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# Editorials

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## SPINNING SIN

Roberts Liardon (named after Oral Roberts) catapulted himself into Pentecostal fame by releasing "God's Generals," a series of videotape biographies (featuring clips with his commentary) on the old pioneer faith healers of yesteryear. Liardon platformed the likes of William Branham, A.A. Allen, Aimee Semple McPherson, and Kathryn Kuhlman. He dished out endorsements of them and, by extension, their aberrations and heresies. This video walk in the past with Liardon's editorializing and excuse-making could more accurately be labeled hagiography, not honest biography.

Liardon also launched the Empire Christian Center in California as well as the Spirit Life Bible College. He has overseas offices in England, South Africa, and the Philippines. He has published books with the standard fare of Charismatic buzzwords like "anointing," "authority," and so forth. He certainly tells everyone how to do it.

Liardon's wildest claim is that he's been to heaven and back (*I Saw Heaven*, Harrison House, 1983). While in heaven, he claims to have a playful water fight with Jesus in the river of life. In this trite and playful bit of fantasizing, Jesus supposedly told Liardon to be different than anyone else. Recent events show how different he is. No discerning Christian believes Jesus told him that in

heaven, but Liardon's fanciful way of describing himself is interesting, if nothing else.

And now comes Roberts Liardon's latest adventure. It could be called *From Here to Homosexuality — and Back!*

The spin masters of Washington (and even Bill Clinton) have nothing on the rich, powerful, sinful Charismatic televangelists. This lot can spin sin and bounce back on a trampoline of a quick repentance with new revelations from the cesspool of their sinful experience. The premise seems to be that you have to jump into the pig pen to know it smells, or that an oncologist has to contract cancer to treat it. The subplot is that massive failure equips you to minister to failures. That idea, however, would have totally excluded Jesus from ministry.

The news of Liardon's sinful conduct first broke on Dec. 21, 2001, on *Charisma's* ministry web site. It was entitled "Roberts Liardon Leaves Ministry Over 'Moral Failure.'" Liardon said that what he had done was "inappropriate." Most people would say that he should resign. However, it is not quite that simple.

The "moral failure" or "inappropriate" behavior idea (note that neither *Charisma* nor Liardon calls it "sin") plays into modern psychology, minimizes the severity of sin, and tones down responsibility. Surely everyone fails — right? The "he is only human" card plays well when you are caught, but the rest of the time you dish out

(continues on page 25)

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revelations from the throne and people really think you are a cut above all Christians. The “special anointed vessel that God speaks through” is the persona at all other times, except when caught flatfooted in gross sin and failure.

In what appears to be a crisp, well-planned, and carefully crafted letter, Liardon admitted to his congregation that he had engaged in a homosexual liaison. But he was quick to say it was “short term.” It was an obvious attempt to minimize the sheer sinfulness and evil that had been done. Apparently, having sex with another man then is not all that bad — as long as it is just once or short term. Moreover, “professional and church counseling” will have him back to normal in three months. However, people with that kind of sin propensity also lie, deceive, and cover up, so who knows? Romans 1 indicates that there is a moral twistedness that is very perverse when one is involved in this type of sinning.

Liardon assured his shocked followers that he would go to a “professional counselor.” Others in certain Charismatic camps would do an exorcism, which probably would be as effective.

What would it sound like if Isaiah, Jeremiah, Paul, or John stood up and told their congregation that they had sex with a man! Then to top it off said, “I am sorry, I am going to the local professional counselor. See you in three months!” Their flock would (and should) be reaching for the nearest stones. Whatever happened to the power of the Gospel, grace, the Holy Spirit, Scripture as sufficient for reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness? Where are the biblical perimeters for discipline and sanctification in Liardon’s revelations about himself?

This is not an appeal for non-forgiveness, but a call for common sense and a biblical approach. At the very least, more time is needed with the Church calling the shots as to if or when Liardon should return without time tables.

Nowhere in his statement does Liardon call what he did unmitigated sin, or what the first chapter of Romans calls it: “ungodliness and unrighteousness” (v. 18), “uncleanness, lust” (v. 24), “vile passions” (v. 26), “against nature” (v. 26), “shameful...error” (v. 27), “debased” (v. 28) and “sexual immorality...wickedness” (v. 28). Rather, Liardon claims it is only a short term moral failure.

Nowadays, admission alone means almost automatic restoration. No one seems to think about one having to build trust, prove themselves, and have a time period to demonstrate repentance. After all, what Liardon admitted to can be a life-dominating sin that will not go away with a trite confession. Even a minimalist view recognizes a year of accountability and real change before

being readmitted to ministry, especially where trust has been shattered. Paul says clearly that real repentance must be radically demonstrated, and that does take time (2 Corinthians 7:8-11). This observation and time table is to be set by others, not the offender.

Though Liardon has others offering “accountability, counseling and authority,” there are no names or specifics, but only his word. Last December, PFO sent three written requests to the Liardon’s ministry and church for specific information. All of our inquiries went unanswered. Three phone calls to the organization always found its public relations person “on the other line.” So much for accountability. One can be sure that Liardon’s staff are playing this close to the vest.

A hard, cold, and brutal fact that Liardon seems unaware of grasping is that in the future, people are going to look at him in terms of that sin, and parents will feel queasy about having their boys around him and will always wonder. It would be advisable for him to be in a lesser ministry (which will never happen), and one away from any kind of association with the prior sin. Other men will feel uncomfortable around him. Some impressions can never be overcome. Restoration to God and restoration to public ministry are two distinctly different things. Sometimes they have to be distinct for practical reasons. Pointing to David does not help us since David was an absolute monarch and the reigning King of a nation. The comparison is not equal to eldership.

The spinning, downplaying of the enormity of Liardon’s sin, and the announcement of a time table did not drive the congregation right then and there to their knees in horror, shame, sorrow, weeping, and repentance, but as reported by the *Los Angeles Times*, they gave Liardon “a standing ovation.”

Jimmy Swaggart set the timetable for his own return and shortly thereafter was seen cruising again. Pride goes before a fall, and easy repentance, spinning sin, and quickly arranged timetables can only play into more failure and more future disasters for Liardon and his devoted followers.

—GRF

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## NEWS UPDATES

(continued from page 3)

audiences’ and have the commitment and means to conduct effective information programmes about UN activities.”

A statement released by the UN confirmed that the Watchtower had “applied for association with DPI [Department of Public Information] in 1991 and was granted association in 1992.” In light of the Watchtower’s