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Neil Anderson's Rough Road for Believers He's the Same Old Neil with the Same Old Bondage Making Deal

by G. Richard Fisher

Neil Anderson, founder of Freedom in Christ Ministries, has finally done it. He has released his autobiography, called *Rough Road to Freedom*,¹ which reveals that Anderson is the same old Anderson with regard to his extreme teachings on demonology.

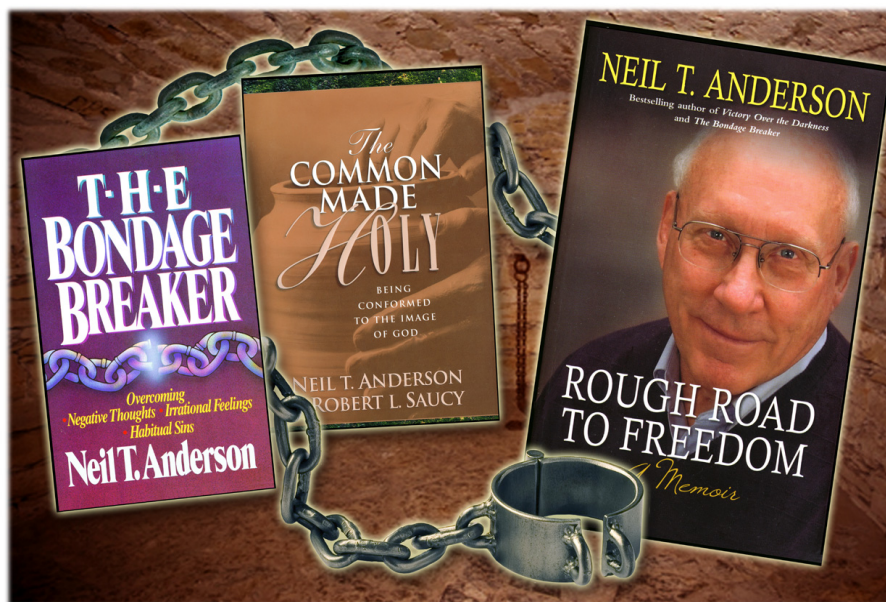
Personal Freedom Outreach released one of its first articles on Anderson over a decade and a half ago, called "Demons, Demons, Where Are the Demons? The Unchanged and Unchanging Neil Anderson."² Fifteen years later, Anderson holds the same views on the subject he did then. Some would say he is being consistent. Yet he has been consistently wrong.

Though some may have hoped for moderation, there has only been a doubling down. He is miles out of the mainstream. Anderson has created a unique interpretation of human

spiritual struggle, using superstition and out-of-context Bible verses. His subjective theology is sold as being the final answer.

Anderson's autobiography details his youth and his family's hard-scrabble Minnesota farm life. He takes us through his formal education and describes how he arrived at some of his beliefs. Anderson details his Navy career, his engineering phase, and his job as a systems designer for Honeywell. He also describes his time at Talbot Seminary. Anderson says he is neutral on the Charismatic movement, a position he based upon the questionable advice of Gamaliel in Acts 5:35-40, whose advice he labels "wise counsel."³ Gamaliel's advice was this: Let a religious movement

(continues on page 13)



Inside this Issue:

SOMEBODY MADE ME DO IT! – OR DID THEY?	PAGE 2
GAY ACTIVISTS RELEASE BIBLE TRANSLATION	PAGE 3
INSTRUCT THE BRETHREN IN THESE THINGS	PAGE 4

Editorials

SOMEBODY MADE ME DO IT! – OR DID THEY?

Several decades ago, popular comedian Flip Wilson created a character named Geraldine. Wilson received a lot of laughs as Geraldine would always excuse her bad behavior and misdeeds with the quip, “The devil made me do it.” The devil would make her buy flashy dresses and most anything else she wanted to buy. The audience would roar with laughter seeing through Geraldine’s ploy. Maybe they were actually laughing at themselves and their own ploys as well.

Geraldine’s evasions live on and they are no laughing matter. One could say that, next to disputing the Word of God and its authority (Genesis 3:1), blame-shifting is the oldest ploy in the Book (“Then the man said, ‘The *woman* whom *You* gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate’” Genesis 3:12, emphasis added).

With our sinful nature comes the inner tendency to try to evade personal responsibility and to scapegoat — just as Adam and Eve tried when they first fell into sin. *Somebody made them do it* — according to them. However, the Lord was not buying it, not even a little.

So who makes us do what we do? We may say others, but in reality others only trigger in us what is already there. It has been often said of a drunk who spews vulgar and angry remarks, “That’s just the alcohol

talking.” But the truth is the alcohol is only a lubricant to expose what’s already in the heart. We sin because we want to and because we, for multiple complex reasons, give in to temptation. We often respond sinfully out of habit. We are most vulnerable when there is availability of sin without accountability.

James reminds us that in the act of sinning, it is our own lust and our own desire that gives birth to sin (James 1:14-15). Just as a magnet attracts and draws metal, temptation pulls at the old shards of our sinful nature. It lures us because of what is in us. When we run or even slowly meander to the pull of sin, we only have ourselves to blame. Regretfully, we often let ourselves go, thinking it will be easy to simply repent later.

That gets us back to who makes us do what we do. One of the most common scapegoats is our parents. It is easy to blame them, especially if they are dead and unable to defend themselves. Counselors often hear stories of all the bad things parents made the counselee do. However, when sitting a counselee and parents down together and listening to their life stories, there are often contradictory accounts. The counselees who seek to scapegoat often embellish or fabricate memories.

A larger issue in this whole discussion is the question: Do our parents’ sins and failures define and determine us? Are their faults and failures determinative or are they only able to influence us? Are we fatalistically

(continues on page 21)

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GAY ACTIVISTS RELEASE BIBLE TRANSLATION

Critics of contemporary Bibles, including paraphrase and gender-neutral translations, will now have an even more scandalous version to censure. Late last year, gay activists released what they call, *The Queen James Bible*.

The book's description says that, "The Queen James Bible is based upon The King James Bible, edited to prevent homophobic misinterpretation." The advertisement further states, "Homosexuality was first mentioned in the Bible in 1946, in the Revised Standard Version. There is no mention of or reference to homosexuality in any Bible prior to this — only interpretations have been made. Anti-LGBT Bible interpretations commonly cite only eight verses in the Bible that they interpret to mean homosexuality is a sin; Eight verses in a book of thousands! The Queen James Bible seeks to resolve interpretive ambiguity in the Bible as it pertains to homosexuality; we edited those eight verses in a way that makes homophobic interpretation impossible."

Offering justification for the publication's title, it is explained that, "Commonly known to biographers but often surprising to most Christians, King James I was a well-known bi-sexual. Though he did marry a woman, many gay relationships were so well-known that amongst some of his friends and court, he was known as 'Queen James.' It is in his great debt and honor that we name The Queen James Bible so."

The editors argue that they "were faced with the decision to modify existing interpretively ambiguous language, or simply delete it." Saying that simply deleting passages doesn't "address the problem of interpretive ambiguity" and "renders an incomplete Bible," the editors chose the former.

One example of the editorial revisions is Leviticus 18:22 which reads in the KJV, "Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is an abomination." The unnamed *Queen James Bible* translators render the verse, "Thou shalt not lie with mankind as with womankind in the temple of Molech: it is an abomination." In defense of their translation, the editors maintain, "Since abominable offenses aren't all punishable by death like this one leads us to believe there was translative error at some point: If having sex with a man is punishable by death, it wouldn't be called an abomination. ... Archetypal pagan rituals for worship of Molech included child sacrifice (literally referenced here in verse 20, and which we know was a 'zimah,' punishable by death), as well as sex with

the male temple prostitutes. In fact, having sex with these male prostitutes in a pagan temple was the most popular form of Molech worship and therefore of 'abominable' pagan idolatry."

Said to be "the perfect Bible for ceremony, study, sermon, gift-giving, or simply to put on display in the home or Church," the 610-page homosexual-friendly version of Scripture is sold on Amazon.com for \$34.95. The website's product page lists God as "Author" and Jesus Christ as "Contributor" of *The Queen James Bible*.

—MKG

CULT KILLING HAS IHOP CONNECTION

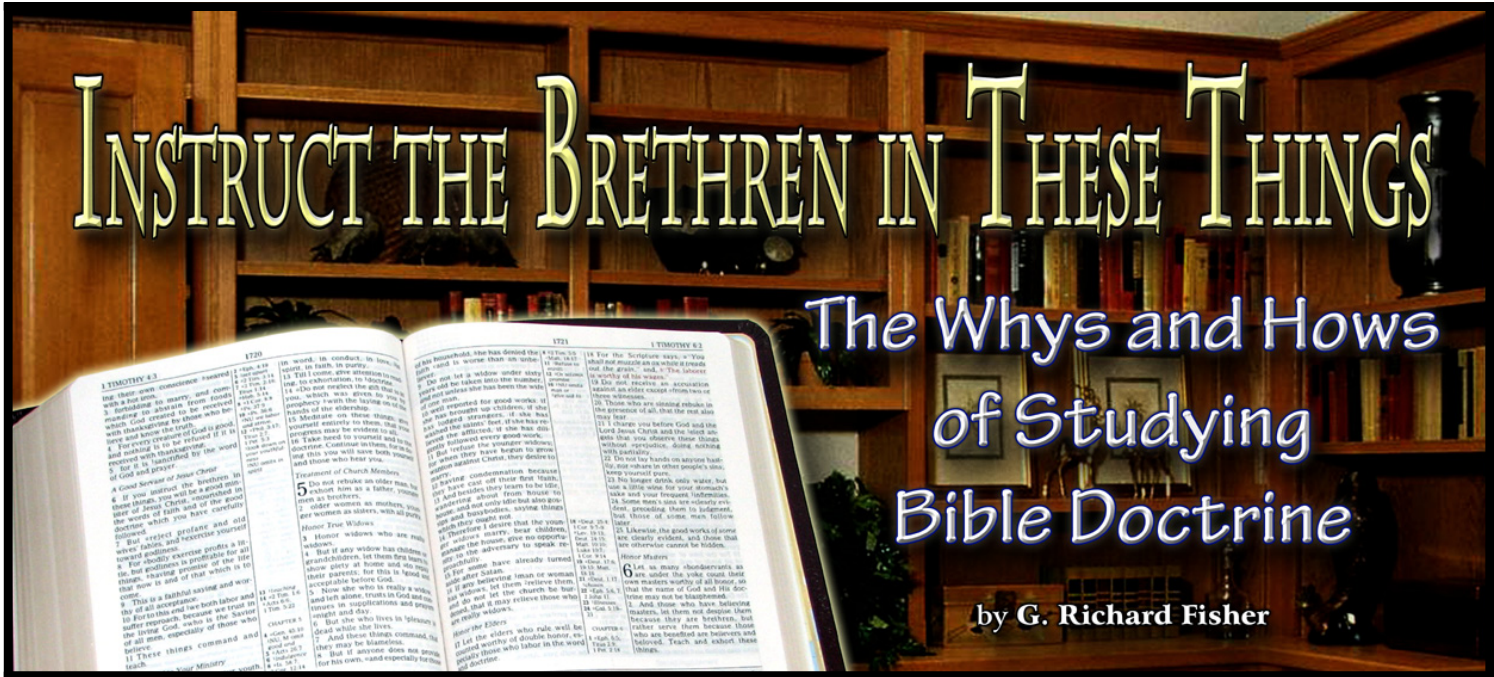
The death of a 27-year-old Kansas City woman has drawn unfavorable attention to the International House of Prayer (IHOP), the Charismatic church and ministry headed up by modern-day, self-proclaimed prophet Mike Bickle.

In late October, Bethany Deaton's body was found inside a minivan with a note which read: "My name is Bethany Deaton. I chose this evil thing. I did it because I wouldn't be a real person and what is the point of living if it is too late for that? I wish I had chosen differently a long time ago. I knew it all and refused to listen. Maybe Jesus will still save me." An empty bottle of over-the-counter pain medication was found with the note and officials said that Deaton's death appeared to be a suicide. Less than two weeks later, that conclusion would change as a story of sex and religion was revealed.

Deaton and her husband, Tyler, were part of a group which worshipped together at IHOP in Grandview, Mo., a Kansas City suburb. In 2009, she and Tyler moved from Texas to Kansas City to take part in a six-month internship at IHOP University, a non-accredited school and ministry for missionaries. The couple married in August 2012, less than three months before her death. Tyler had previously launched his own religious group and designated himself its spiritual leader. The Deatons shared a communal home with other male members of the prayer group.

According to a report in *The Kansas City Star*, "Bethany was sexually assaulted over a period of months while drugged with someone else's prescription anti-psychotic, witnesses in the house told authorities. This was happening, the witnesses alleged, in a period of time that

(continues on page 21)



The Apostle Paul tutored his young protégé Timothy with a detailed plan for building and overseeing a church. His blueprint included: "If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine which you have carefully followed. ... Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine" (1 Timothy 4:6, 16).

It is frightening to read the further inspired words of the Apostle of Christ as he speaks to the downward spiral of good doctrine and the rise of false doctrine beginning in his day and escalating in ours: "Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons" (1 Timothy 4:1). Concerning Paul's warning, Charles Ryrie notes that, "Paul returns to his attack on heresy. False teaching is inspired by *demons* and promulgated by means of *the hypocrisy of liars.*"¹

Consider, too, the reality in regard to spirits who are not only deceitful, but who promote demonic doctrine:

"These evil spirits are ever active in seeking to turn men away from the faith once for all delivered to the saints. They are in rebellion against God, and yet are permitted for some strange,

mysterious reason, to influence and even possess men and women who are not subject to the instruction of the Holy Spirit."²

THE ECLIPSE OF DOCTRINE

One would have to be both blind and deaf to miss the theological obscurity of our day. Moreover, you do not have to look very far or very hard to see it. Vampires, zombies, Mayan calendars, hybrid creatures called Nephilim, boy wizards, identifying the antichrist, and all kinds of personal revelations (among other things) are very much current as a mental diet for many believers — all the while the sane solid tenants of the Bible are out and passé. As people become more feeling-oriented they become more fantasy-driven. People love to study about extraterrestrials, but not about the God who created the universe and outer space.

It is very interesting to monitor Christian magazines, periodicals, and television these days. One will see the fads rolling in and out of the Church scene like waves on a beach. Movie reviews are more popular than Bible study. Merchandisers and advertisers hope one fad will catch on and have a shelf life for a few years so they can ride that wave and clean up

financially. Christians are marketed to death in our celebrity culture.

Twenty years ago, it was every male believer's responsibility to become a Promise Keeper. Large-scale, multi-city rallies, plus tons of books and studies were hawked before the Promise Keeper organization ran out of steam and became another relic and another monument to the faddish bent of modern evangelicalism. Slightly more than a decade ago it became almost the duty of every church to have its members praying the prayer of Jabez. That lasted awhile and now, more recently, one could find piles of *The Prayer of Jabez* books on the shelves of local dollar stores. A couple years following the Jabez craze, it became fashionable — and even mandatory — to be "purpose driven." Churches were heavily marketed and the new fad established. The author of *The Purpose Driven Life*, Rick Warren, tried to reboot the frenzy by marketing a tenth-anniversary edition of *The Purpose Driven Life* during the 2012 Christmas season. But it was lightning that just could not strike twice.

An even more recent innovation is the mania to become missional. Of course, every church should recognize that it has a mission according to Matthew 28:18-20, but it is apparently

not that simple. The word “missional” is becoming ubiquitous and everybody seems to be crowding aboard the missional band wagon. Not many seem to know exactly what the word means, so it becomes whatever a person or a church body wants it to be. To be “missional” (a must use word especially in missionary circles) is like a prepaid debit card. You can load as much or as little onto it as you wish. It is the “in word” and the hot button word if you wish to be seen as “in” and really cutting edge.

Some contend “missional” means outreach as opposed to just trying to attract people; outreach rather than in-reach. But few really know where it came from. Like Creation itself, it appeared from nothing and caught on. No one wants to be against missions and so if a church doesn’t have it in its purpose statement and use it as a buzzword, it is thought to be out of step. Missional has become a well-worn word within the emergent church movement. If one asks what the word means, probably the best response is it means whatever you want it to mean.

Possibly the best theory as to the origin of the word “missional” was that it was developed by Darrell Guder. Guder used it in the title of his book, *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*, published by Eerdmans Publishing in 1998. Guder is the professor of Missional and Ecumenical Theology at Princeton Theological Seminary. The word was not an immediate success, but then along the way it struck and stuck, at least for the time being and until a new buzzword replaces it.

Those who were once called “unchurched” or “seekers” are now labeled as “nones,” and it is in vogue to refer to unbelievers with such a designation. Believers are to pepper their conversations regarding the unsaved as “nones.” (However, it may be wise to make sure that their audience is not confused, thinking that they are speaking about nuns.) Romans 3:11 combines the words “none” and “seek” in this way: “There is none who seeks after God.” Perhaps someday, terms such as “lost,” the “un-

righteous,” “unbelievers,” or even more politically incorrect, the “heathen” will regain favor.

The prevailing fad among extremist Pentecostals and Charismatics such as Todd Bentley³ is the sale of various forms of transferable anointings. Supposedly, one can learn (for a price) how to transfer a healing anointing, a prophetic anointing, or even a release-from-debt anointing. Their books or DVDs may even come with transferable anointing oil. It is a scam as they promise their followers that all this is paving the way back to an Adamic paradise that will set the stage for the Second Coming of Christ. Any doctrine of the Kingdom and/or the Lord establishing His Kingdom is lost in the hype.

So it is not just the world alone that is faddish. The problem is ramped up because many Christians seem to have full blown AIDS; that is, **Acquired Immunity to Doctrinal Studies**. In many formerly sound churches and especially in the emergent church movement, doctrine is no longer stylish or trendy. So it has to go — or at least given minimal distinction. It seems doctrine cannot measure up to a good fad.

Within emergent circles it is considered cutting edge to question everything that is biblical and then subtly suggest the polar opposite of what Christians have always believed. In fact, doctrine is considered totally out of date and a genuine hindrance to dialoguing with cults and other religions. Christians, we are told, must play nice and all get along. We are instructed that we can separate Jesus’ ethical teachings from the doctrines that accompany that teaching. However, that concept is patently absurd.

Some argue that we just need the Golden Rule⁴ minus doctrine. Nevertheless, what God has joined together we cannot put asunder without much spiritual damage and loss. Christians should not even try to separate who Jesus is and His ethics from what He taught in terms of doctrinal issues. Jesus said that the words that He taught were “life” (John 6:63). Millard

Erickson reminds us that, “The ethical teaching is insufficient without the reality which is spoken of by the doctrine lying behind the Golden Rule. If we ignore or alter the doctrine, the ethical teaching loses its validity.”⁵ Consider how important the doctrine of Scripture is because all other doctrines flow from it. Correct doctrine about Christ dictates whether we have the true Christ or another Jesus.

THE EROSION OF DOCTRINE

Regretfully, the cry today is that doctrine is something that went out of date a long time ago, so we need to just get over it. Propositional truth is too confining and therefore obsolete. Our biblical beliefs, we are told, are all culture-bound and belong to past ages of an ancient and archaic world. The current mood was expressed by E.W. Kenyon:

“Dogmas and Doctrines have lost their significance. They are the worn-out shells of yesterdays. They have held us in bondage for years.”⁶

Kenyon made that observation about a century ago, so one could maintain that he was ahead of his time in the outright rejection of doctrine. Kenyon’s jettisoning of doctrine led him far afield into extreme speculation about the use of the name of Jesus. Douglas Jacobsen wrote:

“When the believer spoke or acted in the name, it was the equivalent of Christ doing the same thing. Kenyon thought that potentially all the powers of Christ — all the powers of the godhead — were at humanity’s disposal.”⁷

Kenyon’s is a cautionary tale that few are heeding. His teachings and others like his have produced a flurry of wealthy, pompous charlatans preying on the Church.

We are presently instructed that doctrine divides. Few have expressed this perspective in a more foul and graphic way than Paul Crouch, president of the Trinity Broadcasting Network. Crouch told the faithful viewers of his network:

“And I want to say to all you Scribes, Pharisees, heresy hunters; all of you that are going around picking little bits of doctrinal error out of everybody’s eyes and dividing the body of Christ and arguing over splinters and doctrinal hairs and dissipating and wasting all of our time when the world’s going to hell. I say get out of God’s way, quit blocking God’s bridges or God’s going to shoot you if I don’t. I mean this is in my spirit, folks. I’m tired of Scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites blocking God’s bridges when the harvest is perishing out there and God’s calling the body to come together. *Let Him sort out all this doctrinal doo-doo.* I don’t care about it. I don’t care any more.”⁸

What Crouch and others like him miss is the fact that doctrine is supposed to divide and it is a sure path to dividing truth from error and good from evil. When Jesus said, “Beware of false prophets” in Matthew 7:15, He was the authoritarian divider. In Matthew 10:33-39, Jesus further instructs us about division that can occur when one rightly holds to truth. So it is a fact of life and of logic that truth draws a red line and separates itself from error.

Others certainly see and understand the erosion. For example Pastor Mark Johnson observes:

“Today the flock often lives on a diet of junk food, rather than on well-planned, nourishing banquets that include the meat of the Word. Why this sorry state? Here are some of the many reasons: (1) Many people have come to devalue God’s Word as less than inerrant, less than authoritative, and less than relevant. (2) Experimentation with how to ‘do church’ stresses exciting methodologies but places less emphasis on preaching or leaves little time for Bible teaching. (3) Expository preaching has fallen on hard times. It is considered out of date for a postmodern culture that shuns propositionalism (presenting and defending theological

truths through propositions that can be proven true) and absolutism (the view that certain things are right or wrong).”⁹

THE EVASION OF DOCTRINE

In a politically correct climate where getting along is the ultimate virtue and goal, doctrine just gets in the way. People who are strongly and unashamedly rooted in biblical doctrine are laughed at, scorned, and ridiculed. They are labeled “divisive” and “unloving.” They are called “uncivil.” With sneers they are told they are living in the Dark Ages. They are the problem with the world and if they would cease and desist with the hate speech and try to get along, the world would be at peace and in harmony. Sin is not the problem — rather it is those evil, unloving Christians claiming to have ultimate truth who are really the problem. Rather than upset people and create division as they do, they just need to affirm what unites and not focus on what divides. They create false guilt in people and that needs to be stopped. Harmonic convergence could occur right now if we could only silence the mouths of the doctrinal spoilers.

On the other hand, Muslims, cultists, and fringe movements — even those who promote sinful lifestyles — are able to hold tenaciously to their doctrines and beliefs and that is not only approved but applauded. It is, after all, defined as free speech. However, in a society where Christians are now considered an evil class and their doctrines portrayed as hate speech, true believers seem to be living in a parallel universe. Regardless, Christians need to keep speaking and defending. Jude 3’s command to “contend earnestly for the faith” has not been rescinded.

The drift from fixed truth and doctrine did not happen overnight. It has been a long time coming. Bible teacher and author William Evans wrote:

“There is probably no greater need in the Christian church today than that its membership should be made acquainted with

the fundamental facts and doctrines of the Christian faith.”¹⁰

Those words by Evans were written over 100 years ago. The doctrinal drift has, as Jude tells us, come by way of certain men who “have crept in unnoticed” (v. 4). The Apostle Peter concurred, writing “there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies” (2 Peter 2:1).

A major factor in this proliferation of destructive heresies could be said to have begun in earnest a few centuries ago in two movements. One is called European Scientific Biblical Criticism. This new perspective transformed the Gospel tradition to such a great extent that the end result is a skepticism about the historicity of what is recorded in the Gospels, ranging from a relative to an absolute uncertainty.¹¹

The Gospels, we were told, were not what Jesus taught; neither do they convey real truth about His life on earth, but rather are fantasy and wishful thinking of the early Christian Church. The early Christians fallaciously constructed a religion purely out of a desire to have Jesus as some kind of miracle-working hero. Wanting it so badly, they conceived and declared Him as they wished He had been. Those who espouse this view maintain that the Gospel accounts are simply what the early believers made up and that we can have no confidence in the text.¹²

Nothing is to be believed in the Old and New Testaments, but we are to believe the critics and their contradictory views. It seems strange in today’s topsy-turvy world that we are told to believe the doubters and deniers of Scripture, but not the apostolic writers of the first century. We are further instructed to regard with suspicion the four Gospels of the New Testament, and to believe, without question, the heretical Gnostic gospels (written long after the eyewitness accounts of the New Testament). Likewise, the remainder of the New Testament canon fares no better in the hands of these hyper-liberal biblical critics. It is remarkable to observe that

this destructive movement flourished in Germany, the birthplace of the Reformation.

THE ENLIGHTENMENT AND DOCTRINE

The impetus of higher criticism is indebted to an earlier major movement known as the Enlightenment. It was a time when human reason was crowned king. This movement takes us all the way back to the mid-1700s:

“The Enlightenment was an intellectual movement that stressed reason as the way to truth, a world based on perfectly ordered natural laws and a self-confident and optimistic belief in human ability to make progress. The epoch is also frequently called the Age of Reason because reason was understood to be the path to providing the true understanding of man, society, the world and God. Truth, it was believed, had been obscured by revelation and dogma, but at least people could be enlightened through reason, science and education. The intellectual and religious implications of the Enlightenment were profound, constituting a *massive shift in Western thought*.”¹³

Thus man became the ultimate judge of Scripture, rather than the other way around.

The long and the short of it was that Scripture was no longer accepted because it went contrary to the reason of some in academia. The deity of Jesus was rejected because it seemed to some to be contrary to reason. The Incarnation seemed unthinkable. And so, theological domino after theological domino began to fall. Somehow the ethics of Jesus were fine, but His death as atonement and bodily resurrection from the grave made no sense. Miracles could not be logically understood, so they had to be eliminated as well. With core doctrine being either marginalized or outright rejected, higher criticism, Unitarianism, and Universalism arose and flourished, as they seemed to make more sense to some. Arrogant men with their fallen,

tainted reason were now the sole arbiter of truth.

Unaided, fallen human reason has created many weird religious ideas. This is why there are so many believers who embrace and buy the publications of those who claim to have traveled to heaven — and hell. In today’s Christian circles, it appears people can take a trip to a celestial paradise more easily than a cruise to a Caribbean paradise. A trip to heaven is free and then its description can be sold to others in book form. These books with fantastic claims saturate both the Christian and secular marketplace and all tend to be unbiblical, contradictory, universalistic, and in many cases pantheistic and occultic.¹⁴

Many of these heavenly accounts are just silly. It is obvious that some believers are not really giving their attention to doctrine as an antidote to error. The driving force in esoteric religious movements seems to be our feelings and our experiences. Yet Proverbs 28:26 addresses our flawed, fallen emotions and experiences affirming that, “He who trusts in his own heart is a fool.”

Our interior life must be informed and guided by the Scriptures and the Holy Spirit or we can easily fall into gross error following our own promptings and self-generated illusions. When an individual’s reason and reasoning contradict another person’s reason, who or what breaks the tie? Not to be outdone, there are those who suggest the mind-boggling idea that even though these experiences are creating contradictory theologies, it is still acceptable as long as Jesus is preached. The question that screams for an answer is: “Which Jesus of which experience?”

THE EMBRACE OF DOCTRINE

Without a doctrinal base we have no real foundation or Christian identity. We have no parameters. What is doctrine anyway? How do we define it? The Apostle Paul says we are to give attention to doctrine (1 Timothy 4:13), so it must be important. All told, in 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus the word “doctrine” is used no less than 16 times. It is contrasted in some of

those verses with false doctrine. It comes from the Greek root *didache* meaning “teaching.” Realize that it is not just anyone’s teaching or teaching in general, but *the teachings of the Apostles*. Acts 2:42 speaks clearly to this: “they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine.” So doctrine is teaching and instruction from the Bible. The Apostles’ words have been inspired and then inscripturated and handed down to us in a permanent and unchanging form in an authoritative book. As one theological dictionary expresses it, “Doctrine is the teaching of Scripture on theological themes.”¹⁵ It is not just some ecclesiastical teaching, that is, Church tradition or dogma, but Bible-based propositions of truth.

In the Pauline Epistles, “the apostles’ doctrine” is often referred to as *the faith*. It is that body of truth handed down by the Apostles. It is sometimes called tradition (2 Thessalonians 3:6), meaning what is handed down by the Apostles and eyewitnesses. The Apostle Peter is clear: “that you be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior” (2 Peter 3:2). In 2 John 9, the Apostle says there is an apostolic doctrine of Christ that is to be embraced and held onto. This tells us that there are false and twisted teachings about Jesus that do not line up with the Apostles’ teachings in the Scripture. Those Bible doctrines, taken in totality, form a pattern of orthodox beliefs that have been believed and taught in the Church for 2,000 years. These doctrines are contained in many of the historic creeds. The study of biblical doctrines has a long and venerated history and should be embraced.

The early Church Fathers were clear. Ignatius (c. A.D. 105) urged that we “Study, therefore, to be established in the doctrines of the Lord and the apostles.”¹⁶ Tertullian (c. A.D. 197) wrote, “We hold communion with the apostolic churches because our doctrine is in no respect different than theirs. This is our witness of truth.”¹⁷ He then further argued:

“If that [doctrine] has existed from the beginning which has the apostles for its authors, then it will certainly be quite evident that the doctrine which comes down from the apostles is that which has been kept as a sacred deposit in the churches of the apostles.”¹⁸

“Hold fast to what is good” (1 Thessalonians 5:21) is not just for Bible college professors and pastors. British author Ian Macpherson reminds us:

“Jude says the faith is for the saints. Some seem to think it is for scholars only. It is true that without the scholars, humanly speaking, we should not have had the faith. They have formulated, translated and transmitted to us the documents in which the faith has found historic expression. But the faith was not discovered or devised by the scholars. It was Divinely delivered to the saints.”¹⁹

It would do every true believer well to be aware of Church history and doctrinal continuity down through time. A book such as *The History of Christian Doctrines* by Louis Berkhof is worth the effort.

More than a half century ago, Andrew W. Blackwood, an enormously powerful voice in America for orthodoxy and doctrine, wrote numerous books on homiletics (the art of preaching). In all, he wrote more than twenty books. One of his titles was *Doctrinal Preaching for Today*. One would be hard pressed to find a title like that in this day and age.²⁰ Imagine teaching pastors how to effectively preach doctrine from the pulpit! What an innovative thought! What if that became a fad?

EDUCATION IN DOCTRINE

The chief concern of this article is to recognize a practice far too often ignored (as done above) and then to provide some broad suggestions on *how* to actually *study* doctrine. This latter objective will be suggestive and not exhaustive because of the limited space this journal affords. Readers are

expected to fill in the blanks as we process the much neglected subject of how to study doctrine. We could look far and wide and research many doctrinal books, both old and new, and come up empty as to information on the actual how-to.

One such exception is Herbert Lockyer’s book, *All the Doctrines of the Bible*.²¹ A simple chapter title within that volume, “How to Study Christian Doctrine,” expresses a unique idea. It indicates that Lockyer realized the need of instructing believers on just *how* to study doctrine. Every believer is indebted to other believers in one way or another. We all stand on the shoulders of those who went before, and so this author is indebted to Lockyer for his thoughts and suggestions. They are the impetus for the concepts which follow and are developed upon with much gratitude for his insights. Paraphrasing, summarizing, and building upon what Lockyer has written, we will explore the ABCs (and more) of how to study doctrine (by using an outline with the letters A through F).

A — Assemble. First we must assemble all the pertinent verses having to do with the particular doctrine we wish to study. Why is this important? Author Kay Arthur advises:

“A topical study is a comprehensive and exhaustive study of what God’s Word has to say regarding a specific topic. It is much like a word study, only far more comprehensive. The advantage of a topical study is that it gives the total picture of what the Word of God has to say on a particular subject.”²²

We can use a concordance to gather verses which contain the doctrinal word we are looking for like salvation, or righteousness, or sin. Some help might be gleaned from a topical Bible as well. Chain reference Bibles can also be of help as they link a topic through the entire Bible with cross references provided in the margins. Some of the chain reference Bibles even color code certain words or doctrines. There is, as well, the option of researching the doctrinal word in a good Bible dictionary or encyclopedia.

A word study from W.E. Vine or other linguists will give us very helpful root meanings. Of course, the ideal would be an acquaintance with Hebrew or Greek, but we can use English helps to hurdle the obstacle of not knowing the original languages.

Additionally helpful would be reliable and dependable authors who have written books on doctrine. We can create a small doctrinal library. Assembling is very important as a first step. In assembling we need to be sure to gather all the pertinent Scriptures. We would lose something important, for instance, if we attempted to study the doctrine of sin, but never consulted Genesis 1-3, especially the fall of Adam and Eve (in chapter 3). The same goes for Romans 1-3 when studying sin and its effects on humankind. Assembling as much of the doctrinal picture as we can will insure a deep and proper understanding. This takes work and there are no shortcuts.

B — Balance. We must by all means keep doctrines in balance. One can gather all the verses on the love of God and neglect those which speak to His holiness and justice, thereby ending up with a false God who is nothing more than a kindly old grandfather. This lack of balance regarding God’s attributes will skew our understanding of other doctrines like eternal punishment — a path taken by popular emergent church pastor and author Rob Bell.²³

We cannot neglect *any* of God’s attributes, so we may even launch into a study of His names in the Old Testament. These give us great insight into God’s character.

Another example of balance would be in understanding the doctrine of salvation. Salvation divorced from a robust doctrine of sin will end up with no need of repentance or an inadequate understanding of why Jesus had to die on the cross. Atonement then loses all meaning when sin is denied or diminished. Grace, as well, is a concomitant to salvation, and proper biblical understanding of grace will keep one from lapsing into works salvation.

We could also note that if one focused solely upon the deity of Christ, he would easily lose sight of His humanity. On the other hand, if he focused only on His humanity, he would lose any awareness of His deity. Either way, he would have a false Christ, another Jesus.

Lack of balance is the grist of cults. Balance of doctrine is urgent. In the early 1900s, Pentecostal leader Andrew David Urshan so totally misunderstood the doctrine of the Trinity that he adopted Oneness theology and taught that Jesus was the only person in the Godhead and that He played the part of Father and Holy Spirit at different times. In this view, Jesus becomes the Divine Actor or Great Pretender. Of course, this would have had Jesus praying to Himself in the Garden of Gethsemane and on the cross forsaking Himself. There can also be Patristic Oneness where the Father is considered to be the only person in the Godhead. This is clearly the belief of Unitarianism.

Urshan combined his Oneness doctrine with the teaching that baptism and the speaking in tongues were required for salvation. One heresy often creates another. Later on, Urshan left his wife for ministry, showing his total loss of balance and a misunderstanding of the doctrine of sanctification, as well as marriage.²⁴

C — Combine. One must never separate doctrine from duty; that is, dissociate right believing from right living and precept from practice. First and foremost, doctrine must inform us, enlighten us, change us, motivate us, and direct us. For example, consider a study of grace. Grace teaches us to deny ungodliness and to live soberly and righteously (Titus 2:12). Doctrine should separate us from worldly living and lusts. Doctrine needs to be dynamic and life changing. Lockyer is spot on when he asks, "What is the use of a correct creed without a correct character?"²⁵

Apologist and author Steven Tsoukalas instructs:

"Though defending the faith is important, I consider it secondary compared to knowing the

things of God, putting that knowledge in the heart, and rendering to God glory by expressing that knowledge in worship and lifestyle. This, I am convinced, is the goal of theology. We read in Scripture that the early Christians 'were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer' (Acts 2:42). They were *doing* theology. Again, doing theology involves studying about God and expressing in our lives what we learn."²⁶

For doctrine to really be dynamic it must be applied to life and living. A correct understanding of the doctrine of forgiveness should lead to a freedom from the past and a release of guilt and remorse. We must combine doctrine with practical outcomes in our lives. The old way of saying it was *practice what you preach*. We must be servants to the Word ourselves while depending on the Holy Spirit and embracing personal change. We can prepare food to feed others while starving ourselves. That makes no sense. We must combine our intellectual research with our own devotional life otherwise we are hypocrites. Everett Harrison confirms that segregating doctrine and practice is unjustifiable:

"In current discussions, doctrine is sometimes used in contrast to spiritual life. However, an antithetical use here is unfortunate, for these two elements are complementary. When Paul speaks of 'sound [healthy] doctrine' (I Tim. 1:10; Titus 2:1) he seems to affirm that true doctrine is life-giving."²⁷

D — Develop. Be aware that Old Testament truth is developed, filled out, and brought to completion in the New Testament. A flower is not yet completed until it brings forth a bud. In one regard the Old Testament is the foundation and the New Testament is the completed building. In the Old Testament we see Jesus in prophecy, in types, and in many ways foretold, but not in fullness until His Incarnation. Grace and truth came by Jesus in its fullest manifestation. When the

Word was made flesh, it gave us a more complete understanding.

In the New Testament we see Jesus in a human body and have a more well-rounded picture. This progression and development of Old Testament to New Testament is often called progressive revelation; where truth is given in stages as it builds on prior truth. The Old Testament was in a sense childhood and the New Testament maturity. In the Old Testament the Holy Spirit was partially revealed as one who could come to a person and leave (Psalm 51:11). In the New Testament the Holy Spirit indwells believers and never leaves (John 14:16-17).

If one constructs a doctrine of the Holy Spirit only from the Old Testament they would be hesitant and uncertain and wondering if the Comforter was there to comfort them in the midst of trial and tribulation. It would be a truncated and incorrect doctrine of the Holy Spirit that creates deep uncertainty. It would influence one toward man-made and counterfeit remedies.

A sad example of this is how so many today are lacking a well developed doctrine of angels and demons. The lack thereof allows them to be wide open to paranoia, deliverance ministries, and bogus exorcisms.

E — Exactness. There is no need to coin words and phrases for doctrines in an effort to be innovative, enchanting, or more acceptable. Many modern-day authors try to be real trendy just to sell books. That practice often waters down or distorts truth. Peter Jeffery reminds us:

"Some Christians think of doctrine as being big words; words they can hardly spell, let alone understand. They think of words like propitiation and justification as being well beyond the understanding of ordinary Christians. It is true that these are big words. The truths they express are gigantic in their importance and massive in their place at the heart of the Christian faith. But it ought not to be beyond the ability of most believers to un-

derstand them, especially when we remember that Paul used these words in writing to the church in Rome and most of the Christians there had nothing like the educational advantages we have. The Apostle expected the Romans to understand propitiation and justification and he would have been amazed at our protests that these big words are too much for us."²⁸

Thus, we must allow the Bible to speak for itself — even when doctrinal words seem technical. Moreover, calling God by anything other than what He is called in Scripture is not helpful at all. God had reasons for speaking of Himself in the way He did.

Similar to this are those who try to tone down the doctrine of sin by labeling it a "mistake" or an "error" or "human frailty." But doing so clearly obscures truth. Paul, in 1 Corinthians 2:13, makes a distinction between man's words and words used by the Holy Spirit. Terms like "righteousness," "salvation," "the new birth," "heaven," and "hell" may seem to some to be terribly out of date, but creating new words rather than explaining Bible words can create false doctrine and tainted truth.

We need to speak with precision and exactness and be true to the biblical text. There are times that a failure to be precise and exact in the use of Bible words may tilt us slightly toward error that is not yet full blown heresy, but amounts to nothing more than junk food doctrine. It may not be outright poison, but it is unhealthy and contributes nothing toward Christian growth. Some teachings are silly and unproductive. Sometimes it is just to be sensational and to draw attention. There are some teachers who claim a good doctrinal core and have an orthodox statement of belief to prove it, but are still dispensing a lot of spiritual junk food. Bill Gothard is a prime example. Of all of the numerous lists that he has dreamed up over the years, some might be helpful while others are imaginative and foolish, doing more harm than good.²⁹

F — Fairness. We must be silent where the Word is silent. As English Reformer and martyr Nicholas Ridley expressively stated:

"In these matters I am so fearful, that I dare not speak further, yea, almost none otherwise than the text does, as it were, lead me by the hand."³⁰

The Apostle Paul instructed the believers at Corinth: "that you may learn in us not to think beyond what is written" (1 Corinthians 4:6). We must be honest and fair with the text. People often get caught up in feelings and imagination which may well lead to impose on the text something it does not say. Date-setting the return of Christ is one such bit of nonsense. Everyone who tries it fails; just ask Harold Camping, Edgar Whisenant, William Miller, and others. Date-setting has a long and infamous history of failure. Date suggesting is also dangerous. There are important and prominent doctrines which are clear and our doctrine and teachings should be found clearly in the Bible. Our musings are something else entirely.

An occurrence that should immediately send a red flag up our flagpole is when a teacher or author pretends that he or she has found something in Scripture that has never been seen before or taught before. It is sometimes passed off as "revelation." These "newly discovered" mysteries and revelations always turn out to be a manipulative hoax. One Bible verse often twisted and used for support is Daniel 12:4, "shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end." Cult leaders like Camping have claimed that the meaning of the prophecy and the timeframe of events were sealed and unrevealed; that is, until our day and the emerging of Camping and his Family Radio network.

Cult leaders nearly all say that now they alone can open the meaning and unseal the heretofore unknown prophecy details and dates. What they really do not know or are knowingly distorting is that this verse in Daniel has nothing to do with the *meaning* of

Scripture, but rather the *fulfillment* of Scripture. The fulfillment waits until "the time of the end." It is obvious as we compare Daniel 12:4 with Revelation 22:10 that we see what is being addressed in Daniel is definitely fulfillment of prophecy. John, in Revelation 22:10, says: "Do not seal the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand."

Unsealing prophecy means to fulfill prophecy and being shut up means being unfulfilled. Dr. Harry Ironside wrote:

"Throughout the New Testament, the end is always looked upon as having drawn nigh: therefore, through the book of Revelation, the seal is removed, as it were, from the book of Daniel, and the latter prophecy is found to be the key to the former."³¹

Fulfillment opens and unseals all prophecies. Camping made a fool of himself and has retreated into seclusion under a cloud of disgrace that he created for himself. He could not be told and would not accept correction. Pride indeed goes before the fall. We must not create doctrines from our subjective experiences or pretended insights. Camping chose to go into enlightenment thinking by supposing his reasoning alone could set dates that no one knows. His run-amok imagination created mysteries that were not there. We must be fair and honest and not make the Bible say something it really does not. We would not treat any other book this way. The minute someone touts their teaching as the unlocking of new mysteries, we need to wisely vacate the premises.

OTHER ERRORS IN DOCTRINE

There is little doubt that our society is out of control. Our culture lacks a foundation and parameters and as a result becomes increasingly immoral and violent. A stark depiction of our present world can be clearly seen in Romans 1 and it reads like the daily news headlines. Lack of doctrinal clarity, along with uncertainty about what Christians believe, is definitely not helping things. Major doctrinal

error can be easily illustrated when people ignore the A-to-F steps suggested above.

For example, one of the heresies infiltrating the Church at large is what can be called Incarnational Salvation. (It is also sometimes called Incarnational Christology.) The bottom line of this teaching is that in the end everyone is saved whether they know it or not.³² This spurious view is smuggled into the Church in a very subtle way. It loudly affirms the Incarnation of Christ and Christ as the God-Man, which sounds good, but then comes the heretical deviation. In the late 1970s and early 1980s this heresy was being promoted by a Roman Catholic writer named John Pawlikowski, although it dates back much earlier and under different names.

Orthodox Christology was turned on its head with the promotion of Incarnational Salvation. A recapitulation of this teaching could be expressed as: Jesus became a man, thus forever uniting deity with humanity. In some sense then humanity was deified. Jesus' humanity elevates all humanity here and now.

The plain error, however, is that when we speak of a deified humanity in any sense, it can *only* be attributed to Jesus. He and He alone is the God-Man. No one fully understands the mingling of Jesus' two natures into one. We do know, however, that Jesus is Jesus and fallen man is fallen man. In no sense does the deified humanity of Jesus transfer to man. Even Jesus' death and resurrection does not automatically change anyone's fallen humanity, though it does create the possibility and potential of spiritual change for the lost. All of humanity is corrupt flesh which is taken to the grave and not changed until resurrection.

Scripture does not seem to matter to those who promote Incarnational Salvation. In spite of verses to the contrary, what is true of Jesus is somehow true of every human, they say. Every human possesses some measure of deity in his humanity. We are told that Jesus' uniqueness is not a

uniqueness that is totally other and unlike that of any other human being. Every person has some type of elevated humanity by virtue of Jesus elevating human flesh. We are only different from Jesus by degree rather than kind. This intimate connection to Jesus simply by virtue of our humanity renders us linked to Christ eternally and therefore saved.

The problem is that the Bible addresses us as sinners and clearly says that we are lost (Romans 1-3); our flesh is corrupt (1 Corinthians 15); and our fallen humanity does nothing for us except seal our judgment. Jesus alone was without a sin nature, therefore His humanity was far different from ours, both in kind and degree when it mingled with His deity. This in no way denies His true humanity.

The truth is we are really unlike Christ in every way. Salvation comes only from receiving Jesus and trusting in Him for salvation, which gives us the indwelling Holy Spirit. There is certainly nothing in our humanity that would merit heaven. We all have fallen short of God's glory and are separated from God by a chasm so vast and so deep that we need a supernatural deliverance from outside ourselves to render us saved. Pawlikowski has created a terrible heresy by distorting Jesus and what He came to do. Jesus became man to die as a man, not to deify mankind.

Roman Catholic priest Henri Nouwen may have derived his idea from Pawlikowski and others. All can be addressed as being in the Beloved, according to Nouwen. PFO has stated in the past that within evangelicalism Nouwen is the most quoted and least discerned Catholic priest.³³ He is idolized by both Catholics and Protestants alike. That is a disturbing fact because so few know what he really believes and teaches. Nouwen carries the idea of a deified humanity so far that he can assert that homosexuality is a blessing to our nation. Apparently man can do no wrong. Part of that equation for Nouwen is his personal proclivities.

In addition, Nouwen could have easily developed this teaching from

Roman Catholic mystic Thomas Merton. Merton, decades earlier, stated of Jesus:

"He became man and united man's nature to Himself, ... For in becoming man, God became not only Jesus Christ but also *potentially every man and woman that ever existed*. In Christ, God became not only 'this' man, but also, in a broader and more mystical sense, yet no less truly, 'every man.' ... And indeed, if Christ became Man, it is because He wanted to be any man and every man. If we believe in the Incarnation of the Son of God, there should be no one on earth in whom we are not prepared to see, in mystery, the presence of Christ."³⁴

Merton's theology is corrupt and his anthropology horribly distorted.

The seeds for all this were being planted imperceptibly almost a century before with destructive criticism and the liberal emphasis on the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man teaching. God was declared as being everyone's Father and it took people such as Merton, Pawlikowski, and Nouwen to give it a Christian-like veneer. Jesus never taught universal fatherhood and that is clear from just one verse in which Jesus says that the Pharisees were of their father the devil (John 8:44).

We know that theologians and philosophers from the very early centuries of Church history discussed and debated what aspects of human nature Jesus embraced and took upon Himself. However, they did not fashion an automatically applied salvation for all, but potential salvation offered to all. They never confused anthropology and Christology. Emphasizing even one good doctrine to the exclusion of all others always leads to error. The bottom line for all cults is that they simply ignore, deny, or distort some area of doctrine. Be aware that does not have to start out as a huge broad jump, but rather as many tiny steps in a long departure. Christians should desire to have a long obedience in the right direction.

EXCELLING IN DOCTRINE

The Apostle Paul warned:

“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables” (2 Timothy 4:3-4).

The “time” of which Paul spoke came a long time ago. We then, who profess Christ, need to excel in doctrine and in doctrinal studies. There is no doubt that without good doctrine we create a void that error will fill. People who are starving will eat anything. They will rummage through dumpsters for scraps while being within proximity of a good restaurant.

As an example, people who have been rightly taught that faith (Greek: *pistos*) means trust in God and His Word will be stable, secure, and balanced in their faith. Those wrongly taught that faith is a force which they can use to speak their imaginations into existence will be very unstable and go from error to error. Faith is not about manipulation and a metaphysical force unleashed by speech that we can use to refashion reality and get what we want when we want it. That is a pathway to disappointment and confusion, as well as heresy. Faith is a living trust in God and Scripture as its objects of trust. It is dependent upon the will and providence of God. It is a long obedience to Scripture and biblical principles.

Christians need to know how to study doctrine and then study it. As we engage in that study and become more equipped, we then need to speak loud, clear, and with precision to the confusion and spiritual needs of others. The Apostle Peter’s words provide a fitting conclusion:

“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear” (1 Peter 3:15).

Knowing how is half the battle.

Endnotes:

1. Charles C. Ryrie, *The Ryrie Study Bible*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1976, pg. 1819, note for 1 Timothy 4:1-5, italics in original.
2. Harry Ironside, *Timothy, Titus and Philemon*. Neptune, N.J.: Loizeaux Brothers, 1964, pg. 95.
3. For more information regarding Todd Bentley, see G. Richard Fisher, “The Pied Piper of Chaos - The Life and Times of Todd Bentley,” *The Quarterly Journal*, January-March 2009, pp. 1, 14-21.
4. Drawn from the Sermon on the Mount by Jesus, Matthew 7:12 is often referred to as the Golden Rule: “Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them.”
5. Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1986, pg. 111.
6. Kenyon cited in Douglas Jacobsen, *Thinking in the Spirit*. Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2003, pg. 352.
7. *Ibid.*, pg. 346.
8. Paul Crouch, *Praise the Lord show, “Praise-a-Thon,”* Trinity Broadcasting Network, April 2, 1991, emphasis added.
9. Mark Johnson, “Whatever Happened to Sunday Dinner? The Crucial Role of Biblical Preaching,” *Israel My Glory* magazine, Bellmawr, N.J.: The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, Inc., September/October 2012, pg. 34.
10. William Evans, *The Great Doctrines of the Bible*. Chicago: The Bible Institute Colportage Association, 1912, pg. 7.
11. See further, Donald Hagner, *The Jewish Reclamation of Jesus*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishers, 1984, pg. 73.
12. This skeptical view is sometime euphemistically labeled “higher criticism” to distinguish it from “lower criticism.” Lower criticism is generally not negatively critical of the Bible, but comprises an effort to understand the text and times of the Scriptures. Even good commentaries can be called “lower criticism,” so we must make that distinction. For an extensive critique of both Old and New Testament higher criticism, see Josh McDowell, *More Evidence That Demands a Verdict*. San Bernardino, Calif.: Campus Crusade for Christ International, 1975.
13. W.L. Pitts in Daniel G. Reid, Editor, *Dictionary of Christianity in America*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1990, pg. 393, emphasis added.
14. See further, G. Richard Fisher, “Heaven Is For Real, But the Stories Are Not,” *The Quarterly Journal*, October-December 2011, pg. 2, 22.
15. Everett F. Harrison, Editor, *Baker’s Dictionary of Theology*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1960, pg. 171.
16. David Bercot, *A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs*. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 2000, pg. 28.
17. *Ibid.*, pg. 29.
18. *Ibid.*, brackets in original.
19. Ian Macpherson, *The Faith Once Delivered*. Milton Keynes, England: Word Books, 1988, pg. 7.
20. For additional biographical material on Blackwood, see Jay E. Adams, *Studies in Preaching*, Volume Three, “The Homiletical Innovations of Andrew W. Blackwood.” Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1976.
21. Herbert Lockyer, *All the Doctrines of the Bible*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing, 1967.
22. Kay Arthur, *How to Study Your Bible*. Eugene, Ore.: Harvest House Publishers, 1994, pg. 129.
23. For more information regarding Rob Bell, see J. Greg Sheryl, “Bell’s Hell - The Universalist Gospel of Rob Bell,” *The Quarterly Journal*, October-December 2011, pp. 1, 12-21.
24. See further, *Thinking in the Spirit*, op. cit., pp. 251-252, 254-255.
25. *All the Doctrines of the Bible*, op. cit., pg. 3.
26. Steven Tsoukalas, *Christian Faith 101: The Basics and Beyond*. Valley Forge, Penna.: Judson Press, 2000, pg. xiv, italic in original.
27. *Baker’s Dictionary of Theology*, op. cit., pg. 171, brackets in original.
28. Peter Jeffery, *Bitesize Theology*. Auburn, Mass.: Evangelical Press USA, 2000, pg. 13.
29. For more information regarding Bill Gothard, see G. Richard Fisher, “The Basic Life Principles of Bill Gothard - Benevolent Ministry or Bondage Making?,” *The Quarterly Journal*, April-June 1998, pp. 4, 7-12. Also see, Don and Joy Veinot and Ron Henzel, *A Matter of Basic Principles - Bill Gothard and the Christian Life*. Lombard, Ill.: Midwest Christian Outreach, 2002.
30. Ridley cited in John Eadie, *A Commentary on the Greek Text of the Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians*. Edinburgh, England: T. & T. Clark, 1883, pg. 28.
31. H.A. Ironside, *Lectures on the Prophet Daniel*. New York: Loizeaux Brothers, 1960, pg. 233.
32. One could label Incarnational Salvation a “cousin” to Inclusivism, the teaching that while Christ is the only Savior, faith in Him is not necessary for salvation. Main proponents of Inclusivism include Clark Pinnock and John Sanders.
33. For more information regarding 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.
34. Thomas Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation*. New York: New Directions Publishing Corporation, 1961, pp. 294-295, 296, emphasis added.

alone and if it grows it must be of God. By applying Gamaliel's flawed logic and advice one must conclude that Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, and every other major cult that is growing must be of God.

Anderson also reveals that he is open to and content with the spiritual formation movement, specifically contemplative prayer, as he has learned to practice it.⁴

The book also does a hard sell on his other books and curriculum. For the most part this seems to be standard fare for biographies, but what interests the astute discernor is just how truly biblical or otherwise Anderson's spiritual and religious teachings (and conclusions) are and whether he had modified any at all. It is of little wonder that he writes, "it was not my calling to be an evangelist or an apologist."⁵

Anderson gives a wide berth to apologetics and heartily embraces experiences.

What should give us pause is Anderson's admission that he is a religious lone ranger and sees no need to be hampered by or connected with historical orthodoxy or mainstream creeds. He confesses:

"I have gotten beyond denominations, and sense no obligation to defend any systematic theology. I am just a child of God serving Him in His kingdom. Over the years I have heard people say, 'I can't peg you.' To which I respond, 'Try "Christian".'⁶

Anderson declares, "It has taken me years to discover the reality of the spiritual world, and to learn to be guided by the Holy Spirit."⁷

Belief in direct guidance through contemplative practices apart from the anchor of theology can be a dangerous thing. Anderson does not divulge exactly how he was able to "discover" the things he teaches. He says only that they came from the Holy Spirit. If

something comes from the Holy Spirit, then it must completely agree with the Word of God, which is inspired and authored by the Holy Spirit. However, we will find that some of these "discoveries" are radical, unbiblical, and at times eerie and offensive. Though Anderson does not want to be *pegged*, he can be if one reads his writings carefully.

Anderson also seems to resent being *pegged* with extreme exorcists: those who holler and scream, are rambunctious and commanding. These he writes off as misled, though they themselves — men such as Bob Larson — would claim to be Spirit-led. Anderson sees himself as a quiet facilitator in the dispelling of demons. He is the velvet-gloved exorcist. After viewing his Internet videos, one could conclude that he is a pleasant man.⁸ But pleasant does not equate with truth.

Anderson classifies his method as a truth encounter. But although the method is different from the extreme exorcists, who emphasize power over demons, the premise is the same. That premise is that believers can have demons occupying them that need to be driven out. Anderson claims to know exactly where these demons are in the human body.

ROAD TO ROME

Anderson has succeeded in crossing religious lines with his non-commitment and non-alliance to any systematic theology and has written a book called *The Steps to Freedom in Christ, Catholic Edition*, with Father Sebastian. He claims that, "Father Sebastian had found his identity and freedom in Christ through one of my books."⁹

To further solidify his accommodation to Catholicism, Anderson cites a vision of St. Francis of Assisi in which the venerated 13th-century Catholic figure sees a brother carrying a devil on his back into the central Italian town of Portiuncula. Anderson's citation says "Francis saw the devil flee from his presence."¹⁰ But what Anderson does not know or neglects to explain is that the Vatican has

declared Portiuncula a place where one can receive indulgences for visiting and praying there. This is a detail which can be verified in any standard Roman Catholic encyclopedia.

For those unfamiliar with Catholicism's unbiblical intricacies, an indulgence is the promise of time subtracted from an individual's sufferings in purgatory. These illusionary indulgences by the living can somehow also be applied to the dead, who are supposedly suffering in purgatory.¹¹ It is truly remarkable that one who claims to offer a path of freedom may open the way to the bondage of false doctrine.

BUT HE IS SO POPULAR

Those who question Anderson's approach are written off as being rationalists or naturalists. One might even be accused of somehow harboring or hosting a demon. After all, Anderson's books — many of which are published by evangelical publisher Harvest House — have been advertised and promoted in *Charisma* and *The Marketplace* (formerly *The Bookstore Journal*) and endorsed by Elmer Towns (Liberty University), the late Bill Bright, Chuck Swindoll, Kay Arthur, and Jack Hayford (a close friend of Benny Hinn).

Dr. Timothy Warner, whose name is attached to Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, is another heavyweight who lauds and endorses Anderson. Anderson claims to have received positive reaction and interest from the late "Power Evangelism" guru John Wimber.¹² However, it is not all favorable, as Anderson says he "would have to endure vicious slander on a national level."¹³ Later on in his autobiography, he writes of the "criticism yet to come" and laments that he "really had no idea how cruel some in the church can be."¹⁴ Anderson classifies any disagreement with his teaching as slander.

Anderson claims that his teachings focus on liberation from bondage — bondage from addictions and the power of demonic entities: topics with which any well-taught Christian should be familiar. But a closer look

reveals that these teachings have more in common with fringe Charismatic groups and metaphysical, exorcistic experimentation than they do with the Bible. Anderson often creates a false dichotomy of either believing his extremes or being cast as an anti-supernaturalist when there really is a spectrum of positions between each view. One can hold a robust and biblical view of demonology without adopting Anderson's extremism.

Anderson developed his system by trial and error and based it on how he would interpret the symptom and problems of his counselees. It all required his hearers to go along with his perceived diagnosis, which usually circled back to the demonic. He explains:

"These experiences did not take a lot of discernment, but they raised a lot of questions in my mind. Were they an anomaly, and how many others struggled with the enemy? If we wrestle not with flesh and blood, then the primary battle is spiritual. This has profound implications for how we understand mental health and how to be more effective in evangelism. The answers were slow in coming."¹⁵

The Apostle Paul's answer in Ephesians 6, in terms of not wrestling with flesh and blood, was for us to put on the armor of God, not seek an exorcism. The words *exorcism* or *exorcisms* are nowhere in the immediate or larger context of Ephesians 6. Anderson says "having taken a course on hermeneutics I knew that nothing has meaning without context,"¹⁶ but somehow he missed the context of Ephesians 6 or inserted an imaginary context.

ALMOST EVERYBODY IS IN DEMONIC BONDAGE

So the bondage he claims to see and the deliverance that he promises are not from the power of sin and temptation, but from occupying demons — some originating with long-dead ancestors — who indwell believers or somehow reside in their physical frame. Anderson says that a stagger-

ing 85 percent of all Christians are struggling with various levels and depths of this demonic bondage.¹⁷ The Bible never even suggests that an overwhelming majority of believers are in demonic bondage. Struggling and growing, yes, but not in demonic bondage.

So Anderson first proposes a problem, convinces people they have it, and then offers to sell them the solution. If Anderson convinces someone they have a demonic problem, then they will follow any routine Anderson suggests.

Anderson admits that his early views and rebuking Satan grew not from Scripture, but from within himself and out of his own feelings and an experience he had with a certain man over whom he rebuked Satan: "I sensed that it was a spiritual problem, and it was."¹⁸

Suppose that someone else *sensed* something entirely different? It was only later that he looked for Scripture to try to back what he "sensed." Jude 8-9 warns against rebuking Satan and demons.

He also admits that he was looking for something different: "Finding an alternative way to minister was my motivation to get my doctorate."¹⁹ It would have been better for him to say that seeking a *biblical* way to minister was his motivation.

For even more questionable support, Anderson refers to the mystic and neo-Gnostic false teacher Watchman Nee.²⁰ He also admits that he feels the need of something more than the Scripture in dealing with others and his reliance on so many extra-biblical sources make that plain:

"I knew something more than the verbal communication of God's Word had to happen if God's children were going to be free of their past and become the persons God intended them to be."²¹

In trying to explain what Anderson's "something more" includes, one can conclude that he must not believe Paul's words in 2 Timothy 3:16-17 as

to the truth that inspired Scripture is *sufficient* for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness so that believers may be established for all good works. The Word is inherently powerful and will accomplish what God pleases.

Anderson teaches formulaic prayers and has suggested that the following prayer should be prayed:

"I cancel out all demonic working that may have been passed on to me from my ancestors. ... I renounce all satanic assignments that are directed toward me and my ministry, and I cancel every curse that Satan and his workers have put on me. ... I reject all other blood sacrifices whereby Satan may claim ownership of me."²²

These prayers are not to be said by someone seeking salvation, but by Christians who already have been "delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son."²³

While Anderson talks about freedom in Christ, he offers demonic bondage as an answer for besetting sins rather than the biblical concept of progressive sanctification: putting off old (sinful) habits and putting on new (righteous) ones. Biblical sanctification is lifelong character change motivated and empowered by the Holy Spirit and directed by the Word of God. It is certainly neither a simple fix nor is it easily accomplished in one counseling session. Sanctification is an ongoing struggle as we pass through life.

MUCH DISSENT

Many strongly disagree with Anderson's position that theology must be overcome rather than be a sure guide. The Assemblies of God denomination issued a 15-page booklet refuting the idea that Christians can have indwelling demons. It calls the teaching unbiblical and says it erodes the biblical concept of salvation and peace.²⁴

The Christian Research Institute published this about Anderson's teachings:

“While Anderson promotes ‘freedom in Christ’ vociferously, his emphasis on the occult from which we are to become free is more noticeable, and is described in more vivid terms in the material he presents in seminars and publications than our freedom. His seven steps to freedom, the core of most of his materials, includes a lengthy recitation of renunciation/announcement statements that focus on blood oaths, marriage to Satan, generational curses, and so on. Nowhere in Scripture do we find a precedent for such a focus.”²⁵

Way back in 1995, the *Calvary Contender* also issued a “Neil Anderson Warning”:

“Much of what he says is soundly biblical, but his message and methods are dangerously tainted by [his] ‘version of demonic deliverance, inner healing, psychotherapy, false memory syndrome, a *steps* approach, one naturism, ritualism, and generational curses.’”²⁶

FELLOW TRAVELERS

There is no doubt that Anderson believes his experiences are normative for the Church. Along with using his feelings and senses and looking for alternate ways of ministry, Anderson latched onto Mark Bubeck and his books.²⁷ Bubeck and C. Peter Wagner all parrot many false ideas, often using one another as source authorities.²⁸ They fall into the extreme of an obsessive demonic focus.

Bubeck has a prayer to get demons off all parts of the human body:

“I ask You to look all through the sexual organs and function of my body for any evil spirit activity. ... I ask that the Holy Spirit would search out all my bones, blood circulation, nerve circuitry, muscles, tissues, glands, hair, skin and every cell for any wicked spirit activity against my physical body. Evict any afflicting, evil powers totally away from my body.”²⁹

Anyone who maintains that Anderson’s and Bubeck’s teachings are biblically unsound needs to be able to define what the Bible does teach about demons and the believer. Pastor Gil Rugh summarizes:

“Believers cannot be possessed by demons. Scripture teaches that the Holy Spirit indwells us and is greater than the devil who is in the world. ... The Scripture is clear on this matter. ... Christ’s work was sufficient. There is no further deliverance that must take place. If there were, salvation in Christ would be incomplete. If the Church would stop and think through its theology of Scripture, we would realize that something is drastically wrong with what is being promoted by those who teach that believers can be demonized.”³⁰

While Anderson may attribute sinful propensities to our own as well as our ancestors’ demons,³¹ the Bible is quite clear in James 1, Mark 7, and Galatians 5 that man sins by himself, from himself, and that there is no exorcistic short-cut.

Thomas Ice also warns believers:

“The real potential for problems in the Christian life is blaming things on the demonic and neglecting normal Christian growth and maturity. It is this kind of lack of maturity in the lives of many believers, because they are looking for the quick-fix of a Neil Anderson deliverance, that will prove in the long run to effect the greater damage. I am concerned that believers wake up to the false ways of Dr. Anderson.”³²

Calvary Chapel founder and pastor Chuck Smith labels “Christian ‘Possession’” a false doctrine and answers the question as to whether a born-again Christian can be indwelt by a demon:

“The proponents of this unscriptural doctrine use such terms as Christians being ‘invaded by demons’ rather than demon possessed. This is nothing more than

a word game and a smoke screen to hide the scriptural weakness of their position. They also present an illogical supposition that demons can invade or control the mind or body but not the spirit. God’s Word declares that the body is a temple of the Holy Ghost who is in us.”³³

CONFUSION IN THE CAMP

Not all deliverance teachers speak with the same voice and Anderson may not be aware of the disarray in this field. Or maybe he believes he is the only one with a handle on the subject.

A good illustration of the total disarray is John Arnott, who says that what he used to call demons now could really be the Holy Spirit. In other words he may have been calling the Holy Spirit demonic:

“We used to think when people shook, shouted, flopped, rolled, etc., that it was a demonic thing manifesting and we needed to take them out of the room. That was our grid, that’s what our experience had taught us, that demons could be powerful. ... Who cares? If he thinks it’s God and he likes it, let him enjoy it! Because you can test the fruit later. ... if you play it safe with this thing, the Holy Spirit, you know what? You’re never going to get anywhere.”³⁴

Counseling clients often are manipulated to play into the suggestions of such “warfare counselors.” What is sought in the way of “demonic manifestations” usually can be created by suggestion of a power figure. It has long been recognized that symptoms of demonic possession can be self-induced through expectation and priming.³⁵ Gullible, confused, hurting, struggling people can be led along almost anywhere by an apparently knowledgeable authority figure.

Counselor David Powlison writes:

“An atmosphere of intense expectation can produce almost anything. Counselors find what they are looking for; counselees

produce what counselors are looking for. The 'power of suggestion' may sound like a cheap trick... . But suggestion is a force of vast and subtle power."³⁶

So it is clear that a counselor usually finds — or can help create — what he is looking for. Suggestion goes a long way in creating the anticipated results. A counselee's experiences and responses call for an interpretation. For instance, if a counselee falls asleep in a session, is it medication, lack of sleep the night before, or a demon? The interpretation can be an imposed meaning or wishful thinking.

A MORE PALATABLE VERSION

Because exorcisms of any sort were being forbidden at the school where Anderson was employed, another way had to be found. That way was a relationship with Robert Saucy:

"I was blessed to have Dr. Robert Saucy as a friend. Dr. Saucy was the most respected man on campus, and the chairman of the Systematic Theology Department. As long as we were in agreement, nobody on campus would take much issue with me or with what I was doing."³⁷

Out of that relationship evolved the book, *The Common Made Holy*, co-authored with Saucy.

Anderson's misrepresentation of the biblical doctrine of sanctification is evident in *The Common Made Holy*. Anderson and Saucy toned down, nuanced, sanitized, and created a softer, kinder version with modified and subdued exorcisms, now called truth encounters. Though trying to make these ideas more palatable and less offensive, it is still the old "demons in Christians" error.

The book was also a sales pitch and marketing tool for Anderson's other writings, which teach more blatantly the "demons in Christians" doctrine and his ability and techniques to kick them out and send them running.

In the chapter titled "The Warfare of Sanctification," Anderson and

Saucy subtly present quotes on the general theme of spiritual warfare from authors who would not agree with the premises of demons in believers or ancestral bondage, such as Thomas Brooks, F.F. Bruce, and Martin Luther.

Amazingly, Anderson and Saucy go so far as to quote David Powlison, whose book, *Power Encounters*, thoroughly refutes Anderson and teachers like him. While these out-of-context quotes from Powlison give the air of respectability, scholarship, and agreement, they also are tremendously misleading.

Powlison actually calls the views of Anderson and the like "a hybrid religion" and a "demonic and superstitious worldview."³⁸ He shows without question that exorcistic ministry is not the sturdy biblical view of historical orthodoxy.

Powlison also describes counselees caught up in these views as living in an "impoverished world of semi-occult 'warfare'"³⁹ and others who lose the view of classical biblical warfare as "living in a cartoon world."⁴⁰ How can they pretend Powlison is a friend?

ENSLAVEMENT OF THE FLESH

Anderson and Saucy further confuse the picture:

"Thus yielding to the flesh is also yielding to the influence of Satan and his demons. That such influence can reach the point of enslavement is also taught in Scripture."⁴¹

Again there is a confusion of categories. Yielding to the flesh is talked about throughout Scripture (e.g., James 1:14-15). And, yes, the flesh can enslave. But saying that yielding to the flesh is *exactly* the same as yielding to Satan *directly* is untrue. There is a sense in which all sin plays into Satan's program. There is a sense in which all sin furthers Satan's aims. However, Scripture does not confuse the corrupted flesh or the sin nature with demons which are always *external* to the Christian. There is a sense

in which yielding to sin is a yielding to Satan because we further his agenda, but it is a stretch and a lie to say that means we then have occupying demons and we need a special prayer ritual/exorcism to rid ourselves of those internal, infernal pests.

The Bible warns us in regard to the mastery of sin (which is the power of sin in what the world would call addiction). Anderson would link addictions to demons. The flesh and its power should be a far greater concern than personal forays with demons. There is a sense that if I will take care of my life as God intended, He will take care of the demons. It is a matter of focus.

The Apostle John gave us great assurance when he wrote, "He who has been born of God keeps himself and the wicked one does not touch him" (1 John 5:18). The Greek word for touch is *hupto*. It means to fasten onto or to lay hold of. What Anderson says can happen, John says cannot happen.

John further wrote, "Keep yourself from idols" (1 John 5:21). He did not write, "Keep yourself from indwelling demons."

No wonder John can say: "He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world" (1 John 4:4). Idols of the heart should be a great concern for us as Christians. Again, we must attend to the things God prescribes and He will take care of the rest.

METHODICAL AND MISLEADING

Anderson and Saucy sometimes sound orthodox. For example, they write: "Scripture reveals that believers can, to a varied extent, come under the influence of Satan and demons."⁴²

Readers can agree with the reality of warfare, demonic influence, and intense struggles with evil, but the two authors move to another extreme and describe warfare in a more occultic fashion.

There is a great difference between influence and indwelling, between influence and occupation, between influence and moving in and taking

over. It is one thing to say that my enemy influences me or tempts me as opposed to saying my enemy has moved into my house.

Anderson's apologists sometimes say, "We are closer than you think in what we believe — we are not that far apart, our agreements are more than our disagreements." Yet on this vital issue Anderson is a world apart from orthodox Christianity. Such teachings must drastically color one's view of sanctification, sin, addiction, discipleship, counseling, the Bible, and pastoral care.

WHOSE POSSESSION?

Anderson and Saucy play another word game, saying, "Biblically, it is impossible for Satan to possess a believer in the sense of ownership."⁴³ Once a believer belongs to Christ, he is God's possession; Satan has no ownership.

But Satan possesses a believer not in the sense of ownership, Anderson says, but in the sense of indwelling. After all, that is what the New Testament means when it speaks of demon possession (a demon inside a person).

Anderson and Saucy say that demon possession is the same as saying a person is demonized (Greek: *diamonizomai*) which is the same as *having* a demon inside.⁴⁴ They are right on that.

Anderson and Saucy then teach that a *believer* can have a demon inside, and that a demon can occupy and control a believer's body. Their view is that a believer can be internally demonized, that in fact the demon has moved in.

Anderson and Saucy also dodge the issue with the statement, "the demon need not be seen as residing in the very center of the person."⁴⁵ The demon is not at the very center but is still somewhere inside and they will venture to say exactly where.

The Bible is silent on the issue of *where* a demon resides in an unbeliever but Anderson and Saucy, in neo-gnostic fashion, offered this explanation:

"Bible commentator Franz Delitzsch describes how demonization simply involves demons intruding themselves between the person's own spirit and body and taking over the person's nervous system in order to express demonic actions, thereby limiting the person's expression of his or her real self."⁴⁶

Anderson and Saucy, via Delitzsch, localize the demon in the nervous system inside the believer. Jessie Penn-Lewis⁴⁷ is the real source of this guesswork, not the Bible.

Anderson and Saucy do not explain if Delitzsch is talking about the saved or unsaved, and there is no Scripture to support their conclusions. Yet we are to believe that demons, though not in the very center of our being, are in our nervous system, because Anderson and Saucy say so and cite Delitzsch.

Anderson also cites Delitzsch's *A System of Biblical Psychology*.⁴⁸ The volume used by Anderson was published by Baker Book House in 1966. It is a reprint of an edition originally published in 1899, nearly a decade after Delitzsch's death. Delitzsch is not an entirely safe source to quote on the subject of demons. A close reading of the nineteenth century theologian shows a mixed bag at best.

Delitzsch was persuaded in his later years by higher criticism and "theosophic influence."⁴⁹ Theosophy, in its origins, was an Indian philosophy championed by cult leader Helena Blavatsky. She taught the latent spiritual power of man as well as reincarnation and occult knowledge.⁵⁰

Moreover, a reading of the entire chapter from *A System of Biblical Psychology* from which Anderson made his brief citation is even more damaging to his employment of Delitzsch. Under the chapter heading "Natural and Demoniactal Sickness" (pp. 345-360), Delitzsch is addressing pre-cross and pre-resurrection demonic relationships to *sickness* in the New Testament. He is emphatic:

"We first of all present to ourselves only symptomatically the

demoniacal forms of sickness that Scripture places before our eyes."⁵¹

Delitzsch never once suggests that Christians can be invaded by demons, but suggests quite the opposite. He contends that the accelerated demonic activity in Christ's time was to confront and contend with Jesus, knowing He was the "vanquisher."⁵² He states clearly "the kingdom of God that came in and with Christ was to announce itself unmistakably by the visible overcoming of demons (Luke xi. 20)."⁵³

We must also note that Delitzsch located the demons not in the nervous system as stated by Anderson, but that "demons intrude themselves between the corporeity — more strictly, the nervous body — and the soul of man, and forcibly fetter the soul together with the spirit, but make the bodily organs a means of their own self-attestation full of torment to men."⁵⁴

Again, Delitzsch was emphasizing the relationship of demons to physical sicknesses in the Gospels. He was also careful to say that not every sickness has demonic origins.⁵⁵

Therefore, two things are evident: Anderson should have been suspect of his source in the first place; and Delitzsch is dealing with a different issue (the demonic and disease in the pre-cross New Testament era) and does not support Anderson's position at all.

Apart from Delitzsch, Anderson — from at least 1990 — has taught on his own that "demonic influence is not an external force in the physical realm; it is the internal manipulation of the central nervous system."⁵⁶

Another misleading argument of the two authors is that because we may relinquish control to a besetting sin, it follows that an evil spirit can control us from within our body.⁵⁷ Scripture affirms the former about besetting sins, but not the latter. The authors mix oranges and cucumbers.

Scripture never suggests equating sin with demons. We are told to

struggle against besetting sins (Hebrews 12:1) and lay them aside. We know that the flesh and temptation is ever with us. However, there is no Scripture to ever suggest that demons can reside in a believer in the way that sin does. Sins are inclinations and actions; demons are fallen spirits. Scripture says a believer could possibly be controlled at times by the old nature, but never by an indwelling demon.

Apologists Brent Grimsley and Elliot Miller write:

“This analogy between demonic evil and the evil of fallen humanity is flawed. God stands in a different relationship to demons than to believers. He is the *judge*

The discerning Christian must start with Scripture and critique everything in its light. Anderson tries to deflect the criticism over his being too anecdotal by writing off anyone who would say so. “It seems like those who use the anecdotal argument have no anecdotal experiences to share themselves,”⁶⁰ he contends. In other words, we have to match stories. So Anderson says that if you have not done what he has done you cannot critique it. It would be like saying that an oncologist cannot diagnose and treat cancer if he has not had cancer himself.

Anderson asserts direct conversations with demons. He writes that during one counseling session, “an evil spirit manifested and challenged

practice, then superstition has no place in Anderson’s faith and practice.

In spite of Dan Brown’s *The Da Vinci Code*, superstition surrounding Friday the 13th is connected to occult numerology and only goes back about 100 years. Nathaniel Lachenmeyer writes:

“Friday the 13th only emerged as an independent superstition in the twentieth century. ... Public opinion and almost every news story on Friday the 13th notwithstanding, contemporary folklorists are in agreement that Friday the 13th is a twentieth-century superstition.”⁶⁶

Historical sources, including Lachenmeyer, say credit must be given to Thomas Lawson and his 1907 novel, *Friday, the Thirteenth*, for the coupling of Friday and the number 13 — both of which were heretofore thought unlucky. Anderson is not stripping his counselees of superstitions and occultism, but actually promoting them.

SATAN ON A TIME CLOCK

Anderson teaches that demonic attacks regularly occur in the early morning hours. He claims that the period between midnight and 3:00 a.m. “is like prime time for demonic activity.”⁶⁷ There is no Scriptural support for this and its impact on impressionable people is obviously negative. Anderson argues that these experiences were not self-generated, but rather they are given directly from God. “I was not looking for these experiences, but God was bringing them to me for a purpose,”⁶⁸ he writes. By attributing the encounters to God, Anderson may be trying to escape accountability for the unbiblical nature of these stories, but to assign to God actions He is not committing and which go against His Word is dangerous.

Such teaching only adds a deeper level of fear to one already confused, defenseless, and in a vulnerable frame of mind. This is more like “bondage making” than “bondage breaking” and more akin to the methodology of occult practitioners. God could not be

Anderson teaches that demonic attacks regularly occur in the early morning hours. He claims that the period between midnight and 3:00 a.m. “is like prime time for demonic activity.”

of Satan and demons and the *savior* of believers. Demons are enemies of God; believers, despite their sin natures, are His servants and friends. God will dwell with His people; He will not dwell with His enemies. This argument fails to recognize the essential difference between evil persons (demons) and redeemed persons (believers) who have evil within them (the ‘flesh’), but also have a new nature (the ‘spirit’) which causes them to ultimately triumph over evil (1 John 3:9).⁵⁸

OTHER VERY TROUBLING AREAS

Later in his biography⁵⁹ Anderson presents testimonials, anecdotes, and sensational stories. However, these do not determine truth. These stories and experiences are often put through a subjective grid of embellishment, faulty evaluation, and interpretation.

me. I told it to leave in the name of Jesus and the spirit said, ‘Where will I go?’⁶¹ Anderson is not always clear and though he denies that he casts demons out, he suggests as much. “I took authority over the evil spirit,”⁶² he further writes. Somehow the demons leave as Anderson progresses through his routine.

Anderson also holds to some strange superstitions.⁶³ He believes that Friday the 13th has some kind of “spiritual significance” and that day is even more potent and troubling if it happens to “coincide with a full moon.”⁶⁴

Believing in superstitions is miles from the Bible, yet Anderson throws in the obligatory claim, “I look to the Bible for answers and I have always believed that God’s word is the sole authority for faith and practice.”⁶⁵

This rings hollow. If the Bible really is the only authority for faith and

the originator of something so unbiblical.

It is no surprise that Anderson admits that his “theology has changed.”⁶⁹ “My theology has been affected by my experience,”⁷⁰ he writes. Anderson’s experiences or his interpretation of his experiences shape his theology. This is a slippery slope and no one knows where his experiences might lead him next.

Anderson says he knows a lot about satanic ritual abuse even though many facts dispute its existence and some leading proponents of these ideas have been exposed as frauds. He offers this about interacting with victims of SRA:

“Some of what they say may not be true, but there will be no way to prove it. You have to accept what they say in order to help them.”⁷¹

Despite this hollow warning, he claims to know about a woman who had been ritually abused and had bred fetuses for ritual sacrifice.⁷²

After having been told of the breeding of fetuses for ritual sacrifice, if Anderson does not present the information to the authorities he violates Scripture.⁷³ He may wish to dodge his responsibility by saying, “Usually satanic ritual abuse (SRA) victims come for help years after the crime.”⁷⁴ Nevertheless, he should be reporting the perpetrator of the ritual abuse which he has uncovered, along with the details of the killings of the fetuses.

GIVE THIS SOME THOUGHT

Anderson labels his deliverance sessions “a freedom appointment.”⁷⁵ That sounds really hopeful to someone who is struggling with life. Anderson deals almost exclusively with vulnerable and needy people. Perhaps, in many cases they are fragile and broken. There is nothing wrong with that; more Christians ought to be reaching out to those in need. But it must be done with great care because in the presence of an authority figure such as Anderson, vulnerable people can be talked into anything.

They might not even question someone if they were told that their struggles and sins were actually demonic forces at work in their lives. After all, an expert — one with revelation from God — said so. The *interpretation* of their plight could be massaged and manipulated in numerous ways. Anderson’s approach and *interpretation* of people’s difficulties changes the face of pastoral care in so many ways that it cannot be truly biblical. Anderson does help some, according to the testimonials. If nothing else, when a person is told and convinced that their problem is of demonic origin and then they are told that they are free from the demon by a perceived expert authority figure, we realize how powerful suggestion can be. Some will feel a placebo effect.

Anderson seems to have an anemic view of forgiveness that falls short of the biblical definition. He spends nearly six pages⁷⁶ protesting and complaining about an unnamed nationally syndicated radio ministry that issued four articles critiquing his positions. Though he says he opts to “forgive” them, he spends a number of pages accusing them of slander and mistreatment. He never gets specific with his charges, but his obsession raises the question: Why spend all this time complaining if forgiveness has been extended?

True forgiveness is a commitment to not raise past forgiven offenses to others or to one’s self. Those who have even a basic knowledge of Anderson’s critics are well aware that the unnamed group is the Christian Research Institute and the alleged unnamed offenders are ministry president Hank Hanegraaff, and Brent Grimsley and Elliot Miller, who wrote the critiques of Anderson’s teachings. Although Anderson accuses them of violating Matthew 18, he needs to know that public teaching, when false or harmful, calls for public rebuke. The Matthew 18 passage has to do with one-on-one personal offense in the context of a local church. That does not apply in this case. Anderson should abstain from calling slander what is legitimate criticism leveled by CRI. He has aired his complaints to

the world saying in numerous ways that he was treated unfairly all the while saying it is all forgiven. Christians should be happy that God does not deal with our sins in that way after forgiving us. Psalm 130:3-4 and Hebrews 8:12 assures us that God will not bring to mind our forgiven offenses.

REAL SPIRITUAL WARFARE

Michael Horton’s words on Ephesians 6 — the greatest single passage on warfare in the Bible — go right to the heart of Anderson’s errors:

“And we are not left with our own weapons or armor, but with the same armor that won Christ’s victory in the first place. He clothes us with his victory, with his righteousness, with his truth, with his gospel, and his salvation. His Word protects us from Satan’s designs.”⁷⁷

Horton continues:

“That approach may not be as exciting as the theology of glory, which reads a passage like this one as if it were a *Star Wars* script. It is, however, sufficient to keep us from dying on the battlefield. If spiritual warfare were really concerned with ‘taking back’ territory and goods stolen by the devil, in terms of ‘naming and claiming’ the salvation of loved ones or automobiles, we would be the saviors. Instead we are wearing borrowed armor. And it is alien armor — protective gear that is not our own. Furthermore, there is nothing here about territorial spirits whose activity can actually be ‘mapped’ by specially gifted prophets — that has more to do with superstition and magic than with Christianity. Folk religion always finds a way of deifying and demonizing ‘spirits of the forest’ or ‘spirits of the cities.’ Nor does this passage tell us how to get rid of so-called ‘generational curses’ — that is, the attribution of demonic activity to genetic or hereditary problems.”⁷⁸

Horton concludes:

"There is not the slightest hint of such superstitious tendencies in this key passage on spiritual warfare. In fact, Satan most likely uses such diversions to distract us from the real battle, which Paul is anxious to set in our view."⁷⁹

The beliefs and superstitions of Anderson are not at all like revelations from God, but are imaginations of a weird and tainted mind. Anderson feeds on a troubled clientele and ruminates on what they convey. His instructions are really cruel ideas that will bring unstable souls into darkness and bondage.

Anderson's *Rough Road to Freedom* is a rough road for believers if they choose to travel on it.

Endnotes:

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4. *Ibid.*, pg. 60.
5. *Ibid.*, pg. 211.
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 12-13.
7. *Ibid.*, pg. 12.
8. See, for example, "Neil Anderson - Finding Freedom in Christ Pt 1," YouTube video. Video accessed at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=BBurYssOmH8.
9. *Rough Road to Freedom*, op. cit., pg. 262.
10. Paul Sabatier, *The Road to Assisi: The Essential Biography of St. Francis* cited in *ibid.*, pg. 222, quotation rendered in italics in original.
11. See further, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. New York: Doubleday, 1994, pg. 417, entry 1498.
12. *Rough Road to Freedom*, op. cit., pg. 197.
13. *Ibid.*, pg. 64.
14. *Ibid.*, pg. 206.
15. *Ibid.*, pg. 75.
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18. *Rough Road to Freedom*, op. cit., pg. 92.
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20. *Ibid.*, pp. 121-122. For additional information on Watchman Nee, see G. Richard Fisher, "Watchman Nee: The Master of Mix-Up," *The Quarterly Journal*, October-December 2003, pp. 1, 10-20.
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24. "Can Born Again Believers Be Demon Possessed?," Springfield, Mo.: Gospel Publishing House, 1972.
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30. Gil Rugh, *Demonization of the Believer - An Unbiblical Teaching Exposed*. Lincoln, Neb.: Indian Hills Community Church, 1994, pp. 27, 28.
31. *The Bondage Breaker*, op. cit., pp. 205-208.
32. Thomas Ice, *Biblical Perspectives*, Vol. V, No. 3, May-June 1992, "Demon Possession And The New Clinical Deliverance," pg. 6.
33. Chuck Smith, *Answers for Today*. Costa Mesa, Calif.: The Word For Today Publishers, 1993, Volumes 1 & 2, pg. 67.
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39. *Ibid.*, pg. 151.
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41. Neil T. Anderson and Robert L. Saucy, *The Common Made Holy*. Eugene, Ore.: Harvest House Publishers, 1997, pg. 353.
42. *Ibid.*, pg. 347.
43. *Ibid.*, pg. 349.
44. *Ibid.*
45. *Ibid.*, pg. 350.
46. *Ibid.*
47. For more information on Jessie Penn-

- Lewis, see G. Richard Fisher, "Pressing Truth to the Extreme - The Errors of Jessie Penn-Lewis," *The Quarterly Journal*, April-June 2000, pp. 1, 11-20.
48. *The Common Made Holy*, op. cit., pg. 398, endnote 39.
49. Elgin S. Moyer, *Who Was Who In Church History*. New Canaan, Conn.: Keats Publishing, Inc., 1974, pg. 114.
50. See further, *The Columbia Viking Desk Encyclopedia*. New York, N.Y.: Viking Press, 1953, Vol. 2, pg. 1260.
51. Franz Delitzsch, *A System of Biblical Psychology*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1966, pg. 347.
52. *Ibid.*, pp. 359-360.
53. *Ibid.*, pg. 360.
54. *Ibid.*, pg. 354.
55. *Ibid.*, pg. 348.
56. *The Bondage Breaker*, op. cit., pg. 111.
57. *The Common Made Holy*, op. cit., pg. 351.
58. Brent Grimsley and Elliot Miller, "Can A Christian Be 'Demonized?'," *Christian Research Journal*, Summer 1993, pg. 38.
59. *Rough Road to Freedom*, op. cit., pp. 176-192.
60. *Ibid.*, pg. 243.
61. *Ibid.*, pg. 135.
62. *Ibid.*, pg. 148.
63. For a critique of superstitions, see Edgar L. Havaich, "Black Cats and Sidewalk Cracks... Superstition: The Reverence of Fear," *The Quarterly Journal*, October-December 1991, pp. 5-7.
64. *Rough Road to Freedom*, op. cit., pg. 179.
65. *Ibid.*, pg. 243.
66. Nathaniel Lachenmeyer, *13: The Story of the World's Most Popular Superstition*. New York: Thunder's Mouth Press, 2004, pp. 80, 86.
67. *Rough Road to Freedom*, op. cit., pg. 183.
68. *Ibid.*, pg. 184.
69. *Ibid.*, pg. 243.
70. *Ibid.*, pg. 244.
71. *Ibid.*, pg. 180.
72. *Ibid.*, pp. 181-183.
73. See further, George C. Scipione, "The Limits of Confidentiality in Counseling," *The Journal of Pastoral Practice*. Laverock, Pa.: Christian Counseling and Educational Foundation, 1984, Vol. VII, No. 2, pp. 29-34. Scipione asks, "Are there limits to confidentiality?" and replies, "Yes, the Bible has answers to this question" (pg. 29). He further states, "Knowledge of certain serious sins does not allow for the protection of confidentiality or secrecy" and lists "knowledge of a murder" as an exception to the "general rule of confidentiality" (pg. 30).
74. *Rough Road to Freedom*, op. cit., pg. 180.
75. *Ibid.*, pg. 236.
76. *Ibid.*, pp. 238-243.
77. Michael Horton, *In The Face of God*. Dallas: Word Publishing, 1996, pg. 97.
78. *Ibid.*
79. *Ibid.*

determined like some kind of robots just because of what parents did or did not do? A study of all the Old Testament kings with offspring who turned out the opposite of their parents seems to provide proof that parental behavior patterns are not determinative. The kings of the Old Testament in particular show that God's grace even offsets parental influence. It shows a mix of good kids from bad parents and vice versa. Some children of kings willingly followed the example of their parents, whether good or bad.

Ezekiel 18 sets the record straight. God will judge each individual based on their own sins and not the sins of their parents. God will hold parents accountable for their bad behavior and hold children responsible for their bad responses to that behavior. Jesus did not have perfect parents, but He showed that one can still increase in wisdom and stature in favor with God and man with imperfect parents (Luke 2:52).

Someone may say, "Well, I was abandoned or not loved by my parents." Join the club! This writer grew up in a broken home with divorced parents and a derelict and drunken father. Home life was a nightmare. After my conversion, God in His grace, goodness, and providence allowed me to find Psalm 27. For me it put all the past to rest as far as ever being a place to focus on. The psalmist extols God as being his light and salvation. He focuses on God as his strength. He exalts the beauty of God and knows God is his hiding place. Whatever his father or mother may have done or not done, the psalmist is confident in his perfect heavenly Father and proclaims, "When my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD will take care of me" (v. 10). This one psalm could save countless minds and countless dollars spent on a psychologist or psychiatrist who wants to spend years doing archaeological research into our past so that we can continue to scrape our insides. It is true, after all, that we become what we focus on. In the end our pocketbooks are lighter, but not our spirits.

The old Helen Griggs chorus says: "Gone, gone, gone, gone! Yes, my sins are gone. Now my soul is free and in my heart's a song; Buried in the deepest sea. Yes, that's good enough for me; I shall live eternally, Praise God! My sins are gone!"

We could put the word "past" in the place of sins in that chorus. "Praise God! My past is gone!" Psalm 27 (mentioned above) focuses on both the present and the future and the psalmist prays, "Teach me Your way, O LORD" (v. 11).

Someone may ask me, "Have you forgiven your father?" Only God can forgive and that is not my prerogative or responsibility. My responsibilities are to not carry any bitterness or hold or nurse grudges and to extend mercy and pity. I am to obey Philippians 3:13-14,

"forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." Paul did not want to do any mental rehearsing that did not encourage his spiritual life. This kind of biblical understanding and approach would put all the confusion of what is called generational curses and deliverance through various forms of exorcism "ministries" out of business!

Unless the Word of God rules us, we will live selfishly looking for excuses. We excuse our own sins, faults, failures, and bitterness, but lack any mercy toward our scapegoats. We require perfection of the living and the dead, but not of ourselves. A Galilean carpenter once said something about planks in our own eyes and how they come first as far as our attention and removal is concerned (Matthew 7:3-5).

Much of our spiritual and mental health is dependent upon our focus. We are to focus on Jesus and His will for us according to Philippians 4:8-9, Colossians 3:1, and Hebrews 12:2 (look them up). We are to focus on the great grace of Jesus and not on an ugly past or parents who were broken. Pity them. Reread Psalm 1 as far as our proper focus. Our minds and spirits depend on it. And in so doing we can say, "Bye-bye, Geraldine."

—GRF

NEWS UPDATES

(continued from page 3)

male members in the house were involved in sexual relationships with [Tyler] Deaton, one saying it was part of a 'religious experience.'"

Because Deaton was seeing a therapist, Tyler as well as other members of the group feared that she would divulge how she was being repeatedly sexually assaulted. Tyler then ordered Micah Moore, a 23-year-old member living in the home, "to kill Bethany Deaton because he knew Moore had it in him to do it," the *Associated Press* stated. The *AP* report further revealed, "Moore told police that he had placed a bag over Bethany Deaton's head and held it there until her body shook."

It was Moore who detailed to police the bizarre episodes and confessed to the murder, causing authorities to abandon the suicide theory. On Nov. 9, three days after the funeral for Deaton, Moore showed up at a Kansas City police station to disclose the sordid series of events leading to her killing. At an earlier time he had told Shelley Hundley, a minister and member of the executive team at IHOP, about the specifics surrounding the homicide.

Police charged Moore with first-degree murder, and *The Star* indicated that according to prosecutors, "[Tyler] Deaton and others in the group are under investigation."

The newspaper also stated that insiders of the group described Tyler as “charismatic [and] controlling.”

One individual who formerly attended Tyler’s Bible study said, “Everything had to go his way. One time he said there would be no discussion until everyone agreed that the King James Version was the only true version of the Bible. Well, I was Catholic so I had a problem with that. So we argued and of course Tyler won everybody over because that’s what he did.”

Moore was a student at IHOPU, and others of the group worshipped together at IHOP. But church officials and their members quickly tried to limit public reaction by putting distance between themselves and Tyler and his group, saying the events are not reflective of IHOP.

Meanwhile, *Charisma* magazine quickly rallied to Bickle’s and IHOP’s defense by publishing an online article titled, “IHOP Kansas City Is Not a Cult, but Cults Are Rising.” The magazine reported that, “*The Huffington Post* published an unfortunate article penned by a radical gay activist characterizing the International House of Prayer in Kansas City, Mo., as a cult. It’s clear ... that [the article’s author] Wayne Besen doesn’t understand the Holy Spirit or how He moves. How could he? He’s not saved and he’s been on a witch-hunt for years.”

Charisma also noted that, “in response to the tragedy IHOP Director Mike Bickle taught on the seven characteristics of a cult. I’ve heard Mike teach on this in the past, but he dusted off his notes to address the IHOP community earlier this month — a responsible response to the heartbreaking story.”

But not all share *Charisma*’s commendation of IHOP. Keith Gibson, apologist and author of *Wandering Stars*, indicates that while the IHOP ministry appears to many to be within the mainstream of Christianity, a closer examination reveals that the group is built upon the shaky foundations of personal revelation and that it promotes heresy.

—MKG

SISTER AIMEE GOES TO BROADWAY

Jesus found Himself headlining Broadway shows in the 1970s with *Jesus Christ Superstar* and *Godspell*. More recently, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints found itself the casualty of a contemptuous and irreverent — but Tony Award winning — Broadway musical, entitled *The Book of Mormon*. Now the Pentecostal vanguard and Foursquare Church founder, Aimee Semple McPherson, took her turn on New York City’s theatrical stage.

Scandalous: The Life and Trials of Aimee Semple McPherson opened last Nov. 15 and ran through Dec. 9 at the Neil Simon Theatre in New York City.

The Broadway show marks several “firsts.” It is the first Broadway musical about McPherson — narrating the highs and lows of the controversial evangelist’s life. It is also the first time that the Foursquare Foundation has invested in a Broadway production. The group’s customary use of funds is for evangelism and social ministry work. In addition, the show is the first with a book and lyrics written by Kathie Lee Gifford, popular co-host of the *Today* show and former longtime co-host of *Live! With Regis and Kathie Lee*.

Gifford wrote the musical and, before appearing on Broadway, the show had a month-long run in Seattle in 2011 under the title *Saving Aimee*. Gifford’s husband Frank, a former professional football player and sportscaster, attended McPherson’s church as a child. Gifford describes herself as “a very bad follower of Jesus. Every day I try to be a better one.”

Christianity Today magazine, in an online posting, writes that, “The show opens with a scene about the biggest scandal of McPherson’s career. In 1926, she disappeared while swimming in California. When she resurfaced five weeks later in Arizona, she said she had been kidnapped and held prisoner in Mexico. Her critics said she disappeared to be with a married lover. She was charged with lying to a grand jury and conspiracy to commit a hoax in connection with the case, but those charges were dropped. The show flashes back through key moments in McPherson’s life, including her decision to leave her second husband and travel the country holding tent revivals that drew thousands. She began her ministry a few years after the birth of Pentecostalism, and almost single-handedly popularized the movement that’s best known for speaking in tongues and faith healings.”

McPherson’s career spanned from the 1910s until her death in 1944. The International Church of the Four-square Gospel claims 8 million members worldwide.

—MKG

COURT VERDICT IS A SETBACK FOR SCHULLER

In what is being described as “the final chapter” in the court battle between the Rev. Robert H. Schuller and the church and ministry he founded, the erstwhile pastor received only a fraction of the money he claimed was owed to him.

Schuller stated that for decades the books and other materials he wrote were given to the Crystal Cathedral without compensation. He was seeking over \$5 million which he claimed was due to him for his intellectual property, and for copyright infringements and contract violations. Judge Robert Kwan thought otherwise, awarding Schuller just \$615,625 and nothing to his wife,

Arvella, who also sought damages for her work for the Crystal Cathedral Ministries and its *Hour of Power* television broadcast.

The minister's daughter, Carol Milner, called the judge's ruling a "travesty" and claimed that it left her parents with no option but to "start liquidating everything."

While the Schullers may regard the court decision as a reversal of fortune, not all share that same opinion. Because of the Schullers' lawsuit, creditors of the Crystal Cathedral church and ministry, who were owed millions of dollars, were delayed payments. With the judge's ruling, it gave a green light to allow the church's creditors to finally receive the money they were owed. Most have waited years for payment.

—MKG

END-TIME HANDMAIDENS FOUNDER DIES

Gwendolyn Ruth Shaw, founder and president of End-Time Handmaidens and Servants International, died Sunday, Jan. 13. She was 88.

Shaw was born Gwendolyn Bergman in Canada in 1924. She was raised in a Mennonite family and claimed a conversion to Christianity at age 17. In 1943, she met and married her first husband, Dave Schmidt, and in 1947 the couple became missionaries to China. After

more than 25 years of marriage and nearly a decade of separation, the couple divorced.

In the early 1970s, Schmidt met Lt. Col. James Shaw, a retired Air Force officer. Schmidt told Shaw that, "The Lord has told me that I can marry you." In 1975, the couple and their organization moved to Jasper, Ark.

With doctrinal ambiguity and theological aberrations, Shaw and her End-Time Handmaidens easily mobilized within and gleaned from various extremes of Pentecostal and Charismatic teachings. The organization stressed the importance of ongoing and personal revelation.

During a Benny Hinn crusade held August 2003 in Berlin, Germany, Hinn invited Shaw to the platform to pray for revival to come to Germany. Shaw told Hinn and his audience, "It will begin here, it will begin here." When Hinn inquired, "Are you prophesying now, that the revival will begin in Berlin?" Shaw replied, "I am speaking it by the Holy Spirit. ... The Lord said that the revival would begin with this crusade. ... Pastor Benny, you got no idea how important it is that you're here."

Thousands of Handmaidens and Servants gather annually at the group's World Conventions, which were first held in 1976. Followers are coerced into attending the gatherings and are told that those missing the convention may have lost their "first love" and have "grieved the Holy Spirit by not accepting His invitation."

Shaw wrote more than 50 books. Her second husband, James, died in 2007.

—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

UNMASKING THE ANTICHRIST

Dispelling the Myths, Discovering the Truth
by Ron Rhodes

Harvest House Publishers, 249 pages, \$13.99

So much artificial, exaggerated, and unbiblical guesswork surrounds the topic of the antichrist these days. The “name game” and “dating game” sell big but are always huge failures because they are based purely on speculation and imagination, not the Scriptures. That’s why *Unmasking the Antichrist* is timely and extremely relevant. It is a study not driven by sensationalism and news headlines — only by the Bible.

In his Introduction, author Ron Rhodes writes, “As soon as the word *antichrist* is mentioned, all kinds of questions come to mind.” He then asks: “Could the antichrist be alive somewhere in the world today? Could he be a child, or perhaps a teenager, a college student, or even an adult waiting in the wings to emerge as a world leader? Could one of today’s well-known political leaders be the antichrist — perhaps even a leader in the United States? And if he is in the world today, is he indwelt by Satan even now, or does that take place in the future? Will he be a Muslim? Will he be a Jew? Is he the mysterious person named Gog in the book of Ezekiel? Do any prophecies need to be fulfilled before the antichrist emerges on the world scene? If so, which ones? Can we calculate with precision when the antichrist might emerge? Will the antichrist have some kind of supernatural birth? Will he be half human and half demon? Will he actually claim to be God on earth one day? Will he really suffer a fatal head wound and then be resurrected from the dead, inspiring awe and wonder around the world? What is the mark of the beast we keep hearing about?” (pg. 7) In the light of world events and so many tragedies and disasters, many are expressing these same questions.

The Introduction to this book further lists many biblical reasons why we can trust the prophecies of Scripture. It is an apologetic on interpreting the Bible literally. It also gives an overview of the book of Revelation with a

helpful outline. What Rhodes is presenting is Eschatology 101. Words such as “pre-” and “post-” rapture and the millennium are explained.

The opening chapter contains a glossary and overview of the main events, including the personalities (antichrist, false prophet) linked to the end times. It is a useful road map for beginners and a review for the more advanced reader and scholar.

Rhodes looks at the differing concepts of the antichrist, as well as many failed past identifications of this mystery man. Church history is replete with silly guesswork and premature pinning the tail on the “real” antichrist.

Rhodes takes up the assertion popularized today by author Joel Richardson and others, which states that the antichrist will be a Muslim. He presents the case for and the case against a Muslim antichrist. He states, “A scriptural analysis emboldens me to say that the antichrist will *not* be a Muslim” (pg. 64). In the next chapter, the case for a Jewish antichrist is examined and also rejected by Rhodes.

In subsequent chapters, Rhodes reviews the names and titles of the antichrist; examines the mark of the beast; considers the question and possibility if the antichrist is alive today; and concludes by covering frequently asked theoretical and biblical questions about the antichrist. Questions like: Will the antichrist have a supernatural birth? Will he be able to read minds? Will he know he is the antichrist growing up? What are the clearest markers for identifying the antichrist? And could he emerge from the United States? These and many more questions are answered well.

As the title promises, the antichrist is unmasked in many ways in this book. However, Rhodes is careful to advise that we need to keep an eternal perspective and be balanced and sound-minded. He urges that we use our knowledge of future events to live righteously. He warns that we should never set dates and, most of all, that if we are in Christ that we need not worry about the antichrist or the tribulation.

Rhodes is eminently qualified to discuss such controversial topics. He holds ThM and ThD degrees from Dallas Theological Seminary. Very few books these days cover this topic in a comprehensive, sane, balanced, and biblical way. This one does and that is why we can heartily recommend it.

—GRF

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