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# Editorials

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## A LOT TO SAY ABOUT NOTHING?

A letter recently came to our St. Louis office from a reader criticizing our examination of the teachings of Joyce Meyer. Among other things, she wrote, "You sure had a lot to say about nothing!" Sadly, her comments reflect a troubling development in the Church: Christian fundamentals are easily discarded when people become captivated by a religious superstar. Meyer is a classic example.

In Meyer's case, the very substance of the Gospel is at stake. False teaching conflicts the truth; it is the Church's enemy. It is not much ado about nothing. Meyer, like cultists and heretics, clearly adds to the Gospel message. She is on dangerous ground and in deadly company. Changing or adding to the Gospel is damnable territory as Galatians 1:8-9 declares. Paul did not consider Peter's union with the circumcision crowd a matter to ignore. His actions cut to the heart of the Gospel. If Christ did not complete our salvation on the cross — and we add to it by ritual or relocation — His declaration, "It is finished," is meaningless.

Consider, for example, how major cults all attack the Gospel. Jehovah's Witnesses limit the atonement of Christ to 144,000 (those it designates as "anointed" Christians) and further restrain God's grace by adding works; Mormons likewise lessen Christ's death by teaching that it may provide salvation if it is earned

through personal merit; Mormons also move the distinctive of the atonement on the cross into the Garden of Gethsemane, claiming that Christ shed his blood for our sins not only on the cross, but in the garden as well; Christian Scientists teach that the shed blood of Jesus did not cleanse us from sin at all.

This letter writer extends "doctrinal grace" and leniency to someone who teaches that Christ's death on the cross was not enough but does not extend that same leniency to PFO. Her bias toward Meyer keeps her blinded and undiscerning.

Meyer teaches that Christ had to take our place in hell to complete the atonement. She writes that a person "cannot go to heaven unless you believe with all your heart that Jesus took your place in hell" (*The Most Important Decision You Will Ever Make*, first edition, pg. 37).

The "born again Jesus" or "spiritual death of Jesus" theology (which is what Meyer suggests here) is a concept not found in Scripture. It is a relatively new doctrine taught by men such as E.W. Kenyon, Paul E. Billheimer, Kenneth Copeland and other New Thought and Word-Faith teachers.

Meyer's teaching, which moves the atonement of Jesus into hell, clearly contradicts Scripture, which states that Christ paid for our sins on the cross. Romans 5:10, Colossians 1:20-22, 2:13-14, 1 Peter 2:24 and 1 John 1:7 are but a few examples. Moreover, there is no mention of

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self-sufficient and in no great need of others. Wrong.

In spite of Paul's gifts and greatness he was very human and very vulnerable. He, at times, found life to be fearful, hard and even excruciating.

Listen to Paul's admissions in 2 Corinthians 7:5: "For indeed when we came to Macedonia, our bodies had no rest, but we were troubled on every side. Outside were conflicts, inside were fears."

Here Paul sounds just like us. How often we've said "I feel stressed — overextended — so much going on around me that is not right — everywhere I turn things are out of sorts — it troubles me inside — it upsets me inside!"

Paul needed comfort. How would he get it? Would it be a warm fuzzy feeling sent directly from God? Would it be a booming voice from heaven? Would it be a bolt that would strike him? Would he tingle from head to toe? How did God minister comfort to Paul?

The next verse gives the answer. The answer was *fellowship*. Plain and simple — fellowship. God sent a man:

"Nevertheless, God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus" (v. 6). Comfort was ministered through fellowship.

We can be a Titus to someone and we need a Titus or two around us. Even Paul did.

Black gospel musician Thomas Dorsey lost his wife and newborn son in 1932. Ministering in revival meetings in St. Louis, he received a telegram giving him the tragic news of their sudden death.

Stunned, broken, and torn by shattering grief there was born in his grieving heart the words of the wonderful hymn, "Precious Lord, Take My Hand."

"Precious Lord, take my hand,  
lead me on, let me stand — I am  
tired, I am weak, I am worn;  
thro' the storm, thro' the night,  
lead me on to the light — Take  
my hand, precious Lord, lead me  
home. When my way grows  
drear, Precious Lord, linger near  
— when my life is almost gone.  
Hear my cry, hear my call, hold  
my hand lest I fall — Take my  
hand, precious Lord, lead me  
home."<sup>6</sup>

He knew Christ, he knew the Word, and he spent his life being a Titus to God's people. Many of them were a Titus to him.

May the God of all grace and the God of all and every comfort, minister that grace and comfort to you through Christ, the Word and others. May you keep yourself in the way of grace and under the means of grace. May you in turn minister that grace and comfort as a Titus to others (Romans 15:14).

#### Endnotes:

1. Jay E. Adams, *The Big Umbrella*. Nutley, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1972, pg. 66, italic in original.
2. Some of these elements can be found in Warren and David Wiersbe, *Comforting the Bereaved*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1985, pp. 22-23.
3. Mark Ammerman, *The Rain from God*. Camp Hill, Pa.: Horizon Books, 1997, pg. 268.
4. See further, W.E. Vine, *The Expanded Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*. Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship Publishers, 1984, pg. 199.
5. Marilyn Heavilin, *Roses in December*. Eugene, Ore.: Harvest House Publishers, 1987, pg. 148.
6. Kenneth Osbeck, *Amazing Grace*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Kregel Publishing, 1990, pg. 260.

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## EDITORIALS

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Jesus taking our place in hell as part of the Gospel message so clearly described by the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4.

Meyer, by virtue of her redefined gospel, has moved herself onto a more critical playing field. She, like so many heretics and cultists, says God gave her this teaching apart from the Bible. She places herself beyond the authority of Scripture when she says, "The Bible can't even find any way to explain this. Not really. That's why you've got to get it by revelation. There are no words to explain what I'm telling you. I've got to just trust God that He's putting it into your spirit like He put it into mine" (*From the Cross to the Throne*, cassette tape).

Meyer's premise leads us to conclude that she believes that an infinitely wise, intelligent and omniscient God had trouble expressing His truth in Scripture and that she thinks she can better express those truths herself.

The Bible is clear in its proclamation of the Gospel. God was not at a loss for words, nor were the inspired authors of Scripture. Scripture is all we need for life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3). Nothing more, nothing less, nothing else — it's just that simple. We do not need extrabiblical declarations stolen from heretical teachers.

Clearly, the reason Meyer appeals to "revelation knowledge" and not the Bible is because her doctrine is another Gospel. She has borne false witness against God by saying that He put this teaching into her spirit. Again, she finds herself on even more dangerous ground with such a claim. She has painted herself into a theological corner by claiming this teaching came directly from God. If it came by revelation from God and means our very salvation, as she says, it is a doctrine that must never be denied or ignored. If she ever moves to disclaim such teaching, then she has lied — to the utmost — in saying that God gave her the declaration by revelation. She is a false prophet.

When we allow ourselves to drift from God's Word alone, we open ourselves to be exposed to "destructive

heresies" from men and women who distort the truth (2 Peter 2:1). Apart from Scripture, we will all too easily believe and tolerate false and unorthodox teachings. The Church needs Bereans who "examine the Scriptures daily to see whether these things are so." We must commit ourselves to a lifelong and daily study of Scripture in order to grow in our knowledge and understanding of God. We must not allow ourselves to become weary in our passion for the Word. We should be like the Psalmist whose very being was consumed with a longing for God's Word in his life (Psalm 119:20). We must never become bored with the Scriptures so that we search for truth apart from the Bible. Regrettably, for many Christians, they're looking for truth in all the wrong places.

The Church does not need modern-day prophets, like Kenyon, Copeland or Meyer, to uncover for us principles of God's redemption for man, that have been missed down through the centuries. Jesus promised the Holy Spirit, who would "guide you into all the truth" (John 16:13). Whether knowingly or unknowingly, Meyer, with her call to "spirit revelation," is supplanting the work of the Holy Spirit.

The current wave of self-proclaimed prophets and esoteric teachers only pretends to enhance biblical truth. In employing their mystical repertoire, they try to usurp the authority of Scripture. Despite claims to the opposite, these men and women are really linked to liberalism. Their doctrine and practice draw one away from the Bible and dilute Scripture. PFO, as believers in Christ and under the authority of the Scripture, will strive to stand up for the truth and be witnesses for the truth when error is being propagated.

British author, Peter Jeffery wrote: "The doctrinal health of the church is of paramount importance in the New Testament. False teachers may be lovely, kind, charming men but their doctrine is poison."

Indeed, it is *not* a lot to say about nothing.

—MKG

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## NEWS UPDATES

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my being there, it became more of a 'you need to be there and support what we are doing or don't take a paycheck from me.'"

One employee, Anita Pillow, told the Baptist news service, "I was told that because the direction the company was moving towards, my position was being replaced by someone who attended her Remnant Fellowship church." Pillow added, "[Shamblin] thanked me for my hard work but said my services were no longer needed. Because I was not a member of the Remnant

Fellowship, I was being replaced." Pillow is a member of Park Avenue Baptist Church.

Amid the revelations of her heretical theology, Shamblin sought to play down her unorthodoxy. "A few people have been on a witch hunt in the last month," she told *CT*. "People don't care about this. They don't care about the Trinity. This is going to pass. What the women want is weight loss. They care about their bodies being a temple and their lives turned over to the Lord. That's what my ministry is about," she said.

Shamblin says that despite the disclosure of her beliefs, she continues to receive the support of "many ministers," from Baptists to Episcopalians.

In less than a decade, Shamblin's diet program went from her garage to a multimillion-dollar business. Her 1997 volume, *The Weigh Down Diet* sold more than 1 million copies and at its apex, the ministry had 30,000 locations, including thousands of evangelical churches, which hosted weekly meetings of her Weigh Down Workshops.

—MKG

## ARMSTRONG FURTHER SILENCED WITH AID OF COURT

The Philadelphia Church of God, a religious group based in Edmond, Okla., which strictly adheres to the teachings of Herbert W. Armstrong, had its efforts to publish and distribute the last written work of the late religious leader quashed by a federal appellate court in September.

A year before his death in 1986, Armstrong, at the age of 92, completed a 315-page book, *Mystery of the Ages*. Armstrong taught "the Bible was a coded book, not to be understood until our day" and that his *Mystery of the Ages* enabled the Bible to be "clearly understood." The book's copyright was bequeathed to the Worldwide Church of God, the church founded by Armstrong in 1934. Over 9 million copies of the book were distributed free of charge by the WCG.

In the months following Armstrong's death, the Pasadena, Calif.-based WCG began a radical and protracted departure from the doctrine and practices of its late founder. This deviation led to the founding of the PCG in 1989 by two former WCG ministers in order to advocate the undistorted teachings of Armstrong.

While the WCG ceased distribution of the *Mystery of the Ages* in 1987, the PCG continued distributing existing copies of the book. In 1997, the supply was exhausted and the PCG began reproducing the book without permission of the WCG. Later that year, the WCG sued in federal court for copyright infringement. When a federal district court ruled in favor of the PCG, stating