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Desert Fathers and Other Barren Wastelands The Origins of the Spiritual Formation Movement

by Gary E. Gilley

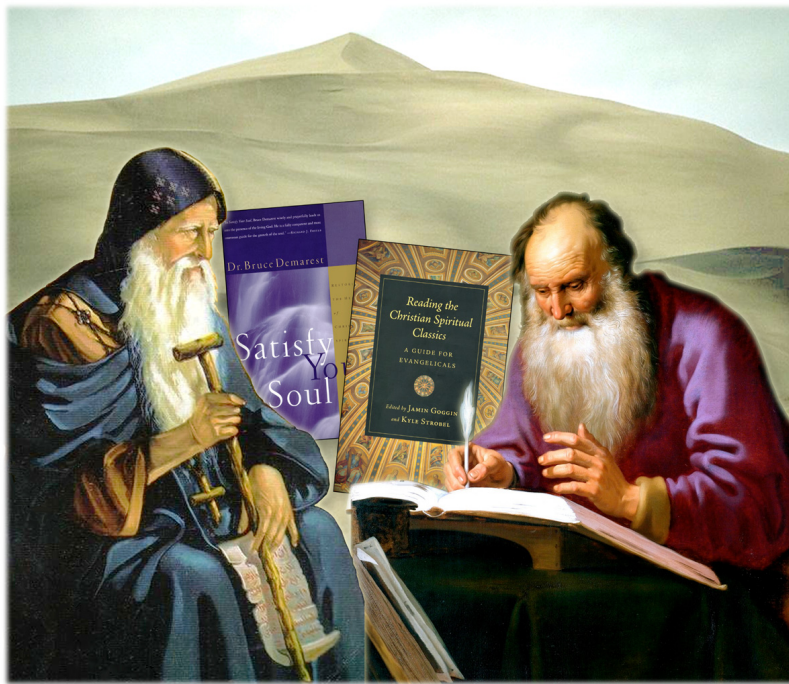
For several years various articles in *The Quarterly Journal* have touched upon a range of issues of the Spiritual Formation Movement.¹ And while we have examined the genesis of this modern movement as well as its key beliefs, leaders, and teachers, both past and present, it is helpful to turn our attention to their ancient roots. It is also valuable to discuss the attraction of the movement, especially for Evangelicals. In previous articles we documented the serious errors in doctrine and practice of the movement, and why so many Evangelicals embrace its disciplines and look to the so-called "spiritual masters" for guidance. These issues of origin and attraction overlap, but we will look at them separately for clarity's sake.

PROBLEMATIC ROOTS

All trees are sustained by a root system and, while there are many

roots of various sizes within the system, there is usually a main root or two from which other roots sprout. There are two ancient main roots of spiritual formation that need exploring: The theological root and the experiential root.

Theological root: Even a casual reading of the New Testament reveals that the Church struggled with doctrinal errors and heresies. Virtually all the Epistles, with the possible exception of the short and personal letter to Philemon, addressed one or more theological concerns which run all the way from the person of Christ to the Gospel message (continues on page 16)



Inside this Issue:

WHERE IS THE EMERGING CHURCH HIDING?	PAGE 2
CONCERN EXPRESSED OVER VATICAN PRAYER MEETING	PAGE 3
OBSESSED WITH DEMONS	PAGE 4

Editorials

WHERE IS THE EMERGING CHURCH HIDING?

Has the emerging church movement, once the religious topic of the day and revered subject matter for most Christian publishing houses, gone into hiding? Or has it suffered an even worse fate? C. Michael Patton of Credo House Ministries wrote in his blog that “around the year 2009, the identity of the emerging church went silent and many (some enthusiastically) put a gravestone over its assigned plot” (“What Happened to the Emerging Church?,” Parchment & Pen Blog, Jan. 14, 2013). In fact, earlier in May 2009, Patton offered an “obituary” for the emerging church saying:

“Today, at 12:32 pm, while most of you were having lunch, the Emerging Church was taken off of life support. The Emerging Church was not around long enough to be declared alive, so the announcement of its death comes with an apathetic ‘ho-hum’ for many of you. But it is true. ... As far as I can see, the Emerging Church is dead at 15” (“Obituary: The Emerging Church (1994-2009),” Parchment & Pen Blog, May 4, 2009).

While Patton maintains that the emerging church has died, by his own admission it may be more metamorphosis than fatality:

“The name ‘emerging’ became tainted by the radical reformers associated with the movement. But the

‘best-of’ the emerging church lives on. Indeed, the ethos of the emerging church never dies, as the church is reformed and always reforming” (“What Happened to the Emerging Church?,” op. cit.).

For several years PFO has affirmed in its writings that the emerging church movement is alive and well — mutating, not dying. But it’s not, as Patton argues, the “‘best-of’ the emerging church” that is living on, but rather more of the same questionable and even unbiblical traditions and practices which it had earlier advanced.

Patton further encourages his readers to go with this new flow, saying:

“But certian [sic] aspects of the ethos of the emerging church should be within all of us. We should never be satisfied with the status quo. We should always be asking questions and bringing to account our most fundamental beliefs. We need to identify with the culture at the same time as we hold on to the past. I believe Robert Webber, though never really called an emerger, was a great example of our continued need to reform. His *Ancient-Future Faith* was a great example of how we can hold on to, respect, learn from, and identify with our past, yet push forward into an exciting future” (ibid.).

Webber, who died of pancreatic cancer in April 2007, taught theology for more than 30 years at Wheaton College.

(continues on page 21)

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GOTHARD ACTED INAPPROPRIATELY, NOT CRIMINALLY

The in-house verdict is in on Bill Gothard — but the organization responsible for bringing to the public's attention alleged sexual indiscretions by the popular Bible teacher and seminar leader calls it "a severe disappointment."

Last March, charges of sexual harassment and other misconduct against Gothard began to surface. The longtime head of the popular Institute in Basic Life Principles (IBLP) subsequently resigned as president and from the ministry's board and its affiliates. The whistle-blowing organization, Recovering Grace, said it had statements from 34 women who alleged that they had been sexually harassed by Gothard, four of whom claimed molestation.

An IBLP board investigation followed and in June issued a statement maintaining that Gothard had "acted in an inappropriate manner" but that "no criminal activity has been discovered."

The board's statement, posted on its ministry website and titled "A Time of Transition," asserted, "In response to allegations against Bill Gothard, the Board sought the facts through a confidential and thorough review process conducted by outside legal counsel. Many people were interviewed, including former Board members, current and past staff members, current and past administrators, parents, and family members. At this point, based upon those willing to be interviewed, no criminal activity has been discovered. If it had been, it would have been reported to the proper authorities immediately, as it will be in the future if any such activity is revealed."

In an interview with the *Chicago Sun-Times*, Gothard said, "I respect and honor the board, and my number one goal right now ... is to go back to the ones that I have offended and ask their forgiveness."

The Recovering Grace organization posted an immediate online reply to the board's statement saying, "we have been cautiously hopeful that the board would ultimately do the right thing — that they would come to an understanding of the corruption and misconduct that has permeated the ministry for almost forty years, and that they would lead the ministry towards repentance." The response further claimed, "This week's statement by IBLP was a severe disappointment as we realized that the current board of IBLP has chosen to do as the previous

IBLP board did in 1980 and 1981: to minimize the exploitation of innocent young women by the founder of their ministry, to ignore their responsibility for this and other misconduct and abuse, and to justify this type of non-response because they believe in saving the organization above all else. Once again, a Christian organization is choosing self-preservation, ignoring the abuse and broken lives left by a predatory leader."

In summarizing its rebuttal, Recovering Grace presented "three major flaws in the board's statement: 1) It is **dismissive** of the victims and of the harassment itself; 2) It is **deceptive** in its presentation of recent events; 3) It is **defensive** of the validity of Bill Gothard's ministry and teachings."

Recovering Grace is not alone in its criticism. R.L. Stollar of the Homeschoolers Anonymous website agrees, saying "IBLP's Statement Is A Disgrace." Stollar further stressed, "Now, in today's statement, the IBLP board has sadly chosen to continue their history of whitewashing and denialism. It may be a new board, but the actions remain the same."

In the 1980s, Gothard and his ministry weathered an earlier storm of sexual improprieties when revelations surfaced that his brother, Steve Gothard, had affairs with several secretaries of the Institute. Steve was forced to resign as administrative director, and Bill resigned as president but quickly returned three weeks later — long before the scandal had time to recede.

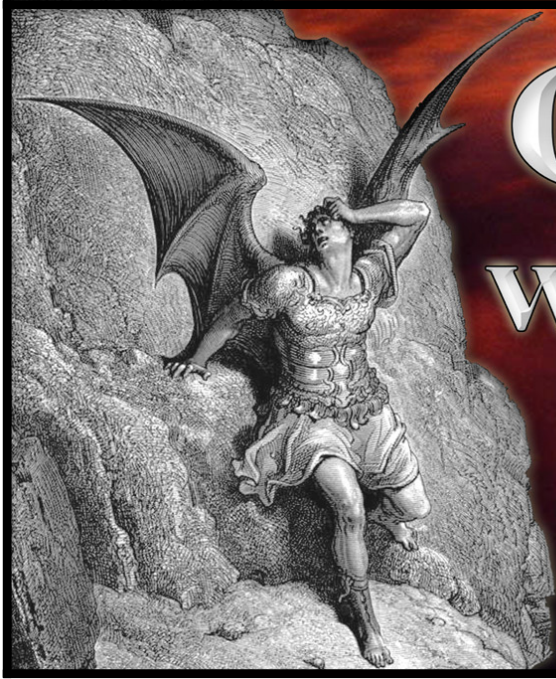
The 79-year-old Gothard has never been married.

—MKG

CONCERN EXPRESSED OVER VATICAN PRAYER MEETING

Major news services — including the Associated Press, Reuters, and Al Arabyia — have reported that Pope Francis hosted "an unprecedented prayer meeting" with Israeli and Palestinian presidents. Israeli President Shimon Peres and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas joined Pope Francis on June 8 in the Vatican gardens for "an hourlong invocation of Jewish, Christian and Muslim prayers," according to the *New York Daily News*.

The Times of Israel noted that, "In order to accommodate Jewish religious beliefs, the event will be held in a
(continues on page 22)



Obsessed with Demons

A Call to Discern Today's Deliverance Movement

by M. Kurt Goedelman and J. Greg Sheryl

Last spring the movie *Son of God*, which was produced by actress Roma Downey and her husband, Mark Burnett, was released in theaters across the country. While many — such as Rick Warren, Joel Osteen, Max Lucado, T.D. Jakes, and even baseball legend Mariano Rivera — applauded the film, Downey and Burnett took their share of criticism; specifically in Downey's case because of her Roman Catholic allegiance.

One article critical of the motion picture was written by New Testament scholar Craig S. Keener, who is professor of New Testament at Asbury Theological Seminary in Wilmore, Ky., and was titled, "Casting the Devil Out of the Jesus Story." In that article, Keener noted that the new movie had removed the devil from the story of the life of Jesus, even though *The Bible* miniseries, which aired on the History Channel last year, and from which the *Son of God* movie was taken, had included the devil in its story of the life of Jesus. While respecting Downey's stated reasons for not including the devil in the theatrical version of the life of Jesus,¹ Keener also observed:

"You can certainly tell the gospel story without including him. Nevertheless, Satan remains an uncomfortable part of the gospel

story, and knowing who he is and what he does helps us to fully understand what Christ has done for us. Jesus endured temptation, triumphed over evil, and brought life and healing to those who were oppressed."²

As the 20th-century apologist C.S. Lewis famously pointed out, "Satan, the leader or dictator of devils, is the opposite, not of God, but of Michael [the archangel]."³ Lewis wrote something else that is very appropriate to our topic:

"There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors, and hail a materialist or a magician with the same delight."⁴

The beloved hymn, "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God," written by the 16th-century Protestant Reformer Martin Luther, contains clear references to supernatural evil forces that are arrayed against us. Reflect upon the hymn's very first verse:

"A mighty fortress is our God, A bulwark never failing; Our

helper He amid the flood Of mortal ills prevailing. For still our ancient foe Doth seek to work us woe — His craft and pow'r are great, And armed with cruel hate, On earth is not his equal."

Notice the careful balance that Luther strikes in this hymn, not only in that first verse, but in the other verses as well. He acknowledges the reality of the devil and of demons; and their warfare against the Christian. Yet he asserts that God and His power give the victory over all the forces of evil. And that is good theology. The devil is real, but God is much more powerful.

It has commonly and correctly been observed that the Christian has three enemies: The world, the flesh, and the devil. While all three of these enemies are formidable foes and important to consider, the focus of this article will be to not only address the subject of our adversary the devil by considering who he is, but also to examine popular and contemporary thoughts about his abilities and operations, and compare those ideas with Scripture. The Apostle Paul said this to the believers in Corinth:

"Now whom you forgive anything, I also forgive. For if indeed

I have forgiven anything, I have forgiven that one for your sakes in the presence of Christ, lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices" (2 Corinthians 2:10-11, emphasis added).

Therefore, like the Apostle Paul warned, neither do we want to be unaware of Satan's devices or schemes.

ORIGIN OF SATAN AND DEMONS

The Scripture speaks of "the mystery of lawlessness" (2 Thessalonians 2:7), and refers to "the man of lawlessness" (2 Thessalonians 2:3) and "that lawless one" (2 Thessalonians 2:8), both apparent descriptions of the same person referred to in 1 John 2:18 as "the antichrist" and in the book of Revelation as "the beast" (Revelation 13; 14:9-13; 19:19-20; and 20:10). This "antichrist" (or "beast" or "man of lawlessness," etc.) is empowered by "the dragon" (see Revelation 13:2-4), which is a name for Satan (Revelation 12:9), who is the epitome of lawlessness (1 John 3:4, 8).

The origin of Satan and of demons is not spelled out in detail in the Scriptures. The majority opinion that can be gathered from Evangelicals about the origin of Satan can be gleaned from sources such as theology professor Robert Lightner, who says:

"Two major passages of Scripture are usually said to describe his original condition before he sinned and his sin — Ezekiel 28:11-19 and Isaiah 14:12-19. Not all agree, however, that Satan is in view in these passages. If he is not, we do not have any record of his rebellion against God. ... There are good reasons to believe Satan is the subject in these two passages, though one should avoid dogmatism on the matter."⁵

The *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Dictionary* also states:

"The origin of Satan is not explicitly asserted in Scripture, but ... 1 Tim. 3:6 indicates that he fell under God's condemnation be-

cause of ambitious pride. While many theologians refuse to apply the far-reaching prophecies in Isa. 14:12-14 and Ezek. 28:12-15 to Satan, contending that these passages are strictly addressed to the kings of Babylon and Tyre, other scholars hold that they contain a clear revelation of Satan's origin. These profound prophecies are thought to go much beyond any earthly ruler and harmonize with the scriptural picture of Satan's close relations with world governments (Dan. 10:13; Jn. 12:31; Eph. 6:12). These passages picture Satan's prefall splendor as well as his apostasy through pride and self-exaltation against God. A consuming passion of Satan is to be worshiped (Isa. 14:14; Matt. 4:9; 1 Cor. 10:20; Rev. 13:4, 15). In his fall Satan drew a vast number of lesser celestial creatures with him (Rev. 12:4)."⁶

So, as to Satan's origins, this dictionary points out that the Scriptures tell us several things. For one thing, 1 Timothy 3:6 seems to indicate that the devil's downfall may have been his pride. This verse, in speaking of qualifications for church overseers, states that the potential overseer must not be "a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil."

Secondly, some Christian scholars believe that certain descriptions in Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28 are images of the fall of Satan,⁷ while also describing the kings of Babylon and Tyre.

In Scripture, Satan is also called "Beelzebul," and is referred to as "the ruler of the demons" (Matthew 12:24). Thus knowing that Beelzebul is Satan, who is the ruler of the demons, it would appear that Satan (the devil, Beelzebul, etc.) is the arch-demon, the "chief demon."

The question arises as to who or what demons are. Theologian Charles Ryrie presents us with possible options:

"The origin of demons has been a matter of speculation for centuries. The Greeks said they were

the souls of departed evil people. Some Christians believe that they are the disembodied spirits of a race of people who lived and died before Adam was created. However, the Scriptures say nothing about such a race. More likely, demons are the angels who revolted with Satan. Notice their close link with him in Matthew 12:24 and 25:41. Too, they are called spirit beings, albeit unclean (Matt. 17:18, cf. Mark 9:25), which associates them with the spirit world rather than the human."⁸

While most respected Bible commentators would strongly reject that second option there are those like the late controversial Bible teacher Derek Prince,⁹ who would favor the so-called "pre-Adamic race" theory.

However, most Evangelicals believe that the demons are fallen angels, whose fall may be referred to in Revelation 12:4, which states that "His [the red dragon's] tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth." This is generally interpreted to be Satan drawing away a third of God's angels as co-rebels with him against God. Although Derek Prince mentions some plausible reasons why he does not believe demons are fallen angels,¹⁰ the overwhelming majority of Bible students and scholars hold fast the belief that demons are indeed fallen angels.

THE NEW EXORCISTS

There can be little doubt that the popularity and degree of teaching — both written and oral — in regard to spiritual warfare, demonic activity, and ability of demons can be attributed to those men and women who are seen as "experts" in telling Christians how to successfully battle the spiritual forces of darkness. These men and women run the gamut from hyper-charismatic all the way to conservative and evangelical. The more well-known players include:

Rebecca Brown. There is little doubt that Brown is the most bizarre spiritual warfare and demonic bondage deliverance teacher to gain a hearing

in recent years. She was born Ruth Irene Bailey and at age 31 received a Doctor of Medicine degree from Indiana University. She began her internship at Ball Memorial Hospital in Muncie, Ind. It was here, early in her internship, that she developed an obsession with demons and deliverance.

During her internship and residency at Ball Memorial, her behavior became eccentric. The hospital started receiving reports that she was exorcising demons in the intensive care unit. She began using candles in the rooms during her exorcisms. On numerous occasions she told her patients that she was chosen by God as the only physician able to diagnose certain ailments and conditions which other physicians could not. She believed that other physicians, including physicians from Ball Memorial and St. John's Medical Center in Anderson, Ind., were in fact demons, devils, and evil spirits themselves.

In 1984, following several months of investigations by numerous legal entities, the Indiana Medical Licensing Board issued an emergency suspension of Bailey's license. She fled the area and finally in September, after additional investigation, the IMLB issued a "Findings of Fact, Conclusion of Law & Order" calling for the immediate revocation of Bailey's medical license.

Bailey moved to California and changed her name to Rebecca Brown. It was here that her wild and embellished tales of the demonic captured the attention of Gospel tract publisher Jack Chick. Chick was an easy target for exaggerated and off-the-wall testimonies having promoted and published the phony tales of John Todd and Alberto Rivera.¹¹ Chick bought into Brown's far-fetched stories and catapulted her to celebrity status by publishing her first two books, *He Came to Set the Captives Free* and *Prepare for War*.

Brown's materials are laced with fear and paranoia, saying anything from a household accident to an insect bite to a splinter is an opening for demon possession.¹² Her remedies for

deliverance are just as strange, instructing her readers how to squeeze and draw demons out of a person by placing an "oil tourniquet" (i.e., ring of oil) below the victim's elbow and slowly squeezing downward over the wrist toward the hand. Brown claims this will "drive the demons down and out of the extremity."¹³

Brown even teaches that family pets can be possessed:

"If you have pets, always be alert to the possibility of their having familiar spirits, but please be sure to briefly share the gospel before casting out the demon or asking the Lord to remove the human spirit. Usually you will not know if you are dealing solely with a human spirit or with a demon, and whenever possible you want the satanist involved to hear the gospel."¹⁴

Brown's stories are pure fiction that have more in common with a low-budget horror film than with sound theology. It is regrettable that there are Christians who readily buy into her nonsense. Her demonology is purely fear-based and cheapens the victorious message of the Gospel.

Bob Larson. Larson rose to public attention in 1982 as an evangelical apologist when he launched "Talk Back," a two-hour weekday call-in show which responded to a variety of "hot-button" issues of the day such as cults, the occult, rock music, and role-playing games (such as "Dungeons and Dragons"). Since then he has reinvented himself several times over. His current persona is that of an exorcist extraordinaire. On a weekly television broadcast, *Bob Larson presents Spiritual Freedom*, he promoted himself as "the world's foremost authority on the occult, demons, and the supernatural." He currently tours the world holding out-of-control and deliberately shocking exorcist meetings. He identifies nearly every sin and human weakness with the tag of "demon."

In an earlier *Quarterly Journal* article, PFO director G. Richard Fisher commented in regard to Larson's meetings and those attending:

"Much of Larson's routine and spectacle feed off of ignorance and the need to be seen. Much of the commotion is generated by followers who know what is expected. Some are just confused, needy, desperate, and untaught. Everyone can get into the act and become a part of the main attraction in the greatest show in the universe. It is hard to resist."¹⁵

Like Rebecca Brown, Larson capitalizes on the ignorance of his followers and sells them fear. For example, in response to the question "Can a person have a demon and not know it?" he says that "may be one of the most fundamental questions asked about deliverance" and that "The answer is yes."¹⁶ He further teaches:

"When a demon enters, he immediately embarks on a plan for further demonic invasion. The spirit will tempt the person to commit other sins that in turn allow other demons to enter. As the number of demons grows, they set out to dismantle the spiritual boundaries in the person. In the place of moral consciousness, the demons establish an infrastructure of evil. Like a cancer spreading from one organ to another, the spiritual malignancy extends to every vulnerable aspect of the person's spirit, soul, and body. Often the victim descends to depths of moral depravity that would have been unthinkable prior to the possession of evil spirits."¹⁷

Larson also describes "demonic hindrances to deliverance" to his readers:

"Certain demons actually go by the name Blocker, which also describes their function. I have dealt with hundreds of demons like this. They belong to a category of evil spirits whose sole purpose is to hinder the progress of the exorcism. They may make the person mute, so he cannot respond to inquiries or pray against the demons. Other blockers will make the victim temporarily blind, which creates a terrifying experience. One blocker I

encountered induced a condition of paralysis."¹⁸

Yet Larson's talents leave a lot to be desired. Beyond his pretentious claims of discernment and ability to deliver the demon possessed is much that calls his practice into question. The investigative news program *Inside Edition* noticed repeated exorcisms of the same person at several different Larson rallies. It also reported on the hoax orchestrated by two men who pretended to be demon possessed and attended a Larson meeting in Phoenix. Larson took the bait and supposedly cast out the demons from them as the pair continued "playing along" to "keep the gag going."¹⁹ Apparently, Larson fares no better than his gullible faithful, who are easily fooled and cannot distinguish a real demon from a fake. In fact, by employing Larson's demonology, one could easily argue that he himself has a two-fold spirit of deception — deceiving others and being deceived (cf. 2 Timothy 3:13).

Joyce Meyer. *Charisma* magazine labels Meyer as "America's most popular woman minister" and "a national sensation."²⁰ Meyer speaks to nearly every aspect of the Christian's life to "help" believers achieve the victorious life. This includes teaching on demons, spiritual warfare, and deliverance.

Like the other aberrational deliverance teachers, demons are never in short supply for Meyer:

"[In] one of the foreign lands, there's a certain tree that they believe that demons inhabit this tree. Demons have been known to inhabit rocks. And, you know, there are inanimate objects that they will inhabit. But largely they want to inhabit a human body because they can work out their evil through that human body. Occasionally they will get into an animal, but they want to be in a body. That's the highest honor for them is to get in a body. They want to be in a body."²¹

"Evil spirits are drawn to sounds, to smells, and also to

different things they can see like different idols."²²

"Poverty is probably one of the most unique spirits to watch. You can watch a spirit of poverty take over an entire neighborhood. ... And almost always with a poverty spirit, comes a spirit that just stinks. I mean, a poverty spirit just plain stinks. When I get people at the altar that got a poverty spirit on them they almost always have bad breath and body odor."²³

"You know, a lot of lazy people get demons. A lot of passive people get demons."²⁴

Meyer has a litany of "war" stories, but they come with no corroborating evidence or proof. We are simply to believe Meyer's stories and her interpretations. For her listening audience, it seems the more bizarre the better.

Meyer claims that she has had people in her home, hitting her, spitting on her, throwing up on her, socking her in the face, and running crazed through the house. On one occasion she and her pastor, Rick Shelton, supposedly rode a large demonized woman piggyback around her house while the woman vomited on every towel Meyer had in the house.²⁵ Was Meyer just the victim of some wild charade, or is she merely exaggerating for effect? While we will never know, we do know her actions and activities are in no way biblical.

Meyer says that her education in demonology came from a prominent book by a Christian author, but she refuses to give either the author's name or the title of the book.²⁶ However, her ideas sound much like those found in Frank and Ida Mae Hammond's book, *Pigs in the Parlor*.

Frank and Ida Mae Hammond. First published in June 1973, *Pigs in the Parlor* by the Hammonds, a Baptist couple turned charismatic, is advertised as: "The best-selling handbook on deliverance in the world! More than 1,000,000 copies in print worldwide. Translated into more than a dozen other languages."²⁷ One could easily label the Hammonds' book as

"everything you wanted to know about demons but were afraid to ask." However, the problem is that this slim volume (153 pages) is far removed from any sane presentation of a sound theology of demons. The Hammonds' volume was a forerunner to the books by the aforementioned teachers and authors, and was a breeding ground for fear, superstition, and misinformation.

Perhaps contributing to the popularity of the book was its victim mentality, making the believer the target and therefore not responsible for his or her disobedience or sinfulness. It was truly the religious literary companion to comedian Flip Wilson's "the devil made me do it," which was a national catchphrase at the same time *Pigs in the Parlor* was released.

The Hammonds assure readers that no one is exempt:

"Does everyone need deliverance? Personally, I have not found any exceptions. While we have walked in ignorance and darkness the enemy has successfully made inroads into each of us. We must learn how to get him out and how to keep him out."²⁸

And when the Hammonds say no exceptions, they mean *no exceptions*, teaching that "demon spirits are able to gain entrance to a fetus and to children" and that "it is obvious that there should be deliverance for them."²⁹ Frank illustrates their point:

"A young Christian couple brought their three month old child for ministry. This was their first baby and they had disagreed as to how to discipline the child. The father and mother had a violent argument over the matter. While they were having this argument the child began to scream, and since the incident it was apparent that the child was suffering from *tormenting spirits*. My wife held the child in her arms and began to command the troubling spirits to go in the name of Jesus. As the first spirit came out the baby stiffened and cried out. Two other demons

came out in the same way. Then the child grew quiet and relaxed and was soon asleep."³⁰

Even beyond the desire by these parents wanting to discipline their 3-month-old child, it is hard not to see a number of disturbing and unbiblical issues here.

While the Hammonds acknowledge the reality of sinful behavior by a believer, they tend to see it as the pathway or open door for demons:

"In the fifth chapter of Galatians we find a list of seventeen 'works of the flesh.' They include the sins of adultery, fornication, witchcraft, hatred, wrath, strife, envying, murders and drunkenness. Through my experiences in deliverance I have encountered demons that responded to each of these designations. What, then, is the relationship between the works of the flesh and the works of demons? When a man yields to temptation he sins in the flesh. Through such sin the door is opened for the invasion of the enemy. Then he has a compounded problem — the flesh and the devil. The solution is two-fold: crucify the flesh and cast out the demons."³¹

The Hammonds inform their readers that the need for deliverance is determined by two principal methods: discernment and detection.³² In addressing the latter method, they write:

"Some of the most common symptoms of indwelling demons are as follows: 1. *Emotional Problems*. Disturbances in the *emotions* which persist or recur. Some of the most common disturbances are resentment, hatred, anger, fear, rejection (feeling unwanted and unloved), self-pity, jealousy, depression, worry, inferiority and insecurity. 2. *Mental Problems*. Disturbances in the *mind* or thought life, such as mental torment, procrastination, indecision, compromise, confusion, doubt, rationalization and loss of memory. 3. *Speech Problems*. Outbursts or uncontrolled use of the *tongue*. These include

lying, cursing, blasphemy, criticism, mockery, railing and gossip. 4. *Sex Problems*. Recurring unclean thoughts and acts regarding *sex*. These include fantasy sex experiences, masturbation, lust, perversions, homosexuality, fornication, adultery, incest, provocativeness and harlotry. 5. *Addictions*. The most common addictions are to nicotine, alcohol, drugs, medicines, caffeine and food. 6. *Physical Infirmities*. Many diseases and physical afflictions are due to spirits of infirmity. (See: Luke 13:11). When a demon of infirmity is cast out there is often the need to pray for a healing of whatever damage has resulted. Thus, there is a close relationship between deliverance and healing. 7. *Religious Error*. Involvement to ANY DEGREE in religious error can open the door for demons. Objects and literature from sources of religious error have been known to attract demons into houses."³³

Thus, according to the instruction by the Hammonds, everything appears to be an indicator of indwelling demons — from having a *Watchtower* magazine in your home to forgetting where you placed your car keys to drinking too much coffee to waking up with a headache. Every day and in every way, it is just one battle after another against the forces of darkness. When one tries to fill in the blanks they think are in Scripture, anything goes.

In the Foreword to his book, Frank divulges the source for much of his understanding of deliverance:

"I acknowledge with deep gratitude the influence that Dr. Derek Prince has had upon my ministry. Many of the principles of deliverance reflected in my writings are products of his sound foundational teachings."³⁴

It is not surprising that Prince, like the Hammonds, is an author to be avoided — or at the very least considered with a watchful eye.³⁵ He died over a decade ago, but his resources live on.

Yet, as earlier noted, it is not just the eccentric, ridiculous, or charismatic extremist authors who purport an unbiblical and dangerous demonology. There is a full list of authors regarded as mainstream who present a sanitized, but equally unsafe study of demons and how they operate.

Neil Anderson. As the author or co-author of more than 40 books, Anderson is the vanguard among those seen as conservative in deliverance ministry. He has received endorsements from Elmer Towns (Liberty University), the late Bill Bright, Chuck Swindoll, Kay Arthur, and Jack Hayford (a close friend of Benny Hinn). No doubt the fact that Harvest House Publishers, considered a reputable and cautious evangelical publisher, is the company responsible for his most popular book, *The Bondage Breaker*, has helped establish Anderson's prominent position. One apologetic source also gives us insight into — and warning of — why he is so easily accepted:

"Much of what he says is soundly biblical, but his message and methods are dangerously tainted by [his] 'version of demonic deliverance, inner healing, psychotherapy, false memory syndrome, a *steps* approach, one naturism [sic], ritualism, and generational curses."³⁶

The Christian Research Institute agrees and argues that Anderson promotes numerous negative and dangerous concepts:

"(1) Misinterpretation and misapplication of Scripture; (2) Inordinate or inaccurate focus on demonic and occult influences, powers, and activities; (3) Misinformation on occult activity; (4) Acceptance and promotion of untrue theories of traumatic repression, dissociation, multiple personality disorder (MPD), satanic ritual abuse (SRA), satanic conspiracies, and occult phenomena; (5) An unbiblical view of demonization of Christians, and so forth; and (6) Use of teaching and counseling techniques that condition attendees to believe what he

is saying and to manifest the symptoms and responses he elicits."³⁷

Like his more aberrational, charismatic counterparts, Anderson sees demons everywhere:

"It is my observation that no more than 15 percent of the evangelical Christian community is completely free of Satan's bondage. These are the people who are consistently living a Spirit-filled life and bearing fruit. The other 85 percent are struggling along fruitlessly at one of at least three levels of spiritual conflict."³⁸

One strong critic of Anderson's counseling model is Thomas Ice, who co-authored with Robert Dean, Jr., a skillful and biblical theology of spiritual warfare. That book, first released under the title *A Holy Rebellion* and later as *Overrun by Demons*, was printed by Harvest House, the publisher of Anderson's best-seller, *The Bondage Breaker*. As good as the Ice and Dean book was, it was not of any great surprise that direct criticism of Anderson was absent, with only a passing reference to him being made. However, in other publications and resources, Ice is more direct and specific in his denunciation of Anderson:

"I am sorry to have to conclude that many of Dr. Neil T. Anderson's views on spiritual warfare and deliverance approaches fit into the category of subtle falsehoods. His whole approach is built upon a faulty foundation. ... Anderson's message contains a blend of psychology, theology, Bible verses, but most importantly story after story (my how he loves to tell stories) to give his readers/listeners confidence that he has practiced what he preaches. ... The real potential for problems in the Christian life is blaming things on the demonic and neglecting normal Christian growth and maturity. It is this kind of lack of maturity in the lives of many believers, because they are looking for the quick-fix

of a Neil Anderson deliverance, that will prove in the long run to effect the greater damage. I am concerned that believers wake up to the false ways of Dr. Anderson."³⁹

Mark Bubeck. Another teacher who is regarded to be within the genre of established and respected spiritual warfare teachers is Mark Bubeck. Bubeck's best-selling volume, *The Adversary*, is published by Moody Publishers (aka, Moody Press). It is unfair to place Bubeck in the fringe category made up of Rebecca Brown, Frank Hammond, and the others. Nevertheless the result of his teaching will be the same. He believes and teaches that Christians can have indwelling demons.

Bubeck is masterful at nuancing the concept of demon possession. He rejects the idea that a believer can be possessed, saying rather that demons can gain ground in and direct control of a believer. He argues that a believer cannot be possessed in the same way that an unbeliever can be possessed. G. Richard Fisher notes, "Bubeck's approach as far as depravity, the sin nature, addictions and the mastery and depth of sin (even in a believer) is shallow and deficient."⁴⁰ Fisher also addresses what he believes is the source or influence of Bubeck's presuppositions:

"In *The Adversary*, Bubeck speaks of Jessie Penn-Lewis' book, *War on the Saints*, as 'a classic in the study of Satan's war against believers.' It is obvious he has borrowed some of his extreme views from this woman who could be called 'the Mother of all deliverance teachings.' Penn-Lewis was a Welsh mystic who wrote *War on the Saints* in 1904. ... Penn-Lewis believed the Church was entering the tribulation period and coinciding with that was a great demonic attack on the Church and Christians. She actually believed that demons could reside in the head, eyes, jaws, tongue, muscles of the face or in the nerve tissues of the brain in believers. They could be

spatially located even in the bowels of Christians. Bubeck, too, purports to having discovered demons of nausea and colon, so some of Penn-Lewis' excesses are being played out in Bubeck's books. Bubeck has cobbled together ideas from Penn-Lewis, Charismatics, 'deliverance' teachers and his own interpretations of purported encounters with demons."⁴¹

Like Anderson, Bubeck and his book come with an impressive number of endorsements, including Warren Wiersbe, Erwin Lutzer, Chip Ingram, and Charles Stanley. Wiersbe is responsible for the Foreword in the current edition. Moody Publishers, the publisher of *The Adversary*, posits, "Having sold more than 350,000 worldwide, this best-seller will help the reader triumph in the battle against demonic activity by relying on the almighty and powerful Word of God."⁴²

C. Fred Dickason. Of those in the mainstream deliverance camp, perhaps the teacher and author most diligent and thorough in his setting forth the teaching that a Christian can be indwelt by a demon is the anti-charismatic deliverance minister C. Fred Dickason. Dickason argues his case in his 350-page tome *Demon Possession and the Christian: A New Perspective*. Whether or not one agrees with Dickason on this matter, it is not unfair to say he certainly deserves an "A" for effort.

Dickason is a 1954 graduate of the Moody Bible Institute. In 1961, he joined Moody's faculty where he served for decades as a professor and for nearly three decades as its Chairman of the Theology Department (from 1968-1995).

Dickason, like Bubeck (who wrote the Foreword in *Demon Possession and the Christian*), is proficient at nuancing terms. He uses expressions such as "demonization," "demon habitation,"⁴³ "inhabited by demons,"⁴⁴ "[to] have a demon resident in [one's] body,"⁴⁵ and so forth in postulating the idea that a Christian can have a demon.

Despite his painstaking and thorough examination of this question, Dickason must face the facts and therefore rightly concludes that neither the Bible nor biblically-based theology give a decisive answer to this question. Thus, he believes that what he terms “clinical evidence” (i.e., experience) provides us with the only answer. Not surprisingly, then, it is here in those experiences that Dickason is able to find that Christians can have demons.

Many additional examples could be cited. For example, Bible teachers and authors Beth Moore and Bill Gothard both espouse the unbiblical teaching of ancestral demons. (Moore does so subtly; Gothard more overtly.) This teaching, also labeled as generational curses, maintains that the unconfessed sins committed by an ancestor (e.g., father, mother, grandparent) have their direct consequences — not just social or environmental consequences — passed down to their children. These consequences continue from generation to generation until the time a believer repents and seeks God for a breaking of the generational curse.

While the above-cited authors (from Brown to Dickason) have finer distinctions from one another in their spiritual warfare doctrines and practices, the major common denominator, however, is that a Christian can be indwelt or possessed by a demon. It is to this teaching that we will now turn our attention.

CAN A CHRISTIAN HAVE A DEMON?

In charismatic circles, attempting to cast demons out of Christians is not an uncommon practice. And with the influence of men like Anderson and Bubeck, the non-charismatic camps may not be far behind.

One well-known Evangelical, the late Merrill C. Unger, in a book published in 1952, entitled *Biblical Demonology*,⁴⁶ denied that a Christian could have a demon. He then changed his belief as is evidenced in his book published 19 years later titled, *Demons in the World Today*,⁴⁷

and in another book published several years after that titled, *What Demons Can Do to Saints*.⁴⁸ And adding to the confusion is the fact that a handful of Evangelicals who believe that a Christian can have a demon are also certain that the gifts of tongues and prophecy have ceased. Influenced by this belief, they give testimonies of having cast “tongues spirits” out of people,⁴⁹ thereby creating problems for fellow-deliverance ministers from charismatic circles.⁵⁰

Yet not every Evangelical is willing to jump on the demon bandwagon with Anderson and company. There are many who have remained faithful to the Scriptures and vigorously deny that a Christian can have a demon.

The question of whether or not a Christian can have a demon relates to epistemology; that is, how do we know what we know? This is particularly so because demons are invisible spirits. Because this question concerns invisible realities, that are not perceivable to our physical sense of sight, we cannot know the truth about these things by natural means. We cannot, for instance, “see” a demon with our physical eyes, any more than we can tell by looking whether or not a person has Christ living within them. Likewise, we cannot see (with our eyes) a person being given the gift of eternal life.

In that these things are so, we must rely solely upon God’s revelation for knowledge on all such matters to tell us things that we cannot know by means of our five physical senses. God’s revelation in the Bible tells us the things that He wants us to know. Some of these things are given to us in the form of direct, propositional statements, such as, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved” (Acts 16:31). However, there are other matters that the Bible is either silent on (such as the date of the Lord’s return), or only gives us information that, while not directly answering the question, provides us with certain precepts and instruction that *may* relate to the matter (such as whether or not an infant who dies goes to heaven). With this latter kind of

information, we may arrive at a theological position on the issue in question.

There is no Bible verse that directly says, “A believer cannot have a demon.” Thus, to attempt to answer it, we must use all the relevant scriptural data, being careful to rightly divide the Word of truth, and in so doing come to a sound biblical position. Space prevents an exhaustive study of the question, but a brief review of several important particulars will be beneficial. These specifics include:

First is an understanding that those who promote the idea that a Christian may have a demon rely more upon experience than Scripture. This approach to finding “truth” is called empiricism. Theologians Thomas Ice and Robert Dean define in detail for us this process:

“The empiricist will gather all the information he can from those who claim to have had some experience with an angel or a demon, or those who have helped deliver people from demonic influence. He will find out what they learned from these encounters and which methods, in their opinion, proved successful in delivering a person from the demonic oppression. He will collect these case studies and then draw conclusions about what we are to do when we encounter a demon. Even when the Bible is consulted with this process, no matter how high the empiricist’s view of Scripture, in practice the Bible is treated as just another voice or witness to demonic activity. This always results in adjusting the biblical teaching on demons until it fits with the conclusions of various experiences.”⁵¹

Second, in considering this issue, it is essential to realize that the Epistles — which provide the doctrinal foundation of the Church and are the interpretation and application of Christ’s teachings — are conspicuously silent on the matter of demon possession. Thomas Davis tells us:

“Demon possession appears in the New Testament exclusively in conjunction with the offer of the Messianic Kingdom. Therefore we see cases in the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles, and predictions of demonic activity during the Tribulation Period in the Book of Revelation. However, we do not see the same kind of overt demonic attack in the Epistles — that section of the Bible which describes the believer’s experience in this present Church Age. The current interest in the demonic is inconsistent with what the Epistles describe as our position in Christ and the tactics taught for spiritual warfare. In light of all the verses that emphasize our deliverance from the kingdom of Satan and protection in the fellowship of the Godhead, it is inconsistent with the Scriptures that God would allow demons to invade the person of one of His children.”⁵²

Third is insight into the biblical word used for the terms “possessed” or “demonized.” The Greek word *daimonizomai* is used only in the Gospel accounts and a total of 13 times.⁵³ James Bjornstad wrote regarding the use of this term:

“This term is used only in the gospel accounts. It is used almost exclusively in the Synoptic Gospels, and most frequently in Matthew, where it occurs seven times. ... This term appears to be limited in application to unbelievers. There are no passages in which this term is used of a believer.”⁵⁴

In responding to the subject of whether born again believers can be demon possessed, the Assemblies of God explain:

“The word *daimonizomai*, to be possessed of a demon, or, as some put it, to be demonized, is not as common. It is used as a verb only once and that of a Canaanite girl who was ‘badly demonized,’ or cruelly tormented by a demon. Everywhere else it is found as a participle which

should be translated, ‘the demoniac(s)’ (Matthew 8:28, 33; 9:32; 12:22; Luke 8:35; Mark 5:15-18). Again, in no case is there any indication that any of these ‘demoniacs’ or demonized persons were right with God; and in most cases they suffered severe torment — and a dramatic change of personality.”⁵⁵

Another biblical expression is *echo* (to have, to hold, to possess) a demon. This term is found only in the Gospels and the book of Acts, and is used 17 times.⁵⁶ The Greek word *echo* is sometimes used in reference to a child who had a demon; to Jews, who although apparently were religious, had a demon (as well as to other people who had demons); and it was also used by Jewish critics of Jesus, who were accusing Him of having a demon. However, in the New Testament the word never appears to speak of a believer in Jesus having a demon.

Fourth is labeling as a demon what Scripture clearly says is sin or the works of the flesh (Galatians 5:19-21). This is a deeply flawed extrapolation that cannot be permitted to stand. Chuck Smith, the late founder of Calvary Chapel, speaks to the matter:

“Some of the names given by these supposed demons which are more popular are lust, hatred, liar, gluttony, envy, fear, and jealousy. These things are classified in Galatians 5:19-21 as the works of the flesh. We’re told to ‘put off all these’ (Colossians 3:8), or by the Spirit to ‘mortify the deeds of the body’ (Romans 8:13; 6:3-14). Not once are we commanded to have them cast out. It seems to me that this whole Christian-and-demon trip is a cop-out for the flesh. I would like to find some easy way to get rid of my fleshly nature, and rather than the painful process of crucifixion, I’d just like to have it cast out. It’s also a way of escaping the responsibility for my fleshly actions. How can I be blamed if ‘the devil made me do it?’ There doesn’t exist one piece of evidence in the Scriptures that Jesus Christ, His apostles, or the

early church once sought to cast demons of the flesh out of anyone in the Body of Christ. The works of the flesh were recognized, and we’re instructed in how to deal with them. Never are we taught that they’re to be exorcised.”⁵⁷

In a theological position statement, the Assemblies of God also address falsely recognizing the works of the flesh as demons:

“A serious danger in considering all these sins of the disposition to be demons is that the individual may feel no responsibility for his actions and feel that the necessity for repentance is removed. Actually, the Bible calls men to repent of these things and to put off these attitudes. The great conflict within us is not between the Holy Spirit and demons, but between the indwelling Holy Spirit and the flesh (that is, all the sensory apparatus that tends toward sin).”⁵⁸

Fifth, and finally, are the straightforward expressions of Scripture. Paul appears to specifically address the issue that a Christian could not have a demon because the Holy Spirit of God lives within the believer. He makes this point in a passage exhorting Christians not to “be bound together with unbelievers” (2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1). Within that passage, the inspired Scripture says:

“And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God” (2 Corinthians 6:15-16).

Thus, it would appear that God and Satan could not both reside in the Lord’s temple. At the very least, this Scripture is stating that it would be incongruous for them to do so. As such, the evidence of Scripture here indicates that it would be unnatural for Christ and demons to occupy a believer’s body.

Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians deals with the issue of an immoral brother (5:1-13). The diagnosis by

modern spiritual warfare enthusiasts would be that this man possesses the “spirit of immorality.” Their remedy would be to cast out the spirit. But that is not the instruction Paul gives. He tells the church that the sinner is to be *delivered to*, not *delivered from* Satan (vv. 4-5) and that the man is to be *expelled* (v. 13) rather than *delivered*. This was done in order that the sinner might be helped to repent, to keep the church pure, and to be a testimony to the watching world.

Romans 12:2 tells us to be transformed by the renewing of our minds — and this through the Word (John 17:17). We are not transformed through exorcisms and the casting out of demons.

Additionally, 1 John 4:4 states, “You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.” He who is in us, of course, refers to God; he who is in the world, most commentators agree, is Satan.

Finally, Scripture is clear as to the impotency of Satan and his host of demons:⁵⁹

- Without God’s permission, Satan cannot harm believers: “... and the wicked one does not touch him” (1 John 5:18).

- Satan must flee when resisted: “Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you” (James 4:7).

- Satan has no authority over Christians: “He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love” (Colossians 1:13).

- Satan has been disarmed and defeated: “Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it” (Colossians 2:15).

- Satan and his works are destroyed: “... that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil” (Hebrews 2:14) and “For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil” (1 John 3:8).

- God protects His own against Satan’s attack: “Have You not made a hedge around him, around his household, and around all that he has on every side?” (Job 1:10).

As Jay Adams quips, “Surely Satan is alive, but not ‘well, on planet earth!’”⁶⁰

Richard Mayhue provides a clear and rational explanation of what is provided to believers for their spiritual warfare:

“... our Lord Jesus Christ has not left us defenseless. Let me show you the arsenal that is at our command. The Saviour’s victory at Calvary (John 12:31, Rev. 12:11). The promise of overcoming (1 John 5:4-5; Rev. 21:7). The intercessory ministry of Christ (John 17:15, 20). The knowledge of Satan’s tactics (2 Cor. 2:11). The believer’s spiritual armor (Eph. 6:10-17). The Holy Spirit’s indwelling power (1 John 4:4). The believer’s prayers (Matt. 6:13; Eph. 6:18-20; Mark 9:29). The instructions for defeating Satan (James 4:7-8). The sure knowledge that Satan has been rendered powerless with regard to death (Heb. 2:14). The encouragement of ultimate victory (Rev. 20:1-10).”⁶¹

Each of the above five points may be likened to an individual piece of a puzzle, and which when assembled, provides a clear picture. The Bible is clear that a Christian cannot be possessed by demons. The Christian is the temple indwelt by God’s Holy Spirit, who is greater and more powerful than any and all demons and cannot be dispossessed (1 John 2:14; 4:4; 5:18).

HOW SATAN OPERATES

Having considered — and rejected — the matter of demon possession, it is therefore important to address how the devil operates, both toward unbelievers and toward Christians. And as we speak of how the devil operates, we are also *including* the operation of demons, who serve him. To again quote New Testament scholar, Craig S. Keener:

“In the Gospels, we see an elaboration on what the Old Testament and ancient Jewish tradition say about Satan: he is an accuser, deceiver, and tempter.”⁶²

Thus, Keener notes that the Gospels, in accordance with both the Old Testament and ancient Jewish tradition, reveal that Satan is an accuser, a deceiver, and a tempter — actually, he is *the* tempter. Let’s examine each of the characteristics of the devil noted by Keener as well as two additional demonic operations.

An accuser. In Revelation 12:10-11, the Bible says:

“Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, ‘Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.’”

In the first two chapters of the Old Testament book of Job, we see how Satan slandered and accused Job before God, charging that Job simply served God because God was so good to Job. In another very vivid illustration from the Old Testament of Satan’s role as an accuser, Zechariah 3 says:

“Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the Angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to oppose him. And the LORD said to Satan, ‘The LORD rebuke you, Satan! The LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is this not a brand plucked from the fire?’ Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and was standing before the Angel. Then He answered and spoke to those who stood before Him, saying, ‘Take away the filthy garments from him.’ And to him He said, ‘See, I have removed your iniquity from you, and I will clothe you with rich robes.’ And I said, ‘Let them put a clean turban on

his head.' So they put a clean turban on his head, and they put the clothes on him. And the Angel of the LORD stood by" (vv. 1-5).

Notice in this passage that Satan is accusing Joshua before the angel of the Lord; however, the Lord stands up to Satan's accusations against God's servant and speaks in defense of Joshua. The Lord also has Joshua's filthy garments removed and has him re-clothed with other garments.

In Romans 8, we read that those "whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified. What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?" (vv. 30-31).

This may seem to sound like there is a question as to whether or not God is for us; however, the Greek used here basically means, "If God is for us — and He is — who is against us?" Paul then tells us:

"Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us" (Romans 8:33-34).

And the Apostle John instructs:

"My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2:1).

Concerning the phrase, "we have an Advocate with the Father" (referring to Jesus), one Bible source says, "One Greek word underlies this phrase, which refers to someone who speaks in court in behalf of a defendant."⁶³

Elsewhere this same source says that the word advocate "is a legal term, but with a broader meaning than 'counsel for the defense.' ... It referred to any person who helped someone in trouble with the law."⁶⁴

One modern translation renders John's verse this way:

"My dear children, I am writing this to you so that you will not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate who pleads our case before the Father. He is Jesus Christ, the one who is truly righteous" (*New Living Translation*).

Thus we see that although Satan, in accordance with his name (which means "accuser"), accuses us before the Father, Jesus is our "advocate who pleads our case before the Father." And our advocate has never lost a case!

A deceiver. A second way in which Satan operates is as a deceiver. In our Lord's description of the devil, He described him as one who "does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it" (John 8:44).

Think of that: The devil is a liar and the father of lies! We know that the eternal destiny of the devil is to be tormented in the lake of fire for all eternity (Revelation 20:10). Likewise, the Scripture says that all liars will also end up in the lake of fire (Revelation 21:8). The devil has deceived from the very beginning. From the first temptation in the Garden of Eden in the book of Genesis until the conclusion of the devil's activity in the book of Revelation, he has done nothing but lie and deceive.

The God we serve is characterized by truth. In the Old Testament, God refers to Himself as "the God of truth" (see Psalm 31:5; Isaiah 65:16). Jesus said of Himself, "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). God's Spirit, the Holy Spirit, is repeatedly addressed as "the Spirit of truth" (John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13). So God the Father is the God of truth; Jesus the Son is the Truth; and the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth. By contrast, the devil is characterized by lies and deception. In Revelation 12:9, the Scripture says that, "Satan ... deceives the whole world."

One way Satan deceives people is through false doctrines and false religion.⁶⁵ Paul wrote:

"Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer" (1 Timothy 4:1-5).

Take note that the inspired Scripture here explicitly attributes the source of these false doctrines of forbidding marriage and abstaining from certain kinds of food (for religious reasons) to demons. But notice also that these demonic doctrines are taught by *men*. The number of false doctrines and false religions that are promoted by demons *through men* is endless. They would definitely include such things as teaching that Jesus is not the only way of salvation, contrary to what the Scripture plainly teaches; teaching that all people, regardless of what they believe or how they live, will end up in heaven; teaching that there is no such being as the devil; or that there is no such place as hell; or that hell is not eternal; and so forth.

The Scripture says to Christians, "We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one" (1 John 5:19), and the New Testament contains numerous warnings to Christians against being deceived.

In regard to the Scripture's warnings to Christians not to be deceived, one Christian source provides an excellent listing of warnings found in the New Testament against being deceived:

"A man is DECEIVED if he is a hearer and not a doer of the Word (James 1:22). A man is DECEIVED if he says that he has no sin (1 John 1:8). A man is

DECEIVED when he thinks himself to be something when he is nothing (Gal. 6:3). A man is DECEIVED when he thinks himself to be wise with worldly wisdom (1 Cor. 3:18). A man is DECEIVED when he seems to be religious and does not bridle his tongue (James 1:26). A man is DECEIVED when he thinks that he will not reap what he sows (Gal. 6:7). A man is DECEIVED when he thinks that evil company will not corrupt good morals (1 Cor. 15:33). A man is DECEIVED when he thinks that the unrighteous will inherit the kingdom of God (heaven) (1 Cor. 6:9). Now Satan will try to DECEIVE you to not pay attention to the above. Will you let him?"⁶⁶

A tempter. A third way that Satan operates is through temptation. He is "the tempter." We know this instinctively. He is called "the tempter" twice in the New Testament (Matthew 4:3; 1 Thessalonians 3:5). He tempted Eve in the garden; he tempted the Lord Jesus in the wilderness and at other times; and he tempts every man, woman, and child. That isn't to say that the devil is behind every temptation. For as James explains, God can neither be tempted with evil, nor does He himself tempt anyone (James 1:13). James also tells us that "each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed" (v. 14). So while each one of us has latent sources of temptation in ourselves, the devil *can*, at times, also latch onto one or more of those sources of temptation within us and tempt us. However, even if and when he doesn't, we can still give in to temptation that we already have within us.

An afflicter. A fourth way that Satan operates is to afflict us and to cause us to suffer. This is definitely *not* to say that all suffering or affliction comes from Satan. However, some suffering does. For instance, the Scripture warns:

"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist

him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world. But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you" (1 Peter 5:8-10).

Notice in this passage that the sufferings Peter is describing here are attributed to Satan's activity. You recall that Job's sufferings were caused by Satan — not only his personal losses of property and family, but also his physical sufferings (Job 1:13-22; 2:7-8).

One final Scripture worth mentioning in regard to the devil bringing suffering to Christians is found in the book of Revelation, where we read Jesus directing John to write to the church in Smyrna, telling them, "Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life" (2:10).

So, here again, Scripture affirms that the devil can cause Christians to suffer.

Additionally, a special kind of suffering which Jesus dealt with in His earthly ministry was people who were demon possessed and/or people who had sicknesses that were caused by demons. In Acts 10, Peter refers to this, when he tells the household of Cornelius that:

"God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him" (v. 38).

Once again, it must be stated that not every sickness is the result of the devil or demons; and sometimes even the same infirmity or sickness, that in one case may be caused by demons, in another case may not be. Some physical sicknesses and disabilities that Jesus healed were caused by demons, and others were not. So Satan is

sometimes responsible for the suffering of Christians. He also sometimes causes physical illness or infirmity, or depression and discouragement.

An influencer. One final way in which the devil operates is that he influences things that happen in the world, including world leaders and governments. Scripture calls Satan, "the god of this age" (2 Corinthians 4:4), "the ruler of the world" (John 14:30; cf. 12:31), and "the prince of the power of the air" (Ephesians 2:2). Recall that in one of the temptations of Jesus in the wilderness, the devil offered Jesus all the kingdoms of the world, if Jesus would fall down and worship him (Matthew 4:8-9; Luke 4:5-7). In Luke's account of the temptation, we read of Satan's offer:

"And the devil said to Him, 'All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for this has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. Therefore, if You will worship before me, all will be Yours'" (Luke 4:6-7).

BE AWARE TO BEWARE

The matter of demons and what they can and cannot do to believers is of great significance. How we proceed on the road toward personal and progressive biblical sanctification depends upon it. If we diagnosis the sin in our life correctly — that is, seeing it as sin and not a demon — then we have a much better opportunity to employ the biblical solutions and mandates of repentance and "putting off" and "putting on."

There are few books that promote a healthy response and biblical approach to spiritual warfare. And all too often they are in print for only a short time, while the bad and unbiblical volumes are printed, reprinted, and then printed again. This is all the more reason that the believer must be aware to beware!

"At Scott Air Force base in Belleville, Illinois, there hangs this sign: 'An Untrained Soldier Is Just a Target.' Paul notes the same thought in Ephesians 6:10-18. Peter affirms this truth in 1 Peter 5:8. The adversary is

looking for easy targets, and we become one every time we walk without our spiritual armor."⁶⁷

Likewise, an *unaware* Christian — that is, one who is ignorant that the enemy has a bull's-eye painted on his or her back — is likely to be easy pickings for both the devil and the purveyors of an unbiblical and heretical demonology.

Endnotes:

1. Roma Downey, in an online post with *USA Today*, said that the original content of the film included the devil but that "Someone made a comment that the actor who played the devil vaguely resembled our president [Barack Obama], and suddenly the media went nuts. It went global, showing up all over TV and the Internet. ... But for our movie, *Son of God*, I wanted all of the focus to be on Jesus. I want his name to be on the lips of everyone who sees this movie, so we cast Satan out. It gives me great pleasure to tell you that the devil is on the cutting room floor" ("Producer: Why we cast 'Obama' devil out of 'Son of God,'" *USA Today*, Feb. 17, 2014).

2. Craig S. Keener, "Casting the Devil Out of the Jesus Story," *Christianity Today* online post dated Feb. 25, 2014. Accessed at: www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2014/february-web-only/casting-out-devil.html.

3. C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*. New York: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1982, pg. vii.

4. *Ibid.*, pg. 3.

5. Robert P. Lightner, *Angels, Satan, and Demons*. Nashville: Word Publishing, 1998, pg. 67. For additional information, see pp. 67-78 of his book.

6. J.D. Douglas and Merrill C. Tenney, editors, revised by Moisés Silva, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2011, s.v., "Satan," pg. 1290.

7. The reason set forth says that in Isaiah 14:12-14 we read, "How you have fallen from heaven, O star of the morning, son of the dawn! You have been cut down to the earth, You who have weakened the nations! But you said in your heart, 'I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God, And I will sit on the mount of assembly in the recesses of the north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High'" (NASB). Where this translation says, "O star of the morning, son of the dawn," the Hebrew word for "star of the morning" is "*Helel*; i.e. shining one," according to a text note in the New American Standard Bible translation. This Hebrew word, *Helel*; which in this translation (NASB) is translated as "star of the

morning" is translated as "Lucifer" in the King James Version and New King James Version of the Bible. However, the Hebrew word simply means, "shining one" and while its translation as "Lucifer" in the KJV and NKJV make it appear that the person named in these verses is certainly the devil, that may or may not be the case.

8. Charles C. Ryrie, *Biblical Answers to Contemporary Issues*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1991, pg. 87.

9. See further, Derek Prince, *They Shall Expel Demons*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Choosen Books, 1998, pp. 91-95. Although Prince merely mentions this option as a *possibility* in his book (e.g., see pg. 95), he clearly comes out in favor of this view in an audio tape, *Spiritual Warfare on the Earthly Plane*. (Charlotte, N.C.: Derek Prince Ministries International, April 2000, cassette #DP-153.) While Prince's book gives his views on demonology, he seems to state his views in a somewhat more guarded way in it than he does in his numerous audio tapes on demonology.

10. *They Shall Expel Demons*, op. cit., pp. 91-92. Prince also briefly discusses this in his audio tape, *Nature and Activity of Demons*. (Charlotte, N.C.: Derek Prince Ministries, 1971, cassette #B-6003.)

11. John Todd claimed to have possessed insider knowledge of an occult conspiratorial organization called the Illuminati. Alberto Rivera claimed to once have been a Jesuit priest who witnessed all kinds of ungodly activities and plots by the Roman Catholic Church.

12. Rebecca Brown, *Becoming A Vessel of Honor*. Woodburn, Ore.: Fortress Books, 1990, pp. 94, 97, 109.

13. *Ibid.*, pg. 102.

14. Rebecca Brown, *He Came to Set the Captives Free*. Chino, Calif.: Chick Publications, 1986, pg. 282.

15. G. Richard Fisher, "Overthrowing the Kingdom of Darkness - The History and Hysterics of Bob Larson," *The Quarterly Journal*, April-June 2007, pg. 20.

16. Bob Larson, *Larson's Book of Spiritual Warfare*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999, pg. 49.

17. *Ibid.*, pg. 318.

18. *Ibid.*, pg. 322.

19. Matt Meagher, "The Exorcist," *Inside Edition*, May 16, 2000.

20. Ken Walker, "The Preacher Who Tells It Like It Is," *Charisma*, November 1998, front cover and pg. 48.

21. Joyce Meyer, "Deliverance & The Character of Satan," tape 6, side 2. From the series: *How to Fight the Devil and Win!* Fenton, Mo.: Joyce Meyer Ministries, no date. Here Meyer has imported the religious belief called "animism" into Christianity saying demons inhabit trees, rocks, and other inanimate objects. According to one source, "In its simplest form, animism is the widespread belief that material

objects such as trees and stones are possessed by spirits or have a life of their own" (Terry L. Miethe, *The Compact Dictionary of Doctrinal Words*. Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1988, pg. 27).

22. Joyce Meyer, "Witchcraft & Related Spirits (Pt. 2)," tape 3, side 1. From the series, *How to Fight the Devil and Win!*, op. cit.

23. Joyce Meyer, "Generational Curses & Deliverance," tape 5, side 1. From the series, *How to Fight the Devil and Win!*, op. cit.

24. "Deliverance & The Character of Satan," op. cit., side 2.

25. "Generational Curses & Deliverance," op. cit., side 2.

26. *Ibid.*

27. Product page for *Pigs in the Parlor* on Goodreads' website. Accessed at: www.goodreads.com/book/show/115950.Pigs_in_the_Parlor.

28. Frank and Ida Mae Hammond, *Pigs in the Parlor*. Kirkwood, Mo.: Impact Books, Inc., 1973, pg. 12.

29. *Ibid.*, pg. 65.

30. *Ibid.*, italics in original.

31. *Ibid.*, pg. 24.

32. *Ibid.*, pp. 27-28.

33. *Ibid.*, pp. 28-29, italics and capitalization in original.

34. *Ibid.*, Foreword, pg. vii.

35. One of Prince's theological emphases was on deliverance from demonic powers in believers. This made him controversial, yet he was popular among Charismatics and Pentecostals. Another problematic issue with Prince was his past involvement in the shepherding movement. Foremost in the promotion of the shepherding controversy was a group of men known as the "Fort Lauderdale Five." This body consisted of Prince, Don Basham, Ern Baxter, Bob Mumford, and Charles Simpson. Originally they operated under the title of Christian Growth Ministries in Fort Lauderdale, Fla. Prince's book, *Discipleship, Shepherding, and Commitment* was considered a concise "biblical" statement of the shepherding movement's distinctive teachings.

36. *Calvary Contender*, August 15, 1995, Vol. XII, No. 16, brackets and italic in original. Document accessed at: <http://home.hiwaay.net/~contendr/1995/8-15-95.html>.

37. No author, "Dr. Neil T. Anderson - Freedom In Christ Ministries," Christian Research Institute paper, Statement No.: DA-080, pg. 1.

38. Neil Anderson, *The Bondage Breaker*. Eugene, Ore.: Harvest House Publishers, 1990, pg. 107.

39. Thomas Ice, *Biblical Perspectives*, Vol. V, No. 3, May-June 1992, "Demon Possession And The New Clinical Deliverance," pp. 1, 6.

40. G. Richard Fisher, "Mark Bubeck and

Spiritual Warfare - The Cloning of Jessie Penn-Lewis," *The Quarterly Journal*, July-September 1996, pg. 17.

41. *Ibid.*, pg. 14.

42. Product page for *The Adversary* on Moody Publishers' website. Accessed at: www.moodypublishers.com/pub_product_Detail.aspx?id=41823&pid=104105.

43. C. Fred Dickason, *Demon Possession & the Christian: A New Perspective*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1987, pg. 29. While this book was first published by Moody, it was later — after much controversy — dropped by them and subsequently printed by Crossway Books.

44. *Ibid.*, pg. 101.

45. *Ibid.*, pg. 95.

46. Merrill F. Unger, *Biblical Demonology: A Study of Spiritual Forces Behind the Present World Unrest*. Wheaton, Ill.: Scripture Press, 1952, cited in Clinton E. Arnold, *3 Crucial Questions About Spiritual Warfare*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1997, pp. 76-77, 205.

47. Merrill F. Unger, *Demons in the World Today: A Study of Occultism in the Light of God's Word*. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House, 1971, cited in *3 Crucial Questions About Spiritual Warfare*, op. cit., pp. 76-77, 205.

48. Merrill F. Unger, *What Demons Can Do to Saints*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1977, cited in *3 Crucial Questions About Spiritual Warfare*, op. cit., pp. 76-77, 205.

49. See *Demon Possession & the Christian*, op. cit., pg. 189.

50. See Don Basham, *Can a Christian Have a Demon?* Monroeville, Pa.: Whitaker Books, 1971, chapter 4, "Confusion Among Christians," pp. 63-70.

51. Thomas Ice and Robert Dean, Jr., *Overrun By Demons*. Eugene, Ore.: Harvest House Publishers, 1990, pg. 30.

52. Thomas N. Davis, "Demon Possession in Biblical Perspective," *Lamplighter*, Lancaster., Pa.: Lancaster Bible College, Fall 1991, pg. 9.

53. Matthew 4:24; 8:16, 28, 33; 9:32; 12:22; 15:22; Mark 1:32; 5:15, 16, 18; Luke 8:36; and John 10:21.

54. James Bjornstad, "Demonism, Demon Possession, and Deliverance," conference workshop outline, copy on file.

55. "Can Born-Again Believers Be Demon Possessed?" Springfield, Mo.: Gospel Publishing House, 1972, pg. 11. This small pamphlet "was approved as the official statement by the General Presbytery of the Assemblies of God in May, 1972."

56. Matthew 11:18; Mark 3:22, 30; 7:25; 9:17; Luke 4:33; 7:33; 8:27; 13:11; John 7:20; 8:48, 49, 52; 10:20; and Acts 8:7; 16:16; 19:13.

57. Chuck Smith, *Answers for Today*. Costa Mesa, Calif.: The Word For Today Publishers, 1993, Volumes 1 & 2, pg. 69.

58. "Can Born-Again Believers Be Demon Possessed?" op. cit., pg. 10.

59. The points in this section are drafted from Jay Adams, *The Christian Counselor's Manual*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1973, pp. 126-127.

60. *Ibid.*, pg. 127. Adams is here satirizing the title of Hal Lindsey's book, *Satan is Alive and Well on Planet Earth*. Lindsey is another teacher who promotes the idea that a Christian can have a demon.

61. Richard Mayhue, *Unmasking Satan*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Kregel Publications, 2001, pg. 156.

62. "Casting the Devil Out of the Jesus Story," op. cit.

63. Kenneth L. Barker, General Editor, *Zondervan NIV Study Bible*, 2008 Update. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2008, pg. 1945, from the study note on 1 John 2:1.

64. *Ibid.*, pg. 1653, from the study note on John 14:16.

65. *Biblical Answers to Contemporary Issues*, op. cit., pp. 88-90.

66. Ted Kyle and John Todd, compilers, *A Treasury of Bible Illustrations*. Chattanooga, Tenn.: AMG Publishers, 1998, "On Being Deceived," pp. 308-309, capitalization in original.

67. Raymond McHenry, *McHenry's Quips, Quotes & Other Notes*. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1998, "Spiritual Armor," pg. 237, cited from *Leadership* magazine, August 1994, pg. 18.



DESERT FATHERS

(continued from page 1)

sage to abuse of gifts to eschatological confusion. There has been no perfect church or Church age in which doctrinal inaccuracies cannot be found. But as the last of the apostles passed from the scene, by the end of the first century, theological blunders began to escalate both in number and in nature. Serious deviation from apostolic teaching began to multiply throughout the Church. A few of these will be detailed below, but first the cause of this heterodoxy needs identification, which is primarily to be the hermeneutical approach adopted by the earlier Church Fathers, beginning with Origen.

Origen (A.D. 185-254) rejected the single meaning of a text of Scripture and adopted the Greek allegorical approach popular in secular mythological literature especially in the Alexandria, Egypt, region in which he

lived. Before him the Jewish scholar Philo had done the same with Scripture and rabbinical literature. From this backdrop, Origen popularized a view of biblical interpretation which taught that every passage of Scripture had various levels of meaning from the literal, which was the simplest, to the allegorical, which was the most profound and was considered the deeper and richer form of biblical interpretation. Origen, and those who accepted this hermeneutic, looked for hidden, symbolic meanings within the biblical texts, meanings that in actuality were not intended by the author. The net result was that, rather than attempting to understand what the Scriptures were actually saying, foreign ideas were being read into the passages. This method was guided by personal imagination instead of informed study, which led to all sorts of fanciful and heretical interpretations. Origen himself ultimately developed a number of recognized heresies such as universalism and the pre-existence of souls.

Perhaps Origen's most influential book — at least as far as interpretation of Scripture goes — was his *Commentary on the Song of Songs* in which his allegorical model was put on display. The groom in the Song was interpreted to be the Word of God and the bride as both the Church of Christ and the individual soul. One author, who is supportive of Origen's views, wrote, "Almost all Christian spiritual and ascetic literature, ever since, has been indebted to Origen's foundational architecture of Christian mysticism."²

Later, the desert fathers followed in Origen's footsteps. Gerald Sittser wrote concerning this group:

"... their overall approach to the Bible seems — and, in fact, is — foreign to the modern age. They jumped from text to text, as if by free association, making connections that would appear odd to us, and they interpreted the Bible allegorically, which gives the im-

pression that their interpretation is informed more by fanciful imagination than by careful exegesis."³

This approach to Scripture ultimately led to numerous schools of spirituality (ways of living out the Gospel) such as Augustinian, Dominican, Benedictine, Ignatian, and so forth. But ultimately they all had one thing in common, the so-called tripartite division of spiritual life. The *sine qua non* of this three-fold division consists of purgation, illumination, and union and is found in all forms of mysticism, not just Christianized forms. Greg Peters defines these terms:

"The purgative way consists in one's active cleansing and is aided by spiritual exercises and ascetic practices, through the cultivation of humility and by practicing the virtues. Further advancement is made with the assistance of meditation, prayer and contemplation. The illuminative way is characterized by further meditation, prayer and contemplation, combined with the reception of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, additional spiritual exercises and a devotion to the Virgin Mary. The unitive way involves the exercising of proper Christian love until one experiences or achieves mystical union with God as Trinity."⁴

Said more simply, purgation is emptying oneself not only of sin but of passion, desire, and even of intellectual thought. Illumination is what takes place when the Lord fills the emptiness of our souls and minds with extrabiblical knowledge and experiences. And union is that mystical contact with God that cannot be rationally described, only experienced. This is the goal of all mystics, yet the three-fold way of spirituality is not found in Scripture. It is a mystical invention rooted in the errant theology of those who were foundational in what we are now calling spiritual formation.

Experiential Root. During the first two centuries of Church history, per-

secution and martyrdom were not uncommon. The Church stood against the corrupt world system and the devil and many Christians suffered as a result. The heroes of the faith were the martyrs who willingly made the ultimate sacrifice for Christ. With the legalization of Christianity in A.D. 312 by Constantine, the cultural dynamics changed. But accompanying social and legal acceptability of the Christian faith was a watering down of dedication. The Church was flooded with new "Christians," most of whom were Christian in name only. And with martyrdom a thing of the past, who would become the spiritual heroes of a new generation? Stepping into this void were the hermits and monks who later became known as the desert fathers and mothers. They originally moved to the deserts of Egypt, and similar areas, because it was their belief that Satan still ruled there and they sought battle with him as Christians had battled him during times of persecution. And in the face of a softening approach to the Christian life they wanted to demonstrate dedication. As their reputations grew, the desert fathers and mothers became the Christian heroes of their day. Many flooded to the deserts to see these living martyrs, to perhaps learn from them, and some to join them.

In misguided attempts to demonstrate and foster dedication these hermits and monks practiced extreme forms of asceticism including fasting, prolonged days without sleep, exposure to the elements, loneliness, celibacy, and voluntary poverty. As time passed these practices became the badges of a select group of people called "spiritual athletes" and "bloodless martyrs." Their ascetic behavior became codified and imitated. It was under these extreme, self-induced physical conditions that some of the "spiritual athletes" began to claim visions and revelations from the Lord. These were passed down orally by their followers and then recorded in books to be spread throughout the Christian community. These writings became the basis for new forms of spiritualities that continue to have an

impact on the Church to this day. Those in the Spiritual Formation Movement today look continually to this group, which they call spiritual masters and physicians of the soul, for insights into a deeper life with God. The roots of spiritual formation are planted in the desert fathers and mothers of the second to sixth centuries.

However, to these early formers of mystical and ascetic spirituality must be added a number of others who mostly appeared in the Medieval Era, an era variously pegged as beginning from 325 (the council of Nicaea) to 604 (the death of Pope Gregory the Great) and ending from 1453 (the fall of Constantinople to the Turks) to 1517 (Luther posting his "Ninety-Five Theses"). Developers and promoters of these forms of Christianity included Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109), Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153), Bonaventure (1217-1274), Francis of Assisi (1181-1226), Dante Alighieri (1265-1321), Meister Eckhart (1260-1327), Pseudo-Dionysius (c. 500), and Thomas à Kempis (1380-1471), to name a few. Around the time of the Reformation a number of efforts were made by Rome to draw back to the Catholic Church those who had adopted Reformational theology. This Counter-Reformation was led in part by those who supported mystical and ascetic views and insights. This same group popularized their ideas by means of their own experiences, supposed visions, and writings. St. John of the Cross, Teresa of Ávila, and Ignatius of Loyola (the founder of the Jesuits) were among the luminaries.

Julian of Norwich (1342-1416) is somewhat representative of this latter group. She was a nun in Norwich, England, who was locked in a cell that was attached to a church and lived there in seclusion (such women were called anchoresses). These cells or anchor holds would have a window that looked into the church so the individual could participate in the worship services. There would also be another window in which to receive food and water. While living in this condition, and at a time of extreme sickness, Julian claimed that she re-

ceived 16 “showings” (revelations) on May 8, 1373, when she was 30 years old. These showings are held in high regard by the mystics and became somewhat of a pattern for the visions of others, which became increasingly common during this era.⁵

Consistent throughout the history of the mystical and ascetic spiritualities, including those promoting spiritual formation today, has been the four-fold hermeneutical approach to Scripture that attempts to follow the three stage pathway to spirituality (purgation, illumination, union), as well as an openness to extrabiblical visions, revelations, traditions, and practices. It is the acceptance of these three foundational premises that has enabled this branch of Christianity to survive and flourish.

Most Evangelicals, one would think, would recognize these obvious problems and turn away. Yet so enamored are many with this approach to life with God that even relatively strong Evangelicals are willing to drop their safeguards and minimize the clear teaching of Scripture in order to glean from these mystics what they believe will be spiritual insights. This is true even as these Evangelicals are aware that the theological foundation of this system of spirituality is often corrupt to the core.

One of the most interesting and puzzling examples of this is Bruce Demarest, former professor of theology at Denver Seminary for more than thirty years. Demarest is a man who has studied and taught evangelical theology for virtually his entire life and recognizes true heresy when he sees it. In writing the chapter “Reading Catholic Spirituality” in the book *Reading the Christian Spiritual Classics*, Demarest expresses deep appreciation for what he has learned from Roman Catholics concerning spiritual life. Yet he knows full well that the spiritual masters that he promotes and the teachings of Rome are in serious doctrinal error. He identifies a number of these errors himself: Catholic spiritual writers placed Church tradition on par with Scripture and used faulty hermeneutics; they believed in papal supremacy

and infallibility; they had a low view of the fall and human sinfulness; they did not call clearly for conversion; they did not believe in justification by faith alone; they believed in a redemptive role for Mary; they prayed to Mary and the saints; they practiced severe asceticism; they promoted unbiblical mysticism; and they were — and are — a pathway to Eastern religions.⁶

Fred Sanders, another author who is supportive of those who many call the spiritual masters and their classics, nevertheless admits:

“These nonevangelical traditions may hold the gospel itself in stewardship, but they are messing it up, and a messed-up gospel is not the gospel; its result is dysangel, not evangel; bad news, not good.”⁷

These are hardly negotiable doctrines that can be dismissed as unimportant. The positions taken by the “spiritual masters” and the Church of Rome place them outside the realm of biblical Christianity and demonstrate a clear rejection of the Gospel. What kind of spirituality can be learned from those who almost certainly do not know Christ? Why are people drawn to a methodology of spirituality promoted by people who believe false doctrines and practice extreme and unbiblical forms of asceticism? What is the attraction?

FATAL ATTRACTION

Bruce Demarest, mentioned above as a former theological professor at a conservative seminary, and one who knows that the doctrinal positions of the “spiritual masters” are deeply flawed to the point of presenting another gospel altogether, has nevertheless become a strong supporter of the spirituality drawn from these very people. Demarest’s journey into the Spiritual Formation Movement is similar to that of many. In his book, *Satisfy Your Soul*, he tells of his evangelical church sponsoring a six-week course in the late 1980s on spiritual formation taught by a team from the Catholic Archdiocese of Denver. While he was resistant at first, he became interested in what was being

taught and entered into a spiritual direction relationship for several years with the team leader. His director later convinced Demarest to attend workshops and retreats at a Benedictine renewal community in New Mexico. Eventually, in 1995, he spent six weeks at the community in a residential program designed for spiritual direction. This seemed to break his final resistance to spiritual formation and upon returning to Denver Seminary he began developing graduate courses to teach what he had learned.

This has not been an easy journey for Demarest. He confesses, “Admittedly I found that certain beliefs and traditions remained foreign to me, being based more on tradition than solidly on Scripture. ... But I also found that, once I got past my old prejudices and misunderstandings, I accepted more than I rejected.”⁸

This journey was so bewildering that even Ralph Martin, a well-known Roman Catholic scholar, wrote in the flyleaf of Demarest’s book:

“What an amazing journey Bruce Demarest has been on. While remaining solidly rooted in his own evangelical tradition, he has, with great honesty and courage, opened himself to the deep and vital spiritual life in Christian history that has much to offer us today. This book will be profoundly enriching to the Christian who desires something ‘more’ in their union with God.”⁹

As documented earlier, Demarest is well aware of the doctrinal heresies and mutilated gospel that stems from the Roman Catholic Church and the creators of their ancient spirituality. But he seemed to “get over it” and accepted what good he could find while paying little attention to the bad. He believes that the evangelical community has not balanced conversion of the soul with spiritual development of the soul and thus needs aid in understanding how to maintain such balance. He claims:

“And for our help, we can turn to our Christian past — to men and women who understood

how the soul finds satisfaction as we grow in God, and how His Spirit finds a more ready home in us."¹⁰

He is sure that help can be found in this source because "Spiritual formation is an ancient ministry of the church, concerned with the 'forming' or 'shaping' of a believer's character and actions into the likeness of Christ. ... many practices [were taught] that opened him or her to the presence and direction of God."¹¹

Demarest was looking for something "more" in his Christian life and he believes he has found it in spiritual formation, which he sees as "a form of discipleship we are rediscovering today."¹² He is not alone. Carl Trueman, dean of Westminster Theological Seminary, states, "I think the medieval mystics should form a staple of the literary diet of all thoughtful Christians."¹³ And Jamin Goggin and Kyle Stobel assure us that when Richard Foster launched the modern Spiritual Formation Movement within Protestantism in 1978 with his book *Celebration of Discipline*, he was not creating anything new but was merely "recovering a well-worn path of ancient wisdom that helped to define evangelicalism itself."¹⁴

The evangelical promoters of spiritual formation warn of the need for discernment when reading the spiritual classics, but promise great rewards to those who do. Their mantra is that "we should be open but cautious." Even when some of their heroes within spiritual formation drift so far as seeing no difference between Buddhism and Christianity (as was the case of the modern Catholic mystic Thomas Merton),¹⁵ we have little to fear.

On the contrary, Merton's case demonstrates that there is much to fear when we try to mix truth with error. Merton actually was quite consistent and took his views to their logical conclusions. He saw that Buddhism, a religion with little interest in theology or truth, offered the same mystical experiences that contemplative Christianity did. They both use similar methods including ascetic disciplines

and traveling the three-fold path of purgation, illumination, and union. In the end he came to the idea that because doctrine did not matter and only experience did, Buddhism and his understanding of Christianity were offering the same thing. He wanted something more and he found it. But that something was not biblical Christianity. Merton's "more" did not meet the criteria God has handed down in His Word and therefore it was false.

This is the danger facing everyone traveling down the spiritual formation corridor. In search of something more and being convinced by the many spiritual formation authors, past and present, that they are missing out on something, many are buying into the false teachings and false promises of spiritual formation. This journey, begun sincerely, will end badly for many.

A FINAL WORD ON THE DISCIPLINES

The Spiritual Formation Movement claims to offer an almost unlimited number of spiritual disciplines that will aid in forming Christian character. As we have tried to demonstrate in past articles, while some of these have a bit of basis in Scripture, others have none, and even those which seem to be drawn at least in part from the Bible go beyond the Word in either their actual practice or what they promise or both. It is important to affirm that the word "discipline" is a good one and found in Scripture (e.g., Colossians 2:5). The issue is not whether discipline is helpful, even necessary, for spiritual development — it is, for self-control is one facet of the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:23). Neither do we deny that there are specific disciplines that aid in progressive sanctification.

At issue is what disciplines have actually been given to believers as a means of discipleship. It is our conviction that any means which the Lord has ordained for our use in the process of spiritual growth would be identified in the Scriptures. If the Bible is God's complete, authoritative revelation to us today, and if it is designed to make us "complete, thor-

oughly equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16-17), then we should have every confidence that the inspired text would include, with clarity, the instruments or means by which God would have us grow. We do not need to reach beyond the written Word to seek practices for spiritual development and intimacy with our Savior. The Lord is desirous that we know these things and has made no effort to hide them from us. It is not necessary for monks or hermits or other spiritual leaders from the past (or present) to unearth some secret formulas designed to teach us spiritual formation. All that we need to know on this subject is found with certainty in God's divine revelation, the Scriptures.

This does not mean that we cannot learn from fellow believers; we surely can and must. For example in 2 Timothy 2:2, Paul instructs Timothy to take the things Paul had taught him and teach them to other faithful men who in turn will teach others. But what Timothy was to pass on was not his own views and experiences and visions, but the truth of the inspired Word of God given him by the apostle (see 2 Timothy 1:13-14; 2:14; 3:10-4:5; Jude 17; Hebrews 2:3-4).

The early Church gathered primarily to devote themselves to the apostles' teaching (Acts 2:42), not to study the supposed revelations of uninspired men and women. The Body of Christ is essential in our spiritual development (Ephesians 4:11-16), but we aid that development as we continue "speaking the truth in love" to one another (Ephesians 4:15). We also help one another with practical application of biblical truth. For example, in Titus 2 older women are instructed to "admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed" (vv. 4-5). It should be noted that what the older women are to do by way of encouraging the younger women is to facilitate appropriation of truth already revealed in Scripture, not add ideas and revelations to Scripture.

When we turn to the Word of God to discover the Lord's clear teaching on discipleship what do we find? First, admittedly the Bible is a big book with many layers of wonderful truths about God, ourselves, the world, future events, and more, all waiting to be explored. It is a multifaceted revelation from God that reveals the wonders of Christ "in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Colossians 2:3).

This leads to perhaps the primary distinction between the Spiritual Formation Movement and biblical discipleship. Both camps would claim Colossians 2:3 for themselves and both would agree that it is in Christ that all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge of God are hidden. The divide comes largely in the arena of revelation. Scripture promises believers divine power which will grant "to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue" (2 Peter 1:3).

Where is such knowledge of Christ found? Is it found in the Holy Scriptures or in extrabiblical revelations and dreams, or both? As we argued in earlier articles,¹⁶ we believe that the only inspired revelation from God for our times is the Bible. All other claims to revelations, however sincere or well-intended, lack the authority of Scripture. In addition, all other doctrines, methodologies, philosophies, traditions, and spiritual practices that do not emerge directly from the Word of God are at best suggestions and opinions, some helpful, others not, and still others are harmful. But when understood as having divine sanction, these things fall under the condemnation of Jesus who warned the Pharisees that their traditions actually invalidate the Word of God (Mark 7:13). Similarly Paul warned the Colossians:

"Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ" (Colossians 2:8).

The Spiritual Formation Movement, as we have tried to demonstrate, has violated these principles and is "Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men" (Mark 7:7).

WHERE THE LANDMINES ARE BURIED

The modern Spiritual Formation Movement has been in existence for almost 40 years and shows no signs of fading away. Unlike the numerous fads that rush through evangelicalism, lasting a year or two and then being trashed to make way for the next wave, spiritual formation seems to be here to stay. It has, of course, morphed, matured, and changed in many ways throughout the years, but at this time it seems to be gaining momentum and influence. This is due in large part to a number of factors:

- **Renovaré.** This is Richard Foster's organization founded in 1988 to promote spiritual formation throughout the globe. Foster and his mentor Dallas Willard have written many books and articles that have been well received in all branches of Christianity. Renovaré has published *The Renovaré Spiritual Formation Study Bible*, since renamed *The Life with God Bible*. This study Bible is highly ecumenical, drawing its study notes from a wide variety of Christian traditions including Catholicism, Orthodoxy, and Quakerism. And, of course, the study notes promote a mystical approach to the Christian life.

- **Seminaries.** Most seminaries and many Bible colleges now have a department of spiritual formation and are offering degrees in the disciplines. Biola University and its Talbot School of Theology is representative of many relatively conservative Christian schools of higher education that have bought into spiritual formation. Talbot offers an MA and M.Div in Spiritual Formation and Soul Care. They boast on their website, "Since we began offering spiritual direction, hundreds upon hundreds of people have experienced either individual or group spiritual direction through the ministry of the Center for Spiritual Renewal." As Bible colleges and seminaries train the next generation of

pastors, missionaries, and Christian leaders, we can expect that spiritual formation will continue to gain traction in the evangelical community.

- **Publishing houses.** Prior to the publication of Foster's *Celebration of Disciplines* in 1978, virtually all spiritual and mystical literature was produced by Catholic and Orthodox publishing houses such as Paulist Press or the Jesuits. Not anymore, as evangelical publishers are rushing to get to press these bestselling books and authors. NavPress, InterVarsity, Thomas Nelson, and a host of others have entered the market. Christians, who had grown accustomed to trusting these publishing houses, are being caught off-guard by what they are reading from them today.

- **Authors/books/magazines.** As the publishing houses are looking to cash in on the interest in spiritual formation, authors by the score have stepped up to meet the demand. In addition, evangelical magazines such as *Christianity Today*, which is highly sympathetic and a strong promoter of spiritual formation authors and their literature, abound.

- **Emerging and Seeker churches.** It cannot be denied that emerging churches and ministries are on the cutting edge. As movements that have reflected their culture more than Scripture, their leaders are constantly on the watch for shifts in interest and taste in the world around them. Seeker churches originally targeted the baby boomers who apparently wanted to go to church and not feel like they had been to church. Anything that would make them uncomfortable was eliminated and the local church took on a secular persona. But the younger emerging demographic seems to desire a sense of the sacred. To accommodate this group the emerging and seeker leaders have turned to spiritual formation with its ancient spiritual practices that promise intimacy with God. This younger crowd, many of whom have not been trained in theological thinking or biblical discernment, is easily deceived by the rhetoric and methods of spiritual formation.

For these reasons, and perhaps several more, we do not see any diminishing of the influence of spiritual formation on the Church in the decades to come. This is certainly one of the greatest threats facing biblical Christianity today. May the Lord raise up a generation that will return to the sacred text and stand once again on *sola Scriptura*.

Endnotes:

1. See for example, Gary E. Gilley, "There's No Place Like Rome? Understanding the Ancient-Future Faith Movement," *The Quarterly Journal*, October-December 2008, pp. 1, 11-20; David M. Tyler, "The Ape of God - How New Age Spirituality Has Interlaced Into the Fabric of Evangelicalism," *The Quarterly Journal*, January-March 2013, pp. 1, 11-20; Gary E.

Gilley, "Revelation and the Believer - Is God Speaking Today and, If So, How?," *The Quarterly Journal*, April-June 2014, pp. 1, 14-21; and Gary E. Gilley, "Spiritual Disciplines and the Believer - The Hows of True Biblical Discipleship," *The Quarterly Journal*, July-September 2014, pp. 4-13.

2. Louis Bouyer as quoted by Michael Glerup in Jamin Goggin and Kyle Strobel, editors, *Reading the Christian Spiritual Classics, A Guide for Evangelicals*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press Academic, 2013, "The Church Fathers and Mothers," Chapter 10, pg. 177.

3. Gerald L. Sittser in *ibid.*, "The Desert Fathers," Chapter 11, pg. 199.

4. Greg Peters in *ibid.*, "Spiritual Theology: A Historical Overview," Chapter 5, pg. 82, (cf. pp. 188-189).

5. For a fuller account see Greg Peters in *ibid.*, "The Medieval Traditions," Chapter 12, pp. 240-242.

6. Bruce Demarest in *ibid.*, "Reading Catholic Spirituality," Chapter 7, pp. 120-128.

7. Fred Sanders in *ibid.*, "Reading Spiritual Classics as Evangelical Protestants," Chapter 9, pg. 157.

8. Bruce Demarest, *Satisfy Your Soul: Restoring the Heart of Christian Spirituality*. Colorado Springs, Colo.: NavPress, 1999, pg. 35.

9. *Ibid.*, flyleaf, pg. 1.

10. *Ibid.*, pg. 23.

11. *Ibid.*, pp. 23-24.

12. *Ibid.*, pg. 23.

13. Trueman as cited by Jamin Goggin and Kyle Strobel in *Reading the Christian Spiritual Classics*, op. cit., pg. 9.

14. *Ibid.*, pg. 10.

15. *Satisfy Your Soul*, op. cit., pp. 274-277.

16. See "Revelation and the Believer," op. cit., and "Spiritual Disciplines and the Believer," op. cit., esp. pp. 7-10.



EDITORIALS

(continued from page 2)

In Webber's view, the present — or postmodern — stage of the Church is a return to the ancient or classical stage (A.D. 100-600) of the Church which he sees as the purest form of Christianity. Those embracing the "Ancient-Future Faith" say they are reaching back to what they consider the "rich" traditions and practices developed in the classical stage of Church history. It is their contention that it was during this era that Christianity reached its zenith, and for Christianity to regain its spiritual health it must return to this ancient stage with its emphasis and observances.

So the question is not "Where is the emerging church hiding?" but "What is the emerging church hiding?" Briefly knowing some of the roots and fruits of the movement will help us understand the changes. It will also help us to be aware of the dangers that lie behind those it upholds as exemplars for spiritual health and growth.

Perhaps the most visible name in the emerging church movement is Brian McLaren. McLaren helped shape and lead the movement and was, in 2005, named by *Time* magazine as one of the 25 Most Influential Evangelicals in America. McLaren continues to be a key player. This past June, he released *We Make the Road by Walking: A Year-Long Quest for Spiritual Formation, Reorientation, and Activation* which is said to offer more than 52 chapters "that give an overview of the biblical story and a fresh introduction or re-orientation to Christian faith."

It should be noted that the emerging church movement is not a church per se, but rather a loosely affiliated group of writers and thinkers like McLaren, Rob Bell,

Mark Driscoll, and Dallas Willard. They generally eschew doctrine, pose questions, and create doubts, but in the end clarify very little. Though they want to appear to know Church history, they are largely revisionists who are knowingly or through ignorance distorting it and leaving large portions of it ignored. They do a "pick and choose" game and refuse to look at large portions of Church history. What they do pay attention to gets reshaped.

In the emerging church polemic we are pointed back to medieval Roman Catholic "saints" as the epitome of godliness. These are supposed to be the examples of what we are to be if we want to be truly "spiritual." It is sometimes referred to as "spiritual formation," though the term can mean many things. Some who adhere to and promote what is called "spiritual formation" and a contemplative view insist that the key to godliness is using theology and practice of the Dark Ages. However, it is a selective game of hide and seek. It is a game played with the most egregious parts covered up and hidden away. They pretend that what they point to is all sweetness and light with no downside at all.

They assert that they are going back to ancient spirituality. According to these emerging church teachers the models for our lives are no longer to be Jesus, Paul, Peter, and other Bible saints, but rather a group of unknown, unvetted, confused, and sometimes heretical mystics. The emerging church movement really does not go back far enough — to the Bible — and that is their fundamental error.

What is being ignored or covered up are the many occult practices of so-called "saints" of the Middle Ages. One very dark practice boasted of during that time in the past is the claimed power to levitate. One of the most well known of these "flying saints" was Francis of Assisi.

Other “flying saints,” just to name a few, include Alphonsus Liguori, Teresa of Ávila, Maria Villani, and Joseph of Cupertino.

The wild reports and assertions of these otherworldly powers can be found in standard works of their lives and in Catholic biographies, encyclopedias, and dictionaries. Wikipedia offers an entry titled “Saints and levitation.” Readers who have been raised in a Roman Catholic environment probably have received a steady diet of the lives of “saints” such as those mentioned.

Teresa of Ávila reported that in one incident of levitation she pleaded with the nuns in the chapel to hold her down (*Teresa of Avila* by Cathleen Medwick, pg. 109). But this raises the question as to why would she want to be held down from doing something she says God equipped her to do.

The emerging church and spiritual formation leaders and teachers tell us that these “saints” are the godly people to be copied when in fact they are occult practitioners. Isaiah warned, “Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!” (Isaiah 5:20).

We live in a time when doctrine is denigrated and denied and weird experiences are the order of the day. This is an age where people have long forgotten that there is a dark spirituality at work and occultism and spiritistic practices are entering the Church by devious means; creeping in unaware as Jude tells us (Jude 4).

Evil is being called good. Whether the “saints” in question were demonic, confused, deluded, hallucinating, or fabricating is really not the question. God knows their motivation. In any case, they were absolutely wrong, dragged along by feelings, and very far from the solid foundation of the Bible. Levitation has been, is, and forever will be attached to the dark kingdom of Satan and spiritism.

Consider further a few other documented facts about levitation which are being hidden and kept from us by emerging church leaders:

“Since prehistoric times, expectation of levitation have featured as an aspect of spiritual practices. Among the shamans of various cultures, it is thought that the journey to the spirit world can involve the actual transportation of the body. ... Stories of levitation figure prominently in historical religious traditions. In Eastern faiths the ability to levitate is said to be available to spiritual adepts as one of the psychic powers. ... Levitation reports became a major theme in the seances of Spiritualism, a movement that had millions of followers during the 19th and early 20th centuries. In the darkness of the seance room, objects would be observed floating in the air, supposedly elevated by the hands of the spirits; in many cases, hidden devices or accom-

plishes were responsible for the fraudulent effects. ... Claims and investigations of levitation have continued into the late 20th century. In 1977, the Transcendental Meditation (TM) organization announced that it had developed a levitation training program, ... the anecdotes concerning the sages, saints and mediums are all subject to many factors — from misperception and undetected fraud to inaccuracies of memory — that render them unreliable as evidence for extraordinary phenomena” (*Alternative Realities* by Leonard George, pp. 151-153).

Merrill F. Unger reminds us:

“A whole complex of phenomena, purportedly tried and proved, was advanced as the result of the widespread activity in psychical research and experimentation with mediums: such as telepathy, spirit-rapping, trances, luminous apparitions, automatic writing, inspiration, clairvoyance, oral and written spirit communications, mediumistic drawings, materializations, levitations, physical healing, and others, and these form the basis of the new belief in spirits. ... Certain states of trance are commonly conceded to be closely related to demon possession” (*Biblical Demonology*, pg. 161).

The emerging church may argue, “Well, we don’t agree with everything they did back then.” But they’re silent on exactly what things they disagree with.

There are just too many unanswered questions. Emerging church teachers need to get real and they need to get honest. Instead of bashing conservative churches that want to live by the truth of Scripture, they need to examine what they promote. They are good at raising questions but should get an “F” on giving any kind of helpful answers. The question they need to answer is: Are they promoting occultism by ignorance or by design when they promote the medieval mystics?

—GRF/MKG

NEWS UPDATES

(continued from page 3)

garden that is not a place of prayer, nor will it hold any religious symbols.” Critics of the event argued that much more was accommodated than just the location of the prayer meeting.

Even those of Francis’ own flock expressed reservation. Father Dwight Longnecker reported, “some Catholics who are already edgy about Francis and uneasy about his stance on matters see this as yet another compromise — a potentially disastrous Koran kissing ‘Assisi moment’ — referring to Pope John Paul II’s inter faith service in Assisi in 1986.”

The AP also revealed that the “Pope says 99 percent of Vatican opposed idea for a Mideast prayer summit, but then came around” and that “Francis acknowledged the idea was completely novel and wasn’t easy to pull off.” The news service described the meeting as incorporating “Jewish, Christian and Muslim prayers, delivered in Hebrew, English, Arabic and Italian and with musical interludes from the three faith traditions.”

Longnecker was more reserved, giving the pope a pass, explaining that there is a difference between “praying together” and “being together for prayer.” He stressed such “explanations are only necessary because of the ignorance of the press who are sensationalizing what is a low key spiritual event.”

“Bottom line: The Pope is meeting with two world leaders to pray together for peace. This is part of his role as the premier spiritual leader in the world,” Longnecker said. He also maintains that Islam is like Mormonism and that both are “heretical offshoots of Christianity” and that Muslims and Mormons “therefore worship the same God we do — albeit in a defective way.”

—MKG

OSTEEN TO SIGN ON WITH SIRIUS RADIO

The merchandising of Joel Osteen and his prosperity message will be taken to a new height — literally — this fall. In June, satellite radio SiriusXM announced plans to initiate a new and exclusive channel headlined by Osteen.

Media Confidential, a radio digest of broadcasting news, reported, “‘Joel Osteen Radio’ will debut this fall and bring Osteen’s message to SiriusXM listeners nationwide, showcasing exclusive weekly call-in shows hosted by both Joel Osteen and Joel’s wife, Victoria Osteen, co-pastor of Lakewood Church. In addition, listeners will hear Osteen’s weekly Sunday message alongside the catalog of his inspirational and motivational sermons past and present.”

SiriusXM is a subscription-based, commercial-free, broadcasting service of more than 165 channels of music, sports, news, and talk radio. Subscribers are able to listen in their car equipped with a satellite radio, on their home or office computer, or with a special app on a smartphone or tablet.

Osteen is just one of many celebrities courted by SiriusXM. Present and past headliners for the satellite radio service include Oprah Winfrey, Martha Stewart, Neil Diamond, and Bob Dylan.

SiriusXM’s hope to have Osteen as a part of its network has been an ambition for a number of years. Osteen told the Associated Press that the broadcasting service had approached him about five years ago pitching the idea,

but Osteen said time and resources quashed the possibility. “Five years ago we were still growing. I didn’t think we could put the time and energy into it that we can now. We’re much more established and have a bigger library. It feels really right now,” he told the AP.

In a SiriusXM press release, Osteen said, “Victoria and I are excited about this new venture with SiriusXM. We are humbled and appreciative to bring our message to the millions of SiriusXM listeners every day — and equally excited to get to know them personally through our call-in radio programs. We truly cannot wait to get started!”

Critics of Osteen argue that his phenomenal success can be attributed to his underlying message of prosperity which plays well in our relativistic society. Osteen often rebuts such charges. “I don’t ever feel guilty because it comes from — it’s God’s blessings on my life. And for me to apologize for God’s — how God has blessed you, it’s almost an insult to our God,” he told CNN television host Piers Morgan.

Osteen’s personal net worth is reported to be more than \$55 million.

—MKG

BOOKS IN REVIEW

(continued from page 24)

Despite these weaknesses, this book is a very helpful and informative study of the three topics mentioned in its title. It is written in a reader-friendly manner. Although not everyone will agree with all the answers Hitchcock gives, he is to be applauded for his endeavor to present scriptural teachings — as opposed to the ideas of men.

Also praiseworthy is that Hitchcock obviously takes seriously Paul’s admonition to Timothy to “do the work of an evangelist” (2 Timothy 4:5). In this, as in his other books, Hitchcock’s final chapter contains a presentation of the Gospel, and an invitation to the lost to receive Christ as their personal Savior.

In the book’s opening chapter, Hitchcock states his book’s perspective on spiritual warfare:

“God’s people fight *from* victory, not *for* victory. Contrary to what many people might think, spiritual warfare is not scary or frightening. Understanding it brings us hope, encouragement, and reassurance that victory is ours through our Lord Jesus Christ” (pg. 14, italics in original).

Unlike some more sensationalistic books regarding Satan and demons, this is a sane, useful, and scriptural guide to the topic of spiritual warfare.

—JGS



Books in Review

101 ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ABOUT SATAN, DEMONS, & SPIRITUAL WARFARE

by Mark Hitchcock

Harvest House Publishers, 233 pages, \$13.99

Numerous Christian books have been written about Satan, demons, and spiritual warfare. This one is easy to understand, useful, interesting, informative, and doctrinally sound.

At one time author Mark Hitchcock was a lawyer. But then acting upon a desire to invest his life in Christian ministry, he attended Dallas Theological Seminary, where he earned both a masters degree and a Ph.D. Since 1991, Hitchcock has been senior pastor of Faith Bible Church in Edmond, Okla.

He has written numerous books on the subject of Bible prophecy. In some of his books, such as this one on the subjects of Satan, demons, and spiritual warfare, Hitchcock has used a question-and-answer format.

He first answers "Why spend time thinking about Satan and demons?" One reason he offers is that:

"... many different views of this topic exist. Champions of the modern-day spiritual warfare movement advocate cosmic-level spiritual warfare, spiritual mapping, and identifying and confronting territorial spirits. Many others promote deliverance ministry, including rebuking and binding Satan and demonic spirits. Are these practices biblical? Should believers participate in these activities? What does Scripture say? With the emergence of divergent views and practices, followers of Christ today need to understand what Scripture says about spiritual warfare in order to avoid being sidetracked by unbiblical practices and ending up on the casualty list. Spiritual warfare is not a game. Successful warfare against the enemy must be waged according to God's power and God's principles" (pg. 15).

Following this introductory chapter, which lays the groundwork for studying the topic of spiritual warfare, the book is divided into three sections that address Satan, demons, and spiritual warfare. Questions 2-49 pertain to Satan. These questions include: "Where did Satan come from? How did he fall?" (Question 4); "Why does God allow Satan and demons to exist?" (Question 6); "Can Satan perform real miracles?" (Question 16); and "Does Satan know the future?" (Question 25).

Questions 50-77 concern demons and include: "What are demons?" (Question 51); "Can a believer in Christ be demon possessed?" (Question 72); and "Can people inherit demons or generational spirits?" (Question 75).

Questions 78-101 deal with spiritual warfare. This is the practical application section of the book. Some of the questions it deals with are: "Who are the three enemies of every Christian?" (Question 80) and "What are binding and loosing?" (Question 85).

He also addresses how to overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil and discusses each of the six items of spiritual armor that the Scripture lists in Ephesians 6:10-17, and how to appropriate each piece; as well as a helpful chapter on the subject of prayer (pp. 216-220) as it relates to spiritual warfare (cf. Ephesians 6:18-20).

The question-and-answer format breaks up the information into easily accessible topics. It has helpful biblical statistical and linguistic information related to the topics and Hitchcock gives a number of powerful illustrations and anecdotes.

Some readers, however, may see a few weaknesses in the book. For instance, some of his conclusions are either debatable or uncertain; such as his belief that portions of Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28 actually deal with the fall of Satan, his conclusion that Satan can perform miracles, or his assertion that the word translated "Lucifer" in the KJV of Isaiah 14:12 is actually a reference to Satan, etc.

Additionally, he uses the Greek word *tartarus* without much explanation on pages 134-135, but doesn't actually explain the word until pages 162-163. In one place (pg. 115), he seems to use Matthew 22:30 to show that unfallen angels and demons don't marry or procreate; whereas, later (pg. 125), he denies that Matthew 22:30 precludes his belief that in Genesis 6:1-4 it was fallen angels (whom he believes are demons) who sired offspring with human women.

(continues on page 23)

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