact of Christ dying for us, in our place, and is stated nine times (Isaiah 53:4-6, 8, 11-12).

- Finally, PSA is clearly depicted in the whole sacrificial system in which animals were sacrificed as substitutes for men and women who deserved death because of sin.

### NEW TESTAMENT SUPPORT

While the Old Testament sacrificial system provided marvelous shadows and symbols of the work of Christ, they were incapable of covering man's sin, for "it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins" (Hebrews 10:4). True atonement would necessitate a greater sacrifice, a more acceptable substitute than anything known previously. It would take the substitutionary death of the Son of God to fully expiate sin. While the sins of Old Testament saints were truly taken away and forgiven prior to the cross, such was made possible only on the basis of what would ultimately happen at the cross. All the Old Testament ceremonies pointed to the One who could provide salvation by meeting the righteous demands of a holy God. Animals could not meet those demands, nor could man do anything to satisfy God's justice — only the Son could do so. We need to take a look at what the New Testament actually teaches at this point.

As *Our Substitute*. Paul, in 2 Corinthians 5:21, wrote, "For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." Some have termed this "The Great Exchange" as the Sinless One took our sin upon Himself and gave us the righteousness of God. The implication is that this spiritual transaction is made possible only through the sacrifice of Christ.

First Peter 2:24 adds, "who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness; by whose stripes you were healed." Christ then became sin on our behalf (in our place) at the cross, for it is there that He bore our sin in His

body. He did so to free us from sin and bring us righteousness, but our healing was made possible only because of His wounds. First Peter 3:18 says, "For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God."

In Romans 5:8 Paul writes, "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Christ's death was "for us." His death accomplished what nothing else could. Jesus Himself speaks of penal substitution when He states that He came "to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). And John the Baptist declared Jesus as "The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

One of our best hymn writers, Horatius Bonar (1808-1889), expressed it well:

"'Twas I that shed the sacred blood; I nailed him to the tree; I crucified the Christ of God; I joined the mockery. Of all that shouting multitude I feel that I am one; And in that din of voices rude I recognize my own. Around the cross the throng I see, Mocking the Sufferer's groan; Yet still my voice it seems to be, As if I mocked alone."<sup>24</sup>

*Propitiation*. While the *Christus Victor* and moral influence views of the atonement have biblical validity, neither adequately handles the Godward side of the atonement issues. That Christ died to set us free from the bondage of sin, death, and Satan and that He died to provide for us an example of perfect love, explains important facets of Christ's death. However neither of these views, or any others except PSA, addresses why the death of Christ was necessary from God's perspective. Yet Scripture teaches that God is righteously angry at sin and therefore His wrath and judgment is being, and will eternally be, poured out on sinners who have not had their sins cleansed and forgiven.

At issue is the fact that God is just in His judgment of sinners and, being

holy, He cannot ignore our sin and accept us as we are. Something must take place that satisfies the righteous anger of God. That something is termed propitiation in the Scriptures. At the cross, Christ took upon Himself the righteous wrath of God that sinners deserve in order that He might appease the anger of God against sin and sinners.

Propitiation is foreign to the minds of modern people and often confused with pagan concepts. Pagans, both of biblical times and today, see propitiation as an act of man to keep vengeful and mean-spirited deities off their backs. These deities are often seen as anything but holy. As a matter of fact, they are viewed as super-sinners out for themselves. To keep them happy, or to secure their favor, pagans will sacrifice something of great value to them personally. The Hollywood picture of tossing a virgin into a volcano to please the gods and thus obtain victory in battle or to produce rain is one that comes readily to mind of many.

To speak of the true God as needing this pagan kind of sacrifice is offensive to God and perplexing to us. Therefore it is important to understand that biblical propitiation differs in at least two ways. In pagan sacrifice, man is doing something to please the gods. In Christ's sacrifice, God has done something to satisfy His own righteousness. In pagan propitiation, an evil, spiteful deity demands that his unholy appetites be met, while in Christ's death the holiness of God is at stake. At issue with God is how can He who is infinitely holy accept people who are deeply corrupt and sinful? Something must take place to enable God to be holy and at the same time accepting of sinners. At Christ's death, the holy nature of God was satisfied in order that sinners redeemed by the blood of Christ could be received by Him.

Still propitiation is difficult to swallow for many, which might explain why many modern English translations have replaced "propitiation" with such terms as "expiation" or "atoning sacrifice," even though the

proper translation for the Greek word *hilasmos* is unquestionably "propitiation." Rightly understood, however, the concept of propitiation gives the salvation process the fullness it deserves. Taking a look at a few terms will be helpful:

*Expiation:* This is a fancy term that means that God has taken away our sins — they have been removed from us. Such removal of sin was made possible only through the substitutionary death of Christ. Isaiah 53:12 prophesies that the Messiah would bear the sins of many. Christ "put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself ... Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many" (Hebrews 9:26, 28), and He has "washed us from our sins in His own blood" (Revelation 1:5). Expiation is directed at our sin; propitiation is directed at God's holiness. Expiation purges us from sin; propitiation satisfies God's just anger toward the sinner.

*Propitiation:* J.I. Packer writes, "It is a sacrifice that averts wrath through expiating sin, and cancelling guilt."<sup>25</sup>

Through propitiation the divine wrath is averted from us and placed on Christ. The way Thomas Schreiner frames the issue is helpful:

"Modern people tend to ask, 'How can God send anyone to hell?' Paul asks a completely different question because he thinks theocentrically and not anthropocentrically. He asks how can God refrain from punishing people immediately and fully."<sup>26</sup>

*Reconciliation:* David Clotfelter provides us with a very useful distinction:

"If expiation is the removal of our guilt, and propitiation the removal of God's wrath, reconciliation is the consequent renewal of relationship between God and us. Because we are no longer regarded as guilty and are no longer objects of wrath, there is now no barrier to hinder us from coming to God and experiencing peace with Him. ... The death of Jesus has opened the way for God to embrace those

from whom He was previously estranged by their sin."<sup>27</sup>

*Redemption:* "Propitiation focuses on the wrath of God which was placated by the cross; redemption on the plight of sinners from which they were ransomed by the cross."<sup>28</sup>

Apologist James White makes this distinction:

"Redemption contemplates our bondage and is the provision of grace to release us from that bondage. Propitiation contemplates our liability to the wrath of God and is the provision of grace whereby we may be freed from that wrath."<sup>29</sup>

*Justification:* John R.W. Stott writes that justification "will take us into the court of law. For justification is the opposite of condemnation (e.g., Rom 5:18; 8:34), and both are verdicts of a judge who pronounces the accused either guilty or not guilty. ... Forgiveness remits our debts and cancels our liability to punishment; justification bestows on us a righteous standing before God."<sup>30</sup>

## OTHER IMPORTANT SCRIPTURES

In the book *Pierced for Our Transgressions*, the authors offer this interpretation of Romans 3:21-26, which is faithful to the context and direction Paul has taken his readers:

"All people are sinners, whether Jew or Gentile, but all may be justified through faith in Jesus. For God, who in the past had left his people's sin unpunished, has now demonstrated his justice by punishing their sin in Christ. He was set forth as a 'sacrifice of atonement' (literally, 'a propitiation', v. 25), turning aside God's wrath by suffering it himself in the place of his people."<sup>31</sup>

In the flow of Paul's argument, he has used most of the first three chapters of Romans to demonstrate the condemnation that mankind is under because of sin. Perhaps the key verse has been 1:18 wherein we find that God's wrath is poured out

against all ungodliness and unrighteousness. As Paul brings this section of his great epistle to a close, he shows the hopeless condition of sinful humanity by telling us that even the Law of God was unable to purify us from sin, for the Law was only able to reveal sin and thereby condemn us and hold us accountable before a holy God (Romans 3:19-20).

It would take something even greater than the Law to satisfy the wrath of God against sin and redeem us from its power. It would take something that could allow God to both justify unworthy sinners and at the same time maintain the justice and holiness of God (v. 26). Only the sacrifice of the Son of God could do both. Christ died in our stead, taking upon Himself the full wrath of God that we deserved. God's sentence against sin was fully carried out on Christ so that we might be redeemed. In verses 24-25 we read, "being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness." This is the doctrine of penal substitution.

Thomas Schreiner argues that Galatians 3:10-14 plows much the same ground. In verse 10 Paul writes, "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse." "How can such a curse be removed?" Schreiner asks. "Not by Christ's good example. Not merely by Christ defeating demonic powers. Not merely by God healing our damaged souls. Galatians 3:13 answers the question posed: 'Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us — for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree."' The curse we deserved was borne by Christ."<sup>32</sup>

Galatians 1:4 reads, "[Christ] gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father." Christ voluntarily died for our sins in order to rescue us. Nothing but the great sacrifice could set us free.

In Hebrews 2:17 we find this affirmation of PSA, "He had to be made

like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people." Christ's high priestly ministry directly targets the need for our sins to be propitiated. Under the Old Testament system, the Jewish high priest would sacrifice animals to atone for the sins of people and temporarily appease the wrath of God against those sins. But final removal of those sins, as well as ours, would await the perfect sacrifice at the cross. The difference was not so much in the methodology used as it was in the sacrifice itself. The weakness in the Mosaic system was that the animals sacrificed were not capable of taking away sin (Hebrews 10:1-4). A final, once-for-all, holy sacrifice was needed to pay for our sins.

The Apostle John, while not dealing as intently or directly with the doctrine of substitution, is not hesitant to speak of propitiation. In 1 John 2:2 he writes, "And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world." Again, in chapter 4 verse 10, we read, "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

Other scriptural passages of note include:

Titus 2:14: "Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works."

Ephesians 2:13: "But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ."

And few texts are clearer on the subject than Isaiah 53:4-6: "Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows ... But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all."

Although there is helpful truth to be found in some of the other atonement theories, especially *Christus Victor* and moral influence, the central theme of redemptive theology as found in Scripture is that salvation could be made possible only through a perfect sacrifice that could not only redeem us from sin and declare us justified (righteous), but could also satisfy God's holy wrath against sin.

While many substitutes have been suggested, such as our own merit by keeping the Law or through the death of animals under the prescribed Old Testament sacrificial system, none of these would do. Paul, who confessed to trying these other means, gloried in the fact that because of Christ his righteousness was "not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith" (Philippians 3:9).

#### Endnotes:

1. See further Brian McLaren, *The Story We Find Ourselves In*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003, pp. 102ff; and Steve Chalke and Alan Mann, *The Lost Message of Jesus*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2003, pg. 182.
2. Steve Jeffery, Michael Ovey, Andrew Sach, *Pierced for Our Transgressions, Rediscovering the Glory of Penal Substitution*. Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 2007, pg. 21.
3. Mark Dever, "Nothing But the Blood," *Christianity Today*, website article, posted May 1, 2006. Document accessed at: [www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2006/may/9.29.html](http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2006/may/9.29.html).
4. Michael J. Vlach, "Penal Substitution in Church History," *The Master's Seminary Journal*, Vol. 20, No. 2, pg. 201.
5. Trevor P. Craigen, "Emergent Soteriology: The Dark Side," *The Master's Seminary Journal*, Vol. 17, No. 2, pg. 185, italics in original. Craigen cites McLaren's *The Story We Find Ourselves In*, op. cit., pp. 105-106.
6. "Penal Substitution in Church History," op. cit., pg. 203.
7. "Nothing But the Blood," op. cit.
8. James Beilby and Paul R. Eddy, Editors, *The Nature of the Atonement: Four Views*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press (IVP Academic), 2006, pg. 19.
9. Gandhi cited by Mark Driscoll and Gerry Breshears, *Death by Love: Letters from the Cross*. Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 2008, pg. 20.
10. Tony Lane, *A Concise History of Chris-*

tian Thought. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2006, pg. 240.

11. H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Kingdom of God in America*. New York: Harper and Row, 1959, pg. 193. This statement is also cited in "H. Richard Niebuhr" on Wikipedia. Document accessed at: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/H.\\_Richard\\_Niebuhr](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/H._Richard_Niebuhr).

12. Robert E. Webber, *Ancient-Future Faith*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1999, pp. 43-44.

13. See *A Concise History of Christian Thought*, op. cit., pp. 279-281.

14. *Ancient-Future Faith*, op. cit., pp. 50-55.

15. *Ibid.*, pg. 51, emphasis added.

16. Brian McLaren, *Everything Must Change*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2007, pg. 129.

17. John R.W. Stott, *The Cross of Christ*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press,

2006, pg. 226.

18. Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1994, pg. 579.

19. Erickson cited by Richard Mayhue, "The Scriptural Necessity of Christ's Penal Substitution," *The Master's Theological Journal*, Vol. 20, No. 2, pg. 140.

20. Erickson cited by Vlach, "Penal Substitution in Church History," op. cit., pp. 200-201.

21. "Nothing But the Blood," op. cit.

22. Green and Barker cited by David Wells, *Above all Earthly Pow'rs*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2005, pg. 219, first ellipses added, second in original.

23. *The Story We Find Ourselves In*, op. cit., pg. 102.

24. Horatius Bonar, "'Twas I That Shed the Sacred Blood," cited in *The Cross of*

*Christ*, op. cit., pg. 63.

25. J.I. Packer, *Knowing God*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1973, pg. 141.

26. Schreiner in *The Nature of the Atonement: Four Views*, op. cit., pg. 88.

27. Dave Clotfelter, *Sinners in the Hands of a Good God, Reconciling Divine Judgment and Mercy*. Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2004, pg. 196.

28. *The Cross of Christ*, op. cit., pg. 173.

29. James R. White, *The God Who Justifies*. Bloomington, Minn.: Bethany House, 2001, pg. 195.

30. *The Cross of Christ*, op. cit., pp. 179-180.

31. *Pierced for Our Transgressions, Rediscovering the Glory of Penal Substitution*, op. cit., pg. 80.

32. Schreiner in *The Nature of the Atonement: Four Views*, op. cit., pg. 89.

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## THE APE OF GOD

(continued from page 1)

him in the wilderness of temptation. He is a spirit and can influence men.

The Lord's soldiers do not carry guns because the battle is not with men. We fight against "spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 6:12). It is unfortunate that some of God's soldiers make Christ's war a war against men, against "flesh and blood" (Ephesians 6:12). When there is a doctrinal disagreement between two believers, they will often part company angry and bitter. The Christian call to battle is not a call against men, but *for* men and *against* Satan. We fight for God and truth; against error and sin. It is a terrible thing when Christians forget who their enemy is.

We are at war against unbelief, but are to love unbelievers. We are at war with heresy, but we do not hate heretics. There are false teachers spreading damnable lies, but we earnestly pray for them. We are opposed to everything that rises up against God and His truth, but toward every man we endeavor to obey Christ's command to "love your enemies."

### DISARMING THE CHURCH

Spiritual formation, contemplative prayer, centering prayer, soaking

prayer, breath prayer, the silence, labyrinth, and "Christian yoga" might all sound familiar to readers of *The Quarterly Journal*. And these "disciplines" are appearing in churches across America. Under the guise of faith-producing techniques, New Age spirituality has been woven into the fabric of numerous church prayer, youth, and Christian education programs. These practices, of which most believers do not realize are a counterfeit to Christianity, are seen by many as aids to Christian living.

The "Bible thumping," as they say, of traditional evangelicalism and the superficiality of pragmatic or seeker-friendly evangelicalism have given way to a new trend in Christian churches. Eastern style meditation, labyrinths, and "Christian yoga" are the "in" thing. The train headed for the East has left the station and many of evangelicalism's biggest names are on board: Max Lucado, Beth Moore, Richard Foster, Dallas Willard, and Henry Cloud, just to name a few. On a DVD by Fox Home Entertainment entitled *Be Still and Know That I Am God*, they are promoting a New Age practice rooted firmly in Buddhist and Hindu tradition called contemplative or centering prayer. The DVD features "interviews with some of today's most highly respected authors, pastors, and educators."<sup>2</sup> Others on the contemplative bandwagon, not

included in the DVD, are Rick Warren, Bill Hybels, Brian McLaren, Rob Bell, and others of the emergent conversation.

Many Christians have never heard of the New Age contemplative prayer movement. Nevertheless, many believers are practicing or know someone who is practicing its teachings even though they may not be familiar with the terms. It is also referred to as contemplative spirituality or the spiritual formation movement. Spiritual formation refers to the use of Eastern mystical techniques to experience greater spiritual growth and an intimate union with Christ.

### THE DESERT FATHERS OF EGYPT

The spiritual formation movement is widely seen as the way to satisfy the spiritual hunger of postmodern man. From books, magazine articles, conferences, sermons, and seminary courses by popular Christians, spiritual formation or contemplative spirituality is the "new" thing. To the average church-goer it is the new and contemporary word for discipleship. It is said to be essential to progressive sanctification. But spiritual formation is not the same as discipleship or progressive sanctification.

The contemplative spirituality movement has its roots in the Middle

Ages. During the 4th through the 6th centuries, a group of monks known as the Desert Fathers — there were also Desert Mothers — lived in the wilderness of the Middle East in isolated communities for the purpose of devoting their lives to God.<sup>3</sup> They integrated Eastern mystical meditative practices into Roman Catholic theology in an attempt to experience God. Ken Kaisch, an Episcopal priest and contemplative prayer instructor, in his book *Finding God*, admitted to the indiscriminate and random way the Desert Fathers experimented with prayer techniques from many world religions:

“It was a time of great *experimentation* with spiritual methods. *Many* different kinds of disciplines were tried, some of which are too harsh or extreme for people today. *Many* different methods of prayer were created and explored by them.”<sup>4</sup>

The Desert Fathers believed any technique, as long as the person was sincere, could be used to connect and commune with God. If a Hindu or Buddhist can experience God through meditation and use of a mantra,<sup>5</sup> then why not a Christian, they asked.

### FROM THE DESERT OF EGYPT TO AMERICA

A resurgence of interest in the ancient practice began in 1961 when Father Thomas Keating<sup>6</sup> was named Abbot<sup>7</sup> of St. Joseph’s monastery in Spenser, Mass. In 1974, Father William Menninger (1899-1966), a monk, discovered in the library of St. Joseph’s Abbey a 14th-century book titled *The Cloud of Unknowing*. The book was written to teach people contemplative meditation methods that the Desert Fathers and Mothers had used to experience “union” with God. Menninger started teaching the methods to priests. Keating and another monk, Father Basil Pennington (1931-2005), were instrumental in spreading the concepts Menninger taught. Pennington organized the first retreat for lay people in Connecticut where the term contemplative prayer was referred to as centering prayer.<sup>8</sup>

In 1978, the popularity of the spiritual formation movement skyrocketed with the publication of Richard Foster’s book *The Celebration of Discipline*. Foster, a theologian in the Quaker tradition, is considered to be the leading exponent and teacher of the contemplative movement today.<sup>9</sup> Within 15 years of its publication, readers of *Christianity Today* voted *The Celebration of Discipline* number three on a list of books as having “the most significant impact on [their] Christian life.”<sup>10</sup>

Tony Campolo says in his book, *Speaking My Mind*, that mysticism “provides some hope for common ground between Christianity and Islam.”<sup>11</sup> Elsewhere he also states:

“As I lie alone in bed in the early-morning quiet, I wait for God to invade me, to fill my soul, and to take possession of me. ... I learned this way of having a born-again experience from reading the Catholic mystics, especially *The Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola*. ... *The Spiritual Exercises* has become a rich resource for Christians of all denominational persuasions who seek a deep intimacy with God.”<sup>12</sup>

According to Lighthouse Trails Research Project, Tilden Edwards, founder of the *Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation*, said “contemplative prayer is the bridge between Christianity and Far Eastern religions.”<sup>13</sup>

Campolo and other contemplative practitioners have experienced a self-induced trance-like state where they are taken into a spiritual realm. They contend that in this realm they experience the presence of God and there God speaks to and guides them. They also believe that *anyone*, not just Christians, *can enter this realm*. They maintain that anyone can experience the presence of God, Allah, the Great Spirit, or whatever name a person calls God; He is the same God.

Many believers today think that the architects of the spiritual formation movement — those like Keating,

Menninger, and Pennington — were devout Christians. They were, however, Catholic monks. They were men who could not see through the Church of Rome’s foundational heresies, and further promoted the integration of pagan practices such as Zen Buddhism and Hindu yoga with Christianity. Pennington, in his book *Centering Prayer: Renewing an Ancient Prayer Form*, refers to “our brothers and sisters in the Hindu tradition.”<sup>14</sup> He obviously made no distinctions between Christian and Eastern beliefs in God. In Father Thomas Ryan’s book, fellow Catholic priest Henri Nouwen (1932-1996)<sup>15</sup> wrote in the foreword that integrating some of the practices from the East can have a positive and transforming effect on Christians:

“When Thomas Ryan took a sabbatical and went to India to study the religions of the Hindus, the Buddhists and the Moslems, he was most struck by their practices. In India he came to realize that there was nothing wrong with the ‘How to do it?’ question and that *all the great Hindu, Buddhist and Moslem teachers taught their disciples very practical disciplines to transform their lives. He became deeply convinced that unless Christians offer similar disciplines, the Christian faith will never become a true transforming faith, with concrete and specific implications for daily life.*”<sup>16</sup>

The cover of a 2008 *Christianity Today* magazine proclaims “Lost Secrets of the Ancient Church” eliciting attention to its story entitled “The Future Lies in the Past.”<sup>17</sup> The article describes those lost secrets that are being rediscovered by present-day Evangelicals. The ancient church is the Roman Catholic Church and the secrets the early Church fathers discovered are Eastern methods for hearing and experiencing what they believe to be God.

The article describes how young Evangelicals are growing tired of “traditional” and the pragmatic “seeker-sensitive” churches. Traditional churches focus too much on “being

right." They focus too much on "Bible studies" and "apologetics." Believers want to "seek a renewed encounter" with God beyond "doctrinal definitions." Experiencing God beyond the boundaries of God's Word is a perfect definition of mysticism.

### BACK TO ROME

Christian mysticism, under the guise of piety and godliness, is the work *par excellence* of Satan. Mysticism, when it takes hold of a person's life, will progress in an anti-Reformation direction and an increased tolerance of Roman Catholicism and paganism. An illustration can be found in the above-mentioned issue of *Christianity Today*, which addresses evangelicalism's interest in ancient Roman Catholic beliefs and practices. What was amazing was the author of a previously cited feature story and *Christianity Today's* own senior managing editor saying that this movement toward Roman Catholicism is a good thing. The editor, Mark Galli, states: "While the ancient church has captivated the evangelical imagination for some time, it hasn't been until recently that it's become an accepted fixture of the evangelical landscape. *And this is for the good.*"<sup>18</sup>

The author, Chris Armstrong, wrote that the movement is being led by individuals such as "Dallas Willard, Richard Foster, and living, practicing monks and nuns" and "that they are receiving good guidance on this road from wise teachers [which] is reason to believe that Christ is guiding the process."<sup>19</sup>

On the cover of that issue of *Christianity Today* is a modernistic illustration of a man kneeling in a pile of sand with a shovel nearby. The magazine's headline reads: "Lost Secrets of the Ancient Church." He is depicted as having unearthed a Catholic icon — an ornate cross relic. These rediscovered secrets include *lectio divina* and monasticism. Willard, who is mentioned in the article as one of the trustworthy guides, has promoted monastic practices which he admits are not taught in the Bible. Willard has rejected *sola Scriptura* on the

grounds that churches which adhere to it have a "problem" he labels as "a theological deficiency."<sup>20</sup> He says:

"All pleasing and doctrinally sound schemes of Christian education, church growth, and spiritual renewal came around at last to this disappointing result. But whose fault was this failure?"<sup>21</sup>

Willard states that the failure was that the Gospel focused too little on man and his body.<sup>22</sup>

### DISARMING THE CHURCH

Satan's strategy is to offer something in place of a relationship with the true God without arousing suspicion, like a bait concealing a fish hook. Satan's goal is not to tempt people to become immoral, materialistic, or drunkards, but to receive worship from all mankind. This must be done in a way such that humans will *think* they are having a true experience with the true God.

Prayer is the highest activity of our Christian life. Therefore it is not surprising that Satan attacks us in the area of prayer. Through the contemplative prayer movement, Satan is producing confusion about how to pray and our communion and fellowship with God. We must never forget we are engaged in a battle. It is a struggle against the devil, "against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 6:12). If the devil can take away from the Church its most potent weapon, the Church will be powerless and incapable of resisting him and standing firm (Ephesians 6:14). He will disarm the Church with his lies and distortions about prayer, thus depriving it of a means of attack and defense. It will render the Body of Christ harmless.

The devil knows better than to try to persuade believers not to pray at all, so he will teach them a "better way" to pray. And so he provides the Church with the contemplative way. Christians will learn how to listen to God, because, they are told, "prayer is a relationship and two-way communi-

cation with God."<sup>23</sup> Contemplative prayer will help "develop the inward attentiveness to God's divine whisper."<sup>24</sup> It will show us how to "stop and quiet ourselves to spend time in *real relationship* with God."<sup>25</sup>

### MEDITATION: BEYOND THINKING

Any Christian saying that he had learned to communicate with God via a Ouija board would arouse suspicion. After all, the Ouija board is an instrument of divination, which is forbidden in the Bible (Deuteronomy 18:10). Nevertheless, under the guise of "spiritual exercise," "prayer," and "experiencing God," programs and practices rife with New Age methodology have infiltrated the Christian Church.

The popularity of contemplative spirituality in the Church is based primarily not on experience and understanding, but on the words (books, CDs, etc.) of popular Christian leaders. In turn, many of these leaders have not researched the contemplative movement and do not understand it themselves. They associate the New Age movement with people on the fringe of society. In addition, many people mistakenly associate New Age with the 1960s counterculture. They believe that the New Age influence peaked back then and has declined over the years. Church leaders consider it such a recognizable evil that it would be impossible for it to enter the Church. This could not be further from the truth. The New Age movement, like a soaking rain, has seeped into the roots of our culture and has been integrated into the Church.

Attuning oneself to a higher consciousness to experience a deeper communion and spiritual growth is the objective of evangelicalism's infatuation with contemplative prayer.

### WHAT IS MEDITATION?

The idea of meditation might conjure up images of someone sitting alone by a rippling brook, thinking about something intently as birds chirp in the trees and a gentle breeze blows. New Age contemplative medi-

tation is the opposite. The intent of meditation, whether it is Hindu Transcendental Meditation (TM), Buddhist, Islamic, or "Christian" contemplative meditation, is to relax and rid the mind of all thought. It is to *still* the mind and to stop thinking. The mind, we are told, is a hindrance to meditation. The goal of contemplative meditation is for the mind to become thoughtless and empty.

T.A. McMahon, president of *The Berean Call*, said the goal of the contemplative movement "is to get people beyond thinking and understanding and into the realm of *experiencing*. Adherents are taught that while reason has some value, truly knowing God can only come through experiencing Him."<sup>26</sup>

Wayne Dyer, motivational speaker and author, said in his book, *Getting in the Gap: Making Conscious Contact with God Through Meditation*:

"For it's in this silent space called the gap that you'll come to make conscious contact with God. ... The paramount reason for making meditation a part of our daily life is to join forces with our sacred energy and regain the power of our Source (God). ... By meditating, we come to *know* God rather than *know about* God."<sup>27</sup>

Beth Moore states that it is only through meditation that we can truly know God:

"God's Word is so clear that if we are not still before Him we will *never truly know* to the depths of the marrow in our bones that He is God."<sup>28</sup>

It is a dangerous trend which teaches that God can only truly be known by using a technique which leads to a subjective experience. Although a person may be sincere in trying to contact God, he places himself in jeopardy of possibly contacting a demon posing as God, Jesus, an angel, or a departed loved one.

Contemplative prayer, also called centering prayer by Keating, Menninger, and Pennington, is said to be a

method of prayer that prepares people to receive the gift of God's presence. It "is a prayer of silence, an experience of God's presence ... Contemplative Prayer is the opening of mind and heart — our whole being — to God ... whom we know by faith is *within us*."<sup>29</sup>

Centering prayer is sometimes called centering down. It involves emptying the mind of all conscious thought. The objective is to enter into a non-verbal, experiential communion with God in the center of one's being by bypassing the senses and the intellect. The aim is to receive direct revelation from God.

The problem many Christians have is they do not understand the words and phrases the Christian mystics use. They use language that sounds biblical but the meaning is not the same. This is part of the devil's ability to ape God and His Word.

The heart and soul of Christian and non-Christian mysticism is meditation or contemplation. Prayer as taught in the Bible is talking to God. God in turn speaks to us through His Word. Biblical prayer flows from our mind and is rational and intelligent. The Apostle Paul said he prayed with his spirit and with his mind (1 Corinthians 14:15). He did not pray with either his spirit or his mind, but with both. In prayer, believers are to let their requests be made known to God (Philippians 4:6), confess sin (1 John 1:9), and praise and worship God (1 Chronicles 29:10-13).

The techniques Christian mystics use are identical to those of Eastern religions. Richard Foster says:

"I ... find it best to sit in a straight chair, with my back correctly positioned in the chair and both feet flat on the floor. ... Place the hands on the knees, palms up in a gesture of receptivity. Sometimes it is good to close the eyes to remove distractions and center the attention on Christ. At other times it is helpful to ponder a picture of the Lord or to look out at some lovely trees and plants for the same purpose."<sup>30</sup>

Brennan Manning, in his book, *The Signature of Jesus*, instructs his readers:

"The first step in faith is to stop thinking about God in prayer ... *Contemplative spirituality tends to emphasize the need for a change in consciousness* ... we must come to see reality differently. Choose a single, sacred word ... repeat the sacred word inwardly, slowly, and often. [E]nter into the great silence of God. Alone in that silence, the noise within will subside and the Voice of Love will be heard."<sup>31</sup>

The repetition of the "sacred word," the mantra, triggers the blank mind. In this altered state of consciousness the heart is open to spiritual influences; voices and/or visions. It is this mystical state that is valued by the practitioner of contemplative prayer. For the individual the mystical experience becomes the source of revelation and a privileged avenue of insight into God and His workings. Foster encourages his readers:

"Though it may sound strange to modern ears, we should without shame enroll as apprentices in the school of contemplative prayer."<sup>32</sup>

Such encouragement is not found in Scripture.

## THE BIBLE AND MYSTICS

Mystics do not grapple with the historical and textual arguments put forward by serious Bible students. Mystical thinking is fuzzy and inconsistent. Mystics take what they can use from the Bible and will rip it out of its historic context. Mystics seldom if ever deal with sin. Therefore they are blind and open to deception by the Adversary.

If God's purpose was to communicate with His children through mystical practices such as contemplative prayer, the Bible would not be silent on the subject. If God had ordained that mystical experiences would be the means whereby He would guide and direct the Church, then He would have given examples and instructions on how to meditate.

## THE “SEEKER-SENSITIVE” GOES MYSTICAL

In 1976, Jimmy Carter, a professing born-again Christian, was elected president. *Newsweek* magazine proclaimed 1976 “the year of the evangelical.” Chuck Colson’s book *Born Again* became a best-seller. In 1981, with the help of Evangelicals, Ronald Reagan became the 40th president. A growing relationship between the mass movement of evangelical Christians and the Republican Party was hard to miss.

Somewhere in all the commotion Evangelicals began to lose their theological distinctions. Theology or doctrine did not just disappear, but it was neglected. This neglect eventually led to an anti-theological or anti-doctrinal mood within the Church. Traditional evangelicalism with its inflexible beliefs about salvation and the Bible was seen as outdated.

Within this context arose the pragmatic or seeker-friendly church movement which advocated a new way to do ministry. For the past several decades evangelicalism has been romanced by the “seeker-sensitive” movement. Pioneered by Bill Hybels, pastor of Willow Creek Community Church near Chicago, pastors and church leaders were told they needed to throw out their old method and replace it with a new way of “doing church.” Demographic studies, professional strategists, marketing research, and sermons that addressed “felt needs” were the focus. Doctrine was moved to the back burner and being relevant was *avant-garde*. The over-flowing crowds, not the depth of discipleship and biblical knowledge, determined success. If the church was full, then surely God was blessing the ministry. Talk about sin was at a minimum. However, a Starbucks-like coffee house was very popular.

Evangelical pastors hung on every word that proceeded out of the mouth of the church-growth experts. Church leaders flocked to the church-growth seminars to learn the secrets and hear of the successes of Hybels and others, such as Rick Warren of Saddleback Church. Those who challenged the

seeker-sensitive approach to ministry were labeled traditionalists and unwilling to change.

For the most part the seeker-friendly church was quietly orthodox so as not to scare away the seekers. However, ignoring doctrine fostered superficial Christians. Hybels admitted as much when he stated:

“Some of the stuff that we have put millions of dollars into thinking it would really help our people grow and develop spiritually, when the data actually came back it wasn’t helping people that much.”<sup>33</sup>

After decades of Sunday morning rock bands, Christian magicians, and an inspirational speech from the church’s pastor, people were left craving more depth and spirituality. Entertainment church was fun for a while, but the popcorn had grown stale and the bells, whistles, and calliope music started to get on everyone’s nerves. Discontent with the superficiality, trendiness, and artful pandering of the seeker-friendly movement led people to gravitate to the “emergent church.”

Thus the seeker-sensitive churches are adapting their product to a spiritual market that believes it can have spiritual comfort with very little truth. The emergents are adapting their product to a spiritual market that is younger, postmodern, and leery about truth. But in both cases we see this anomaly. Here are those who think of themselves as being biblical, the followers of Jesus and the apostles, embracing an alternative spirituality disconnected from truth in order either to be successful or cutting-edge.

A study released by Willow Creek Church and published in a book titled *Reveal: Where Are You* tells the story. The book, co-authored by Cally Parkinson and Greg Hawkins with its foreword written by Hybels, is an admission by the leaders that their approach for the past 30 years had not produced solid and grounded Christians. Hybels called the studies “earth shaking,” “ground breaking,” and “mind blowing.”<sup>34</sup>

The book asks questions such as: “Is your church really making a difference? How do you know? Do you ever lie awake at night wondering ... Do our church programs really help people grow? Are we putting our resources into ministries that genuinely change lives? Are we helping people become more like Christ, or just keeping them busy?” Additional questions asked are: “How many ... members? Baptisms? Decisions for Christ? How many attend each week? Are in small groups? Actively serve? Tithe?” The authors point out that, “Numbers can be helpful, but they don’t reveal the whole story. Numbers can’t peer into the human heart. When it comes to spiritual growth, we need to be able to measure more than numbers.”<sup>35</sup>

*Christianity Today’s* “Out of Ur” website references comments that Hybels offered in a video while speaking at his 2007 *Leadership Summit*. In its citation of the video, the publication stated that Hybels confessed:

“We made a mistake. What we should have done when people crossed the line of faith and become Christians, we should have started telling people and teaching people that they have to take responsibility to become ‘self feeders.’ We should have gotten people, taught people, how to read their bible between service, how to do the spiritual practices much more aggressively on their own.”<sup>36</sup>

Following Hybels’ confession, the magazine proposed:

“In other words, spiritual growth doesn’t happen best by becoming dependent on elaborate church programs but through the age old spiritual practices of prayer, bible reading, and relationships. And, ironically, these basic disciplines do not require multi-million dollar facilities and hundreds of staff to manage.”<sup>37</sup>

And so from Willow Creek Community Church, with its past mistakes, comes a new approach. While it may be new for this megachurch, it is

really centuries old. It is a shift toward the pagan concepts and practices of the spiritual formation movement. In a Willow Creek-published article titled "Rediscovering Spiritual Formation," Keri Wyatt Kent, author and spiritual formation retreat leader, writes, "From *monastic* communities to the *emergent* church, *spiritual formation* continues to shift and change a whole new generation of Christians."<sup>38</sup> Kent goes on to describe how contemplative guru Richard Foster has awakened the Church to a new understanding of the Christian life. Kent quotes or references the "who's who" of contemplative authors and teachers including Dallas Willard, John Ortberg, Ruth Haley Barton, and others.

Biblical theology is the chief casualty in this spiritual formation (the formation of a deeper spirituality in the believer) or contemplative prayer movement. Mystical experiences have replaced theology. For a minority of believers their Christian beliefs have not drastically changed, however, the search to "experience God" must never be hampered by those beliefs. Experience trumps doctrine is the key to understanding this movement.

Biblical spirituality and contemplative spirituality are not variations of the same theme. They are antithetical to one another. The spiritual formation movement promotes a counterfeit spirituality of which its primary enablers are evangelical pastors and churches. This is especially true of the seeker-sensitive and emergent churches.

### A FAIR CONCERN TO OFFER

For thirty years church leaders have operated on the "insights" of the architects of Willow Creek. They have misled a generation of pastors. Now Willow Creek, having failed to produce true disciples, wants to wipe the slate clean and ask pastors to follow new ideas. In light of where Willow Creek has been and the decision it has made to pursue contemplative spirituality, one can doubt whether Willow Creek is a trustworthy source for ministry advice. Their motives are not being questioned here. Willow

Creek's leaders truly believe spiritual formation is the direction God is taking them. However, this is another example of how Satan apes God. Critics of the seeker-sensitive movement have been pointing out these flaws for years. The brotherly warnings by critics have brought ridicule, but they were spot-on.

It is no secret that Willow Creek is an integral part of the emerging spirituality movement. One only has to go to Willow Creek Association's online resource page where there is a list of New Age/spiritual formation exponents such as Rob Bell, Brian McLaren, John Ortberg, Ken Blanchard, Mindy Caliguire, Tony Campolo, Henry Cloud, Larry Crabb, Max Lucado, Dallas Willard, and others.

The contemplative spirituality movement is the vehicle or "framework" through which Willow Creek will influence millions of Christians around the world. Many undiscerning people have been and will be led astray.

One thing that makes it difficult for the average Christian to detect spiritual formation doctrines is that they come from respected teachers, who are themselves deceived. Hybels, Moore, and Lucado will quote or recommend an individual who is committed to New Age and spiritual formation doctrines. Those who are not familiar and do not research the person being quoted will not easily recognize the false teaching. For example, Lucado, on the back cover of Brennan Manning's book *The Ragamuffin Gospel* states, "Brennan Manning does a masterful job of blowing the dust off of *shop-worn theology* [i.e., *sola Scriptura*] and allowing God's grace to do what only God's grace can do — amaze."<sup>39</sup>

Lucado is one of America's most beloved Christian authors, but his endorsement of Manning is unfortunate. PFO director G. Richard Fisher writes:

"[Manning] is now a defunct Roman Catholic priest who also had a broken marriage which ended in divorce. As an ex-priest he has a love/hate relationship

with the Catholic Church. It can be added to all that a lifetime of admitted alcohol addiction, wildly skewed beliefs, and his distorted understanding of grace. His view of unconditional acceptance by God of just about anything he says or does moves him in extreme antinomianism (literally, lawlessness) and an unbiblical view of the Christian life. ... Brennan Manning's life was a horrible mess even by the world's standards. His distorted view of grace, gratuitously applied to all, produced in his own life the by-product of a man mired in gross sinful habits, drunkenness, and broken commitments. He is a man who was always seeking something more, but never seemed to find it. He is a man who thought that God and grace always accepted anything he wished to do and anyway he wished to live. Manning is totally self-centered and does not care for others or he would not be living in violation of Romans 14:12-13, being a constant stumbling block to the weak."<sup>40</sup>

It is no accident that the deception is so complicated. Satan makes it so. The undiscerning Christian is not suspicious in the least. He thinks he believes biblical teachings. This is how Satan apes God.

### THE BLIND LEADING THE BLIND

The Apostle Paul said, "Let no one cheat you of your reward" (Colossians 2:18). He refers to the reward or prize which was offered to athletes who ran in the Olympic Games. It is good for believers to recall how very frequently Paul points to this by his metaphors to the race course. He describes the Christian as a runner, urging us to strive, at other times agonize. He speaks of wrestling and competing. Paul's words ought to make us feel what an intense and focused thing the Christian life is. It is like running a race or an obstacle course. It is filled with hazards and dangers and one will not attain the prize if one is lazy, half-hearted, and undiscerning. It demands all our

strength and energy. All it takes to rob us of our reward is indifference and neglect.

There were individuals in the church at Colossae: mystics who said that they had a deeper and fuller union with God than Christ alone could give. They would “cheat” or “beguile” (KJV) the Colossian believers by intimidating them. They characterized themselves as being more spiritual — “puffed up” — boasting how they had found a better way, to which Paul instructs:

“Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in false humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen [experiences beyond the five senses], vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, and not holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase that is from God” (Colossians 2:18-19, brackets added).

Mystics today are still trying to intimidate and demean people by claiming they (the mystics) have a better way. They boast of their visions and experiences with God in the silence. They maintain that those who do not believe their doctrines and have similar esoteric visions and experiences live a subpar Christian life.

Henri Nouwen is a prime example of how mystics boast of being more enlightened than ordinary believers. He writes:

“One of the *discoveries* we make in [meditative] prayer is that the closer we come to God, the closer we come to all our brothers and sisters in the human family. God is not a private God. The God who dwells in our inner sanctuary is also the God who dwells in the inner sanctuary of *each* human being.”<sup>41</sup>

Likewise, Foster refers to those who practice contemplative spirituality as “*pioneers* in this frontier of the Spirit.”<sup>42</sup>

John Caddock, a critic of Manning, observes that “While Manning would acknowledge that some elementary truths of God can be found by reading the Bible, intimate knowledge of God *only* comes through centering prayer.”<sup>43</sup> The truth is it comes only through God’s Word and the Living Word, Jesus Christ. It is Christ, through the Holy Spirit and Word of God that produces true spirituality.

Gnosticism was one of the early heresies of the Christian Church and it is alive in the spiritual formation movement. Gnostics see themselves as people who have attained a level of spiritual knowledge higher than the average Christian’s. Gnosticism resulted in believers seeking to attain hidden, extrabiblical knowledge through mysticism. Gnosticism is inherently competitive with Scripture and denies its sufficiency.

Nearly all the New Testament epistles defended Christian teaching from Gnostic influences. In Colossians, Paul assured believers there is no knowledge of God outside of Jesus. Paul wrote in Colossians 2:2-3:

“... that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, and attaining to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”

### MORE DECEPTION

Years ago, The Navigators cultivated young mystics with its *PrayKids!* newsletter, a publication aimed at children ages 7 to 12, luring them into emotionalism, subjectivism, and mysticism. So it is no surprise to hear that the Awana organization, which helps Cubbies and Sparkies learn Scripture, may be headed down the spiritual formation path, too. In the February 2006 edition of Lighthouse Trails Research, it was disclosed that Awana leader Kevin White sent an announcement to Awana youth leaders promoting an upcoming Willow Creek Association’s Student Ministries Conference.<sup>44</sup> Later that year, Lighthouse Trails Research

reported that Awana promoted and offered a book by Saddleback Church youth pastor Doug Fields. Fields is a regular speaker at Youth Specialties, which is one of the strongest promoters of the mystical youth ministry. Field’s book, published by Youth Specialties and Zondervan, contains sidebar comments by a variety of individuals who promote and practice contemplative spirituality.

More recently, in the April 2012 edition of “The Blog of Lighthouse Trails Research,” the question was asked if “Awana [is] naive about contemplative spirituality? If so, then we beseech them to educate themselves and request a recall on their book *Perspectives on Children’s Spiritual Formation*.”<sup>45</sup>

Awana’s promotion and use of this publication has concerned many people. The following is a description of the book:

“The book offers four different views on *how to transform children*. One author, Scottie May, a professor at Wheaton, writes the section titled, ‘Contemplative-Reflective Model.’ May gives a hearty promotion of *centering prayer, the Jesus prayer, Christ candles, the Catholic Eucharist* and a strong endorsement for contemplative spirituality ala Thomas Merton, whom he favorably quotes in the book. Two Awana staff writers [Gregory C. Carlson and John K. Crupper] respond in the book to May’s contemplative approach and give it a thumbs up with only minor cautions. But overall they believe that contemplative is a valid approach for all Christians, including children. *Perspectives on Children’s Spiritual Formation* is giving a green light to Awana leaders around the world to practice contemplative prayer.”<sup>46</sup>

In the February 2008 edition of *The Berean Call* newsletter, a reader submitted a question: “I’ve heard that Awana is drifting toward mysticism in the way they are ministering to children. What do you know about that?”<sup>47</sup>

The response from *The Berean Call* was "Although Carlson and Crupper rightly object to some key points in May's mystical model, they naively give the impression that the Contemplative-Reflective model has something to offer, even quoting favorably Richard Foster, arguably the foremost advocate of Catholic mysticism in the church. Compounding the confusion, they commend 'the Contemplative-Reflective Model [as an] important tool in helping provide a balanced development of the Christian spiritual life' (p. 87). Here they are showing their ignorance of the occultism rooted in mysticism."<sup>48</sup>

Commenting upon *The Berean Call's* observations, Lighthouse Trails Research further explained that if naïveté was the issue it is not an acceptable excuse because it can be spiritually misleading. However, if they were honestly naïve then Awana needs to do two things:

"First, they must educate Awana leaders who are under their tutelage about the true nature of contemplative spirituality. Secondly, they will need to request a recall of the present edition of *Perspectives on Children's Spiritual Formation* and revise it so statements like the following [which endorse contemplative spiritual teaching and teachers] are no longer in the book."<sup>49</sup>

Lighthouse Trails Research then cites numerous examples of comments made by Carlson and Crupper, executives of Awana.

### A CALL TO DISCERNMENT

Undiscerning Christians desiring something deeper than what their experience has been are becoming fixated on mysticism. These mystical practices, which once occupied a tiny corner of the Christian subculture, have moved into the mainstream. This should not be surprising because some of the most popular Christian pastors, authors, and speakers publicly acclaim contemplative prayer as a new and improved way of communicating with God. Christian denominations, organizations, colleges, and seminaries wholeheartedly promote

the superiority of mystical Christianity, integrating Eastern mysticism with Christianity. These facts demonstrate with unquestionable clarity that the Church today lacks biblical discernment.

The popularity of Eastern New Age beliefs and practices is a condemnation of the failings of the Christian Church. If the Church were functioning as she should be, these philosophies would not have the influence and impact that they have today. Believers are looking for satisfaction and power to overcome the difficulties and problems they face. It is a difficult world and they are perplexed and bewildered. They are looking for something that is authoritative and helpful.

There are many people who will say that mystical practices such as meditation, walking the labyrinth, yoga, and reiki<sup>50</sup> have made them feel better and produced positive results. Thousands of Christians from every denomination will tell you that contemplative prayer has changed their lives.

Beth Moore states that through contemplative prayer, God "really can change my circumstances, that [He] really can change my heart, that [He] really can empower me to be different than I'd be, to do what I cannot do, to know what I cannot possibly know."<sup>51</sup>

Those who believe that these practices are of God because they give a positive experience and feeling have been tricked. Feelings are not a sufficient test of whether a spiritual practice is valid (Jeremiah 17:9).

The Bible's emphasis is not on how one feels, but on one's relationship with God. Jesus tells of a Pharisee and tax collector who went to the temple to pray. The Pharisee was a good man, happy and content. He had no complaints. He prayed, "God, I thank You that I am not like other men ... even as this tax collector" (Luke 18:11). However, Jesus said that the Pharisee did not leave justified. While the Pharisee felt fine, his experiences left him confident that he was right with God. But his experiences deceived him.

The great leaders of the Christian faith always derived their teachings from Scripture. This is not true of Satan's counterfeits, such as the contemplative movement, who use Scripture out of context to support their beliefs.

Another common aspect of the wiles of the devil generally speaking, and particularly in the contemplative prayer movement, is that their teaching ultimately depends upon the "personal testimony" of those who practice it. When viewing the *Be Still* DVD, one will notice that everybody talks about experience. They tell about their former prayer life. They talk about how unexciting their religious experience was and how meditation has changed everything. Contemplative prayer is said to be the means where God changes and charges (guides, motivates, enables) His people. It is the formula and the personal testimony of what happened to the person who applied the formula. The point throughout the DVD is if you practice the formula you will have the same results of God speaking to you.

### BLIND GUIDES

Our Lord asked, "Can the blind lead the blind? Will they not both fall into the ditch?" (Luke 6:39). The most important thing, if you agree you need a guide, is to examine carefully the person who claims the title "guide." Some people follow a leader because he has been appointed by a particular church authority. He is accepted on that ground alone.

How foolish would a person be who hired a guide just because he said he was a guide? The person follows him into the Alaskan wilderness only to discover he is blind. It would not be long until both were lost.

Many believers blindly follow the blind teachers of the spiritual formation movement. They defend their "various and strange doctrines" (Hebrews 13:9) and twisted interpretation of Scripture. They affirm they are confident that their guides have, with great care and discernment, integrated

into their teaching pagan ideas and practices that are consistent with Scripture. They do not examine their guide's eyes.

Some of these misguided people are not misguided at all. It is sometimes true of teachers as it is of idols: we make them in our own image. A man with good vision would not choose a blind man to follow because he sees the danger and disaster on the horizon. A blind man may choose to follow a blind man because he too cannot see and that is why he is immersed in the errors of the spiritual formation movement.

Then there are those believers who have, because of spiritual immaturity, chosen a blind guide. This sightless instructor comes highly recommended by students who have lost their sight under his tutelage. The old saying that the student "will be like his teacher" (Luke 6:40) is well-founded. The young believer who puts his confidence in a blind guide will in time become blind.

Charles Darwin's erroneous explanation was that man descended from the ape; apes mimic, and that is why people mimic one another. However, you will imitate the one you follow: your guide. Choosing a mentor is serious business. One either excels in true godliness or moves in a direction away from God. The blind man and his guide may miss and overlook a number of things, but they will not miss falling into the ditch. One does not need vision to fall into a ditch.

### Endnotes:

1. Berkouwer cited by Randy Alcorn in "Lord Foulgrin's Letters: Afterword." Eternal Perspective Ministries website, Dec. 23, 2009. Document accessed at: [www.epm.org/resources/2009/Dec/23/Lord\\_Foulgrin\\_s\\_Letters\\_Afterward/](http://www.epm.org/resources/2009/Dec/23/Lord_Foulgrin_s_Letters_Afterward/).
2. *Be Still And Know That I Am God -Psalm 46:10*, DVD by Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment, 2006. Written, directed, and produced by Amy Reinhold, Judge Reinhold, and David Kirkpatrick. Back cover of the DVD insert.
3. See further, "Desert Fathers" on Wikipedia. Document accessed at: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Desert\\_Fathers](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Desert_Fathers).
4. Ken Kaisch, *Finding God: A Handbook of Christian Meditation*. New York: Paulist Press, 1994, pg. 191, emphasis added.

5. A mantra is a word or phrase used in meditation. It is repeated over and over to induce an altered state of consciousness and free a person from thoughts.
6. See further, "Thomas Keating" on Wikipedia. Document accessed at: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas\\_Keating](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Keating).
7. The abbot is the superior or governor of an abbey or monastery for men.
8. "Thomas Keating," Wikipedia document, op. cit.
9. See further, "Richard Foster (theologian)" on Wikipedia. Document accessed at: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard\\_Foster\\_\(religion\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_Foster_(religion)).
10. "Book of the Year Reader's Poll," *Christianity Today*, April 5, 1993, pg. 27.
11. Tony Campolo, *Speaking My Mind*. New York: Basic Books, 2006, pp. 30-31. Cited in "Interspirituality - The Outcome of Contemplative Prayer," Lighthouse Trail Research Project website. Document accessed at: [www.lighthouse trailsresearch.com/marchnewsarticle.htm](http://www.lighthouse trailsresearch.com/marchnewsarticle.htm).
12. Tony Campolo, *Letters to a Young Evangelical*. New York: Basic Books, 2006, pp. 30-31.
13. "Interspirituality - The Outcome of Contemplative Prayer," op. cit.
14. M. Basil Pennington, *Centering Prayer: Renewing an Ancient Prayer Form*. New York: Image Books Doubleday, 2001, pg. 29.
15. For additional information on Henri Nouwen, see G. Richard Fisher, "Evangelicalism's Favorite Priest - Is Henri Nouwen a Friend or Foe?" *The Quarterly Journal*, April-June 2011, pp. 1, 15-21.
16. Henri Nouwen in Thomas Ryan, *Disciplines for Christian Living*. Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1993, pg. 2, emphasis added.
17. Chris Armstrong, "The Future Lies in the Past," *Christianity Today*, February 2008, pp. 22-29. The quoted words that follow are from pg. 26.
18. Mark Galli, "Ancient-Future People," *Christianity Today*, February 2008, pg. 7.
19. "The Future Lies in the Past," op. cit., pg. 29.
20. Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives*. New York: Harper/Collins, 1991, pg. 18.
21. Ibid.
22. Ibid, pg. 19.
23. *Be Still* DVD, op cit., statement made by Judge Reinhold, narrator at 01:58 timemark. Concerning the concept that "Prayer is two-way communication with God," this, we believe, is an unbiblical concept. Prayer is a "one-way" not a "two-way" communication. Praying is outward and upward to God. The Bible says absolutely nothing about listening to God in prayer because people are to listen to God in Scripture (Matthew 22:31). The words "pray" and "listen" are not even remotely connected. Prayer is prayer and

- listening is listening. All of the Greek words translated "prayer" refer to talking to God, not God talking to us. Christians do not receive instruction from God in prayer by waiting for Him to respond in their thoughts. Within prayer, we may begin the process of receiving guidance by asking for it (James 1:5), but in Scripture, prayer is always represented as man addressing God. Never are we told to "listen" for an "answer" in prayer. Prayer is a way of asking God to show you guidance. To discover the Lord's will we should pray for help to understand and use the Bible in a proper way.
24. Ibid., at 02:38 timemark.
25. Ibid., at 02:14 timemark, emphasis added.
26. T.A. McMahon, "Please Contemplate This," *The Berean Call* newsletter, March 2000, pg. 1, italic in original.
27. Wayne Dyer, *Getting in the Gap: Making Conscious Contact with God Through Meditation*. Carlsbad, Calif.: Hay House, Inc., Publishing, 2002, pp. xi, 2, italics in original.
28. Beth Moore, *Be Still* DVD, op. cit., at 15:02 timemark, emphasis added.
29. "Centering Prayer," The Center for Contemplative Mind in Society website, emphasis added. Document accessed at: [www.contemplativemind.org/practices/tree/centering-prayer](http://www.contemplativemind.org/practices/tree/centering-prayer).
30. Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*. New York: HarperCollins, 1998, pg. 28.
31. Brennan Manning cited by Ray Yungen, *A Time of Departing*. Silverton, Ore.: Lighthouse Trails, 2002, pg. 84, emphasis added, ellipses and brackets in original.
32. *Celebration of Discipline*, op. cit., pg. 15.
33. Bill Hybels cited in Denny Hartford, Vital Signs Blog, Wednesday, October 31, 2007. Document accessed at: <http://vitalsignsblog.blogspot.com/2007/10/bill-hybels-we-made-mistake-seeker.html>.
34. Bill Hybels cited in URL Scaramanga, "Willow Creek Repents?," *Leadership Journal's* Out of Ur website, October 18, 2007, quote rendered in italics in original. Document accessed at: [www.outofur.com/archives/2007/10/willow\\_creek\\_re.html](http://www.outofur.com/archives/2007/10/willow_creek_re.html).
35. *Reveal Where Are You?* product page on Amazon.com, ellipses in original. Document accessed at: [www.amazon.com/Reveal-Where-Hawkins-Cally-Parkinson/dp/074419234X](http://www.amazon.com/Reveal-Where-Hawkins-Cally-Parkinson/dp/074419234X).
36. Hybels cited in "Willow Creek Repents?," op. cit. The video from which this statement was taken was originally posted on Willow Creek's own website (<http://revealnow.com/story.asp?storyid=49>). It has since been removed and replaced with the message: "Page Error - You appear to have clicked on a broken or outdated link."
37. "Willow Creek Repents," op. cit., emphasis added.

38. Keri Wyatt Kent, "Rediscovering Spiritual Formation," *Willow*, Fall 2007, Volume 14, Issue 4, pg. 10, emphasis added. Document accessed at: [www.print-epro.net/freeport/willowcre/willowvol14iss4/index.php](http://www.print-epro.net/freeport/willowcre/willowvol14iss4/index.php).

39. Brennan Manning, *The Ragamuffin Gospel*. Sisters, Ore: Multnomah Publishers, Inc., 1990, pg. 1, emphasis added. This endorsement is also found on the back cover.

40. G. Richard Fisher, "When Grace is No Longer Amazing - The Tragic Life and Legacy of Brennan Manning," *The Quarterly Journal*, April-June 2012, pp. 1, 11, 18.

41. Henri Nouwen, *Here and Now*. New York: The Crossroad Publishing Co., 1994, pg. 25, emphasis added. It should be noted that if God already dwells in each person regardless of their religious or non-religious beliefs, as Nouwen states, then Jesus' words to Nicodemus about being born again (in John 3:3) are meaningless.

42. Foster cited in Bob DeWaay, "Richard Foster — Celebration of Deception," *Critical Issues Commentary* website, emphasis added. Document accessed at: <http://cicministry.org/commentary/issue112.htm>.

43. John Caddock, "What is Contempla-

ive Spirituality and Why is It Dangerous? — A Review of Brennan Manning's *The Signature of Jesus*," *Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society*, Autumn 1997 — Volume 10:19, emphasis added. Document accessed at: [www.faithalone.org/journal/1997ii/Caddock.html](http://www.faithalone.org/journal/1997ii/Caddock.html). In addition to drawing his conclusion from Manning's *The Signature of Jesus*, Caddock further supports his remarks by citing Manning's *Gentle Revolutionaries* (Denville, NJ: Dimension Books, 1975).

44. "Awana Clubs — Are they heading toward contemplative?" Lighthouse Trails Research Project website, February 26, 2006. Document accessed at: [www.lighthouse trailsresearch.com/awana.htm](http://www.lighthouse trailsresearch.com/awana.htm).

45. "Revisiting Awana's Move Toward Contemplative - And Another Look at 'Perspectives on Children's Spiritual Formation'," Lighthouse Trails Research Project website, April 14, 2012. Document accessed at: [www.lighthouse trailsresearch.com/blog/?p=1864](http://www.lighthouse trailsresearch.com/blog/?p=1864).

46. "Awana News," The Berean Call website, emphasis and book title italics added. Document accessed at: [www.thebereancall.org/content/awana-news](http://www.thebereancall.org/content/awana-news).

47. "Question: I've heard that Awana is

drifting toward mysticism in the way they are ministering to children. What do you know about that?," *The Berean Call* newsletter, February 2008. Document accessed at: [www.thebereancall.org/content/question-ive-heard-awana-drifting-toward-mysticism-way-they-are-ministering-children-what-do](http://www.thebereancall.org/content/question-ive-heard-awana-drifting-toward-mysticism-way-they-are-ministering-children-what-do).

48. *Ibid.*, brackets in original.

49. "Revisiting Awana's Move Toward Contemplative - And Another Look at 'Perspectives on Children's Spiritual Formation,'" *op. cit.*

50. According to The International Center for Reiki Training, "Reiki is a Japanese technique for stress reduction and relaxation that also promotes healing. It is administered by 'laying on hands' and is based on the idea that an unseen 'life force energy' flows through us and is what causes us to be alive. If one's 'life force energy' is low, then we are more likely to get sick or feel stress, and if it is high, we are more capable of being happy and healthy." Document accessed at: [www.reiki.org/faq/whatisreiki.html](http://www.reiki.org/faq/whatisreiki.html).

51. Beth Moore, *Be Still* DVD, *op. cit.*, at 26:45 timemark.



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## EDITORIALS

(continued from page 2)

finding himself at Cape Canaveral, Fla., staring at the space shuttle. As he inspects this strange object he would naturally ask "What is it?" and "What does it do?" The meaning and purpose of the space shuttle cannot be accurately ascertained by the man in and of himself. A NASA scientist would have to explain to the man what it is and what it does. Apart from that explanation the true meaning and purpose of the large object cannot be known by the man.

There is no academic field of study and application more immersed with evolutionary thinking than psychology. Ever since Charles Darwin, and especially Sigmund Freud, psychologists have evaluated man's behavioral problems on an animalistic basis. Experiments with animals and even insects are routinely used for guidance in dealing with human beings. Although many modern-day psychologists have disavowed Freud, they nevertheless have built on his foundation. They theorize within an evolutionary framework. They believe man is merely a highly evolved animal with animal problems and animal solutions.

Psychology's attempt to understand man's nature, his behavior, attitudes and thoughts, apart from the Creator is impossible. Man exists by virtue of the fact that God exists. God is man's environment. Man cannot be lifted

out of his God-environment and be understood. To understand man, as psychology attempts to do, one must understand God's purpose for creating man in the first place. God, the Creator, is the Interpreter of what He has created. To say there is no God who created man with meaning and purpose is to deny man has meaning and purpose.

The theory of evolution maintains that man evolved out of chaos and by chance. Man, therefore, has no meaning and purpose because chance has no meaning and purpose. Chance has no plan because there is no Planner. If there is no NASA scientist to explain and interpret the meaning and purpose of the large object then it is impossible to know. The object has no discernible meaning and purpose. The man can hypothesize and guess, within the context of a man living a thousand years ago. However, all that the man will know for sure is that the object is; it exists. Why? Because it is there. But what it is and what it does, he will never know.

Man will never understand himself apart from God who created him. To deny God and then attempt to gain knowledge of man, as psychology professes to do, is an attempt to do the impossible. It is impossible because God made man with meaning and purpose. Psychology ignores man's real meaning and purpose and presupposes a false meaning and purpose. The result is man's behavior, disturbing moods, and uncomfortable feelings are confusing and difficult to explain; hence the reason there are hundreds of conflicting theories of psychology.

For example, a can opener was created with meaning and purpose: to open cans. What if I decide to impose a false meaning and purpose on a can opener? I tell you I am going to use it to clean my carpet. Can you imagine how difficult and convoluted my explanations are going to be trying to explain how a can opener can clean carpet?

It is the same with psychology. The Bible teaches us that man was created in the image of God. Man is a spiritual and material being. Man is a sinner and his problems with anger, immorality, and so on are heart issues. Psychology teaches man is an animal. Man is material only and his problems are health issues. As man continues to evolve he will become physically and ethically better and better.

No matter what explanation I put forth as to how a can opener can clean carpet, the explanation will never fit the experience of cleaning a carpet. I will have to give another explanation. However, it won't fit either. And so I will have to resort to another and another and another explanation.

Getting back to the man looking at the space shuttle, the NASA scientist interprets its meaning and purpose. He explains the landing gears, wings, booster rockets, and so forth. It all makes perfect sense. If the man rejects the scientist's explanation and imposes his own erroneous explanation then he will never know the meaning and purpose of the space shuttle. For example, the man observes it has wheels; therefore, it rolls. It is large and very heavy; therefore, it must be pulled by horses. It is long and has a protruding nose on the front; therefore, it must be a modern-day battering ram used to break down fortified walls. The platforms (wings) are where soldiers ride. And the man's theories about the meaning and purpose of the space shuttle, just like in psychology, go on and on.

The knowledge to understand man is found in God's Word. Paul wrote the believer is "renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him" (Colossians 3:10). It is knowledge within the context of the One who created man with meaning and purpose. To lift man out of that context would make true knowledge about man unknowable. The man does not have the proper context to interpret the space shuttle. He does not know about modern aerodynamics, hydraulics, rockets, space exploration, and so on. He tries to understand the space shuttle in the context of a man living a thousand years ago. Therefore, he cannot know the space shuttle. God's Word is the ground for true knowledge. "For the LORD gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding" (Proverbs 2:6).

The belief that man can formulate a psychology apart from God is a myth. A psychology that does not begin with the fact that man was created by God and rebelled against his Creator is not an objective account of man. Humanistic psychology has produced unprecedented confusion and has permeated the evangelical Church.

Psychology, properly understood, is a branch of theology. Theology is the study of God. Psychology is the study of the soul or mind of man. Anthropology's focus is on man's physical character, environmental and social relations, and culture. Psychology is concerned with man's nature and inner life. Satan's substitute, humanistic psychology which is radically at odds with the Bible, is commonly used by Christians for guidance in pastoral or "Christian" counseling. This routine practice has resulted in the steady erosion of the biblical doctrines of creation, man, and salvation.

The biblical worldview sees man as a little lower than the angels, while the prevalent worldview sees him a little higher than the apes. In the gradual ascending series of creative acts we see man at the top. Man created in God's image, a little lower than the angels and capable of entering not only into relations with his fellow man but also with his Creator. There stands, above the plant kingdom and animal kingdom, man, a being fitted for the kingdom of God. Animals, however highly developed, are merely creatures within the natural world. Man has a life above nature. He is able to reflect upon himself; on the meaning and causes of things. He can reason and overrule impulse and passion and so he is responsible and capable of morality. He shows his superiority through the thoughts he cherishes of God and eternity. Before God had created man He pronounced His works "good," but not until He made man did He declare His works "very good." Man is the key to understanding the whole creation for nature does not exist for its own sake, but for the sake of man. Man is the bonding agent who connects the material and spiritual worlds. Humanistic psychology's materialistic explanations ignore the spirit and reduce thoughts, feelings, and will to functions of matter. Man is a little higher than the ape. There are no angels.

In one brief phrase "image of God," man is related to God. Evolution is denied and man's uniqueness is upheld. He is more than flesh and blood. His behaviors and attitudes issue from his heart and are therefore, spiritual and God-related. Contrary to humanistic evolutionary psychology, human beings are far more similar to God than to animals. Man is made in God's image; animals are not (Genesis 1). Man was given rule over the animals (Genesis 1:26); animals are not "suitable" and do not correspond to man (Genesis 2:18-20).

Communication by man and God through revelation and prayer is nonexistent between God and animals. Man, unlike the animals, has the power of moral knowledge. The moral "ought." He distinguishes good from evil. He recognizes his obligations toward God to obey what is right and just and flee from what is unjust and evil. He was made with moral freedom and capable of moral affection. God is love and without this capability man would not be a true image bearer of God. Man, in the image of God, is a rational being. He can understand the world God has made. Science is only

possible because man was created with the same kind of reason which is expressed in the world in which man lives. For example, if a man was going to translate a book written in a foreign language, he must know the language of the author who wrote the book. If he did not know the author's language he would not be able to translate the book into his native language. It is the same with the kind of reason man was created with and the kind of reason expressed in creation by the Creator.

Biblical psychology will seek to understand man, not in terms of human relations, but in terms of the image of God. The psychologies built on evolution reduce man from a creature made in the image of God to an animal evolved by chance, out of chaos and nothingness. Many believers argue against modern psychology on the basis that it attributes man's behaviors to a plethora of drives and instincts over which he has no control. Christians rightly contend man is not at the mercy of drives and instincts, but is responsible and accountable. It is certainly true that modern psychology does not allow for responsibility, but it is not because of out-of-control drives and overwhelming impulses. The psychologies leave no room for responsibility because it lifts man out of a creation context. Man, made in the image of God, is immersed in an evolutionary scenario where every aspect of his personality has come from chance, chaos, and nothingness. Man cannot be responsible to nothingness. He can only be responsible if he is a creature of God. Man as a creation by God is the only option to man as a creation from nothingness.

—DMT

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## NEWS UPDATES

(continued from page 3)

Graham posted on his ministry's website a statement announcing the meeting which took place at the evangelist's home in Montreat, N.C., and which stated in part, "It was an honor to meet and host Gov. Romney in my home today, ... What impresses me even more than Gov. Romney's successful career are his values and strong moral convictions. ... It was a privilege to pray with Gov. Romney — for his family and our country."

Ken Barun, chief of staff for the Graham organization told CNN in a statement that, "Our primary focus at the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association has always been promoting the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We removed the information from the website because we do not wish to participate in a theological debate about something that has become politicized during this campaign."

In Charismatic circles, self-proclaimed modern-day prophet Rick Joyner told viewers of the Rev. Jim Bakker's Sept. 24 broadcast that a prophecy "supposedly

attributed to Joseph Smith" stated that at a time when "the U.S. Constitution would hang by a thread" that "the Lord was going to raise up a Mormon president to save our Constitution." Joyner went on to say, "And who knows, maybe this was one of those true prophecies."

Right Wing Watch, a website describing itself as a "project of People For the American Way dedicated to monitoring and exposing the activities of the right-wing movement," targeted Joyner's comments and provided a link to its YouTube posting of his remarks as well as a link to Bakker's own website featuring the entire broadcast. The RWW website also noted that Joyner agreed "with Bakker that the differences between Mormonism and Christianity are merely minor ones."

In November, Republican nominee Romney lost his bid for the presidency to President Barack Obama. Despite his loss, the LDS church still was victorious by gaining ground in its ongoing effort to further shed its cult image.

—MKG

## POWER STRUGGLE AT TBN REVEALED

The family rifts amidst the leadership of the Trinity Broadcasting Network have snowballed to the point that the local newspaper is describing it as "nuclear family warfare." Brittany Koper, granddaughter of the network's founders Paul and Jan Crouch, along with her husband, Michael, have charged family members with gross financial mismanagement and power struggles for control of the multibillion-dollar broadcasting empire. The Kopers have furnished the courts with numerous internal documents and reports to substantiate their allegations.

More recently, a 70-page declaration was filed in Orange County [California] Superior Court containing a photograph of Jan Crouch holding a letter from Paul Crouch Sr. in which it is alleged that he appointed his son Matthew to take control of the broadcasting ministry after his death. Matthew Crouch is uncle to Koper and younger brother of Koper's father, Paul Crouch Jr. Matthew is a prime target fixed in the crosshairs of the Kopers' charges.

According to a declaration by Michael Koper, the photo was taken in September 2011 when Paul Crouch Sr. "was in the hospital suffering from congestive heart failure," the *Orange County Register* reported. "Apparently, Matthew Crouch and Jan Crouch were celebrating what they believed was Paul Crouch Sr.'s impending death and Matthew Crouch's promotion to president of TBN that would subsequently occur," the newspaper further reported Koper as saying.

The elder Crouch did not die and still heads up the network. However, Michael Koper maintains that, "Paul Crouch Sr. suffers from severe memory loss probably due to his years of abuse of alcohol and prescription drugs."

TBN is contending that the Kopers' actions are a "blackmail attempt" and "an inflammatory smear campaign to divert attention from their own financial sins against Trinity," the *Register* reported. But the network may be facing an uphill battle in warranting its indictments. The newspaper stated that "a judge recently threatened to brand Trinity a 'vexatious litigant' for the prodigiousness of its legal maneuverings against the Kopers."

Carra Crouch, sister of Brittany, has a battle of her own against the network, charging that as a young teen she was drugged and raped by a network employee and that her family members and ministry officials concealed the incident rather than report it to authorities. In an email to Michael Koper from Trinity's lawyers it was argued, "Corporations cannot be liable for negligent supervision or reporting of an alleged rape of a minor. Failure to report is not a legal basis of a cause of action. Sexual Battery cannot be alleged against an entity." Arguing these factors, the network is hoping the sexual battery lawsuit "will be dismissed in due course."

Although it is also being heard in the Orange County Superior Court, Carra Crouch's lawsuit is separate from her sister and brother-in-law's litigation.

—MKG

## CRYSTAL CATHEDRAL GETS NEW OWNER, NEW NAME

The next mutation for the renowned Crystal Cathedral, the Southern California megachurch founded and built by the Rev. Robert H. Schuller, will be a change of its name to Christ Cathedral. In February 2012, the financially-strapped, bankrupted church was forced to sell its campus — with its iconic glass cathedral — to the Roman Catholic Diocese of Orange for \$57.5 million.

The Diocese said they are planning to begin the cathedral's conversion into "a Catholic place of worship" in July 2013. The process is expected to take at least a year. A month prior to the start of the renovation, the Crystal Cathedral ministry, including its popular *Hour of Power* television broadcast, will vacate its longtime campus and move to St. Callistus Catholic Church. The Catholic Church gave the Crystal Cathedral six months free rent there under the sale agreement.

The renaming of the structure is a formal process within Catholicism. The proposed name must be submitted to the Congregation of Bishops in Rome. The bishop for the Orange Diocese received approval for the name change on April 26, 2012, and it was publicly announced seven weeks later during an ordination ritual on June 9.

Schuller is an ordained minister of the Reformed Church in America, the oldest Protestant denomination in the United States.

—MKG

### PERSONAL FREEDOM OUTREACH — STATEMENT OF BELIEF

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



# Books in Review

## THE HARBINGER: FACT OR FICTION?

by David James

The Berean Call, 223 pages, \$15.99

David James received his masters in Biblical Studies from Dallas Theological Seminary and is preeminently qualified to write this cutting-edge critique of *The Harbinger*, Jonathan Cahn's runaway best-selling fiction. James documents heavily that Cahn can fit into most any religious environment. James shows Cahn to be a real chameleon who is able to tailor and present himself in different ways to different audiences in accordance with their expectations.

Is Cahn a modern-day prophet who reveals mysteries and new revelations as some believe? Or is he someone who has tried to connect imaginary dots that are not really there? James leaves no one wondering. He is meticulous in his research and documentation. He believes that Cahn is creating optical illusions with words that match neither reality nor proper interpretation of the Scriptures. James gets to the root of Cahn's problem and addresses Cahn's departure from sound hermeneutics.

Cahn's book, *The Harbinger*, is clearly fiction, but he says that what is behind the story is very real. His premise is that Isaiah 9:10-11 shows a pattern of God's judgment for America. He says that nine harbingers or warnings coincide exactly with events in the United States starting with the 9/11 terrorist attack on the Twin Towers. James shows that there is really no biblical justification or support for seeing the Isaiah passages as a template for America.

Cahn asserts there are too many events in U.S. history that correspond to Isaiah 9 to be coincidental. James disagrees and backs up his arguments. He shows that coincidental events are no proof of God's direct intervention. For example, James shows a fascinating set of coincidences between the assassinations of Presidents Lincoln and Kennedy, as well as eerie similarities between the sinking of the Titanic and a novel called *The Wreck of the Titan* written 14 years before. James rightly warns, "believers need to be careful about assigning

God's action to specific events with absolute certainty apart from special revelation from Him" (pg. 23).

James documents that Cahn's seminal idea about Isaiah 9 may have, in fact, originated with David Wilkerson. Wilkerson was known for many false prophecies and he was embarrassed again and again with prophetic failures. James does us a favor in documenting a few of Wilkerson's failed prognostications. Given Wilkerson's pathetic record of outcomes, we can hardly take seriously any views he would have on Isaiah 9.

James employs investigative skills by digging into Cahn's background and documenting that he has been passing himself off for years as a revealer of hidden mysteries and ancient revelations.

Another of Cahn's flaws pointed out by James is the almost total absence of Christ, a missing Church, and missing Christians. Cahn's scenario is deficient. In *The Harbinger* there is no discussion of the present age of grace, the future of Israel as a nation, the future tribulation period, and nothing directly mentioning Islam, only the word terrorists.

James examines all of the so-called harbingers or warnings, showing that they are all specious with some being founded on circular reasoning. Every one of Cahn's claims is carefully dissected.

The rest of James' book shows numerous red herrings and misleading statements. James shows clearly that the so-called Isaiah 9:10 effect and its claims of inevitable outcomes has been made up by Cahn and is not biblical at all.

James also critiques Cahn's horrible misuse of the Old Testament Shemitah law and demonstrates Cahn's fudging with numbers.

If *The Harbinger* is selling as hotly as the advertising claims it is, James' book is a huge bucket of ice water which needs to be thrown on Cahn's adoring fans to get them back to reality and into logical biblical thinking. James uses the scalpel of the Word to deliver the death of a thousand cuts to Cahn's book.

Discerning Christians need to stay current with the various whimsical fads infiltrating the Church (Acts 20:30-31). And to this end, it may sound cliché to say that James' new book is a must-read — however it is a must-read.

—GRF

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