

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