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# News Updates

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## PFO CONTINUES TO GROW

Growth prompts the need for change. Personal Freedom Outreach was a counter-cult, apologetic ministry conceived in the mid-1970s, when several of the mainline cults were experiencing tremendous gain. It was also during a time when the Church was giving way to the advancing of aberrant theologies.

PFO saw its "infancy" in the late 1970s, its "childhood" in the 1980s, its "teen years" were in the 1990s, but now — for the 21st century — the ministry has grown to "adulthood" and with it, added responsibilities and demands.

During the past couple years, PFO has sought that each of its directors become more involved in their personal devotion and duty to help realize its goals. At a recent board meeting, it was determined that PFO would add two new members to its Board of Directors. Appointed to serve on PFO's board are Dr. Robert L. Griffin and Dr. David M. Tyler.

Robert Griffin has served as pastor of Parker Road Baptist Church in Florissant, Mo., since 1992. He earned his Doctor of Ministry from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary in 1973. His ministry opportunities include preaching, teaching, writing, mission work, and Bible Camp direction throughout the world. Bob served as the Executive Director of the Bible Memory Association International from 1977-1989. He currently serves on the Board of Trustees for the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention.

David Tyler has pastored churches in Illinois and South Carolina. He holds a B.A. in Theology, a M.A. in Pastoral Ministry, and a Ph.D. in Biblical Counseling, all from Trinity Theological Seminary in Newburgh, Ind. Presently, David is a Regional Director for Church and Community Ministries for the Illinois Baptist State Association. He is a member of the National Association of Nouthetic Counselors and the Southern Baptist Association of Biblical Counselors. He co-edits, along with fellow PFO director Kurt Goedelman, SBABC's *Quarterly Newsletter*.

Both men have been active in and supportive of PFO prior to their appointment as directors, including participation in a teaching capacity at its *Saint Louis Conference on Biblical Discernment* held last April.

—MKG

## U.S. NEWS SPOTLIGHTS McPHERSON HOAX

What do Aimee Semple McPherson, Piltdown Man, and crop field circles have in common? They all earned recognition in a recent edition of *U.S. News & World Report* dedicated to "The Art of the Hoax" (Aug. 26-Sept. 2, 2002, special double issue). The magazine stated, "Our team of writers presents the best deceptions, scams, and gags, past and present."

McPherson weighed in as the magazine's Hoax #10, being "the evangelist [who] was tried for a tall tale." On May 18, 1926, at age 35, the celebrated female evangelist and founder of the International Church of the Four-square Gospel went swimming in the Pacific Ocean at Venice, Calif. When she did not return, her flock feared the worst. For weeks there was no sign of McPherson. Then, five weeks after vanishing without a trace, McPherson turned up in the Arizona desert. She claimed that she had been abducted by three people who held her prisoner. However, news reports disclosed quite a different scenario. Reporters stated McPherson "had joined the one-legged engineer from her radio station in a cycle of sin at a Carmel, Calif., 'love nest.'"

Despite the reports, McPherson insisted the abduction was legitimate and said it was "my story" and that she was "sticking to it" — a pronouncement later echoed by Mae West on the big screen and President Bill Clinton during the Monica Lewinsky episode. McPherson was charged with a felony, obstructing justice by falsely reporting a crime. Finally, litigation against McPherson was dropped as "the state's key witness altered an account once too often."

McPherson stuck to the story until her death in 1944.

—MKG

## WATER UNDER THE BRIDGE?

Less than a decade ago, *The Liberty Flame*, a periodical on religious liberties published by the Rev. Jerry Falwell, called into question the life, practice, and theology of popular television preacher John Hagee. The May 6, 1994, *Flame* displayed a bold, front page headline asking, "John Hagee: Heretic?" However, more recently, Falwell's view of the San Antonio-based minister has apparently

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organizations and/or popular phenomena such as Jehovah's Witnesses, Latter-day Saints (Mormons), Freemasons, Unitarian Universalists, Wiccans, Roman Catholicism, Harry Potter, astrology, and many other issues and concerns examined by PFO, which Brown and Yoder also "attack."

Second, if Brown and Yoder are aligning themselves with those named on their "PFO Attack List," then they are coming to the defense of the likes of Oneness Pentecostals, documented false prophets, legalists, and men and women who promulgate all sorts of aberrant and heretical theologies under the guise of "revelation knowledge." It is a dangerous undertaking by which Brown and Yoder only further establish how much they dishonor the Word of God.

Moreover, PFO does not "declare that ALL testimonies are false," as Brown and Yoder say. PFO has never stated anything that even remotely suggests such a position.

However, Brown and Yoder's April 2002 newsletter does prove why Christian publishers should guard against publishing dramatic testimonials: The couple persist in retelling stories that are wholly fabricated. An example is a purported testimony of a survivor of the World Trade Center attack of Sept. 11, 2001.

The newsletter says, "One sister worked on the 105th floor of one of the World Trade Center buildings. This was the floor the jet crashed into. When the jet hit, she was thrown out of her seat across the room behind a door. This saved her from being set on fire. When she collected her wits from the shock of being thrown, she realized that she was in the doorway to a stairwell. Jesus appeared to her and instructed her to follow Him out of the building. He led her all the way down 105 stories to safety. She got out of the building unhurt." If one considers the details from that day, a concise sampling alone renders the testimony published in the *Harvest Warriors Newsletter* as fiction.

The first of two hijacked Boeing 767 jets struck the North Tower between the 93rd and 98th floors, instantly killing scores of people on those floors and in the airplane. The impact of the aircraft — most notably its steel engines — damaged the inner support columns and three stairwells located in the building's core. The jet's fuel instantly ignited a fire which quickly consumed the stricken area. When the core of the North Tower was struck, its three emergency exits (or stairwells) were destroyed. The 950 people above the impact zone were trapped with no way out of the building. They were unable to get past the crash area because the sheetrock (or drywall) used to protect the stairwells had been demolished, leaving the stairwell exits in flames, and impassable.

Several minutes later, the second Boeing 767 jet hit the South Tower, crashing between the 78th and 84th floors. This time the aircraft pierced the building at an angle to the right and did not squarely hit the core as did the plane that struck the North Tower. Only two of the three stairwells were destroyed. Five hundred people were trapped above the impact zone, and only 18 were able to escape through the remaining stairwell exit.

Like their own personal testimonies, Brown and Yoder continue to feign preposterous tales that are far removed from reality or fact. Once again, even basic and fundamental details (such as what floor the aircraft crashed into) contradict the historical documented information.

The couple contends that PFO "practices just about every one" of the seven abominations to God listed in Proverbs 6:16-19. Perhaps Brown and Yoder should take a serious review of these abominations and see how many apply to their own lives and ministry.

Despite Brown and Yoder's deceitful campaign, the members of PFO stand by the organization's long and fruitful ministry of testing everything, holding on to the good. PFO will firmly hold to the Word of God over experience and persist in meticulously documenting what it writes and publishes. It also will continue to attend to those who are emotionally and spiritually damaged by the likes of self-assuming false teachers and false prophets such as Brown and Yoder.

— MKG

NEWS UPDATES

changed. Last spring, Falwell and Hagee headlined a religious meeting for the Horizon Foundation in Cape Girardeau, Mo. A few months later, Hagee was the evening keynote speaker for Falwell's "Old Fashioned Fourth of July" held at Liberty University in Lynchburg, Va.

The 1994 *Flame* article described Hagee's immorality with a young woman in his congregation and subsequent divorce of his first wife, Martha. The newspaper also disclosed that Hagee resigned from his San Antonio church, immediately accepted another pastorate in the same city, and, just eight months after his divorce, married the woman with whom he had engaged in adultery. Hagee also was criticized in the article for holding a "dual-covenant" theology — the teaching that Jews do not have to accept Christ to be saved. Hagee, however, says he does not publicly teach such a doctrine.

Because Falwell's newspaper once had labeled Hagee a heretic, *The Washington Times* considered this recent alliance strange. The newspaper tried to contact both

men, asking for an explanation. Joanne Coffey, an assistant to Hagee, told the *Times* that Falwell's stern criticism of Hagee was "water under the bridge" for both men. "The beauty of being a Christian is you learn how to forgive and forget and carry forward," Coffey said.

Falwell did not immediately return a call to the Washington newspaper's inquiry.

—MKG

## PEARSON'S INCLUSIONISM PROMPTS HIS EXILE

As a rule, Pentecostals and Charismatics possess a high threshold of doctrinal tolerance. However, the transition into a gospel of inclusion by the Rev. Carlton D. Pearson has cost him congregation, colleagues, and a bid to become his city's mayor. The prominent Pentecostal bishop pastors the Higher Dimensions Family Church in Tulsa, Okla.

Pearson believes that man's salvation comes solely through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. However, he teaches that this salvation is imparted to man apart from repentance and faith in Christ. All sincere people, including Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and others who do not trust Christ as Savior, will be saved, Pearson maintains.

"All will be saved, with the exception of a few. ... Most people on planet Earth will go to heaven, because of Calvary, because of the unconditional love of God and the redemptive work of the cross, which is already accomplished," Pearson told the Associated Press. He further teaches that hell is for those few who "deny in their hearts that there is a creator" and "who have a disrespect for the deity." He also told *Charisma* magazine that "Scripture clearly shows that the 'vast multitudes' will be in Heaven." Pearson "claims that inclusionism was the predominant thought during the first 500 years of the Christian church, until Augustine introduced the concept of hell with fire and demons from Africa," the magazine's news service reported.

Pearson says his move into the arena of universalism started over 25 years ago after reading the works of E.W. Kenyon. Eight years ago, he returned to study the doctrine and four years ago he began to publicly teach it. He argues, "A careful study of what I have taught will reveal that it is entirely scriptural, logical and theologically sound." Apparently, his staff members and congregation disagreed. Congregation members left in masses and four assistant pastors started churches elsewhere.

In addition, Pearson has come under fire from his Pentecostal colleagues, including his "mentor," Oral Roberts. Pearson has resigned from the board of Oral Roberts University and Roberts has barred Pearson from holding his annual Azusa Conference at ORU. Yet, while Pearson's inclusionism may distance him from his former

allies, it is gaining him new friends. "The pastor said he is befriending Hindus, Muslims and those of other faiths who see a difference in him because of his loving acceptance. A Hindu now underwrites Pearson's radio program," *Charisma* reported.

Pearson also told the magazine, "My Hindu friend wasn't sure he wanted to become a Christian because he and his family had been Hindu for generations and he didn't want to believe that his father — a good, devoted Hindu — was in hell, ... I said: 'I think your father is in heaven; don't you think so? Your dad is as reconciled to God as I am, according to the Scriptures.'"

Pearson alleges that not all of his Pentecostal associates are expressing concern. Last March, according to *Charisma*, "Pearson noted that fellow black preachers, including Charles Blake, G.E. Patterson and T.D. Jakes, are familiar to some extent with inclusionism. These are my friends. ... They're not bothered by this." However, Patterson, Presiding Bishop, and Blake, First Assistant Presiding Bishop of the Church of God in Christ, have denounced Pearson's assertion. In a published statement, Patterson and Blake declared, "As leaders of our nation's largest Pentecostal body, we are appalled that Bishop Pearson would so casually and carelessly associate us with a body of teachings which neither we nor our denomination supports. We feel that Bishop Pearson was presumptuous and irresponsible in assuming that we were 'familiar to some extent' with, and that we are 'not bothered by,' his teachings."

In February 2002, Pearson lost a primary election and his bid to become the Republican candidate for Tulsa's mayor. He believed his defeat was, in part, as a result of local churches denouncing his doctrine of inclusionism.

—MKG

## WARNKE FIRES BACK

Christian entertainer Mike Warnke has returned to national attention with *Friendly Fire*, his first publication since being exposed as a fraud over a decade ago. Warnke, in his best-selling book, *The Satan Seller*, spun a chronicle of alleged satanic and occult involvement prior to his conversion to Christianity. In 1992, *Cornerstone* magazine published a meticulous report which demonstrated that Warnke's sensational testimony was a complete fabrication. The magazine later amplified its article into a formidable book called *Selling Satan*. During the years following the *Cornerstone* exposé, Warnke's Christian celebrity status diminished greatly.

Now Warnke's back. But apparently he's not suggesting that true confession is good for the soul. Neither is he prepared to admit that he invented a purely fictional account of his life and Christian conversion. Rather just the opposite. Warnke writes in his new book, "Were the media reports true? Was I a fake, a charlatan, a deceiver,