
Editorials

IS PFO REALLY NEEDED OR SHOULD WE QUIT?

In a day of pluralism and tolerance, apologetic and discernment ministries are viewed by some as antiquated, unneeded, and in the way of getting together and getting along. In a day when unity is put far above truth, counter-cult ministries are seen as passé and even obstructionist.

Televangelists and Word Faith teachers can draw tens of thousands to their meetings while discernment conferences struggle to get a hundred. Truth, clear thinking, and biblical precision are definitely not in, and heresies are gaining popularity. Orthodoxy is out and false doctrine is in vogue.

Of course, there are many reasons for this: Men love darkness rather than light. We have an unseen enemy who goes about like a roaring lion. And liberalism has so eroded confidence in Scripture that many are turning to mysticism and experience. Subjectivism is the drug of choice. Many of the religious are addicted to their own adrenalin.

Truth be known, the deception is getting deeper and more subtle. This only underscores the need for organizations such as Personal Freedom Outreach. Someone needs to sound the alarm. Without discernment ministries, who will do it?

The evangelical Church has tried so hard to be relevant to the world that it is becoming irrelevant. Rather than compromise with the dominant culture, we need to stand more strongly for our distinctives and distinctiveness.

The Apostle Paul warned us in 2 Timothy 3 that deception would be as alluring and impressive as the magicians of Moses' day (v. 8). The antidote, Paul says, is to *carefully follow doctrine* (v. 10), but few are listening. Paul further warns that "evil men and seducers will grow worse and worse, *deceiving and being deceived*." (v. 13).

Deception has multiple masks. Deception is hard to spot. Deception is covered with religious clichés designed to deceive and that is why we need all the help we can get from those with discernment. Deceivers are tricky and most times wear disguises. Deceivers may even say they believe in Jesus, so we fail to stay alert to what they layer onto the name of Jesus. Some may not even ask, "Which Jesus?"

Take, for instance, the following testimony. Read it slowly and see if you can find anything wrong with it:

"...today's society makes me constantly wonder if anyone knows what it's like to give your heart and mind to the truth of Christ and Yahweh, and to be hated and ridiculed for those beliefs, especially by people that don't even know me. I'm always trying to make sense of everything I read and everything I

(continues on page 22)

PERSONAL FREEDOM OUTREACH

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passages and verses that deal with sin, grace, and faith. The point is found in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It does not matter whether one is preaching or teaching from the Law, the prophets, the historical books, the wisdom literature, the Gospels, or the Epistles, they all point to the Lord Jesus Christ, who died for our sins.

The landscape of evangelicalism today is very disturbing. Christians have jettisoned their commitment to God's sufficient Word. A psychological Tower of Babel has been erected. Biblical definitions and categories have changed and a new vocabulary has emerged within the Church. Behaviors and attitudes once regarded as sinful have undergone a dramatic change. They have been reappraised. Sin is called sickness. Confessing sin

has been replaced with recovering from sickness. The word "sin" has nearly disappeared from our vocabulary. As such, the impact of the Gospel to a non-believer is less pronounced and the need for progressive sanctification in the believer is minimized. Nevertheless, there is, in the back of our minds, the fact that sin is still with us — somewhere, everywhere. It is a vaguely uneasy feeling. Although we try to make ourselves feel better by calling sin by another name, it is always there. It never fully goes away.

Endnotes:

1. E. Fuller Torrey, M.D., *The Death of Psychiatry*. Radnor, Pa.: Chilton Book Co., 1974, pg. 24.
2. Garth Wood, *The Myth of Neurosis: Overcoming the Illness Excuse*. New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1986, pg. 1.

3. A.H. Marckwardt, F.G. Cassidy, and J.B. McMillan (eds.), *Webster Comprehensive Dictionary International Edition*. Chicago: J.G. Ferguson Publishing Company, 1992, Vol. 1, "disease," pg. 365.

4. Thomas Szasz quoted in Janet Vice, *From Patients to Persons*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1992, pg. 14.

5. *Ibid.*, italics in original.

6. Throughout the New Testament the starting point when declaring the Gospel is the wrath of God. For example, the first point John the Baptist made to the people who came to hear him was they should repent of their sins and "flee from the wrath to come" (Matthew 3:7). Peter, on the Day of Pentecost, preached concerning men's relationship to God. The sermon would affect them in such a way that they cried out, "Brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37). Paul's sermons throughout the book of Acts emphasize man's relationship to God and the judgment that will come because of sin. (See, for example, chapters 13, 14, 17, and 20.)

EDITORIALS

(continued from page 2)

see going on around me and holding back my disgust for those that I feel are responsible for the lies that my people so easily accept as truth. I see drug dealers, gang members and other criminals killing and being killed all the time with no sign of fear from these individuals. But we Christians that are promised life everlasting seem to stand back and let things get out of control because of our fear and because of the Judeo-Christian preachers and the government constantly telling us that these problems will be taken care of. But they never are. My hateful thoughts toward my enemies sometimes consume my logic. But I am always mindful of the mistake and great wrong it would be to take any kind of action out of hate or ignorance. As a messenger of Yahweh I am always praying that what I have expressed to my people will make them thirst for more knowledge. And that what I have told them will never escape their minds. As a Christian I don't need to see what will take place in the future because Yahweh has told me what will happen, therefore I know it will be. But knowing what the future holds doesn't make it any easier living in the present. So, when I'm asked, don't you get depressed or do you ever feel like giving up, my answer is 'yes.' But it is my faith that sustains me and I start out every morning with the thought that every new day means one more day of Satan's rule behind me and one day closer to the second coming

of Christ. My wife also reads Psalm 91 every morning, which I suggest that everyone should read for spiritual fortification."

On some level the words are challenging and would resonate with most Christians. The deception, however, is not the words, but the real *interpretation* given by the speaker. The one who spoke these words is Charles Lee, Grand Dragon, White Camelia Knights of the Ku Klux Klan. The quote is from *Soldiers of God* by Howard Bushart, John Craig, and Myra Barnes (pp. 171-172).

On the basis of Lee's words alone, most anyone would consider the speaker a dedicated Christian. However, a discernment ministry would pick up on all the baggage that so denies Christ as to nullify Lee's testimony. It would know about the "seed line" theory that gives the white supremacist the liberty to persecute Blacks and Jews. Remember: The Pharisees were fundamental and believed the Old Testament. However, the traditions they added made their religious system void in the eyes of God (Matthew 15:8-9). Whatever they had right was nullified by their endless traditions and additions. A religion may offer the name Christ and even have a correct Christology, but then offer a plan for salvation by works. A proper Christology does one no good if Christ is put out of reach by a defective doctrine of salvation. One correct doctrine is not enough if another totally ignores the pattern of the Apostles' teachings (Acts 2:42, 2 Timothy 1:13).

The above is almost a no-brainer, but there are others less obvious and more deceptive. The Word Faith movement may superficially speak of Christ, but their

Christology of a born-again Jesus who suffered in hell, denies the Christ of the Bible and is rank heresy. Using Christian words and defining them in non-Christian ways is the essence of deception and cultism.

There are many reasons we need organizations such as PFO. We need to help one another spot deception. We need to help one another be more discerning overall.

Pray for PFO — support it with your prayers and gifts. It is a ministry that is desperately needed as the darkness and deception deepens. There are men who want to be thought of as evangelical who sit on the boards of organizations of New Age gurus, and who endorse New Age teachers and a Catholic contemplative web site. Someone needs to sound the alarm on the fence-straddling.

“Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you have learned, and avoid them. For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple” (Romans 16:17-18, NKJV).

—GRF

NEWS UPDATES

(continued from page 3)

Meyer’s organization indicates that the homes were originally purchased as investments for the ministry. “The increase in property values makes it hard not to sell,” Sutherland told the *Post-Dispatch*.

In a report last April, the *Post-Dispatch* revealed that the “ministry’s board of trustees, which is led by Joyce Meyer, agreed to pay her a \$900,000 annual salary in 2002 and 2003. The board agreed to give her husband, Dave Meyer, the board’s vice president, an annual salary of \$450,000 in each of those same two years.”

As a result of the newspaper’s 2003 reports, Meyer, beginning in 2004, reduced her salary to \$250,000, but still receives additional perks, including a “portion of the \$3 million a year in royalties earned from books and tapes.” Weeks after the *Post-Dispatch*’s initial reports divulged her expensive lifestyle, the televangelist told listeners at a local St. Louis-area conference that the news articles were a “satanic plot.”

—MKG

WHO IS THIS NEW POPE?

On April 19, 2005, German Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger was elected Pope of the Roman Catholic Church. In his opening statement, he acknowledged his need for help from Jesus, Mary, and the Saints.

The new pontiff is certainly well known in the Vatican, but not to the general public. Ratzinger, the oldest of the candidates at 78, became a Cardinal in 1977 and was appointed guardian of the church’s doctrinal orthodoxy in 1981. He is an old-line Catholic and was a trusted friend of former Pope John Paul II. John Paul was the velvet glove, but Ratzinger was the clenched fist inside. He was one of the key men John Paul relied on to silence dissident theologians and reiterate church teaching. There is a reason he is referred to as the Vatican’s enforcer and was responsible for the excommunication of dissidents.

In electing Ratzinger, the College of Cardinals has signaled to Catholics worldwide that it is business as usual. The new Pope is definitely conservative and a traditionalist. News reports speak of Ratzinger’s inflexible reputation. One of the major issues, celibate clergy, will continue to be practiced and debated. Ratzinger has always been a tough opponent of practicing homosexuals and the ordination of women. Women’s rights probably will not be high on his agenda, either. He holds all the dogmas and traditions of Rome with deep commitment.

Ratzinger has selected the name Pope Benedict XVI. Benedict XV was the Pope of the First World War, reigning from 1914-1922. He is best known for canonizing Joan of Arc as a Saint. He spoke unrealistically of global peace and reconciliation between nations, but was marginalized and ignored by the world powers at the time. The powers of that day saw him as a nothing but a provincial potentate. Perhaps Ratzinger wishes to signal the world that he is a man of peace and for peace among all nations. Perhaps he wishes to give his papacy an aura of global concern. Perhaps he can be the new Benedict that the world will heed. The choice of the name is certainly not arbitrary. It is all about image.

Already, conservatives and liberals within Catholicism are taking sides. Ratzinger most likely will have a stormy and controversial papacy with little internal change for some years. There is little chance that anything in Rome will tilt back toward Scripture. Ratzinger undoubtedly will tenaciously uphold dogma, tradition, and papal infallibility. Publicly, Ratzinger will speak of Christians uniting, but in Ratzinger’s mind Christian unity involves all coming under the papal banner.

As Ratzinger reaffirms Catholic traditions, Bible-believing Christians could benefit. The cafeteria theology of American Catholics confuses and misleads even them. As the differences between Roman Catholicism and orthodox Christianity become clearer, witnessing could become easier. If Ratzinger makes Catholicism more like pre-Vatican II Catholicism — which he would like to — it surely will prompt more Catholics to questioning their beliefs and perhaps make them more receptive to Bible witness.

—GRF