

The Quarterly Journal



THE NEWSLETTER PUBLICATION OF PERSONAL FREEDOM OUTREACH

VOL. 33, NO. 4

OCTOBER-DECEMBER 2013

EDITOR: KEITH A. MORSE

Is That Really Jesus Calling? How the Subjectivity of Sarah Young Draws People from Scripture

by J. Greg Sheryl

In 2004, Thomas Nelson published a devotional book titled *Jesus Calling*.¹ The book consists of daily devotionals, in the purported “words of Jesus” Himself, as perceived through a contemporary “listener” Sarah Young. Each devotional includes Scripture references below the day’s “words from Jesus.”

Jesus Calling has several companion volumes, such as *Jesus Calling, Women’s Edition*; *Jesus Calling, Teen Edition*; and *Jesus Calling: A 365-Day Journaling Devotional*. All three of these are the same book as the original devotional, despite different titles. There is also *Jesus Calling - 365 Day Perpetual Calendar*; *Jesus Calling: Devotions for Kids*; *Jesus Calling Bible Storybook*; and a *Jesus Calling Devotional Bible*.² Young has also written two other adult devotional books: *Jesus Lives*,³ marketed as “A Companion to *Jesus Calling*,”⁴ and *Jesus Today*.⁵

Christian musicians Sheila Walsh and Matthew West have endorsed

Jesus Calling.⁶ There is a *Songs Inspired by Jesus Calling* CD featuring 12 performances by contemporary Christian musicians. Another CD, *Jesus Calling:*

Instrumental Songs for Devotion, features instrumental arrangements of 10 contemporary Christian songs.

The *Jesus Calling Devotional Bible* includes devotional selections from both *Jesus Calling* and from *Jesus Lives*. A subsequent devotional book, *Dear Jesus*⁷ also borrows from the earlier *Jesus Calling*.⁸

Although *Jesus Calling* simply gave some Scripture references at the end of each day’s devotion which might be suggested by the devotional message for that day, her subsequent three books provide both the Scripture text and references at the end of each devotional.

(continues on page 13)



Inside this Issue:

- HOLY SMOKE! – WHAT DID WE GET IN THE NEW POPE? PAGE 2
- UNEXPECTED REACTION TO BOY SCOUTS LIFT OF GAY BAN PAGE 3
- IS HOMOSEXUALITY A BIBLICAL OPTION? PAGE 4

Editorials

HOLY SMOKE! – WHAT DID WE GET IN THE NEW POPE?

It was the resignation heard around the world! On Feb. 11, 2013, Vatican officials divulged that Pope Benedict XVI would resign, citing poor health as the cause. The announcement stunned everyone. Very few knew the decision had actually been pondered a year prior. No one thought a pope could resign, but when Benedict turned in his resignation two weeks later, the action was accomplished. He then retired to a small monastery (Mater Ecclesiae) in the Vatican Gardens. The *Code of Canon Law*, the system of laws and principles used to regulate the Roman Catholic Church and its governments, does permit a pope to resign (see paragraph 2, canon 332) and throughout the centuries there have been five documented papal resignations prior to Benedict's. The last one was Gregory XII in A.D. 1415.

The resignation created quite a stir even outside the Roman Catholic Church, in part because of the sensationalistic prophecy-mongers who seized the opportunity to resuscitate a bogus medieval "prophecy" by a certain St. Malachy of Ireland. It was called the "prophecy of the Popes" and supposedly it dates back to the 1100s. These modern prognosticators claim that the "prophecy" foretells that the newly elected pontiff would be the very last one. So the end of days is near, or so it is strongly suggested. This idea is being popularized in a book titled

Petrus Romanus (meaning "Peter the Roman") by Thomas Horn and Cris Putnam and promoted by the Internet news provider World Net Daily.

This questionable, mythical "prophecy" has been exposed as foolishness and even rejected by the Roman Catholic Church in an article published in the Feb. 24, 2013, edition of the *National Catholic Register*. Even prophecy speculator and author Joel Richardson called it a proven fraud. Specifically, the title "Peter the Roman" does not have the slightest connection to the newly elected pope's birth given name (Jorge Mario Bergoglio) or to his papal name (Francis). While the pope is regarded as the "Successor of Saint Peter," this designation applies to any and all pontiffs, not just Francis.

Moreover, Christians need be reminded that God does not speak by way of bizarre and esoteric secrets or reveal the future through mystery hucksters with their obscure babblings. There are no special keys for the spiritually elite. We are reminded of this in Deuteronomy 30:11: "For this commandment which I command you today is not too mysterious for you, nor is it far off." Even when the New Testament uses the word "mystery," it is referring to something that was heretofore unrevealed, but is now openly revealed in the New Testament. The Greek word *musterion* (mystery) could be translated "an open secret." In Colossians 1:26, mystery is truth now revealed in the inspired Word of God.

(continues on page 21)

PERSONAL FREEDOM OUTREACH

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

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

BOARD of DIRECTORS:

G. Richard Fisher Dillsburg, PA Gary E. Gilley Springfield, IL
M. Kurt Goedelman Saint Louis, MO Keith A. Morse Denver, CO
David M. Tyler Granite City, IL

BOARD of REFERENCE:

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

© 2013 – PFO. All rights reserved. ISSN: 1083-6853. These articles may not be stored on web pages or Internet sites without permission. *The Quarterly Journal* is the newsletter publication of PFO. Published by Personal Freedom Outreach, P.O. Box 26062, Saint Louis, MO 63136. PFO's *Journal* may also be obtained on CD-ROM in Portable Document Format (.PDF) for use with Adobe® Reader® software.

JOHN PAUL II AND JOHN XXIII DECLARED SAINTS

The late pontiff, John Paul II, will be officially declared a saint according to an announcement made by the Vatican in July. The decree was signed by Pope Francis on July 5. John Paul II died in 2005 and was the church's second-longest serving pope.

The Vatican also announced that Pope John XXIII also will be declared a saint. John XXIII was pope from October 1958 until his death in June 1963. In 1962, he was responsible for convening the Second Vatican Council, which revised the liturgy of the Catholic Mass and called for a strong ecumenism toward Protestants.

Within Catholicism, sainthood is technically a four-step process. First, the person must be dead. Then, secondly, the title "venerable" is bestowed by the current pope to the candidate. Third, a miracle must be confirmed and attributed to the intervention of the would-be-saint, which allows for beatification. Lastly, a second miracle is certified and accredited, thereby allowing sainthood.

While no official date for the canonization ceremony was announced, many, including the Italian media, are speculating Dec. 8, which is the Catholic Feast of the Immaculate Conception. According to Catholic teaching, the Immaculate Conception refers to the condition that the "Virgin" Mary was free from original sin from the very moment of conception in her mother's womb.

—MKG

CHO INDICTED FOR STOCK SCHEME

David Yonggi Cho, the founder and pastor emeritus of Yoido Full Gospel Church in Seoul, South Korea, was indicted in June on charges of breach of duty and tax evasion.

Months before the indictment, Cho was reportedly being investigated "for a stock scheme in which he arranged for the church to buy his son Cho Hee-jun's stock 'at a rate three to four times higher than market value.' Prosecutors also found evidence that Cho has accrued \$5.5 million in tax debt," a *Christianity Today* article stated. According to a Yonhap News Agency online news posting, Cho's stock activity is suspected of causing \$14 million (15.7 billion won) worth of losses to the church.

The *CT* report also disclosed that "Cho first came under investigation in 2011, when church elders accused him of embezzling \$20 million. Cho also has been criticized for privatizing church assets."

The church founded by Cho is said to be the world's largest church. It claims more than a million members. Cho is a favorite within Charismatic circles not only because of the extraordinary church membership, but also because he is a teacher of positive confession and other Word-Faith doctrines.

—MKG

UNEXPECTED REACTION TO BOY SCOUTS LIFT OF GAY BAN

In surprising announcements, leaders from both the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons) and the Roman Catholic Church have expressed approval of the recent decision by the Boy Scouts of America to allow openly gay members into its organization.

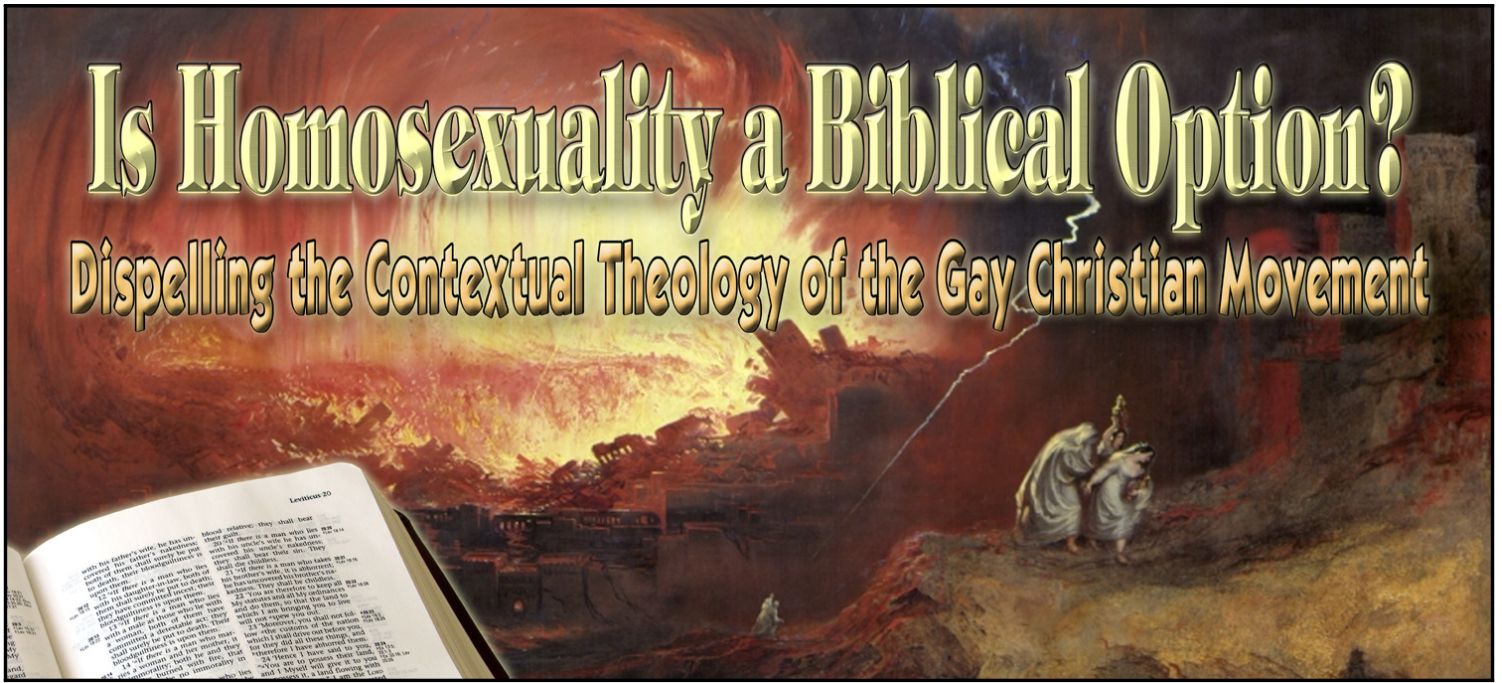
On May 23, more than 60 percent of the members of the BSA's National Council who cast ballots voted to lift the more than century-old ban and to accept gay youths as members. The change in policy is to be effective Jan. 1, 2014. A ban on permitting gay adults as Scout leaders remains in effect.

In a statement posted on the LDS website, the church said it was "satisfied that BSA has made a thoughtful, good-faith effort to address issues that, as they have said, remain 'among the most complex and challenging issues facing the BSA and society today.'" The statement further said, "We appreciate the positive things contained in this current proposal that will help build and strengthen the moral character and leadership skills of youth as we work together in the future." The Mormon church is the largest sponsor of Boy Scouts with nearly 38,000 troops consisting of around 250,000 Scouts.

In response, the BSA issued an amiable statement of its own saying it "is deeply appreciative of its long-standing relationship with the Mormon church and pleased to hear it is satisfied with the proposal," the Associated Press reported.

According to a Religion News Service report, "The U.S. Catholic Church's top liaison to the Boy Scouts of America is telling Catholic Scout leaders and troop

(continues on page 23)



Is Homosexuality a Biblical Option?

Dispelling the Contextual Theology of the Gay Christian Movement

by David M. Tyler

Imagine a movement that aims to legitimize sloth.¹ It is led by activists who, for the most part, are undisciplined people who believe they have been mistreated and shunned by society. Many of these people have struggled with their lack of motivation since they were children. They have been criticized by family and friends.

After years of frustration they decide to stop trying to change and accept themselves as they are: slothful. They believe that they cannot change, thus God must have made them that way. They decide they will not allow people to characterize sloth as sinful.

As slothful men and women share their testimonials in books, on radio and television, the movement grows. Some in the medical field lend their support and say slothfulness is genetic. Some psychologists state that people who have slothful tendencies are as emotionally healthy as those who are highly motivated and successful.

Sociologists say historically slothful individuals have been discriminated against and encourage a modern approach to sloth. Pastors say the Church has traditionally condemned slothfulness, but that God loves sloth-

ful people as much as He loves anyone else. They recommend a revision of biblical standards.

The traditionalists, Christians, or anti-slothful people, begin to speak out. They do not accept the premise that sloth is normal and value-neutral. Many physicians continue to warn the public that being slothful and inactive is unhealthy. Many psychologists suggest sloth may be symptomatic of deep-seated emotional problems. Many pastors insist that God, while He loves slothful people, did not make them that way and that sloth is sin. The pro-slothful people respond by labeling those with opposing viewpoints as "hateful, bigoted and 'slothophobic.'"

Traditionalists and Christians respond by insisting they are not prejudiced against slothful persons. If a person wants to practice sloth that is their decision; they will not interfere. However, pro-slothful supporters are not content with dissent. They want assent. They want everyone to agree that sloth is normal. The issue is not that pro-slothful individuals are free to stay at home and not work, but their insistence that traditionalists and Christians approve of something which they believe is morally wrong.

Traditionalists and Christians have always opposed slothfulness just as they opposed stealing, drunkenness, envy, anger, and so on. They would also oppose a movement that says they must accept theft or drunkenness as acceptable. The main issue is that slothful people demand sloth is accepted as morally equivalent to those who are energetic.

But over time, the sloth-rights advocates win over public opinion. People begin to doubt the traditional, moral objections to laziness and idleness. Opposition wanes and after a couple of decades, society's conventional wisdom changes to the extent that many people cannot remember a time when slothfulness was considered wrong or even what the objection to sloth was.

THE CALL TO COMPROMISE

The powers behind today's "gay-rights" agenda have succeeded in reversing the historical and nearly universal denunciation by Americans of the legality, social decorum, and Christian ethics of homosexuality. A politically active "gay" community emerged and social standards have changed.

In 1973, the American Psychiatric Association, and in 1975 the American

Psychological Association, removed homosexuality from its authorized listing of mental disorders.

Homosexuals argued that the Bible views homosexuality just as acceptable morally as heterosexuality. They reinterpreted several Scripture passages so that they reflected positively — or at least not negatively — on homosexuality.

Over the years, the Christian Church has repeatedly been challenged from within and without to re-evaluate its position on homosexuality as sin. Proponents of homosexuality argue in light of new approaches to biblical studies, modern psychological and sociological data, that the Church needs to abandon past convictions as impractical, unjust, and unbiblical.

Conflicting attitudes within the Church regarding homosexuality are often traced to opposing views of Scripture. Nearly all disputes among professing believers concerning the morality of homosexuality turn on the question of biblical authority. In a world of doctrinal permissiveness and the abandonment of the absolute authority of God's Word, it is no surprise that many Evangelicals try to synthesize Christian theology with secular perspectives. The result is a distortion of the Christian message.

Many in the Christian Church consent to and accept a departure from clear-cut biblical standards of morality. Christians "suppress the truth in unrighteousness" (Romans 1:18)² and thereby make compromises on homosexuality, either by expressing sympathy or wholehearted approval. The debate within the Church about homosexuality demonstrates what happens when biblical authority is replaced by man's wisdom. As in the book of Judges, "everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (21:25).

As we respond to the challenge to re-evaluate homosexuality's status as sin, we must recognize that apart from God's Word we have nothing to contribute. If we are not committed to proclaiming God's Word, then we are just another opinion. The boundaries

are God's, not ours. The voices that call for acceptance of homosexuality are based on beliefs contrary to Scripture. Their aversion to God's Word demonstrates they are not interested in worshiping Him. It clearly shows their intent to follow something less than God as He has revealed Himself in Scripture.

All religious controversies and human opinions must be examined in light of Scripture and with the guidance of the Holy Spirit. It is therefore important to study specific passages in the Bible that speak of homosexuality.

The teaching of Scripture is offensive to our post-modern relativist and "pleasure or happiness is the sole purpose in life" mentality. Those who believe homosexuality is morally equivalent to heterosexuality will view themselves as victims of a Church that has a distorted view of God and His Word.

The carnal or fleshly man is "hostile toward God" (Romans 8:7). Therefore this accusation is unavoidable. Contrary beliefs in morality will always condemn one another as being incorrect; opposing views of homosexuality are traced back to opposing moral standards. The believer must faithfully adhere to Scripture despite the ridicule of those who despise and reject it.

The believer must resign himself to the fact he cannot please all men and the choice of different standards will automatically and unavoidably generate hostility. Despite such temptations, distractions, and ridicule, the believer must "stand firm" in God's truth (Ephesians 6:14).

Some "believers" recommend updating biblical morality to reflect conclusions proposed by psychology and sociology. They do not understand the pseudo-scientific status of psychology, speculative presuppositions, and faulty methods of psychology and sociology, nor do they account for the lack of consensus in either field regarding homosexuality.

Man's thinking has been darkened by sin and his fallen perspective on

life and the world cannot be a standard for morality (Romans 1:18-32). The source of right and wrong is not found in man's research, but in God's Word. God has declared what is right and wrong.

Scripture is the final arbiter of morality. Nevertheless, there is a widespread opinion that because God's ideal cannot be realized in a fallen world, compromises must be made. The practice of homosexuality would be regarded as appropriate in light of an individual's situation and desires. This attitude has become acceptable in some denominations. It is argued that circumstances prevent a person from achieving God's ideal and therefore an exception must be made. The idea that man can make exceptions to what God decrees demonstrates a failure to understand the nature of God.

SEX IN THE BIBLE

A word study of the word "sex" in the Bible nearly always finds it used in the context of sexual immorality.³ One might conclude — inaccurately — that most of what the Bible says about sex is negative and, therefore, prohibitory. The Bible speaks about "all things," including all aspects of sex; good or bad. Paul wrote in Colossians that God created "all things" (1:16); God created sex. Whatever you do, "do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31). Thus sex in its proper context glorifies God. Husbands and wives should never "deprive one another" of their sexual duties (1 Corinthians 7:3-5).⁴ Because of the wickedness of man's heart, sex can be "pure" and good, or "defiled" and wicked (Titus 1:15).

To rightly understand sex, one must understand how sex and the practice of sex relate to God. God made sex. Sex is not something we should be ashamed to talk about honestly — albeit with discretion. Sex is God-related in that the images and language of sex point to our relationship and intimacy with God. God's covenant is confirmed with the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross. The relationship between God and His

people is referred to as a marriage. One day there will be a great celebration called the “marriage supper of the Lamb” (Revelation 19:9).

The perversion of sex and sexuality — adultery, fornication, bestiality, homosexuality, and so on — distorts its meaning and purpose: to point to God and His covenant relationship with His people.

THE CHURCH IN CRISIS

The fact that homosexuality is believed by some and under consideration by others to be morally equivalent to heterosexuality is evidence that our civilization is in moral crisis. The handling of the issue by the Church of Jesus Christ is evidence that the Church is in crisis.

There has never been a time when the Church has not been in a crisis from within or without. Every crisis has required a response from the Church. However, we should not take any consolation in the fact that this is just another crisis. What we may learn from past crises is whatever its particular teaching and behavior, at its core was a denial of the inerrancy and authority of Scripture.

The current crisis demonstrates the downward spiral of biblical authority, resulting in the Church being influenced by the culture instead of the other way around. Consequently, many Christians and Christian denominations have already surrendered the most important ground: the authority of Scripture.

Christians are confused and shaken by the unceasing attacks on the authority of the Bible. The cutting edge of the Christian message is blunted. “If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?” (Psalm 11:3). The attack is coming not only from the world, but from leaders within the Church itself. They look at man’s reason and philosophies as being the lens through which we should view the Bible, instead of the other way around.

Many walls are being assaulted in order to overturn the created order of man, woman, marriage, and family to

include homosexuality. The walls that must fall are centuries of biblical teaching, doctrine, and practice. The attacks reflect an attitude of moral rebellion that biblical truth is malleable and relativistic, confusion about the order of creation, and revolt against God’s design for sexuality.

THE HOMOSEXUAL’S APOLOGETIC

According to the view espoused by many homosexuals, the creation account (Genesis 1:27-28; 2:18-24) is not the template for human sexuality. It is said it does not forbid homosexuality; it just does not mention it because the emphasis is on procreation.

The creation account, they say, is irrelevant. It is not an exposition on human sexuality and marriage, but on “human relationships ... all loving heterosexual **and homosexual** human relationships.”⁵ The command to “be fruitful and multiply” can only refer to male and female couples (1:28). The creation account does not forbid homosexuality or homosexuals marrying, it just does not mention it because it is referring to procreation and same sex couples cannot have children.

However, the biblical view of the creation account is the template for human sexuality and forbids homosexuality. The emphasis is *not* on procreation. Man was created by God. Therefore the meaning of man’s life transcends man. It is impossible for man to interpret and understand himself and the universe apart from the Creator. The creator of a thing creates the thing with meaning and purpose in mind. This repudiates the autonomous contention made by homosexual advocates that man has the right to self-definition. Consider these five facts:

1) When God created, He created two sexes; male and female. Adam’s body was shaped male (*zakar*) and Eve’s body female (*neqevah*). The Hebrew words *zakar* and *neqevah* refer specifically to biological and sexual distinction.

2) God did not create another Adam, an exact reproduction. God

opened Adam’s side and took a rib and made another, but corresponding, person: Eve. This complementary aspect or compatibility of Eve is absent in a same-sex relationship. Eve was not “like” Adam as another male would have been, but she was “taken out of Adam.” From Adam came two sexually different human beings that were united by marriage and sexual intercourse into “one flesh” (2:24). The “one flesh” principle is so great that it takes precedence over the biological bond to parents; Adam will “cleave to his wife; and they shall become one flesh” (2:24). The sexual union between two males or two females would not and could not constitute “one flesh.”

3) To argue that homosexuality is not mentioned because the creation account’s focus is on procreation and same-sex couples cannot have children is to ignore the obvious. The primary focus is on the creation of man and woman, companionship, and the way they serve to fill out or complete the other. It is relational, physical, and sexual. Companionship was the main reason for God creating woman (Genesis 2:18). Procreation is not mentioned until later (Genesis 3:16). Procreation was certainly a reason for marriage and sexual intercourse in order to populate and “fill the earth” (Genesis 1:28). However, marriage is recommended by Paul *not* for the purpose of procreation, but to avoid fornication or sexual “immoralities” (1 Corinthians 7:2).

4) Homosexuality was not mentioned in the creation account of mankind because human sexuality consisted of a male and female. Pedophilia and bestiality were not mentioned either, but one cannot conclude God condones sex with children and animals. While homosexuality is not mentioned, an honest reader can no more miss the implied prohibition of homosexuality than one can miss the implied denunciation of bestiality. After Adam named the animals, “there was not found a helper suitable for him” (Genesis 2:20).

5) A monogamous relationship between a husband and wife is consis-

tently commended in the Old and New Testaments. While polygamy and use of concubines is recorded in the Bible, it does not mean God approved of such behavior. Adultery and divorce are in the Bible. However, God does not condone adultery and divorce. God allowed divorce because of the "hardness of heart ... but from the beginning it has not been this way" (Matthew 19:8).⁶

HOMOSEXUALS AND THE DESTRUCTION OF SODOM

Homosexual theology presents a variety of arguments in regard to the destruction of Sodom (Genesis 19:4-9). For example, it is repeatedly maintained that the sin of Sodom was *not* homosexuality, but inhospitality.

We are told that the Middle Eastern custom of showing hospitality to a visitor was much different than our custom of showing hospitality today. In Lot's day hospitality was more than simply being polite or friendly to a stranger. It went beyond general respect and courtesy to entertaining travelers in your home. Hospitality was a vital part of the culture and people followed these customs as codes of conduct.

The main issue is presented as the strangers had entered the city and only Lot had shown the customary hospitality. When word spread to the townsmen they went to Lot's home to correct the oversight by showing hospitality to the travelers.

It is further argued that anti-homosexual Christians misunderstand the story of Sodom. The men of Sodom demanded Lot bring the angelic visitors outside that they may "know them" (KJV). Their desire was to meet, greet, and become acquainted with the visitors. There was no sexual implication.

We are also told that Jesus' condemnation of Sodom supports the contention that the sin was inhospitality and not homosexuality. The passage in Luke 10 describes Jesus sending out the 70 disciples into the cities to preach the Gospel. Jesus instructed the disciples to remain in the cities

that received them and showed them hospitality. To the city that does not show hospitality they were instructed to say, "Even the dust of your city which clings to our feet, we wipe off in protest against you ... it will be more tolerable in that day for Sodom, than for that city" (vv. 11-12). Jesus' reference to Sodom was a condemnation of their inhospitality.

Finally, to further enhance the homosexual view, it is maintained that Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel in their description of the sins of Sodom do not mention homosexuality. This, it is suggested, is more proof that the sin of Sodom was not homosexuality.

The prophets Isaiah (3:9), Jeremiah (23:14), and Ezekiel (16:49) make reference to the sin of Sodom, but never mention homosexuality. Ezekiel, for example, specifically mentioned that Sodom's sins were pride, fullness of bread, idleness, and failure to give aid to the poor.

WHAT SAITH THE SCRIPTURE?

First, it must be stressed that the men of Sodom undoubtedly desired homosexual relations with Lot's visitors. This passage has been traditionally viewed as a condemnation of homosexuality. So common is this view that the word "sodomy" was incorporated into the English vernacular as referring to any sexual intercourse believed to be unnatural, including anal sex and bestiality. However, it has received a "revisionist interpretation" in order to support the contention that homosexuality is equivalent to heterosexuality.

The pro-homosexual inhospitality version does not stand up to scrutiny. The argument is that the men surrounding Lot's house were there to show hospitality; a sort of Sodom Welcome Wagon. They wanted to greet, meet, and get to know the visitors. The references to the Hebrew verb for "know" (*yada*) translated "to become acquainted with" is said to prove their intentions were not sexual. However, the Hebrew verb "know" (*yada*) can have a variety of meanings including "to become acquainted with" and as a euphemism

for sexual intercourse as in "Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain" (Genesis 4:1, KJV). The word is found nearly 950 times in the Old Testament but translated to have "relations with" (as in the NASB) only ten times. So how is one to determine its meaning? It is the context which must dictate the meaning and not the fact that the word is translated more one way in the Old Testament than another.

Lot knew the immoral reputation of the city and therefore invited the strangers into his home rather than allow them to spend the night on the streets (vv. 2-3). When the men of the city came and asked to "know" the visitors, Lot knew it was not a kindly visit. Lot considered their intentions wicked (v. 7) and for the safety of his guests he closed the door.

Lot certainly would have been overreacting if the men's only desire was to get acquainted with the visitors. Neither would Lot's appeal to them not to do "wickedly" make sense.

If the sin of inhospitality was the main issue, the townsmen of Sodom should have been praised. The city should not have been destroyed because all they wanted to do is "get acquainted" and show hospitality. Lot should have been condemned for not allowing the Sodomites to welcome the visitors.

Lot panicked and foolishly offered his virgin daughters instead of the visitors to the crowd. This is not the action of a man responding to a crowd's friendly request to get acquainted. Lot and his daughters were residents of Sodom, it is said Lot sat "in the gate,"⁷ and therefore the townsmen would have "known" (been acquainted with) Lot and his daughters. Lot's reference to his daughters being virgins implies that Lot knew their intent was to have sexual intercourse.

It is unlikely the first use of the word "know" referring to the men of Sodom "knowing" the visitors (v. 5) would be translated "to get acquainted with," and the second (v. 8) referring to the men having Lot's

daughters who have never “known” a man “to have sexual intercourse with.” When Lot refused to send the strangers out to the townsmen, they threatened Lot. They said it will be worse for Lot than it would be for the visitors. The threat to deal harshly with Lot and nearly breaking down the door clearly shows their malicious intent to sexually abuse the strangers.

Jesus’ words (Luke 10) were not a condemnation of the cities because they were inhospitable, but because they refused to believe the teachings of the disciples. To hear the Gospel message of Jesus Christ and to reject it would be a far worse offense than any known in the infamous city Sodom. As repugnant as Sodom’s reputation was, Jesus said of the cities that reject Him, “It will be more tolerable in that day for Sodom, than for that city” (v. 12).

Jude depicts Sodom and Gomorrah as cities that “indulged in gross immorality and went after strange flesh” (v. 7). Some believe “strange flesh” refers to the visitors being angels; angelic flesh. Others believe it to mean strange in the sense of same-sex: unnatural. The men of Sodom were not aware the men were angels. However, it still may refer to angelic flesh.

In their wicked pursuit of homosexual relations with the men, they would have unwittingly had homosexual relations with angels. Peter’s second epistle referred to Sodom’s “sensual conduct of unprincipled men” and “lawless” lifestyle (2:7, 8).

Neither Jude nor Peter specifically used the word homosexuality. Nevertheless, in the context of the Old and New Testaments’ references to Sodom, homosexuality is what they had in mind.

The argument that the sin of Sodom was not homosexuality because the prophets Isaiah (3:9), Jeremiah (23:14), and Ezekiel (16:49) make no specific reference to homosexuality is equally flawed. Ezekiel specifically mentioned that Sodom’s sins were pride, fullness of bread, idleness, and failure to give aid to the poor. In response, one

would not be surprised that a city given to sexual perversion would also be guilty of many other sins.

When considering the plain teaching of Genesis 19, it is obvious the prophets were not giving an exhaustive list of the sins of Sodom. The fact that the prophets did not include homosexuality in the list does not nullify the plain teachings in Genesis 19 and other Old and New Testament references to the sin of homosexuality and Sodom.

In addition, Isaiah, speaking of Israel’s rebellion, compares their attitude about their sins to the Sodomites. Isaiah does not refer to the specific sin of Sodom, but only refers to how blatant, shameless, and bold the Sodomites were with their sinful behavior. This description is very fitting of the “in-your-face” attitude of the homosexual movement today.

WHAT IS THE ABOMINATION?

Scripture is clear: “You shall not lie with a male as one lies with a female; it is an abomination” (Leviticus 18:22; see also 20:13).

Homosexuals, however, claim that the laws in Leviticus against homosexuality are not relevant today. They maintain that the Levitical rules and rituals were intended to ensure the purity and preserve the distinctive characteristics of the Israelites. The Levitical rules were only applicable within the historical and cultural context of the Hebrew people. Consequently, Paul clearly taught that Christians are no longer under the Law and therefore we are not bound by Levitical regulations and practices. The Law has been fulfilled in Christ. If a prohibition of homosexuality is still in effect today, then what about the other directives? For example, eating rabbit (11:6), pork (11:7), shellfish (11:9-12), forbidding sowing your field with two different kinds of seed, or wearing a garment made from two kinds of fabric (19:19). It appears that Christians pick and choose certain parts of Leviticus to uphold, while ignoring other parts.

Further presented is the idea that the sin is idolatry and prostitution,

not homosexuality. The Canaanites practiced idolatrous rituals involving homosexuality and homosexual prostitution. The issue was not homosexuality *per se*, but idolatry and prostitution. The pagan practice of combining homosexuality with idolatrous rituals and prostitution was the reason God forbade homosexuality among the Israelites.

Another homosexual view asserts that Leviticus only condemns exploitative, pederastic forms of homosexuality (intercourse with a young boy).

However, the biblical view is understandable and relevant: the Levitical passages on homosexuality speak to same-sex intercourse as an abomination regardless of age or circumstance.

The book of Leviticus is relevant today. The main purpose of the book of Leviticus is to teach Israel how to live as a holy nation in fellowship with God. The key verse is: “You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy” (19:2).

The word “holy” means to set apart. Israel was set apart by God for the high service of mediating God’s redemptive plan to the world. This could only be accomplished by separating themselves from the beliefs and practices of the surrounding nations. It is important to keep in mind that the Levitical laws were intended to guarantee Israel’s separation.

Leviticus is divided into two parts. Chapters 1-17 deal with non-moral regulations including ceremonial, physical defilement, or cleansing. The five offerings point to man’s sinfulness and his approach to God through a sacrifice. Each foreshadowed Jesus Christ (1-7). The Priesthood mediated and officiated in connection with the sacrifices and typified Christ as the Priest and Mediator of the New Covenant (8-10). The regulations of diet and clothing and so on are about the physical and ceremonial cleansing of the people, which again typifies the work of Christ on behalf of His people (11-16). The altar — the one place a sacrifice is offered — foreshadowed Jesus Christ (17). Chapters 18-27 address conduct and character. It con-

sists of moral regulations including sex prohibitions, general admonitions, and penal sanctions against offenders (18-22). This section also includes regulations for the priesthood (21-22), feasts (23-24), and Canaan (25-27).

Leviticus logically follows Genesis and Exodus. Genesis records the fall of man (chapter 3). In Exodus we learn that redemption is acquired by means of a sacrifice (chapter 12). In Leviticus we learn redemption leads to holy living or sanctification (19:2). The two-part message of Leviticus can be illustrated by knowing that chapters 1-17 reveal the way to God: sacrifice. Chapters 18-27 point to the walk with God: separation from sin through the moral laws that point to sanctification and holiness.

The commands against homosexuality should not be dismissed as being applicable only within the historical and cultural context of Leviticus and Israel. There are sections of Leviticus that only apply to the Hebrew children in their historical context. For example, God said to Moses, "Speak to the sons of Israel, saying..." (11:2).⁸ God told the Israelites that eating certain foods and mixing fabrics and so on was an "abomination" (11:10, 11, 12, 13, 23, 41, 42, 43, KJV). God was not speaking to other nations.

On the other hand, there are abominations that apply to Israel and other nations at all times. For example, Leviticus 18:22-30 clearly states how the other nations were condemned for practicing abominations.

Chapter 17 describes the blood atonement procedures that are only to be observed by the Israelites. Chapter 18 focuses on Israel and the other nations. The injunctions that follow apply to Israel and the other nations. Egypt and Canaan had practiced these abominations: adultery (v. 20), homosexuality (v. 22), bestiality (v. 23), and so on. The problem is that when people do not keep the distinction in mind, they confuse commands intended for Israel with those that pertain to all nations.

People fail to understand there are three main divisions of the Law: civil,

ceremonial, and moral. The civil and ceremonial aspect of the Law is no longer in effect. The civil aspect ended with the demise of the Jewish civil government (6:1-7; 19:15, 17, 35; 24:17-23; 25) and the ceremonial ended with Jesus' priestly work (1-6; 7:1-37; 11:1-47; 14:33-57; 16:1-28; 17:1-16; 21; 22; 23:1-25). The moral aspect of the Law focuses on stealing, lying, idolatry, adultery, incest, bestiality, homosexuality, and so forth (19:11, 13, 18; 20:1-5, 9-21; 26:1-13).

Condemnation of homosexuality is in the moral part of the Law not abolished by Christ. Jesus referred to the moral code of Leviticus as being valid (Matthew 22:37-40). Other verses found in Leviticus which are quoted in the New Testament as being valid include 2 Corinthians 6:16 and 1 Peter 1:16.

The continuity between the Old and New Testaments' moral law and condemnation of homosexuality is apparent in Paul's words to the church at Rome (1:26-27). To dismiss Leviticus' condemnation of homosexuality because it is Old Testament Law pertaining only to Israel would be to dismiss the condemnation of lying (19:11), stealing (19:13), sacrificing children (20:1-5), adultery (20:10), incest (20:11), and bestiality (20:15-16).

The sacrifices and offerings of the ceremonial part of the Law foreshadowed Jesus Christ and are redemptive in nature. The moral laws against homosexuality and so on did not foreshadow Christ; they are *not* redemptive in nature and therefore not negated by Christ. Ceremonial laws were relevant for Israel's theocratic period, including the time of the kings. However, they are not binding today.

Gay rights advocates argue that if homosexuality is condemned in Leviticus and binding today, then so is wearing clothing that has a mixture of linen and wool threads. Both are denounced in Leviticus, but the actions are not morally equal. Each represents a different facet of the Law.

Mixing fabrics is in the context of other prohibitions against mixing dif-

ferent animals or seeds together (Leviticus 19:19; Deuteronomy 22:9-11). The reason God gives for not mixing seeds is so the seed a person is sowing is not defiled by the other seed (Deuteronomy 22:9). It is a picture and a warning to Israel (God's seed) not to mingle with the inhabitants of Canaan (pagan seed) or they will become defiled.

It is the same pertaining to animals and garments. God also prohibited Israel from eating pork (Leviticus 11:7) and shellfish (Leviticus 11:12). It was not because pork and shellfish were bad, but the Law illustrated symbolically the spiritual difference between God's people and pagans; clean and unclean. It symbolized the principle of separation and distinction.

These ceremonial laws of clean and unclean were negated by Christ. For example, Peter was commanded to eat animals that were previously considered unclean, but that which God, under the New Covenant, called clean (Acts 10:14-15). Threads that could not be mixed, animals that could not be yoked together, and dietary restrictions all symbolized the same separation of God's people from pagans. While these practices found in Leviticus have been annulled by Christ, the principle that believers should be separate is still in force today. Paul wrote:

"Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? ... Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate, says the Lord. And do not touch what is unclean; and I will welcome you" (2 Corinthians 6:14, 17).

The sound view of the Levitical passages further stresses that idolatry and prostitution are not the issues. Homosexuality is the issue.

The degree of disgust and abhorrence same-sex intercourse is to God is indicated by the explicit attachment of the Hebrew word *toeba*. The word refers to something abominable, dis-

gusting, and abhorrent. In Leviticus it refers to a sexual act that: 1) God views as being abhorrent, 2) those involved are subject to the death penalty or are “cut off” from God’s people, and 3) if ignored, tolerated, and unpunished the entire nation will be in peril of God’s judgment (18:22, 26-30).

The context in which the prohibitions against homosexuality appear (chapters 18 and 20) include other sexual sins such as adultery, incest, and bestiality. If homosexuality is an abomination only in the context of idolatry and/or prostitution, then adultery, incest, and bestiality would logically also be permissible as long as they were not associated with idolatry or prostitution.

The argument as to why male-male intercourse is wrong is indicated by the words “lie with mankind, as with womankind.” Such behavior is an abomination (*toeba*) and implies the idea of “boundaries.” There were gender boundaries set by God at creation.

The laws in Leviticus 18:6-23; 20:2-21 are decrees against forms of sexual behavior that overturn the created order. To cross those boundaries was an abomination because it joined two individuals (male and male or female and female) who were never meant to be joined.

The contention that Leviticus only condemns exploitative, pederastic forms of homosexuality is equally fallacious. Leviticus does not limit its condemnation to exploitative forms of homosexuality. The most common form in that time was adult males having sexual intercourse with adolescent boys. There are no exceptions to the prohibitions in Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13. It is forbidden for any man regardless of his age to “lie with a male as one lies with a female; it is an abomination.” The issue was not exploitation, but confusing genders and violating the creation order of male and female.

JESUS AND HOMOSEXUALITY

Homosexuals are often quick to point out that Jesus never mentioned

homosexuality. Jesus, we are told, always emphasized love. He embraced sinners and did not condemn or criticize loving relationships whether heterosexual or homosexual.

However, it is illogical to argue that because Jesus did not mention homosexuality He approved of it. The argument assumes the Gospels carry more authority than the other books of the Bible that do condemn homosexuality. Jesus never said that one part of Scripture was superior to another.

The fact that the Gospels do not record Jesus making a direct comment about homosexuality does not mean Jesus never said anything about it. The Apostle John said it would have been impossible to record all the works and words of Jesus Christ (John 20:30; 21:25).

Jesus did not speak directly to the issue of homosexuality, just as he made no direct statements concerning many other important topics. For example, Jesus made no explicit comments on incest or bestiality. However, His silence should not lead one to infer that He approved of these practices.

There is implicit data that speaks about Jesus’ attitude toward homosexuality. The disciples would have assumed Jesus’ view of homosexuality was the same held by all Jews. This would especially be the case in light of Jesus’ attitude toward the Law: “Do not think that I came to abolish the Law ... but to fulfill” (Matthew 5:17).

If Jesus’ view had been contrary to first-century Judaism, He would have had to explicitly say so.

Second, Jesus clearly affirmed His acceptance of heterosexual monogamy when He talked about God creating man “male and female” and a man shall leave his father and mother and being joined to his wife (Matthew 19:4-5). God’s will was clearly expressed, so there would be no reason for Jesus to comment on homosexuality and whether His teachings on divorce and remarriage applied to homosexual couples too.

Finally, Jesus’ reference to the Ten Commandments and particularly the seventh commandment reveals His attitude toward homosexuality. Jesus’ quoting of the seventh commandment, “Do not commit adultery” points to the safeguarding of the man and woman’s marital union (Mark 10:19). It goes without saying why Jesus did not mention preserving a homosexual marital union: “from the beginning of creation, God made them male and female” (Mark 10:6).

To argue that Jesus was more loving and tolerant and therefore He did not judge the conduct of others is ridiculous. Jesus was more demanding than the culture in which He lived. Jesus said it was not only critical to limit sexual intercourse to one’s wife, but also to control one’s sexual thoughts:

“Ye have heard ... Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart” (Matthew 5:27-28, KJV).

The narratives of the sinful woman (Luke 7:36-50), the adulterous woman (John 8:1-11), and the woman at the well (John 4) are usually cited to demonstrate Jesus’ lenient and non-judgmental attitude pertaining to sexual wrongdoing. For example, when a group of men were going to stone a woman for the capital offense of adultery, Jesus said, “He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her” (John 8:7).

To cast a stone is reinterpreted to mean not a literal stone, but any judgment and criticism of a person’s behavior. Jesus removed the penalty of Mosaic Law and showed mercy to the woman. But it must be emphasized that Jesus’ words “go” and “sin no more” indicate His attitude toward adultery and His gesture of mercy is to deter the woman from further acts of adultery (John 8:11).

In each case, Jesus’ mercy and forgiveness was with the expectation of repentance and a change in behavior. They were to sin no more.

PAUL AND HOMOSEXUALITY

Not only are we told that Jesus' silence is synonymous with acceptance, but that the Apostle Paul, even with his direct statements (Romans 1; 1 Corinthians 6:9; 1 Timothy 1:10), did not condemn homosexuality.

It is further argued that Paul did not condemn true homosexuals, but heterosexuals who practiced homosexuality. For example, it is said, Paul was not saying true homosexual behavior is "against nature" (Romans 1:26, KJV) or "unnatural" (NASB). Paul supposedly was referring to a person who was by nature heterosexual, but was committing homosexual acts. Homosexual acts by a heterosexual person would be against their true nature and therefore wrong.

Paul's teaching is also contorted to say his condemnation is directed toward the exploitative, pederastic form of homosexuality. Yet, the literary context of Paul's statements does not restrict his words to certain situations and circumstances.

The Old Testament ethic pertaining to homosexuality is confirmed unambiguously in Paul's letter to the Romans. The context is the indictment of man's sin. The result is that when man abandons God, God abandons man.

Among the behaviors listed, Paul singles out homosexuality in these terms: "impurity" (1:24); "dishonored" their own bodies (1:24); "degrading passions" (1:26); "unnatural" (1:26); "error" (1:27); and "depraved mind" (1:28). He lists homosexuality in three of his epistles along with other behaviors commonly understood to be sinful (Romans 1:18-32; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; and 1 Timothy 1:8-11).

Some argue that homosexual behavior that involves lust, promiscuity, and idolatry is what Paul condemned. If that were so, the same logic would have to apply to other sins listed in Romans 1:28-31. There is no acceptable homosexuality. The context does not restrict Paul's words to certain circumstances. God abandons man because man suppresses his knowledge of the truth and exchanges it for

a lie. When God removes His restraining grace, men freely pursue their sin, with homosexuality being the leading proof. Paul wrote:

"For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error" (Romans 1:26-27).

Paul condemned all homosexual behaviors and said homosexuality was against nature.

For Paul, the issue is not exploitation, but women and men sexually gratifying themselves with someone of the same sex. The wording is absolute: "women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural" and "men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men." There are no exceptions, excuses, or extenuating circumstances. The reference to lesbianism (1:26) indicates Paul's denunciation is not limited to pederasty, which was a common and accepted practice in his day. From lesbianism, Paul shifts to male homosexual behavior (1:27) with the words "and in the same way also," indicating that he rejects both male and female homosexual behavior.

In regard to 1 Corinthians 6:9 and 1 Timothy 1:10, the homosexual view maintains that Paul is condemning homosexual prostitution.

In 1 Corinthians 6:9, the words *malakoi* translated "effeminate" and *arsenokoitai* translated "homosexuals" are said by pro-homosexual advocates to refer to men that prostitute themselves (*malakoi*) and practice prostitution or immoral behavior in general (*arsenokoitai*). Paul, it is maintained, is not condemning true homosexual behavior.

However, the word *malakoi* translated "effeminate" or "soft"⁹ refers to

a male who plays the role of a female sexual partner. The word *arsenokoitai* refers to a male "who lies with a male as with a female, sodomite, homosexual."¹⁰

In his scholarly work, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*, Robert Gagnon references the views of a first-century Jew, Philo of Alexandria. Philo, in his discussion of homosexual behavior, uses the word *malakia* twice in conjunction with the word *anandria*, which means "unmanliness." He describes the person as one who develops feminine features, braids his hair, and uses makeup and perfumes. They are men who feminize themselves with the objective of enticing other men. Philo never brings up the issue of male prostitution.

Philo's "critique focuses not on idolatrous associations or the exchange of money but rather on the deliberate effacement of the masculine stamp by these male-females, first by allowing themselves to be penetrated as women by other men, second by taking the further step of feminizing their appearance."¹¹

Gagnon rightly concludes by stating that the collective evidence from 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 and Philo demonstrates *malakoi* does not refer to just any effeminate male. It refers to a male who conceals or removes his masculine characteristics and plays the submissive role in a homosexual relationship. Gagnon says there is no exploitation. Paul and Philo condemn both male participants; the dominant male as well as the passive male who zealously works to remove his masculine traits. Gagnon states:

"To argue that Philo or Paul were only concerned with exploitative same-sex relationships is to argue from an oxymoron, because for both Philo and Paul same-sex relationships were inherently exploitative. The moment a man takes another male to bed he distorts and diminishes the other male's sexual identity as created and ordained by God, regardless of whether the relationship is fully consensual and non-commercial."¹²

Gagnon concludes:

“Therefore, in 1 Cor 6:9, *malakoi* should be understood as the passive partners in homosexual intercourse, the most egregious case of which are those who also intentionally engage in a process of feminization to erase further their masculine appearance and manner.”¹³

Clearly Paul was thinking of the Levitical Holiness Code (18:22 and 20:13), which prohibits a man from lying with a man who plays the part of a woman. Paul alludes to the Code several times in 1 Corinthians 5-6 in his discussion about the importance of moral distinctions from unbelievers. He emphasizes those differences, for example, by the words “Gentiles” (5:1), “the unrighteous” (6:1), and “unbelievers” (6:6). There is the distinction of those who will and those who will not inherit the kingdom of God (6:9) and the nations God will drive out of the land and Israel’s inheritance of it (Leviticus 20:23-24). Of the ten sins listed by Paul, only drunkenness is not found in Leviticus. The topic of incest (1 Corinthians 5:1-13), followed by homosexuality (6:9-10) and prostitution (6:12-20), reflects the discussion of incest and homosexuality in Leviticus 18 and 20.

Additional parallels are seen in Paul’s call for disciplining the man caught in sexual immorality with his father’s wife (1 Corinthians 5). Paul clearly implies the same procedure of discipline on all who are unrepentant of the sins listed (6:9-10). Paul commands believers to disassociate themselves from the offender (1 Corinthians 2; 5; 6-9; and 11). In the Old Testament, a person guilty of one of the abominations listed, homosexuality being one, is to be “cut off from among their people” (Leviticus 18:29).

The word *arsenokoitai* is a combination of the words *arsenos* (male) and *koite* (bed or lying). *Strong’s Concordance* translates the word to mean “a Sodomite,” referring to the wicked men of the city of Sodom. All the standard lexicons and dictionaries understand the word to be a reference to homosexual behavior; a male lying with a male.¹⁴

Paul’s repeated use of the word “law” in 1 Timothy 1:7-10 confirms that he has the Levitical Code in mind when using the word *arsenokoitai* in 1:10. The Levitical prohibition against homosexuality was not narrow, but broadly defined and included all forms of homosexuality. There was not an acceptable form of homosexuality any more than there was of bestiality, adultery, and so on.

To understand what Paul meant by the word *arsenokoitai*, one must view it in the context of Romans 1:24-27. It would seem logical that Paul’s words in Romans would shed light on the terms *malakoi* and *arsenokoitai*. Paul obviously had in mind the term *arsenokoitai* when talking about “men with men” (1:27).

According to Paul, the dishonoring of their bodies (1:24) occurred whenever a woman had sex with another woman, or a man had sex with another man. They exchanged the natural use of the opposite sex for same-sex intercourse; which is “unnatural” (Romans 1:26). It was not a question of whether the same-sex relationship was consensual or exploitative. Same-sex intercourse, according to Paul, is wrong.

Endnotes:

1. The idea for this analogy was taken from Joe Dallas’ book *The Gay Gospel: How Pro-Gay Advocates Misread the Bible*. Eugene, Ore.: Harvest House Publishers, 2009.
2. Unless otherwise noted, the Scripture citations in this article are from the New American Standard Bible (NASB).
3. The Greek word is *porneia* from which the word pornography originates.
4. An excellent book on this subject is *Biblical Principles of Sex* by Robert D. Smith, M.D., published by Timeless Texts.
5. “Adam and Eve - Did God intend to prohibit same sex marriage partnerships?,” Gay Christian 101 website, bold emphasis in original. Document accessed at: www.gaychristian101.com/adam-and-eve.html.
6. The monogamous relationship of a man and woman was pronounced by God as being “very good” (Genesis 1:31). Other key passages indicate God’s intent for marriage to be one man and one woman. God said He will make “a helper” for Adam, not helpers (Genesis 2:18). A man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his “wife” not wives and

become “one flesh” not two, three, or four (Genesis 2:24). There are numerous examples of polygamous relationships among the patriarchs of Israel (Abraham, Jacob, David, and Solomon). Polygamous relationships are never mentioned in a positive way and were always associated with problems. *Abraham*: There was bitterness between Sarah and Hagar. Eventually Hagar and Ishmael were sent away. The consequences of Abraham’s relation with Hagar is evident even to this very day. *Jacob*: Rachel became very jealous of Leah. This led to Joseph being despised by his brothers and sold into slavery. *David*: David’s behavior led to the rape of his daughter Tamar by her half-brother Amnon. This in turn led to David’s son Absalom murdering his half-brother Amnon. *Solomon*: Solomon’s “wives turned his heart away after other gods” (1 Kings 11:4). In the New Testament there are several passages that speak against polygamy. Paul told Timothy that elders in the Church must be the “husband of one wife” (1 Timothy 3:2; see also Titus 1:6). Paul referred back to Genesis when he compared the relationship between husband and wife to that of Christ and the Church (Ephesians 5:23-33). Paul concluded the analogy saying, “each individual among you also love his own wife even as himself; and let the wife see to it that she respect her husband” (Ephesians 5:33). Paul consistently used the singular form of husband and wife in answering questions about marriage addressed to him in a letter from the believers at Corinth (1 Corinthians 7). This is true of all the New Testament authors.

7. The gate of a city held an important part, not just in defense, but in the public economy of the community. The gate was a place where business, converse, bargaining, news, and administration of justice was conducted (Genesis 23:10; Psalm 69:12; Deuteronomy 16:18; 21:19; 25:7).
8. Other references include Leviticus 4:2; 7:23, 29; 12:2; 23:24, 34; 24:15.
9. The Blue Letter Bible website, lexicon results for *malakos*. Document accessed at: www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strong=G3120&t=NASB.
10. The Blue Letter Bible website, lexicon results for *arsenokoites*. Document accessed at: www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strong=G733&t=NASB.
11. Robert A.J. Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*. Nashville: Abington Press, 2001, pg. 309.
12. *Ibid.*, pg. 311.
13. *Ibid.*, pg. 312, italic in original.
14. Jonathan Burke, “Does the Greek word *arsenokoites* refer to homosexuals?,” Christian Studies website. Document accessed at: http://christianstudies.wordpress.com/2011/05/14/230/#_ftn29.

An advertisement at the end of *Jesus Today* proclaims, "Jesus Calling is now available for the iPhone, iPod Touch, iPad, and all Android devices!" There is a Jesus Calling page on Facebook.⁹ A video on the Christian Book Distributor website boasts that a million people have been touched by the small devotional book *Jesus Calling* and that this is only the beginning!¹⁰

Jesus Calling was Young's first book.¹¹ From the standpoint of book sales and popularity, it has been a success for both its publisher, Thomas Nelson, and for Young herself.

Young wrote all four of her adult devotionals using the same procedure, which is explained briefly in *Dear Jesus*:

"My first devotional book, *Jesus Calling*, grew out of writings gleaned from my times of focused concentration on Jesus: waiting in His Presence, listening in my mind for His communications. As I listened and wrote, I continually asked for the Holy Spirit's help."¹²

WHO IS SARAH YOUNG?

Young is the wife of a Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) missionary, Stephen Young.¹³ They currently serve in Perth, Australia. The Youngs' online prayer card states:

"The Youngs' mission since 2001 has been to establish a ... Japanese ministry in Perth, Western Australia, by making contacts with residents to eventually establish a church."¹⁴

Their prayer card also says that Stephen was born in Tokyo and Sarah in Tennessee. They met while both were students at Covenant Seminary in St. Louis and after Sarah obtained a counseling degree they married in 1977. Stephen obtained his Masters of Divinity at Covenant Seminary. After Stephen did missionary work in Japan for a year, he served as a pastor for a year in Indiana. They have two grown children.¹⁵

Young reveals various things about herself within the Introductions to her books.¹⁶ A Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN) report on her said:

"Sarah Young was born in Nashville, Tennessee, and grew up in the South. After graduating from college she made four trips to Europe in less than five years. During her fourth trip, she became a Christian at L'Abri Fellowship in a tiny Alphine [sic] village in France. With a degree in philosophy from Wellesley College, Sarah also holds graduate degrees in psychology/counseling from Tufts University, Covenant Theological Seminary, and Georgia State University."¹⁷

In *Jesus Calling*, Young wrote as "The daughter of a college professor, I had been encouraged to read widely and [to] think for myself."¹⁸ Young describes her conversion experience at L'Abri Fellowship:¹⁹

"One night I found myself leaving the warmth of our cozy chalet to walk alone in the snowy mountains. I went into a deeply wooded area, feeling vulnerable and awed by cold, moonlit beauty. The air was crisp and dry, piercing to inhale. Suddenly I felt as if a warm mist enveloped me. I became aware of a lovely Presence, and my involuntary response was to whisper, 'Sweet Jesus.' This utterance was totally uncharacteristic of me, and I was shocked to hear myself speaking so tenderly to Jesus. As I pondered this brief communication, I realized it was the response of a converted heart; at that moment I knew I belonged to Him. This was far more than the intellectual answers for which I'd been searching. This was a relationship with the Creator of the universe."²⁰

She noted that this was her first experience with the Presence of God.²¹ She stated, "The following year, back in the United States, I had another encounter with the Presence of Jesus."²² The occasion was the break-up of a dating relationship. Her job in Virginia sent her to a confer-

ence in Atlanta. While she was there, she felt drawn to a book by Catherine Marshall called *Beyond Ourselves*. She wrote:

"That night as I read the book, I no longer felt alone. I knelt beside the bed in that sterile room and felt an overwhelming Presence of peace and love come over me. I knew that Jesus was with me and that He sympathized with my heartache. This was unquestionably the same 'Sweet Jesus' I had met in the Alps."²³

The next sixteen years included the earning of her master's degree in counseling and biblical studies at Covenant Seminary; her marriage to Stephen; two four-year church-planting stints in Japan; the births of a girl and a boy; and her earning another degree in counseling at Georgia State University in Atlanta, where her husband worked with a Japanese church and she worked at a Christian counseling center.²⁴

She observed that in that busy and eventful time, "not once during those sixteen years did I vividly experience the Presence of Jesus."²⁵ This aspect of Young's story will be picked up later. But first a prominent characteristic will be noted in the portrait of Young's life that she paints of herself in the Introductions to her adult devotional books: the theme of her sufferings and, in particular, her health problems.

YOUNG'S SUFFERINGS AND HEALTH PROBLEMS

At the beginning of *Dear Jesus*, Young wrote:

"*Dear Jesus* emerged from my personal struggles — with circumstances, with people, and with God. Over the years I have contended with numerous health problems and surgeries. I've lived in many situations and places where my strengths were largely irrelevant and my weaknesses were all too evident. Had my life been easier, I could not have written this book."²⁶

In the Introduction to the *Jesus Calling Devotional Bible*, she wrote:

“As I shared in the introduction to my first book, *Jesus Calling*, I’ve gone through prolonged periods of difficulty, struggle, and waiting over the course of my life. And I have been battling Lyme disease, a debilitating illness, for nearly a decade.”²⁷

She also refers to debilitating health problems in the Introduction to her devotional book *Jesus Lives*.²⁸ In *Jesus Today* she devotes the majority of the book’s Introduction to describing various health problems she has battled over the years.²⁹

It is easy to sympathize with Young’s health struggles. What’s troubling is Young’s procedure of listening for God’s voice, writing down what she “hears” Him saying in her mind, and conveying that to the public.

AUTOMATIC WRITING AND DICTATION

In the occult, transcriptions from another realm can be received through “automatic writing.” This has been defined as:

“Scripts produced without the control of the conscious self. It is the most common form of mediumship, the source of innumerable cases of self-delusion, and at the same time the source of some of the most interesting and intriguing cases of mediumship.”³⁰

This same source states:

“In conscious writing it is the writer who moves the pencil; in automatic writing it is the pencil that moves the writer. In the waking state, of course, the writer is fully conscious of the strange thing going on but must remain passive.”³¹

Sometimes poems or even entire books have been composed this way. One contemporary “modification” of automatic writing is communication obtained through the Ouija board.³² Professor Edmond Gruss related the following account given by a woman who had used the Ouija board:

“Marion and I studied with the Ouija board. ... We started by

getting sermons from the beyond. We have hundreds of these sermons that we typewrote and preserved. ... All of them came from the Ouija board. Marion did not believe in spirits. I myself was doubtful. But after the Ouija board had been talking to us for days, we just had to believe.”³³

Sometimes communications from another realm are received via inward dictation.

Because there appears to be nothing “automatic” about Young’s writings — in that she is consciously writing what she believes she hears — it is unfair to liken the communications she receives to automatic writing. However, less clear is whether or not what she “hears” could be occultic dictation.

THE ORIGIN OF YOUNG’S DEVOTIONAL BOOKS

In the story of Young’s life, as related in the Introduction to *Jesus Calling*, we noted that despite having had a very busy and accomplishment-filled life, Young observed, “However, not once during those sixteen years did I vividly experience the Presence of Jesus.”³⁴

The Youngs later moved to Australia as missionaries. One morning in 1992 while she was praying, she had another experience of God’s Presence.³⁵ She writes:

“During that same year (1992), I began reading *God Calling*, a devotional book written by two anonymous ‘listeners.’ These women practiced waiting quietly in God’s Presence, pencils and paper in hand, recording the messages they received from Him. ... [This book] dovetailed remarkably well with my longing to live in Jesus’ Presence. The following year I began to wonder if I, too, could receive messages during my times of communing with God. I had been writing in prayer journals for years, but that was one-way communication: I did all the talking. *I knew that God communicated with me through*

the Bible, but I yearned for more. Increasingly, I wanted to hear what God had to say to me personally on a given day. I decided to listen to God with pen in hand, writing down whatever I believed He was saying. I felt awkward the first time I tried this, but I received a message. It was short, biblical, and appropriate. It addressed topics that were current in my life: trust, fear, and closeness to God. I responded by writing in my prayer journal. My journaling had changed from monologue to dialogue. Soon, messages began to flow more freely, and I bought a special notebook to record these words. This new way of communicating with God became the high point of my day. I knew these writings were not inspired as Scripture is, but they were helping me grow closer to God. I have continued to receive personal messages from God as I meditate on Him.”³⁶

Notice in the emphasized portion of the above citation that Young — whether she realizes it or not — is saying that the Bible is not sufficient for life and godliness; that it is not enough for a person to make sound and God-honoring decisions in life. She desires personal subjective revelation, because, for her, the Bible is not enough.

WHERE DID YOUNG’S METHOD OF “LISTENING AND WRITING” COME FROM?

Because Young says that her procedure of “listening to Jesus” and writing down what she believed He said to her was taken, not from the Bible, but from the book *God Calling*, an examination of this book is in order.

*God Calling*³⁷ was first published in the 1930s.³⁸ The back cover of its sequel, *God Calling 2: God At Eventide*,³⁹ announced that sales of both the original book and its sequel total “well over 10 million copies worldwide.”⁴⁰ The “two listeners,” who chose to remain anonymous, composed this book by daily “listening to Jesus,” and writing what they “heard” Him saying to them.

One of the two listeners wrote an Introduction to *God Calling* called "The Voice Divine."⁴¹ Therein, she notes that she was inspired to use this method from reading a book titled *For Sinners Only*, by A.J. Russell, in the latter part of 1932.⁴² This is the same A.J. Russell who edited both the original *God Calling* and *God Calling 2* books, and who also wrote an Introduction to each of them.

Russell learned this method of direct divine guidance from a religious (and political) movement founded by an ordained Lutheran minister, Frank Buchman (1876-1961). Buchman's controversial movement was first known as First Century Fellowship; later as the Oxford Group; and, finally, as Moral Rearmament. Russell was a proponent of Buchman's Oxford Group (now Moral Rearmament) and his book, *For Sinners Only*,⁴³ is a positive portrayal of the movement. Early in the book, Russell notes, "I learned that it was a practice of the [Oxford] Group to keep a guidance-book and record in it those thoughts which came in periods of quiet listening to God."⁴⁴ He earlier referred to this practice as "two-way prayer: petitions and quiet listening for the reply."⁴⁵

Concerning the first book written by the two anonymous listeners, *God Calling*, Russell makes these comments in his Introduction to the book:

"Not one woman but two have written this book; and they seek no praise. They have elected to remain anonymous and to be called 'Two Listeners.' But the claim which they make is an astonishing one, that their message has been given to them, to-day, here in England, by The Living Christ Himself. Having read their book I believe them. I do not of course believe that He whispered to them *all that He intends to say to this generation*. But I am confident that He opened their eyes to many things which they and this generation greatly need to know. *I do not believe in the verbal inspiration of this or any book.*⁴⁶ But I do believe that these two women have been

led and that much of what is written is very clear leading indeed."⁴⁷

The "listener" who wrote her Introduction to *God Calling* said, regarding their receiving divine messages:

"But with my friend a very wonderful thing happened. From the first, beautiful messages were given to her by our Lord Himself, and every day from then these messages have never failed us. We felt all unworthy and overwhelmed by the wonder of it, and could hardly realize that *we* were being taught, trained and encouraged day by day by HIM personally, *when millions of souls, far worthier, had to be content with guidance from the Bible, sermons, their Churches, books and other sources*. Certainly we were not in any way psychic or advanced in spiritual growth, but just very ordinary human beings, who had had more suffering and worry than the majority and who had known tragedy after tragedy."⁴⁸

Here we see a denigration of Scripture in comparison with a supposedly *higher and better* form of guidance.

The "listener" closes her Introduction:

"So to us this book, which we believe has been guided by our Lord Himself, is no ordinary book. It is published, after much prayer, to prove that a living Christ speaks to-day, plans and guides the humblest, that no detail is too insignificant for His attention, that He reveals Himself now as ever as a Humble Servant and Majestic Creator."⁴⁹

It appears that this listener regarded their auditions from the Lord as being as inspired as the Scriptures and perhaps even superior.

Edmond Gruss wrote:

"What about the contents of *God Calling*? Many have stated that they have read it with benefit and some have made reference to its ministry to them. ... There is

no denying that many statements in the book are inspiring. Scripture is often quoted in *God Calling*. But cultic literature often quotes Scripture. Reading Scripture wherever it may be found and being blessed by it does not automatically legitimize the publication in which it is included."⁵⁰

After listing a number of problematic or erroneous words from Jesus in *God Calling*, Gruss concludes:

"Much more could have been given to illustrate the errors and problems in *God Calling*. One need not question the sincerity of the 'two listeners,' but the method of guidance they employ is not Christian. The good thoughts and inspiring statements attributed to Christ in *God Calling* often are combined with faulty theology and the misinterpretation of Scripture. Communications from the 'Living Christ' would not have these defects."⁵¹

Much of what Gruss said in his review of *God Calling* can be applied to Young's *Jesus Calling*.

A BRIEF EXAMINATION OF JESUS CALLING

In *Jesus Calling*, there is a one-page devotional for each day of the year. The book's subtitle, "Enjoying Peace in His Presence," is appropriate. The word "peace" is found 158 times in the 366 devotional selections. The word "presence" — referring to God's presence — is used 366 times.

Young's Jesus repeats several thoughts, such as "spend time with Me" and "relax in My Presence." Young's Jesus also repeats certain topics, such as not worrying, being aware of Jesus' presence, gratitude, and communicating with Him.

The devotions for September 2, 6, 7, and 10 contained some good thoughts. Other devotions were questionable or unusual. Her devotional for January 10th says:

"Every time you affirm your trust in Me, you put a coin into My treasury. Thus you build up equity in preparation for days of

trouble. I keep safely in My heart all trust invested in Me, with interest compounded continuously. The more you trust Me, the more I empower you to do so. Practice trusting Me during quiet days, when nothing much seems to be happening. Then when storms come, your trust balance will be sufficient to see you through. *Store up for yourself treasure in heaven* through placing your trust in Me. This practice will keep you in My peace."⁵²

This message points up a further difficulty: It is sometimes difficult to know whether or not the words she is receiving are Scriptural or not. We know that the Bible tells us to trust in the Lord. However, it never compares such trust to a bank account in Jesus' heart where He compounds our trust continuously.

Another example can be found in the March 5th devotional:

"Make friends with the problems in your life. Though many things feel random and wrong, remember that I am sovereign over everything. ... The best way to befriend your problems is to thank Me for them. This simple act opens your mind to the possibility of benefits flowing from your difficulties. *You can even give persistent problems nicknames, helping you to approach them with familiarity rather than with dread. The next step is to introduce them to Me, enabling Me to embrace them in My loving Presence.* I will not necessarily remove your problems, but My wisdom is sufficient to bring good out of every one of them."⁵³

The beginning and the end of what Jesus tells Young here sounds similar to certain Scripture passages (James 1:2-3; 1 Thessalonians 5:18; Romans 8:28). However, the italicized portion sounds odd. Giving problems nicknames and "introducing them to Jesus" so He can love on them seems to take the "problems as friends" metaphor to an extreme.

A third category is devotionals that either appear wrong or definitely are

wrong. In the April 21st devotional, Jesus instructs Young on the rebelliousness of man's mind:

"Let me control your mind. *The mind is the most restless, unruly part of mankind. Long after you have learned the discipline of holding your tongue, your thoughts defy your will and set themselves up against Me.* Man is the pinnacle of My creation, and the human mind is wondrously complex. *I risked all by granting you freedom to think for yourself.* This is godlike privilege, forever setting you apart from animals and robots. *I made you in My image, precariously close to deity.*"⁵⁴

So in the initial section of her devotional, Young appears to be saying that Jesus is telling her that it is possible to control the tongue even though the mind (and heart)⁵⁵ are out of control. The Scriptures, however, would disagree with that premise. Our minds and our speech are closely tied together.

The words of Christ, recorded in Scripture, tell us that "an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. *For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks*" (Luke 6:45, emphasis added. Cf. Matthew 12:34).

Moreover, sanctification — the process of spiritual growth — is realized in a believer's life by putting off "the old man which grows corrupt" (Ephesians 4:22) and putting on "the new man which was created according to God" (Ephesians 4:24). Paul tells us the key to that transformation in verse 23: "and be renewed in the spirit of your mind."

As John MacArthur and Wayne Mack instruct, "According to the Word of God, sinful behavior is merely an outward indication of problems in the heart."⁵⁶ Thus the words we speak, the things we do are root issues found in our hearts. But the good news is that the "restless, unruly" mind can be transformed. It is only when we are "transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Romans 12:2) that a person can truly possess a disciplined tongue.

Jesus further tells Young, "I risked all by granting you freedom to think for yourself." In fact, God knew all along that mankind would give in to temptation. There was no "risk" whatsoever, because God knew the outcome in advance, and had already made preparation for it before man ever sinned. Jesus is "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Revelation 13:8). Again, the Bible says of Jesus, "He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world" (1 Peter 1:20); and that "He [God] chose us in Him before the foundation of the world" (Ephesians 1:4).

While it is true that some Bible translations render the beginning of Psalm 8:5, "Yet you [God] have made him [or them; i.e., a reference to man] a little lower than God,"⁵⁷ still other versions translate it "a little lower than the angels."⁵⁸ And even the three translations referred to which translate the word as "God" in Psalm 8:5, translate it as "the angels" in the New Testament citation of this passage in Hebrews 2:7 as do the two translations cited that use "the angels" in Psalm 8:5. But even if we were to grant that Jesus correctly told Young that God created man "close to deity," the word "precariously" is unwarranted, because man is in no danger of ever becoming God.

Other errors that Young's Jesus makes when speaking to her include His telling her in the January 28th devotional: "I am with you always. These were the last words I spoke before ascending into heaven."⁵⁹ While these are the closing words of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus' final recorded words before ascending to heaven are in Acts 1:8, where Jesus told His disciples that after the Holy Spirit came they would be His witnesses to the world.

The devotional reading for April 6th involves Jesus giving Young extrabiblical revelation about what caused Eve to sin in the garden: Ingratitude.⁶⁰

On May 14th, Jesus tells Young, "Talk with Me, and listen while I talk you through each challenging situation."⁶¹ Nowhere does the Bible say

we can expect Jesus to talk us through all of our challenging situations.

Another example comes from the July 25th devotional:

“As you listen to birds calling to one another, hear also My Love-call to you. I speak to you continually: through sights, sounds, thoughts, impressions, Scriptures. There is no limit to the variety of ways I can communicate with you. Your part is to be attentive to My messages, in whatever form they come. When you set out to find Me in a day, you discover that the world is vibrantly alive with My Presence. You can find Me not only in beauty and birdcalls, but also in tragedy and faces filled with grief. I can take the deepest sorrow and *weave it into a pattern for good*. Search for Me and My messages, as you go through this day.”⁶²

It’s nice that Jesus included Scripture for honorable mention at the end of the list as one of the various ways that He can speak to Young. While God’s *glory* is certainly revealed in nature (Psalm 19:1-4; Romans 1:18-20), this day’s devotional sounds almost like pantheism (all is God and God is all). And while God can speak to us however He wants, Christians are not to be like pagans looking for omens in nature, like those who consult animal livers or tea leaves to discern God’s will for our lives. God has given us the Bible to consult and to hear His voice and to know His will (2 Timothy 3:16-17), something that this devotional denigrates.

PROBLEMS WITH YOUNG’S METHODOLOGY

Young’s methodology of listening to Jesus and writing down what He supposedly says presents several problems.

Her method doesn’t come from the Bible. Indeed, it bears similarities to occultists receiving messages from another realm via inner dictation.

If this were simply Young’s private devotional practice, we might con-

sider it erroneous but hardly worthy of a lengthy examination. However, Young is actively promoting this unbiblical practice as a normal means for all Christians to draw closer to Jesus. Young even says Jesus told her to teach this practice to others:

“You are blessed to hear Me so directly. Never take this privilege for granted. The best response is a heart overflowing with gratitude. I am training you to cultivate a thankful mind-set. This is like *building your house on a firm rock, where life’s storms cannot shake you*. As you learn these lessons, you are to teach them to others. I will open up the way before you, one step at a time.”⁶³

One might initially suppose that Jesus is here instructing Young to teach the lesson of having a thankful mind-set to others. However, Jesus here speaks of “these lessons” (in the plural, not the singular). Thus, it appears that the “lessons” Jesus gives Young to teach, include hearing from Him directly.

Notice also that Young’s Jesus is commissioning her to teach these lessons to others and that He says that she is “blessed to hear Me so directly,” calling it a “privilege.” These things all serve to point to Young as a very important person in the Body of Christ and, if the reader believes that Jesus actually said these words to her, then they serve to elevate Young to a higher position than others in the Body of Christ, and one from whom other Christians should receive instruction. By printing these words in a devotional book Young has caused those who view these words as the very words of Jesus to have an exalted view of her status in God’s kingdom.

In the devotional for August 21st, we read:

“Wait with Me for a while. I have much to tell you. You are walking along the path I have chosen for you. It is both a privileged and a perilous way: experiencing My glorious Pres-

ence and heralding that reality to others. Sometimes you feel presumptuous to be carrying out such an assignment.”⁶⁴

Notice that Jesus is again commissioning Young, this time to “herald” His glorious Presence to others. Possibly the closest Scriptural admonition would be in 1 Peter, where *collectively* believers are told:

“But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9).

We also again notice that by printing the supposed words of Jesus for mass consumption, Young has again elevated her status in the eyes of those who read these words and believe that Jesus said them to her.

In the devotional for October 24th, we read:

“I have called you to walk with Me down *paths of Peace*. I want you to blaze a trail for others who desire to live in My peaceful Presence.”⁶⁵

Here again, Jesus seems to be calling Young to be a pioneer for other Christians to look up to and emulate. By writing this, Young again exalts herself in the kingdom of God.

YOUNG’S ATTEMPTED “QUALITY CONTROL”

In all four of her adult devotional books we have referenced, Young assures her readers that she has exercised “quality control” to ensure that what she has “heard from Jesus” matches up with Scripture:

“As with all my books, I relied on the help of the Holy Spirit as I worked — seeking to listen to Jesus throughout the creative process. When I write in this way, I am always selective in my listening. If anything is unbiblical, I reject it. I believe the Bible is the infallible Word of God, and I strive to present to my readers only what is consistent

with that unchanging standard."⁶⁶

In *Jesus Calling*, Young states:

"The Bible is, of course, the only inerrant Word of God; my writings must be consistent with that unchanging standard."⁶⁷

In *Dear Jesus*, we read:

"I wrote *Dear Jesus* in the same listening-to-God mode that I used with *Jesus Calling*. I've continued to write with the help of Christ's Spirit, who guides my thinking while I listen in His Presence. I believe the Bible is the only infallible Word of God. My writings are based on that absolute standard, and I try to ensure they are consistent with Scripture."⁶⁸

In the citations above, Young's comments necessitate three observations worthy of mention. First is her attempt to square her "words from Jesus" with the Bible. While this is a commendable goal, it would be better to simply base her devotionals on the Scriptures themselves.

Second, by exposing herself to receiving messages from Jesus in this manner, she leaves herself open to believing that Jesus has said something to her that He has not said and then passing that along to others as "words from Jesus."

Third, if the "words" Young "hears" are truly from Jesus, she wouldn't need to employ the editing process of comparing to Scripture what she "heard," because everything received from Jesus would agree with Scripture. At some level, based on what she has stated in her Introductions, she must be aware that not all of her "hearings" come from Jesus.

Her procedure of "quality control" mentioned above also assumes that Young will invariably discern when the content of what she writes deviates from the Scriptures. But if she makes a mistake or something slips past her knowledge of the Bible, then she is unknowingly passing on bad information. If a reader who doesn't possess the same familiarity with the

content of Scripture that Young does tries to use her method and doesn't catch the unbiblical content of the message that they receive from Jesus, the same problem can arise. Young herself recognized this latter possibility. In a CBN interview, she was asked: "What would you tell someone who wants to begin 'listening' to God?" Young responded:

"Let me begin with some cautions. It's essential to remember that the Bible is the only infallible record of God's speaking. Always subordinate your personal listening to absolute biblical truth. If something you 'hear' is inconsistent with biblical teaching, don't write it down — it's not from God. *New Christians, especially, need to be cautious about listening to God in this way. I had been a Christian for 20 years before I began this practice.*"⁶⁹

Indeed, not only has Young been a Christian for many years, she has a seminary education, is a missionary, and has had a lot of life experience. She also has a seminary-trained husband from whom she can seek advice if she wishes. Probably not many Christians have as much going for them in helping them distinguish the "voice of the Lord" from other influences.

An immature believer might receive all kinds of unbiblical guidance in the way Young teaches. Yet this is exactly the sort of practice Young apparently feels commissioned by Jesus to promote and does promote through her writings.

Near the end of her Introduction to *Jesus Calling*, Young issues this unqualified invitation to her readers, making no distinctions between levels of Christian maturity among them: "I invite you to keep a journal to record any thoughts or impressions you receive as you wait in His Presence."⁷⁰

HOW DO YOUNG'S WRITINGS DIFFER FROM SCRIPTURE?

In each of her adult devotionals, Young states that she believes the Bible is "the only inerrant Word of

God,"⁷¹ "the infallible Word of God,"⁷² "the only infallible Word of God,"⁷³ and she also says, "I knew these writings [exemplified in *Jesus Calling*] were not inspired as Scripture is, but they helped me grow much closer to God."⁷⁴

From these and other citations that could be given, we see that Young believes she has a high view of Scripture. The question then is, "What place does she assign *her* writings in relationship to the Scriptures?" If the Bible is God's only infallible word, if it is inerrant, if it is "perfect,"⁷⁵ then her writings are less than infallible and inerrant.

One statement of Young's that is particularly troubling appears near the end of her Introduction to the *Jesus Calling Devotional Bible*,⁷⁶ of which she is the General Editor. (In addition to containing the New King James Version biblical text, this devotional Bible also includes 260 devotional selections taken from two of Young's devotional books: *Jesus Calling* and *Jesus Lives*). Young writes:

*"Since my writings are rooted in the infallible, unchanging Word of God, having them appear alongside the biblical text would seem to be a natural place for them. It is an honor to have devotionals from two of my books, *Jesus Calling* and *Jesus Lives*, included in this volume."*⁷⁷

In place of the above words in italics, one would have expected Young to say something along the lines of, "Although I consider my writings to be rooted in the infallible and unchanging Word of God, I feel rather uncomfortable seeing them placed alongside the biblical text; which, after all is *the* infallible and unchanging Word of God."

Instead, her lack of discomfort with seeing the words that she believed she received from Jesus for her particular, individualized situations placed beside the universally applicable, flawless Word of God is very troublesome and it gives rise to the question as to whether or not she actually sees her own writings as much different from the Bible itself.

Also troubling are the following two instructions on “How to Use the *Jesus Calling Devotional Bible*”:

“These intimate expressions are written as prayers to Jesus, describing various life situations men and women face every day. Read the personalized prayer first; then read the devotional on the facing page, written by Sarah Young, who uses the words of Scripture to provide Jesus’ possible answer and guidance in that situation.”⁷⁸

In fact, these prayers referred to above, appearing at various places within this devotional Bible, apparently were crafted by professional writers to accompany the devotionals that Young had *previously written* in her two books mentioned above. How could they, then, reflect Jesus’ *possible* answer to the *fictional* scenario presented?

The other troubling instruction appears on the facing page:

“These devotionals are specially selected from Sarah Young’s devotional books and placed in the Bible text near a key verse or reading that is related to the topic. Read the prayer on the previous page, describing a personalized scenario, and then read this devotional thought *as if Jesus were speaking directly to you*.”⁷⁹

This isn’t using Scripture to speak to people. This is using words that Young believes Jesus spoke to her at a particular point in time, which she attempted to filter through her knowledge of the Bible, and which she is now attempting to apply to her readers as the Word of God to them. She is trying to use her personal auditions from Jesus *as if* they are as universally applicable to her readers as the Bible itself.

Reformed theologian R.C. Sproul serves as co-pastor of Saint Andrew’s Chapel⁸⁰ and is an ordained PCA minister. Ironically, this is the same denomination in which Young and her husband serve as missionaries.⁸¹ Some years ago Sproul wrote regarding Word-Faith teacher Robert Tilton’s extrabiblical revelations:

“If we are to believe Tilton’s astonishing claims, there is no reason we should not include his writings in the next edition of the New Testament.”⁸²

Sproul’s words are equally applicable to Young’s extrabiblical revelations, which she promotes as the words of Jesus.

SINCERITY DOES NOT EQUAL ORTHODOXY

Young is an older woman and has been a Christian for a number of years. Her decision to be a counselor evidences a desire to help people. She is most likely sincere, warm-hearted, and well-intentioned. In the latter three of her four adult devotionals, she assures her readers that she prays for them,⁸³ and her warmth and affection for her readers can be felt in these assurances.

Nevertheless, sincerity doesn’t guarantee orthodoxy or orthopraxy. One erroneous concept that Young promotes through her *Jesus Calling* is that we should continually *experience* the Presence of Jesus. The Bible doesn’t teach us that we should continually *experience* the manifest Presence of God in this life. God is omnipresent. We are to *realize* and *know* that He is always with us, whether or not we can “feel” or “sense” His Presence with us. If God should choose to manifest a sense of His Presence to us, we should gratefully accept this, even as Young herself did, prior to concluding that she *deserved* to have such an experience of the Lord’s Presence continually.

One day — in heaven — Christians will experience the Lord’s Presence continually. At times, God may give us a sense of His Presence during this lifetime. However, the initiative is always with Him, not with us. Christians are to realize that the Lord is with us always, because He promised us that He would be (Hebrews 13:5; Psalm 139:7-12; Psalm 24:4; Romans 8:38-39), regardless of whether or not we “feel” or “sense” that He is with us. That’s called faith. And the Bible says that, “For we walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Corinthians 5:7). Jesus

knew that the Father was with Him (John 8:29; 16:32).

James 4:8 tells us, “Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.” However, in context, this Scripture says nothing specifically about feeling or sensing God’s Presence, although it may involve this. And James was writing about Christians forsaking worldliness and repenting of sin.

Jesus did give us one promise by which we might experience His Presence. He said, “He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him” (John 14:21).

So, if a person really wants to experience Jesus’ Presence, Jesus says that the path to such an experience is obedience to His commandments.⁸⁴

ADDING TO THE WORDS OF GOD

One risk of Young’s devotionals is that she is dangerously close to adding to God’s Word.

Moses told Israel, “You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you” (Deuteronomy 4:2; see also 12:32).

In Proverbs, we read, “Every word of God is pure; He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him. Do not add to His words, lest He rebuke you, and you be found a liar” (Proverbs 30:5-6).

Revelation 22:18-19 says:

“For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.”⁸⁵

We have seen that Young’s method of receiving words from Jesus and

transcribing them is questionable and laden with potential hazards. We are never instructed in Scripture to expect a daily dialogue with God, much less to use the method that Young advocates.

Even in the biblical record, instances of God and man having dialogue appear to have been brief and limited to specific situations. It also would appear that prophets, apostles, and evangelists may have experienced these interventions more often than the average believer. However, even *they* don't seem to have had a two-way conversation with God on a daily basis.

Endnotes:

1. Sarah Young, *Jesus Calling*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2004.
2. Sarah Young, General Editor, *Jesus Calling Devotional Bible*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 2011.
3. Sarah Young, *Jesus Lives*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2009.
4. *Ibid.*, front cover. This statement is similarly repeated on the back cover.
5. Sarah Young, *Jesus Today*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2012.
6. *Jesus Calling Devotional Bible*, op. cit., endorsements of *Jesus Calling* are on the back cover.
7. Sarah Young, *Dear Jesus*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2007.
8. *Ibid.*, pg. 8.
9. "Jesus Calling by Sarah Young," Facebook page, accessed at: www.facebook.com/JesusCalling on June 9, 2013. To see Thomas Nelson's complete listing of their Sarah Young books, see: www.thomasnelson.com/collections/jesuscalling?limit=all. Accessed on June 9, 2013.
10. Accessed at the video link on the Christian Book Distributor product page for *Jesus Calling*: www.christianbook.com/jesus-calling/sarah-young/9781591451884/pd/451884?item_code=WW&netp_id=336842&event=EBRN&view=details on June 19, 2013.
11. *Jesus Calling Devotional Bible*, op. cit., pg. v.
12. *Dear Jesus*, op. cit., pg. 6. Cf. *Jesus Calling*, op. cit., pp. X-XII; *Jesus Lives*, op. cit., pg. 2; *Jesus Today*, op. cit., pg. xvi.
13. Stephen and Sarah Young prayer card, accessed at: www.mtw.org/SiteCollectionDocuments/PrayerCards/YoungStephen.PC.PDF on June 8, 2013. PCA is a conservative, evangelical branch of the Presbyterian denomination.
14. *Ibid.*
15. *Ibid.*

16. See the Introductions to *Jesus Calling*, op. cit., pp. VI-XIII; *Dear Jesus*, op. cit., pp. 6-9; *Jesus Lives*, op. cit., pp. 1-3; *Jesus Today*, op. cit., pp. ix-xvii.
17. "Author Profile: Q&A with Sarah Young," CBN website, accessed at: www.cbn.com/entertainment/books/JesusCallingQA.aspx on June 8, 2013.
18. *Jesus Calling*, op. cit., pg. VII.
19. The L'Abri official website explains, "L'Abri is a French word that means shelter. The first L'Abri community was founded in Switzerland in 1955 by Dr. Francis Schaeffer and his wife, Edith." Accessed at: <http://labri.org/> on June 9, 2013. L'Abri is a Christian center where religious seekers can come to seek answers to their religious questions.
20. *Jesus Calling*, op. cit., pg. VII.
21. *Ibid.*, pg. VI.
22. *Ibid.*, pg. VIII.
23. *Ibid.*
24. *Ibid.*, pp. VIII-IX.
25. *Ibid.*, pg. IX.
26. *Dear Jesus*, op. cit., pg. 6.
27. *Jesus Calling Devotional Bible*, op. cit., pg. v.
28. *Jesus Lives*, op. cit., pg. 2.
29. *Jesus Today*, op. cit., pp. ix-xv.
30. J. Gordon Melton, Editor, *Encyclopedia of Occultism & Parapsychology*. Farmington Hills, Mich.: Gale Group, Inc., 2001, Vol. 1, pg. 127, s.v., "Automatic Writing."
31. *Ibid.*, pg. 128.
32. Leslie Shepard, Editor, *Encyclopedia of Occultism & Parapsychology*. Detroit: Gale Research Company, 1984, Vol. 1, pg. 113, s.v., "Automatic Writing."
33. *New York Times*, Feb. 20, 1921, pg. 16, cited by Edmond C. Gruss, *The Ouija Board*. Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing, 1994, pg. 117, ellipsis in original.
34. *Jesus Calling*, op. cit., pg. IX.
35. *Ibid.*, pg. X.
36. *Ibid.*, pp. XI-XII, emphasis added.
37. "Two Listeners," A.J. Russell, Editor, *God Calling*. New York: Jove Books, 1978.
38. Edmond C. Gruss, "God Calling: A Critical Look at a Christian Best-seller," *Personal Freedom Outreach Newsletter* (the former name of *The Quarterly Journal*), July-September 1986, pg. 1.
39. "Two Listeners," A.J. Russell, Editor, *God Calling 2: God At Eventide*. Park Lane, Ropley, Hants, U.K.: O Books, 2009.
40. *Ibid.*, back cover.
41. *God Calling*, op. cit., n.p., (if these pages had been numbered, they would have been pp. 11-13).
42. *Ibid.*, n.p., (if this page had been numbered, it would have been pg. 11).
43. A.J. Russell, *For Sinners Only*. Tucson, Ariz.: Hats Off Books, 2003.
44. *Ibid.*, pg. 19.
45. *Ibid.*, pg. 18.
46. Notice Russell's denigration of the Bible, both by his statement that he

- doesn't believe any book is verbally inspired (which would include the Bible), and also that he does not believe that God has said everything He plans to say to this generation — even through the two anonymous listeners. If Russell believes that God is still speaking to his generation, it follows that he considers the Bible to be an incomplete revelation from God, in need of supplementation (cf. 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Jude 3).
47. *God Calling*, op. cit., n.p., (if this page had been numbered, it would have been pg. 5), emphasis added.
 48. *Ibid.*, n.p., (if these pages had been numbered, they would have been pp. 11-12), italic and capitalization in original, boldfaced emphasis added.
 49. *Ibid.*, n.p., (if this page had been numbered, it would have been pg. 13).
 50. "God Calling: A Critical Look at a Christian Best-seller," op. cit., pg. 6.
 51. *Ibid.*
 52. *Jesus Calling*, op. cit., pg. 11, italics in original due to her using the words of Matthew 6:20; even though, in its biblical context, Jesus wasn't speaking about trust in that passage.
 53. *Ibid.*, pg. 68, emphasis added.
 54. *Ibid.*, pg. 116, italics in original due to its reference to Genesis 1:26-27, boldfaced emphasis added.
 55. The words "heart" and "mind" are not always that distinct in Scripture and are often used interchangeably (e.g., Genesis 6:5; Hebrews 4:12).
 56. John F. MacArthur, Jr. and Wayne A. Mack, *Introduction to Biblical Counseling*. Dallas: Word Publishing, 1994, pg. 245.
 57. See, for example, NASB, NRSV, NLT.
 58. See, for example, KJV, NKJV.
 59. *Jesus Calling*, op. cit., pg. 29.
 60. *Ibid.*, pg. 101.
 61. *Ibid.*, pg. 141.
 62. *Ibid.*, pg. 216, italics in original due to its reference to Romans 8:28.
 63. *Ibid.*, pg. 231, italics in original due to its reference to Matthew 7:24-25 (Jesus' parable about the foundation of the house built by the wise man).
 64. *Ibid.*, pg. 244.
 65. *Ibid.*, pg. 311, italics in original due to its reference to Luke 1:79.
 66. *Jesus Today*, op. cit., pg. xvi.
 67. *Jesus Calling*, op. cit., pg. XIII.
 68. *Dear Jesus*, op. cit., pg. 7. See her similar assurance in *Jesus Lives*, op. cit., pg. 3.
 69. "Author Profile: Q&A with Sarah Young," op. cit., emphasis added.
 70. *Jesus Calling*, op. cit., pg. XIV.
 71. *Ibid.*, pg. XIII.
 72. *Jesus Today*, op. cit., pg. xvi.
 73. *Dear Jesus*, op. cit., pg. 7; also, *Jesus Lives*, op. cit., pg. 3.
 74. Sarah Young with Jean Fisher, *Jesus Calling Bible Storybook*. Nashville: Tommy Nelson, 2012, n.p., (if this page had been

numbered, it would have been pg. 8).
75. *Ibid.*, n.p., (if this page had been numbered, it would have been pg. 7).
76. *Jesus Calling Devotional Bible*, op. cit.
77. *Ibid.*, pg. vi, emphasis added.
78. *Ibid.*, pg. viii.
79. *Ibid.*, pg. ix, emphasis added.
80. "Pastors & Staff," Saint Andrew's Chapel (Sanford, Fla.) webpage. Accessed at: www.saintandrewsonline.org/about/who-we-are/pastors-staff on July 8, 2013.
81. During a May 2, 2013, telephone conversation with Paul Kooistra's office (the Coordinator of Mission to the World,

the missionary arm of the PCA), I was told, in response to my question about MTW's views on Young's writings, that the organization doesn't have an official position on her books, and regards them as her private writings. Consistent with this statement, a survey of the MTW website (accessed at: www.mtw.org on June 22, 2013), including their "Devotionals" webpage (accessed at: www.mtw.org/Pages/RESOURCE_Devotionals.aspx on June 22, 2013), revealed no books or publications there by Young.
82. Sproul in Michael Horton, Editor, *The*

Agony of Deceit. Chicago: Moody Press, 1990, pg. 40.
83. *Dear Jesus*, op. cit., pg. 9; *Jesus Lives*, op. cit., pg. 3; *Jesus Today*, op. cit., pg. xvii.
84. I am indebted to the late Bill Bright, founder of Campus Crusade for Christ, for this insight in one of his writings.
85. Although these latter verses likely apply only to the book of Revelation, given the other Scriptures cited here, it is clear that God does not want people adding to or subtracting from His holy Word.



EDITORIALS

(continued from page 2)

The methodology of papal election is done by the College of Cardinals behind closed doors. These men take an oath and are sworn to secrecy regarding the proceedings and specific details of the election. While everything on the "inside" must be sequestered, it is curious and even humorous to learn that while the deliberations were going on, there was a smartphone app set up to watch the chimney of the Sistine Chapel. (The chimney even had its own twitter accounts, @papalsmokestack and @papalchimney.) If black smoke rose from the chimney, it meant that a vote had been taken but that the conclave of 115 Cardinals had failed to come to the required two-thirds majority necessary to elect a new pontiff.

Then on March 13, 2013, white smoke rose from the chimney and at 8:10 p.m. came the words, *Habemus Papam* — We have a Pope. When Cardinal Tauren made the announcement, he referred to the newly elected Pope as "The Most Eminent and Most Reverend Lord" (see *Pope Francis* by Matthew Bunson, pg. 94). The newly elected "Lord" then led the crush of 150,000 people in Vatican Square in reciting the "Our Father" and "Hail Mary" prayers (*ibid.*, pg. 95).

Jorge Mario Bergoglio, the newest pope — the 266th by Rome's count — was certainly a dark horse, largely unknown and was not on the short list that the press was producing at the time. He is 76 years old and was ordained in 1973 as a Jesuit priest. That latter fact comes with sinister connotations to many conspiracy theorists. He is the first Jesuit to ever serve as pope. He was installed as a Cardinal in 2001. His father, Mario Jose Bergoglio, was born in Italy and became a permanent immigrant worker in Argentina to escape Fascism. The pontiff was born in Argentina, is a citizen there, and speaks his native language Spanish.

Bergoglio actually emerged eight years earlier as a serious papal candidate when Benedict XVI was elected pope. However, in 2013 his election seemed quite surprising.

Once the white smoke dissipated and the days long with pomp and circumstance of the televised papal installation subsided, we began to understand who this new pope really is and where he is going.

Bergoglio served as an archbishop in Buenos Aires, Argentina. As the new head of the Vatican, also known as the Bishop of Rome, he was one of the few popes from outside of Europe. He took the name Francis linking himself to St. Francis of Assisi (from the 13th century) and to the ideas of peace, poverty, and service to the poor and downtrodden. The original Francis was the first claimant of stigmata — purporting to have the wounds of the crucified Savior appearing in his hands. St. Francis is also known for his supposed abilities to communicate with animals.

With all the incredible perks, adoration, and open doors worldwide that a pope receives, it is somewhat disingenuous to have him seek to identify himself among the poor or downtrodden. Nevertheless, the newly installed Francis quickly broke tradition to the shock and dismay of traditional hard liners when on Maundy Thursday he washed the feet of 12 young people in a juvenile shelter. Among the recipients of the pope's actions were two females, one being Muslim. This was a total breach of *Code of Canon Law*, which directs the washing of only priest's feet. It had the liberal wing singing and all the others shaking their heads and sighing. There is much debate going on over this swerve from hard traditionalism.

While Evangelicals would merely discount a breach of a small tradition, there are major systemic problems in the Roman Catholic Church in need of addressing that are far more serious. Although Francis has stated that he wants child sex abuse rooted out of the church, he has offered no specific plan for doing so. It is a wonderful sentiment, but so far it is just words.

A few weeks later, Pope Francis ruffled even more feathers when he proclaimed his social gospel during his homily at a May 22 Mass in which he said that even atheists who do good are redeemed. In the sermon, Francis declared, "The Lord has redeemed all of us, all of us, with the Blood of Christ: all of us, not just Catholics.

Everyone! 'Father, the atheists?' Even the atheists. Everyone! ... We must meet one another doing good." The Vatican quickly engaged in damage control, suggesting that people simply misunderstood what the pope was saying. A Vatican spokesman further emphasized Catholic teaching which says that all salvation comes from Christ through the Roman Catholic Church. People cannot be saved who refuse to enter or remain in this church.

The actions and statements of Francis during the first few months of his papacy draws the immediate and pressing concern of where this new pope will take the Roman Catholic Church, and by extension non-discerning, gullible Protestants and Evangelicals. By looking at his track record and what he says, how he says it, and what he does not say, we can suggest where he might be going.

Another thing which is known about the fledgling Pope Francis is his devotion to Mary. The morning following the election, Francis went to the Basilica of Saint Mary Major to pray before an icon of the "Virgin" Mary. He left a bouquet of flowers before the image. The following day he addressed some of the Cardinals saying, "I commit my ministry, and your ministry, to the powerful intercession of Mary, our Mother, Mother of the Church. Beneath her maternal gaze, may each one of us walk and listen to the voice of her divine Son" (ibid., pg. 106).

His commitment to Mary has a long history. In his home country of Argentina there is a Marian cult, transported from Germany, known for devotion to Mary the Undoer of Knots. There is even a famous painting with her holding a small rope. Its teaching casts Mary as the one who undid the knot of Eve's disobedience by her special obedience. It has evolved into seeing Mary as the one able to undo difficult circumstances for the person devoted to her. This is certainly something a Bible believer could not even slightly embrace. There is nothing anywhere in the New Testament even remotely connecting Eve to Mary in any way. An Internet search of the term "Mary Untier of Knots" will yield numerous articles. The centrality of Christ as the Second Adam and the content of the Gospel (along with the primacy of the Bible) is eclipsed and lost in this aberration.

Another interesting piece of misdirection is the use of conditional language by Pope Francis. He holds tightly to continuance of priestly celibacy, but when speaking of it he uses the phrase that he believes in it "for the moment." It is as if to say, for now but maybe not always. Or it may convey the idea of "for the present circumstances." In doing this he may be getting the hopes of the liberal wing soaring. But is it really honest? Is it just word-play and double speak? Though some may love ambiguity, holding out conditional language that something is fine "for the moment" seems more like a ploy than a plan.

So this then is the danger. Because someone wants child sexual abuse rooted out of the church, washes

another's feet (and kisses lepers and babies), says the right things about the poor and downtrodden, extends salvation to all who do good, and uses conditional language about practices that are already condemned by Scripture (that is, the forbidding of marriage — 1 Timothy 4:1-6), we may wrongly assume he is one of us. Piety that is constantly observed, recorded, and reported on is suspect. Only a massive change in Catholic dogma, along with a dismissal of false teachings and extrabiblical practices would show real change. We cannot assume anything short of that kind of move really means anything at all. In most cases, even the worst of cultists can care about the poor, use conditional and deceptive language, and parade good works. It means nothing without dramatic corresponding biblical change in theology, practice, and living.

Social work is fine and perhaps more churches ought to do more of it. But doing good without a clear Gospel is an eternal waste. We often think that if someone agrees with us on certain issues — let's say abortion — they are completely in our camp. Not so! The idea that we can cooperate and cohabit on social issues has its limits and should not lull us into unreality.

Catholicism today is the product of traditional religious evolution. It was finally cast in cement in what is called the Council of Trent and the Counter Reformation of the 1500s. The Roman church vilified others with eternal "anathemas" cast upon all who disagreed with her unbiblical beliefs. Despite its call to secrecy, it was publicly known that the conclave which elected the new pope was looking for a man who would conserve and teach what Catholicism has believed and taught in past years. This, to them, is the faith and it is unalterable.

Consider the following that no amount of cooperative effort can wish away: Confession of sins to a priest; grace and works mixed into salvation; the adoration of Mary, including a belief in her sinlessness, perpetual virginity, and assumption into heaven; purgatory; prayers to dead saints; indulgences; unbiblical traditions; mandated and enforced fast days; Jesus Christ continually being sacrificed in the Mass; the supposed eating of Christ's literal flesh and blood in communion; and the infallibility of the Pope. There is an unbridgeable chasm between biblical doctrine and these things. It is totally unrealistic to think any pope will ever change any of these to any degree. If he did, Catholicism would not be Catholicism.

Any radical upheaval on these points would negate the office of the pope which is fundamental and foundational to Catholicism. If major tenets of the Roman church are tossed out, what then is the eternal fate of dead Catholics who were condemned because they had committed mortal sins by not accepting these beliefs? The questions become troubling because the system is flawed.

Nothing substantial and foundational will change within the Roman Catholic Church. There may be some changes in emphasis and window dressing. There may be more attention paid to the poor and a ratcheting up of

social concerns. However, the foundation and structure of Catholicism, which is built largely on traditions of men, will remain the same. The actors change and the dialogue changes, but the basic plot is still the same. Time will tell. Watch and see.

—GRF

NEWS UPDATES

(continued from page 3)

sponsors that the BSA's new policy welcoming gay Scouts 'is not in conflict with Catholic teaching' and they should continue to support scouting programs." In a letter sent to "fellow Catholic Scouters," Edward P. Martin, the chairman of the National Catholic Committee on Scouting, further urged that "Catholic Scouters and chartered organization heads not rush to judgment." The Catholic Church is the third-largest sponsor of the BSA.

The United Methodists, the denomination which ranks second in Scout sponsorship, has not formally accepted or opposed the BSA shift in policy. Individual churches within the denomination appear to fall on both sides of the debate.

Yet not all are sympathetic toward the BSA's move to be tolerant and politically correct. The Southern Baptist Convention, at its annual meeting in June, overwhelmingly opposed the BSA decision and authorized help to

those members who want to leave the Scout organization. Baptist churches, which sponsor more than 100,000 Scouts in almost 4,000 troops, are preparing for a mass exodus resulting in a major expansion of its own Royal Ambassadors program.

Human Rights Campaign president Chad Griffin responded to the SBC resolution saying, "This move by the Southern Baptist Convention will cause deeper divisions within families, and will harm young people who seek church as a place of love and acceptance. The last thing that kids need — especially LGBT kids — is one more voice telling them they're not good enough." Griffin said he was raised in the Southern Baptist Church.

George O. Wood, General Superintendent of the Assemblies of God, said that his church's "leadership regrets that the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) has voted to change its policy regarding inclusion of homosexual youth members. We believe — as do a majority of Boy Scout volunteer leaders and parents — that this is not the best policy for BSA, nor for the young men it serves." Woods further stated, "We agree with the BSA that we need to demonstrate compassion and welcome those who are struggling with sexuality issues, but not in a way that condones such behavior, which is what the new BSA policy does."

Similar to Southern Baptists, the Assemblies of God has its own youth program, the Royal Rangers, which is being offered as a more safe and biblical alternative.

—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

101 ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ABOUT THE BOOK OF REVELATION

by Mark Hitchcock

Harvest House Publishers, 253 pages, \$13.99

Revelation is a fascinating and enigmatic book. Some would likely nod their heads in agreement with Mark Hitchcock when he states, "There are many excellent commentaries and studies on Revelation, but many people find them too intimidating, too in-depth, or too irrelevant" (pg. 13). This reviewer has, over the years, collected many books about the last book of the Bible, and they sit, for the most part, unread.

Hitchcock understands and he's here to help! Furthermore, he is well-equipped for the task, having earned his Ph.D. from Dallas Theological Seminary, where he wrote his dissertation on a particular question about the book of Revelation and having written numerous books about Bible prophecy and the end times. Additionally, as he states in the book's Preface:

"At Faith Bible Church in Edmond, Oklahoma, where I serve as pastor, we took a full year to complete a verse-by-verse study of Revelation. As an adjunct professor at Dallas Theological Seminary in the Department of Bible Exposition, I've had the privilege on several occasions to teach through Revelation. Even after having done these studies, I don't claim to have all the answers about the book of Revelation. But I do believe I've become familiar with the kinds of questions people are asking. I've compiled 101 of those questions in this book, and my hope is that this resource will help you understand Revelation better, and that it will also deepen your love for God's Word and our Lord, who is the subject of Revelation" (pg. 14).

Part 1 of the book briefly deals with questions on the interpretation of Revelation. Because Hitchcock studied at a seminary widely known for championing a view of the end times known as dispensational premillennialism (popularly known as "the pretribulation rapture" of the

Church), the fact that Hitchcock's book promotes this interpretation of Revelation should come as no surprise.

Part 2 deals briefly with questions regarding the background of Revelation (author, date, place of writing, etc.). The rest of the book deals with questions the reader might have about the 22 chapters of the book of Revelation.

The book closes by answering the question, "How can I be sure that I'm going to heaven," followed by a short list of suggestions for further reading on Revelation, and the book's endnotes.

Hitchcock's skill as a teaching pastor is evident in that this book is both scholarly and readable. Some of the many questions he addresses are: "Who were the Nicolaitans?" "Who are the 24 elders?" "What's the relationship between the seven seals, seven trumpets, and seven bowls?" "Who are the 144,000 in 7:1-8?" "Who is the great multitude in 7:9-17?" "Why is there silence in heaven for about 30 minutes (8:1)?" He also examines five questions about the beast of Revelation 13.

One of the great features of this book is that it gives answers that other Bible teachers, commentators, and scholars have given to the questions he addresses. Additionally, he tells which answer to the questions posed he considers best and why. In cases where the evidence for one view over another seems uncertain, he seeks to point to what we can say with relative certainty about the answer, regardless of which of the answers is correct.

The volume also provides an occasional chart which offers added understanding to the specific question being discussed. For example, the one on page 120 shows how the events in the successive chapters of Revelation take place back and forth between heaven and earth. Another, on page 215, presents timelines of Premillennialism, Amillennialism, and Postmillennialism.

The reader may not find all of Hitchcock's answers equally convincing. Nevertheless he has done a great service to those who have questions about the Bible's final book.

If you have questions about the book of Revelation and want some solid, well-thought-out answers (from a pretribulation rapture point-of-view), this is the book you need to get. If you are limited to only one book on understanding the Bible's last book, it should be this one.

—JGS

Editor's Note: The publications featured in PFO's *Books in Review* section are available from **Personal Freedom Outreach** (P.O. Box 26062, Saint Louis, Missouri 63136). Please add \$2.50 to the price listed for shipping and handling. Due to occasional price changes by the publishers, the retail amounts listed are subject to change without notice. These publications are also available to those who help to financially support the work of PFO. Please see our funds appeal flyer for details.