

Camping with Gwen

Or, Will the True Remnant Please Stand Up?

by Don and Joy Veinot

In 1956, CBS launched the television game show *To Tell the Truth*. It ran weekly until 1968, at which time it went into syndication. The popular program has been revived from time to time—the latest incarnation was hosted by John O’Hurley (of *Seinfeld* fame). For those who are unfamiliar with the program, the *To Tell the Truth* web site gives the following description:

“*To Tell the Truth* is the classic game show that features three contestants all claiming to be the same person. Following the host’s introduction of the contestants, an affidavit is read describing the life, activities and/or unique experiences of the individual who all three contestants are claiming to be. The featured celebrity panel then asks the three contestants questions, in hopes of trying to determine which one is telling the truth and which two are lying. Following the question session, each panelist has to vote for the contestant he thinks really is the person described in the affidavit.”¹

After all the votes are in, the host finally asks the contestant identified in the affidavit to “please stand up,” thus the panelists and audience find out who was telling the truth and who was lying. It may be entertaining to try to figure out who is telling the truth and who is lying on a television show where the stakes are pretty low. What’s the harm, after all, if you are fooled into thinking Peter the plumber is the King of Spain? But in real life, it’s not always a benign experience to be fooled by false claims—it can, in fact, be dangerous to your health, or wealth, or perhaps, even your life. Real people get hurt in real life scams. This is as true in the Church as in society. Religious con men and women have all of us in their

sights, and we ever will be easy prey unless we seriously heed the warnings given to us in Scripture.

The Apostle Paul was very concerned about this issue. As he met with a group of elders for the last time, he pleaded with them to protect the flock from savage wolves who would worm their way into the Church or arise within the Church to draw away unsuspecting sheep with their benign appearance:

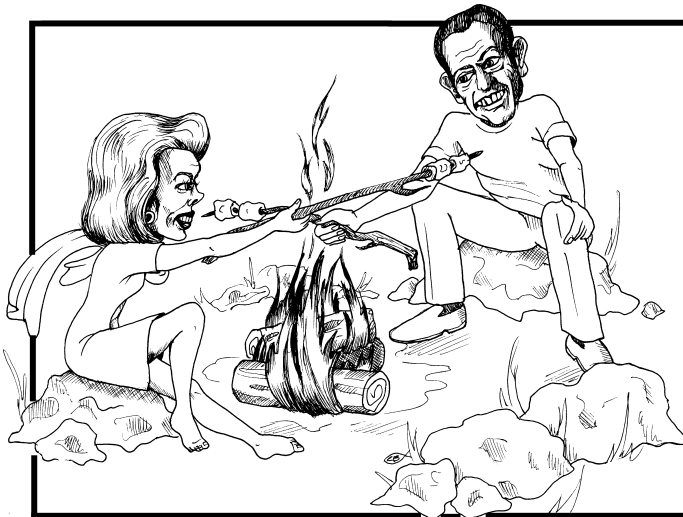
“Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speak-

ing perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears.”²

The True Remnant?

Throughout the Christian era, there have always been religious charlatans rising up to challenge the Church; but the last few centuries have been a virtual hotbed of false-prophet activity. Many men (and women!) have risen up claiming true Christianity was “lost” at some point in the past, and the modern church has become so corrupt that God has abandoned her and raised up *their* group as the only “true remnant” of God’s people on Earth. Currently on stage are the two newest contestants for the “true remnant” role. Our first “player” is Harold Camping of Family Radio, and the sec-

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"Camping" (Continued from page 1)

ond is Gwen Shamblin of Weigh Down Workshop fame. They are making their cases and promoting their groups as *the* "true remnant" of Scripture. Innumerable groups have claimed this title throughout the years, but we don't believe any can hold a candle to these two as far as having their prominence and influence within the church community today. We wish it was as easy as asking the true remnant to "please stand up," but ferreting out the false in real life is never that easy.

Like so many before them, Shamblin and Camping see a great many problems in the Church; which, they believe, has led God to abandon her. To be sure, there are a multitude of problems in the Church, but that has been the case since the first century. Many seem to be unaware that the majority of the New Testament was written to correct errors in the first-century Church. As we can see, things really haven't improved with age. Nevertheless, God loves the Church "*which He purchased with His own blood*" (Acts 20:28). As exasperated as one might get with the problems in the Church, it is still God's Church.

Pastors, elders, and deacons are called to protect the Church from predators, but sadly, in too many cases, they have shirked that responsibility rather than take a stand against popular false teachers who are ravaging the flock. Today, discernment is needed more than ever, because the wolves are busier than ever in our day. Let's examine the grandiose claims of these two newest contestants and determine if either one of them is, in fact, the true remnant of God. Should we pack our bags and flee to one of their camps? We'll examine the teachings of Harold Camping first and then those of Gwen Shamblin.

Harold is on a Camping Trip

Harold Camping heads up the radio ministry of Family Radio which has been around for approximately 42 years. In recent years, he seems to have wandered off the beam—his ego seems to have trumped his common sense. In 1992, he wrote the book *1994?*, which contains his own particular view of end-time events and prognostications. The gist of this book was that the rapture of the Church would occur in 1994, and if anyone differed with his view, he or she would be left behind with the infidels. In this work he stated unequivocally:

"When September 6, 1994 arrives, no one else can become saved. The end has come."³

As far as we are aware, Camping has never renounced this false prophecy; yet, here we are in 2002 (almost 8 years since the world ended) and Camping (left behind with the infidels) is still preaching the Gospel to poor lost souls who cannot possibly be saved! In his own words:

"... we have no other excuse for existence except that we might faithfully declare the Gospel to the world."⁴

Talk about an exercise in futility! If the end has come and gone, one wonders why Camping's ministry (Family Radio) hasn't closed their doors and turned off the lights. If the end did not come as Camping thought it would, what business does he have making further bold pronouncements now? Embarrassment alone should make him leery of repeating his past mistakes. But Camping seemingly has no qualms about it. Do you remember what happened in 1994? We don't either. There was surely some presidential scandal or other—but what *didn't* happen was the end of the world! And praise the LORD, lots of people have been saved since then. Not being easily deterred, Camping has decided he now really knows what the Bible is teaching on this subject and is ready for another go-round. He now knows the plan of God regarding what is soon to become of the churches—and it's not good news!

Flee for Your Lives from the Church!

In September of 2001, Mr. Camping declared the Church is dead and all true believers need to leave their churches or come under the judgement she receives.

"This plan shows that a time will come when God will no longer use the churches and congregations to bring the Gospel to the world. They instead will come under the wrath of God ... No longer are you to be under the spiritual rulership of the church. This command is given because God is finished with the era of churches being used of God to evangelize ... The message should be clear. We must remove ourself [sic] from the church."⁵

How did he come to these startling conclusions? In our opinion, this is a continuation of the dogmatic and egocentric thinking evident in Camping's *1994?* Camping cannot seem to conceive of the possibility he might just be mistaken in his biblical interpretations. G. Richard Fisher, researcher and writer for *Personal Freedom Outreach Journal*, wrote the following in 1993 concerning Camping's cocksure pronouncements in that book:

“This book presents all of the strange views of Camping, who is orthodox in the essentials but dogmatizes on many peripheral and prophetic themes.”⁶

Camping’s prodigious use of typology, symbolism, and numerology has driven him to abandon much of the plain sense of the Scriptures (and to nullify selected Scriptures as we shall see) as he calls his remnant of followers to flee their churches and worship around the Family Radio.

“In many areas there might be somebody in a church who decides, okay, I wanna be obedient and I see this. I can’t be part of a church. And they may have to fellowship around the radio.”⁷

There is a certain amount of typology and symbolism in Scripture, but if one employs these interpretive methods excessively (as Camping does), the Bible can be made to say most anything. In studying the Bible (or any literature for that matter), there are certain interpretive rules called hermeneutical principles that must be followed to arrive at the true meaning of any given passage. Such questions as who is the author, who was he writing to, when was this written, and why was it written must be taken into consideration to achieve the correct historical and grammatical understanding of the Scripture in question. Camping has abandoned proper hermeneutics and has resorted to a mystical interpretation which strangely points to the end of the Church—and the rise of Family Radio to replace it.

How does Camping convince people his astounding prognosis is correct? He begins with an undeniable truism and then wanders off the pier into Haroldism. Camping points out “No one can honestly say that all is well in today’s congregations.”⁸ While this is true, it certainly doesn’t prove his wild and weird subsequent claims, such as:

“... Satan has occupied the churches and has become victorious over the saints.”⁹

It is a monumental desertion of both sound biblical teaching and logic to go from “the Church has problems” to “Satan is running the Church.” But Camping undeniably has the ability to make this unsound reasoning ring true to those who have great faith in him as a Bible teacher. Step one: There are problems in the Church. Step two: Satan causes problems. Camping’s conclusion: Satan is running the Church. Two true premises, but one very flawed conclusion!

The Paganized Church

What biblical evidence does Camping offer to support this declaration? Well, he first talks about God’s warnings of judgment on Israel in Leviticus 26:30 and Ezekiel 6:3-4 for building “*high places*.” The high places were altars which were erected in order to worship and offer sacrifices to false gods. Camping, to support his view of God’s abandonment of the Church, accuses the Church of erecting “high places” of its own. One of these “high places” is divorce, even, by the way, divorce for the reason of immorality, which he equates in importance with Israel’s worshipping and sacrificing to false gods.

“The high places of the church are the doctrines held by the church which are not true to the Bible. Some of these are embedded in the Confessions but additional wrong doctrines are also taught. Divorce for fornication is an example of such perversion of the law of God.”¹⁰

To be sure, the Churches’ teaching on divorce is an important topic, but it is not an issue upon which one’s salvation hinges. Does taking a position contrary to Camping’s “sanctified one” qualify as a “high place”? If so, then Moses and Jesus have a

serious problem. The question was posed to Jesus in Matthew 19:7 as to why Moses allowed divorce. Jesus replied in verse 8, “*Because of the hardness of your heart Moses permitted you to divorce your wives; but from the beginning it has not been this way.*” In other words, God’s direct will was one man married to one woman for life. His permissive will allowed for divorce due to the hardness of men’s hearts. However, God *never* allowed idol worship due to the hardness of men’s hearts. Obviously, God did not place divorce on the same level of importance as He did the worship of false deities. Here again, Camping creates a false criteria in an attempt to support a very false teaching. Why is the “high places” teaching important? Because, according to Camping, Israel is a type of the Church!

“To see this plan we must carefully examine Old Testament Israel. They, without question, typify the New Testament church which the Bible speaks about.”¹¹

In order for this to work, one must buy into Camping’s false presuppositions. His first false presupposition is that Israel is a type of the Church. Next is his assertion Israel was judged for erecting high places, and the “high places” were the reason God ultimately set Israel aside. This is likewise false. Israel *was* judged for false worship, but Israel was set aside due to their rejection of the Messiah. Next, he claims doctrinal disputes within the Church are equivalent, in God’s sight, to worshipping and sacrificing to false deities. This is completely untrue. *False teachings* are wrong, and disputing false teachings is one of the primary *obligations* of the Church! The only way to avoid doctrinal disputes is to set someone up as the final authority on all matters of doctrine and practice. Who could be trusted with such a responsibility? The Pope? We don’t think so, and that is one good reason we “dispute” with the Catholics! Harold Camping, of course, is appointing *himself* to this position; but he will no more “get it right” than the Pope does. Finally, Camping asserts that, due to the Church’s refusal to abandon its “high places,” God has set aside the Church just as He did Israel; hence, the churches are now all under Satan’s control.

Although Camping claims to be biblical and although he cites passages of Scripture, they are twisted beyond recognition as he interprets them through his grid of mysticism and predetermined conclusion. He says it was when he was teaching a Bible study on the Book of Hebrews, that he began looking at Hezekiah and started seeing these things concerning the Church in the Scriptures. Later, he found confirming “evidence” of his developing view of the demise of the Church while studying Acts, Ezekiel, and John.

“When we came to Acts 21 we found that it was guiding us down the same path, exactly the same path ... That there is going to come a time that the church age has come to an end. Well, I’ll tell ya, I can testify that in many class times as I was teaching that I said very candidly, ya know, I’m scared. I’m frightened at where this was going because I saw where it was going. That at some point it looks like we’re going to come to a point where the Bible is teaching the church is dead.”¹²

He can only arrive at this scary conclusion by reading the Church into passages where it is not found by any normal reading. Since Camping asserts Israel is just a type of the Church, everything that ever happened historically to Israel must also befall the Church. And he teaches Jerusalem is also a type of the Church, so the same holds for all the Scriptures which refer to Jerusalem. Oh, and if that’s not enough, the two witnesses of Revelation are the Church, and King Hezekiah is the Church, and by tomorrow, Queen

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“Camping” (Continued from page 3)

Jezebel or your Aunt Betty might be the Church, too! It seems everything from Genesis to Revelation is not really about God and His Plan of Salvation; it is actually about the collapse of the Church and the raising up of Family Radio to replace it.

“I began to see that the Bible is very clear as we read in Revelation 11, there comes a time when the work of the church is finished. But God’s work to present the Gospel is not finished. It’s gonna go right up until the end because Christ said occupy until I come. But his methodology was going to change. And because it is such a drastic change after more than nineteen-hundred years, God has written about it all the way from Genesis, and He’s written about it in Jeremiah, in Daniel, in Revelation, in Matthew, and Mark, and Luke, and Second Thessalonians, and there’s information about this sprinkled all through the Bible.”¹³

How do we know it is true God is finished with the Church and has turned to Family Radio as a more worthy alternative? Camping believes this scenario is “plainly in evidence.”¹⁴ Now that the Church is “plainly” kaput, we must read the Bible a little differently as well. When someone raised a question about 1 Timothy 3:1-2, Camping responded by saying:

“That chapter no longer applies because that applied for 1900 years to the church. That was God’s divine organism to get the Gospel out. But if the church age has come to an end—if their work is finished, that does not apply.”¹⁵

Oh dear. That seems like a problem—a big problem! How are we to know exactly which chapters and verses “no longer apply.” Not to worry—it’s very likely Camping will tell us.

What about Israel’s redemption? Will the Church rise again?

Here is a nagging question: What about all the Scriptures that teach of Israel’s ultimate redemption? Do these apply to the Church as well? The Apostle Paul makes very clear in Romans 11:25-32 that, in His time, God’s favor will return to Israel and “*all Israel will be saved.*” Although set aside for a time for unbelief, “*God’s gifts and his call are irrevocable.*” God LOVES Israel, so even if the Church is a type of Israel (which she is not), she is in good hands.

Actually, Camping has a similar problem with the “two witnesses” of Revelation. They supposedly represent the Church and they died—which Camping construes to depict the death of the Church—but what about the fact that they were resurrected three days later?

Where should we go?

Camping insists the safest place to be is *outside* the Church. (Incidentally and very conveniently, Camping claims Family Radio has always been outside the Church.¹⁶) So, if the safest place to be is outside the Church, what replaces the Church in the life of the believer? After all, gathering around the family radio can be rather isolating and pretty lonely. Camping claims Christians are now to be part of a “fellowship.” This is really a difference without a distinction. *Church* (Gr. *ekklesia*) only means “a called out assembly.” The word doesn’t even apply exclusively to Christians, to worship, or even to religious gatherings. It applies to any group which “comes out” or “gathers together” for any purpose. It “was used among the Greeks of a body of citizens ‘gathered’ to discuss affairs of state, Acts 19:39.”¹⁷ It was used of Israel (Acts 7:38), of a mob which was rioting (Acts 19:32, 41), as well as Christian gatherings (Matt. 16:18, Eph. 1:22, and other places).¹⁸

Okay, let’s follow the pea here. Camping asserts the Church (*ekklesia*) is dead and Satan-ruled. So, Camping is starting a fel-

lowship (*ekklesia*) to replace the Church (*ekklesia*). What will be the purpose of the fellowship? It will be corporate prayer, Bible study and worship. Sounds a lot like ... a church! Except, of course, these fellowships will be handicapped by their belief that much of the New Testament does not apply to them, but to the now-dead church. Who will determine what parts of the Bible apply to these “fellowships?” After all, most of the New Testament was written to churches! So, how will they study the Word of God?

Forget about looking to pastors or elders to teach the Word—Camping claims there is no longer any spiritual leadership or authority (no pastors, elders, deacons, membership, etc.) and no biblical teaching on how this structure should operate. A Jehovah’s Witness, then, who might stumble into one of these “fellowships” would be on an equal footing with everyone else, and there would be no one in authority to keep him from teaching heretical doctrine to the others. Camping supposes he guards against such a situation by saying if such an event occurred, the board of directors could make some rules about this.¹⁹ But doesn’t that mean the “board of directors” would be serving the same function as pastors, elders, and deacons? The churches are dead, so we now have to come out of the churches and start or join a “fellowship” so we can pray, worship, and study with other believers. The pastor/elder role has been done away with, so we’ll have to depend upon a “board of directors” to fill that role, but without biblical teaching on how this structure should operate. This is going to be a mess folks! How will the “board” make the “rules?” Won’t they be severely handicapped by their inability to use the New Testament as their guide, since most of the Scriptures therein “applied to the Church?” And there goes the egalitarian aspect of Camping’s fellowships right out the window—after all, they who “make the rules” are the *rulers!* So, what happens if the “laypeople” (non-board members) *disagree* with the rules laid down by the rulers? How will they challenge the power of these ruling board members if they cannot appeal to the “Church’s” Scriptures?

The Buck Stops Where?

And what or who will be the *ultimate authority* for Camping’s remnant? For example, what happens if the board of directors of the Los Angeles fellowship disagrees with the board of directors of the Chicago fellowship about “the rules” or about doctrine? Or even more seriously, what if they decide to reject some of Camping’s teachings? We think it wouldn’t be long before this fellowship is kicked out of the true remnant altogether and falls under the same condemnation as the Satan-ruled churches! Do Camping’s “fellowships” comprise the true remnant of Scripture? We hope people will be very careful when evaluating his claims. Be even more skeptical when it comes to evaluating the claims of Gwen Shamlin, contestant number two.

Enter Contestant #2

“... *evil men and imposters will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived*” (2 Timothy 3:13).

If you have never heard of Gwen Shamlin or do not know anything about her claims, you must be new to the *MCO Journal*. We wrote several articles about Shamlin in the past two years—two for this *Journal* and one that was published in the *Christian Research Institute Journal*.

“Many of our readers will remember that in August of 2000 we had a number of queries concerning Shamlin’s view of the nature of God. After reviewing her web site, and seeing for ourselves that she denied the Trinity and the Deity of Christ, we called Shamlin personally to ascertain if she really meant to write what appeared there. To our dismay,

she vehemently denied the Trinity and the Deity of Christ on the phone and was unmovable in her heretical position. We then issued a press release documenting her view in this area and warned that she was starting her own religious movement and fully intended to take her devotees out of the churches and into her group, the Remnant Fellowship. Gwen seemed unconcerned about the controversy—brazenly saying that women don't care about doctrine. 'They don't care about the Trinity. This is going to pass. What women want is weight loss.'²⁰

Since that time, Shamblin has become even more resolute in her denial of the Trinity, and madly careens "from bad to worse" in other areas of doctrine as well. She promotes egregious errors in the area of grace and forgiveness, and she has no clue about the true Gospel of Christ. Jesus, according to Shamblin, took on human form for the purpose of showing us how to be obedient and to die for our *past sins only*.²¹ In her article "New Jerusalem" on her Remnant Fellowship web site, she writes:

"The grace of God and the Blood of Christ is [sic] to wash us of our *past sins* (rejection of God as authority), and this blood allows us to once more come back under the authority of the One Sovereign Father."²²

She claims our eternal destiny is in our own hands, literally:

"And in the New Covenant, by the way, one of the major themes is that each person will be responsible for his own sins."²³

But how can this be? Are we really capable on our own? Shamblin, who is referred to as the "global authority" by her followers, certainly thinks so. But then, according to her, human beings do not have a sin nature to contend with.

"God did not weave rebellion to Him (sin) into the fabric of His babies."²⁴

The Jesus whom Shamblin portrays came to provide a way for us to make ourselves acceptable in God's sight; and by sheer force of will, we can do it.

The Holy Family

Evidently, Shamblin has managed to convince her flock she has gotten her own righteousness well in hand. David Martin, co-founder of Remnant Fellowship, gushes:

"This past weekend, we—the Martins, had the honor and incredible privilege to travel with the most righteous family any of us know—the Shamblins—to New York, NY, to spend a weekend with Remnant Manhattan. ... What a blessing from God! First of all, hearing this generation's prophetic messenger Gwen Shamblin deliver the message of the Gospel and the warning to flee FALSE TEACHERS is always a humbling experience ... God has indeed spared New York City because of the righteous Remnant Manhattan. ... We all owe Gwen and the Shamblins eternal thanks for being TOTALLY obedient."²⁵

Her holiness is now teaching 9/11 was a judgment from God. I wonder how many of our readers are aware New York City was "spared" because of the righteous Manhattan branch of Remnant Fellowship and the total obedience of the new "holy family?" Wow—what delusion—and what arrogance!

The Harry Potter of Heaven

Heresy begets heresy. Shamblin not only has concocted a little Jesus—whom she asserts is not God, but she has created a very puny God as well. In her book *Rise Above*, she portrays God as sort of the Mel Gibson of Heaven. He was so handsome, so good looking, and so athletic that he had to make himself invisible so we wouldn't immediately fall in love with him. But even with all Shamblin's God has going for him, he is very much a limited physi-

cal being. Her *WD Advanced* video series advances her finite-god theology. It offers a very silly allegory of God's relationship to the Devil that really gives one an idea of how small her god really is. This portrayal is of a little god who uses magic to increase his power and has no idea of what goes on behind his back.

The Parable of the "Magic Chair"

"This particular employee [Satan] found that he had his own idea of how the office should run. He implemented some of these ideas or plans for the business since the great CEO was not always around. He tried just making decisions without getting permission by the CEO. He seemed to get away with it. He did it again, and then again; and he liked not submitting to anyone, and he loved the praise of man when things went well."²⁶

"The CEO was out of the office a lot. He [Satan] found it really a trip to just sit in the boss's chair behind His desk. The chair was magic. You could do what you wanted to do, when you wanted to do it, with no one to stop you. There were many perks being in the magic chair behind the desk."²⁷

"This employee [Satan] was always careful to give praise to His face and in front of others; but behind His back, he was putting down authority which is absolutely essential if you're going to get to the top. Now one day the boss returned and caught him sitting in His very own chair. This was shocking. Such defiance. He confronted this employee; and yet, the great CEO was so kind, that He accepted a 'sorry' and let him return to work."²⁷

Shamblin views God as a limited physical being—somewhat bigger and more powerful than the average man but just barely so. Far from omnipresent, sometimes God is "out of the office." And, when He is "out of the office," He has no idea of what is going on in there, so He is obviously not omniscient either. We already know from her earlier teachings that Shamblin does not view God as omnipotent, since He actually might have reason to fear us—we might stage a coup, kill the great CEO, and take over Heaven! (We know what you are thinking, but we're not making this up! ☺)

But let's get back to Shamblin's "magic chair" narrative. While God was "out of the office," Satan could do pretty much what he wanted to do as long as God didn't find out. God thought things were going pretty well until one day, when He walked in unannounced and was *shocked* to find Satan sitting in God's very own "magic chair." Not only is Shamblin's god limited, but he seems to be a blithering idiot! He had no idea Satan's "sorry" was feigned (How would he know?), and "let him return to work." Is the true God such a fool? The Bible teaches otherwise! God knows everything, *even before* it happens—He is *never* taken by surprise—not "shocked" by the actions of men or angelic beings (Isaiah 46:10, Matthew 12:25)! There is *nothing* Satan has ever done that God doesn't know about. Neither is He taken in by flattery or deceived by anyone's righteous demeanor, but He reads the heart (Psalm 139:1-12, John 6:64). Shamblin herself may be able to conceal her sinful nature from the likes of David Martin, but God knows her a lot better than Martin does.

Shamblin's god is much closer to the finite gods of the Greco-Roman Pantheon than the God who has revealed Himself in Scripture. The true God of Scripture is spirit (John 4:24, 2 Corinthians 3:17). He is everywhere present (omnipresent—Jeremiah 23:24, Matthew 18:20), all knowing (omniscient—Isaiah 44:7-8, Colossians 2:3), and all powerful (omnipotent—Jeremiah 32:17, Hebrews 1:3). He has no need of a "magic chair" to give him a power boost now and then.

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“Camping” (Continued from page 5) The “Counterfeit Church”

Unlike Harold Camping who is teaching the Church Age is officially over, Shamblin insists the Church (which has enriched her in excess of one-hundred-million dollars) is a counterfeit. Until recently, she had insisted it became apostate five-hundred years ago with Luther and the Reformers and their false gospel of salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. We and others asked, “Why doesn’t Shamblin just go back to Rome?” After all, if the false gospel came in with the Reformation—why not rejoin the Church from which the Reformers broke away? It is still there, and it no more believes in free grace than she does! But Shamblin is not really interested in joining any established church; instead, she seems intent upon building her own church in her image. Recently, Shamblin has revealed the Catholic Church is merely “the firstborn counterfeit church.” Concerning God’s imminent judgment on the Roman Catholic Church, she writes:

“This destroyer has been deployed; this death angel is now at the door of the firstborn counterfeit church—the Catholic Church. It is older and ripe for destruction.”²⁹

After that, however, Shamblin assures us “The destroyer will proceed through all of the churches.”³⁰ Similar to Harold Camping seeing everywhere proof of the Churches’ demise, Shamblin sees everything as being the “counterfeit church.” Egypt was the counterfeit church, America is the counterfeit church; in fact, Egypt, America, and church are synonyms for counterfeit church. (Dust off Aunt Betty—she might be next!)

Recently, Shamblin has reinstated the Old Testament feasts, and she equates Israel’s deliverance from Egypt as a symbol of the Remnant’s exodus from the “counterfeit church” that had enslaved them.

“God commanded that in the month of Abib, we are to observe and celebrate the Passover of the Lord our God. This is the month of Abib, and Passover begins Wednesday night at twilight. This is the first month of the calendar year, for all of God’s children who were called out. You were to start the year off with this remembrance of this Exodus from a counterfeit church, from churches that enslaved the true children of God so that they could not worship God.”³¹

“Three years ago this month, at the end of March, it just so happened that God coordinated our own Exodus from the counterfeit church—the Shamblins and the Martins were called out in the month of Abib. It’s very symbolic.”³²

It’s All “Symbolic”

Most pseudo-Christian movements have this same arrogant tendency that Shamblin exhibits here—the propensity to “find” themselves or their perceived enemies (usually the Christian church) in every passage of Scripture, while losing the gospel of Christ along the way. Like Harold Camping, the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society (Jehovah’s Witnesses), or any number of false religious movements, Shamblin handles the Bible as just so much symbolism that can be twisted to mean anything she wishes. Jehovah’s Witnesses view their organization as the 144,000 of Revelation. They are the locust army of Joel that is “tormenting” the Church with their stinging criticism. The seven trumpets of Revelation are seven Watchtower Society conventions held in the early 1900’s. (Puleeeease!) Shamblin misuses Scriptures in this same egotistical manner. Besides “finding” herself and her group in whatever Scriptures concern God’s favor, her hatred of historic Christianity causes her to find judgment for the Church throughout Scripture where *no* objective parallel exists. She sees the 9/11 event as evidence the Church is now beginning to suffer the plagues of Egypt.

“Destruction is going on during the Passover. We are not only just celebrating what happened in the past, but as I said 3½ years ago, the churches are going to come down and sin was going to become a high wall. I feel a stirring going on of proportions that parallel the plagues and destruction of Egypt. September 11th was Plague #1. The financial recession is Plague #2. Egypt is about to be struck. It has actually already begun.”³³

The attack and collapse of the World Trade Center couldn’t have come at a more convenient time for dear Shamblin. She is exploiting these tragedies for all they are worth. Inconveniently for Shamblin, plague number two isn’t going so well—the recession seems to be receding. We can sympathize with her; it can be so disheartening when God doesn’t do what you want. Of course, it is always possible God has slipped off the “magic chair” and/or is temporarily “out of the office.” If she is patient, another recession is sure to come along soon enough. In the meantime, we breathlessly await word on the next eight plagues. If our experience with false prophets is any indication, she will not announce the calamities in *any great detail* until *after* they have occurred, at which time, she will claim she saw them coming. ☺ Vague predictions of doom are a false prophet’s best friend.

It doesn’t seem to occur to Shamblin or her followers that even if 9/11 and the recession that resulted *were* judgments of God upon the Church, it would not indicate God was through with the Church or that the Church is a counterfeit. The Bible teaches God disciplines those He LOVES—those who are his CHILDREN (Hebrews 12:5-6)! But in her blazing hatred of those God loves, Shamblin hopes for the worst and seeks to make hay of the tragedies of others.

Meanwhile, like tossing a boulder to a drowning man, she offers to rescue people from the plagues to come by pulling them away from the “counterfeit church” with its infernal message of grace. Says Shamblin:

“I’m ready to pull you off of this sinking ship and get you safely into the lifeboats of DOING.”³⁴

All Aboard the “Lifeboats of Doing”

How does the “global authority” (as Shamblin has been labeled) persuade people to abandon the biblical teaching of salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone and jump into the leaky “lifeboats of doing?” She abuses the Scriptures, of course, by ripping verses out of their context. We will look at just a few examples. Shamblin quotes Romans 2:5-6 from the NIV:

“But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God’s wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed. God ‘will give to each person according to what he has **DONE**.’”³⁵

Without considering the context, this verse would appear to back Shamblin’s emphasis on works for salvation. All good people, the text says, will be admitted into Heaven on the basis of their good deeds. Paul here clearly states that in the Day of Judgment, God will “*render to every man according to his deeds*.” Those who persevere in doing good will gain eternal life (v.7).

The Good News

This is the heart of Shamblin’s gospel, and it may superficially appear to be good news. All anyone has to do to gain eternal life is to persevere in **doing** good (Romans 2:6-7)! How hard could that be? Well, I guess we need to ask what it means to *persevere*? According to Webster, it means to “persist against obstacles, to continue steadfastly.” *Steadfastly* means “con-

stantly,” *constantly* means “continuously,” and *continuously* means “ALWAYS.” Aye, there’s the rub. ☺ Do you know *anyone* who has ALWAYS done good? We tend, in our humanness, to think *perseverance* means “keep trying,” when, in reality, it means “not ever failing.” The standard is perfection. You must bat 1000 your whole life through from the moment you are born. One measly strikeout *in your whole career* will keep you from attaining that perfect average no matter how many home runs you subsequently hit. You can talk about being a “good person” all day long, but are you willing to reveal your stats?

The Bad News

Once perseverance has been factored into the mix, the GOOD NEWS doesn’t look so good anymore. But when you consider what Paul says next, the situation becomes downright alarming! Here’s the BAD NEWS ... **“To those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation”** (v. 8). Now trust us, you don’t want wrath and indignation to happen to you! Paul goes on, **“There will be tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil...”** (v. 9).

But wait a minute! Paul is talking about evil people here! Someone would have to do something pretty *bad* to be called evil, wouldn’t he? We could say, “Yes,” but we don’t like to lie. No, “evil people” are described right across the page in the first chapter of Romans, verses 29-32. What sins are these “evil people” committing? Pretty much the garden variety sins of all humanity, we would say. Please note **“gossip”** and being **“disobedient to parents”** are listed right up there with **“malice”** and **“murder”** without mentioning which sins are venial and which are mortal. The truth is ALL sins are mortal sins, and every single person throughout history—but One—is thereby condemned.

The Bad, Bad News!

But Paul doesn’t stop with the BAD NEWS of Romans 2. He wants us to get the picture—to see what a hopeless fix we’re in, so he spells it out for dense humanity who is under the delusion we can do it on our own. This is where context becomes the enemy of a false teacher every time. Paul delivers to us the BAD, BAD NEWS of Romans 3:10-18. **“THERE IS NO ONE RIGHTEOUS”**, he declares, **“NOT EVEN ONE.”** Uh oh. **“THERE IS NO ONE WHO DOES GOOD, NOT EVEN ONE.”**

This presents a MAJOR problem for self-made saints—there has only been *one good man* in all of human history; and that man is Jesus Christ. God’s standard of goodness is Himself, and Jesus is God made flesh (contrary to Shamblin’s teaching). Remember the man who came to Jesus and called Him **“good teacher”** (Mark 10:17-18)? Like Shamblin, he wanted to approach Jesus as a peer, merely a “good man” among reasonably “good men.” Very significantly, Jesus did not deny that He was good. He would have been *lying* if He had! But by asking the man, **“Why do you call me good?”** He made the man rethink the issue. Only God is good, Jesus told him. The inference: If I am truly GOOD, then I am GOD in human form and not merely a “good teacher” in a relative human sense.

Very often, those caught up in the works-type salvation plans (like the man who approached Jesus) do not have God’s perfect standard in mind, but are, in effect, grading themselves on a curve. They believe they are good *compared to some “less good” people around them.*

Those who believe they can merit Heaven through a “70-year job interview” [from WDW staff devotions tape] don’t compare their performance to God’s perfection, but to someone

they can match or beat. Conveniently, there are some very unsavory characters they can look at to feel better about themselves (murderers, rapists, thieves, politicians), and then, they rely on their consciences to tell them where they fit in the pack. They only need to make sure they are north of the demarcation line! After all, God has to let someone into Heaven, doesn’t He?

Back to Romans

Well, back to the BAD, BAD NEWS of the Book of Romans. Paul says in Romans 3:19-20 that, because we do not meet the righteous requirements of the law, all of us are accountable to God. We are all silenced—there is nothing we can say on our behalf. We cannot point to the greater misdeeds of others as any excuse, because it doesn’t make a dime’s worth of difference who is further from the mark. If God were to leave it at that—that the good will be blessed with Heaven while the bad are tormented in Hell—none of us would have any hope since *none* of us are good, *all* of us are bad, and we can neither earn Heaven nor avoid Hell by anything we have done or can do.

Jesus is not only fully God, but He is fully man as well. Jesus alone, out of all humanity, is truly good—sinlessly perfect. Think of the life He lived on earth in the context of the passage we’ve been looking at in Romans chapter 3. Jesus was perfectly righteous, He had understanding, and He *persevered* in doing good: steadfastly, constantly, continuously, and always. He deserves Heaven, and He is, in fact, the only person who does; yet, He *left* Heaven in order to rescue the helpless likes of you and me.

The good, good news!

That is why we call Romans 3:21-26 the GOOD, GOOD NEWS. Paul tells us there is **“a righteousness from God”** which we can receive by faith alone—without regard to our deeds. God is offering to *give us, as a free gift*, the very righteousness of His Son. In return, we give Him the only thing we have to offer Him—nothing. That’s a good trade, friends, so please do not neglect to receive God’s gift of righteousness. A gift offered can be a gift refused. What do we do with this righteousness once we receive it? We put it on, just like a beautiful garment, and “wear” it. When God looks at us from that day forward, He sees us “clothed” in the righteousness of His Son; and He credits that righteousness to our account as though we had earned it ourselves. God’s Son already has been voluntarily punished for our sins, so we can be released from captivity. And not only are we released from bondage, but we—who were enemies of God—are now at peace with Him.

“Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand” (Romans 5:1).

What About James?

After sufficiently discouraging and scaring her followers into abandoning the context of Scripture and misusing the Apostle Paul’s Epistle to the Romans, Shamblin blithely skips along a few sentences later in her “New Jerusalem” piece, in an attempt to recruit James as support for her claims. She writes:

“America is under judgment. Salvation is the issue at hand and we must seek it. I have thousands of verses to show you – but let’s just look at one, NT verse: ‘You see that a person is justified by what he DOES and not by faith alone.’ (James 2:24)”³⁶

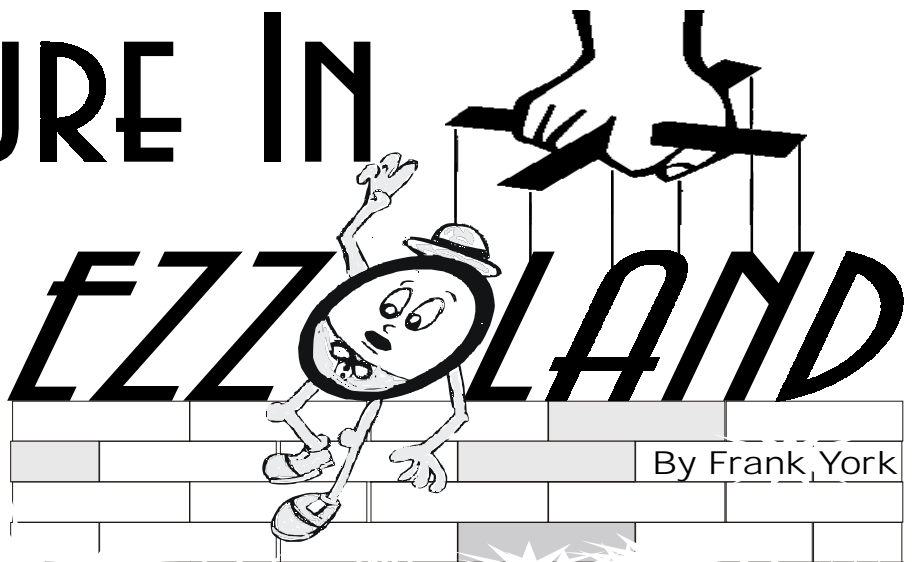
But is it true James is making the case, as Shamblin is asserting, that we must earn our salvation? The answer is, “Absolutely NOT!!!” This is another one of those abused and misused pas-

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ADVENTURE IN

EZZO LAND

A writer takes us on a journey down the Rabbit Hole Into Gary Ezzo's Growing Families International



By Frank York

In *Through the Looking Glass*, Lewis Carroll's sequel to *Alice's Adventure in Wonderland*, Alice meets Humpty Dumpty and begins a rather frustrating conversation with him over the correct meaning of words.

During their conversation, Humpty Dumpty uses the word *glory* in a way that has no relationship to its dictionary definition. When challenged by Alice on his misuse of this word, Humpty Dumpty becomes indignant and tells her: "When I use a word, it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less."¹

When Alice confronts him with the fact he can't make a word mean so many different things, he scornfully responds: "The question is, which is to be master—that's all."²

Humpty Dumpty and self-styled, parenting guru Gary Ezzo have much in common. Both redefine words to suit their own agendas.

Ezzo and his wife, Anne Marie, are co-founders of Growing Families International (GFI), a for-profit publishing company the Ezzo's promote to churches as a "ministry." A business, of course, is not a ministry. As with Humpty Dumpty, Ezzo frequently defines words to mean what *he* wants them to mean, which may have little or nothing to do with their dictionary definition.

I fell down the Ezzo Rabbit Hole on April Fool's Day in 1996 when I went on staff as the Ezzo's editorial director. It was a frightening two-year experience that mercifully ended with my firing on May 11, 1998. The first two weeks of my employment were a pleasant honeymoon. This ended when what I can only describe as the dark side of Ezzo was revealed within few weeks after I went on staff. I quickly learned Ezzo's public persona was a façade that covered a personality that might best be described as deceitful and vengeful.

My wife, Barbara, and I first encountered the Ezzo's parenting curriculum, *Growing Kids God's Way*, when we were involved in a ministry to single moms at our church in Colorado Springs. We were looking for a curriculum that would help these struggling mothers raise decent, God-honoring children. I was also going into my ninth year as an editor in the Public Policy Department at Focus on the Family.

When we ran across *Growing Kids God's Way*, we ordered it for our single parent outreach. As my wife was looking at the back cover photo of the Ezzos, she realized Anne Marie was the daughter of her mother's friend from their childhood in Belmont, Massachusetts. Barbara had gone to school with Anne Marie's brother

and sisters but had lost contact with the family 30 years before.

We soon learned the Ezzo's were coming to Colorado Springs to conduct a parenting seminar. While attending the conference, we introduced ourselves to the Ezzos and were immediately seduced by their seeming warmth and friendliness. We would discover later this was less than genuine. The following evening we went out to dinner, and Barbara and Anne Marie attempted to catch up on three decades of family news.

Ezzo, however, dominated the conversation when he found out I was an editor at Focus. For more than an hour, he peppered me with questions and then offered me a job to come to work for him as his editorial director in California. By the end of the evening, we had agreed to fly out to California to meet his staff.

Once in California, we spent an evening at the Ezzo's with their three vice presidents and wives. Present were Robert Garcia (who married the Ezzo's daughter Amy), Tom Buell, Nick Carter, and their wives.

It was an uncomfortable evening. It seemed as though I was violating some unspoken rules known only to the "initiated." I was also not sure I wanted to go through the initiation if this is what it led to. As we were getting ready for bed that night, Barbara and I discussed our uneasy concerns about the rigidity and coldness of our dinner experience. We agreed we probably would not accept the Ezzo's job offer.

During our visit, however, we drove with the Ezzos out to Riverside, California for an "Evening with the Ezzos" sponsored by a local church. The Ezzos sat on chairs on the auditorium stage while young, naïve parents asked them questions about their parenting philosophy.

As we were preparing to sit down, we were thrilled to see the face of one of our dearest friends from our former days at a church in Pasadena. It turned out she and her husband were involved with GFI and oversaw eight Ezzo classes at their church. They told us how much they enjoyed the Ezzo's material and how it had benefited their family. Their testimonials overrode our uneasiness about the Ezzo dinner experience. This encounter tipped our decision to join the staff at GFI. We took this to be one of those "divine coincidences" that we didn't feel we could ignore.

We accepted the Ezzo's offer and made plans to move to California. I gave my two-week's notice at Focus and began work for the Ezzo's on April 1, 1996 from our home in Colorado Springs. We relocated to Simi Valley, California in June of the same year.

Down the Rabbit Hole

My experience of working for Ezzo was like dealing with a mixture of two characters: Humpty Dumpty and Mafia Godfather Michael Corleone (portrayed by Al Pacino) in *The Godfather* trilogy.

After going on staff, Ezzo's son-in-law Robert Garcia gave me the job of surfing the Internet to "monitor" Ezzo's enemies. Enemies, I thought? Why would a man who is teaching parents to raise "Godly" children have any enemies? I was puzzled, but I dutifully started reading materials from three anti-Ezzo web sites. I was stunned at what I was reading and began compiling reports for Ezzo's review, and I kept copies of everything for my files.

The more I read, the more questions began surfacing in my mind about Ezzo's character and his lack of expertise in areas where he claimed to be an expert. I was also having a growing concern over babies whose lives were being threatened by malnutrition, failure-to-thrive, and low weight-gain and the claims these were the results of following Ezzo's misinformed medical advice.³

More and more, my personal encounters with Ezzo seemed to confirm what I was reading on these anti-Ezzo sites. The longer I worked for Ezzo, the more I noticed he had a habit of lying. I also realized, in Ezzoland, there are only three kinds of people: Blindly obedient employees, Ezzo worshippers, and enemies. I was being forced—by his questionable behavior—into the third category.

As I began to sink into a depression over my bad decision to work for GFI, one of my co-workers invited me out to lunch and asked me what was wrong. When I expressed my concerns about Ezzo's lying, he confirmed my worst fears by telling me: "Oh, it's generally understood by the upper management that Gary is a liar."

I felt trapped. I had just moved my family half way across the country, bought a new home, and found a good church. We had no savings account to cushion a fall. I was trying to make the best of a very bad situation, but I was fearful of confronting Ezzo. One of his vice presidents had already warned me *never* to tell Ezzo he was wrong about anything. I feared being fired on the spot for daring to utter any criticism of his materials or his behavior. I prayed daily for a way out.

I also wondered how his staff could stand by and accept this behavior from a man who traveled the globe teaching churches about "biblical ethics." By my observation, I eventually came to the conclusion he controlled his staff by giving them high salaries, cars, and prestige. He also controlled them by fear. Like Michael Corleone, Ezzo controls his family members and staffers through fear of reprisals. Employees operated under an "Omerta," or Mafia-like code of silence.

Michael Corleone and Humpty Dumpty Converge

Within a few weeks after moving to California, Ezzo called me over to his home office and asked me to proofread a response he was making to an article critical of GFI written by Roy Maynard for *WORLD* magazine. It was published in May 1996. Ezzo called Maynard and challenged his facts in the article.⁴ After two phone conversations, Ezzo constructed a Q&A dialog which was presented as a "verbatim" transcript of his interviews with Maynard.

When I asked Ezzo if I could listen to his taped conversation with Maynard in order to make certain the Q&A was verbatim, he told me he hadn't taped it. All he had was a legal pad with a few scribbled notes on it. When I compared the scribbled notes to the detailed interview, it was apparent he had fabricated most of

Maynard's answers, but he was going to post the Q&A on the GFI web site as though it had actually happened.

"Humpty Dumpty" Ezzo was not only changing the meaning of words to suit his purposes, he was now creating entire conversations that never took place.

He also claimed he had heard rumors Maynard and *WORLD* publisher, Marvin Olasky, had prison records. He wanted me to contact police departments and then publish their alleged criminal records on the GFI web site. It appeared to me Ezzo would stop at nothing to get revenge against his perceived enemies. (This behavior is coming from a man who claims to teach "biblical" ethics?)

Ezzo's Humpty Dumpty ethics carried over into his *Community Perspective* newsletter—a publication that I edited. In the summer of 1997, I interviewed Scot Shier about his wife Patty's use of Ezzo *Preparation for Parenting* materials after she gave birth to quintuplets. Shier told me he and Patty had learned about Ezzo's parenting curriculum at a church camping trip in 1994. Shier said he and Patty had noticed well-behaved children at the camp and discovered two common threads: They had been home-schooled and were being raised according to Ezzo's philosophy. I quoted Shier verbatim in the article and then sent the article to Ezzo for his approval.

In the final version of the article (printed in the Summer/Fall 1997 issue of the *Community Perspective*), Ezzo removed the factual reference to home schooling and then created a totally false quote for Shier. He had Shier saying, "*They [the children] would come to their parents when called and they would ask for permission to do something rather than tell their parents what they were going to do. Most amazingly was watching these kids politely touch their parent's elbow if they needed to talk to a parent who was engaged in another conversation.*" This entire quote is fabricated. Shier never said it, and I never wrote these words in my original article. Like Roy Maynard's allegedly "verbatim" interview, Ezzo simply made up Shier's quote from thin air. Why was he playing fast and loose with words and the truth? Couldn't GFI stand up on its own under honest evaluation?

Not only did I observe Ezzo "making up" quotes like he did for Roy Maynard and Scot Shier, but recent evidence has surfaced which seems to indicate he also plagiarizes the work of others. In late February 2002, an historian who has been a long-time critic of Ezzo's materials posted her discovery of Ezzo's plagiarism on an Ezzo Internet debate forum on ParentsPlace.com.

She compared Ezzo's article "Parental Affection and Character Development"⁵ (available on the GFI web site in early 2002) to "The Killer Narcissists" written by psychologist Barbara Lerner in the *National Review* on May 17, 1999.⁶

A side-by-side comparison of these two articles reveals how Ezzo freely copied her words nearly verbatim and never gave her credit for them. It appears Ezzo lifted large portions of Lerner's article, but one example should suffice. In Lerner's 1999 article, she writes:

"Only the narcissist matters, and because his sense of self-importance is so grossly inflated, his feelings are easily hurt. When they do get hurt—when others thwart him or fail to give him the excessive, unearned respect he demands he reacts with rage and seeks revenge, the more dramatic the better."

In Ezzo's 2002 article, he says:

"To the narcissist only self matters, and because his sense of self-importance is so grossly inflated, his feelings are easily hurt. When they do get hurt, when others thwart

(Continued on next page)

“Ezzoland” (Continued from page 9)

him or fail to give him the excessive, unearned respect he demands, he reacts with rage and seeks revenge.”

The rest of Ezzo’s article is filled either with Lerner’s exact wording or similar phrasing. In my opinion, her description of a narcissist seems to describe Ezzo himself: “... when others thwart him or fail to give him the excessive, unearned respect he demands he reacts with rage and seeks revenge ...”

Beware of the Invitation of the Godfather

In *Godfather, Part 2*, Michael Corleone has his brother Fredo taken out in a small fishing boat by one of Michael’s bodyguards. As Fredo quietly recites a “Hail Mary” in hopes of catching fish, the bodyguard shoots him in the back of the head. In *Godfather, Part 1*, Michael has his brother-in-law gunned down.

Ezzo doesn’t physically harm his family members. But he does demote and humiliate them. Ezzo’s shameful treatment of his brother-in-law Tim Howard demonstrates this heartless attitude.

A few months after I went on staff at GFI, Tim Howard (married to Susan, Anne Marie’s sister), relocated his wife and four daughters from New Hampshire to California to start work for GFI as a vice president. (One of his daughters was already living with the Ezzos.)

During his brief tenure as a vice president, one of Howard’s daughters got into some minor trouble at her local high school. She repented and the issue was resolved. Resolved for everyone that is, except Ezzo and Garcia. Ezzo and Garcia viewed this as evidence that Howard’s parenting skills were flawed. According to former GFI insiders (who are still too fearful to speak out publicly), it is Ezzo’s conviction that parents who raise children according to his philosophy will not have problems with their teenagers. Howard had to be punished for the sins of his daughter. She apparently had not been properly “Ezzofied.”

Howard was demoted and placed in charge of customer service. We were forbidden (by Garcia) to discuss Howard’s demotion with him. He eventually left GFI and now serves as a pastor at a local church in Simi Valley. The Howards and Ezzos seldom see each other.

Ezzo’s War Against

Focus on the Family and Dr. John MacArthur

One of the things that constantly annoyed Ezzo was the fact Focus on the Family maintained a letter on file that was sent to people who wondered where Dr. Dobson (founder and president of Focus) stood on Ezzo’s parenting philosophy. The letter stated in part:

“... our ministry has received numerous letters from parents, pastors, midwives, physicians, and lactation professionals regarding cases of failure-to-thrive in infants subjected to the Ezzos’ program. We don’t believe their experience [sic] should be ignored.”⁷

Ezzo and Garcia directed me to write a letter to Focus on the Family asking the Correspondence Department to stop sending out this very damaging letter to Focus constituents. At this time, Dr. John MacArthur’s Grace Community Church had also issued a damning indictment of Ezzo’s parenting materials. Grace Community Church’s statement was posted on the Internet.⁸

I was required to create a lengthy letter to Focus on behalf of Garcia. In it, I had to create the appearance GFI and Focus had similar parenting goals for children. I knew this to be false since, prior to being asked to write this conciliatory letter to Focus, I had been given the job of writing a pamphlet for Ezzo parents that

would explain why Ezzo parenting was “biblical” while Dobson parenting was humanistic and based on secular psychology. On the one hand, Ezzo was attempting to undermine Dr. Dobson’s influence among churches while at the same time pretending GFI and Focus were allies.

Ezzo also waged a secret war against Dr. John MacArthur. In early May of 1997, Ezzo called me into the GFI conference room and held a finger to his lips as he signaled for me to be quiet. Ezzo closed the door to the conference room and asked me if I knew of a good non-profit lawyer who could give him some legal advice. He explained he wanted to contact a lawyer who could give him an opinion on an alleged practice at Dr. MacArthur’s Grace Community Church that he thought violated Internal Revenue Service code.

I told him I knew a very good lawyer in Washington, DC, who was a former IRS attorney, but he would charge at least \$200 an hour for his services. Ezzo agreed. I was asked to contact the lawyer from my home, pay for his services with a personal check, and I then would be reimbursed with a personal check from Ezzo.

There was no doubt in my mind what Ezzo was doing. He was hatching a plot to turn in Dr. MacArthur to the IRS for an audit. He was using me to conceal his involvement in getting the legal opinion by having me take care of it from my home and paying for it with my personal check.

Fearing for my family’s economic future, I did as instructed, but I kept copies of the check signed by Anne Marie as well as the e-mail from the attorney. Ezzo also asked me to get the address of the local IRS office near Grace Community Church. Several months after I had left GFI, I alerted Grace Community Church to what Ezzo had done.

Failure-to-Thrive Infants

I continued to spend nearly every day on the Internet monitoring anti-Ezzo web sites and downloading information to send along to Ezzo. One of the most alarming sites was LACTNET,⁹ a discussion forum for lactation consultants and pediatric nurses who were exposed to what they termed “Ezzo Babies.” These were typically newborns who were being malnourished, allegedly due to Ezzo’s badly flawed “parent-directed” feeding control schedules.

I compiled numbers of these cases and gave them to Ezzo. In the beginning, I naively assumed he simply was uninformed about these cases—and surely would want to investigate them and change his parenting advice. I was wrong. Ezzo brushed aside my reports by saying these cases were either “fabricated” or “exaggerated.”

The following is one typical case I sent to Ezzo from LACTNET. The woman writing is a Registered Nurse and a certified Lactation Consultant:

“Well, it has happened again! The doctor’s office referred a mother to see me yesterday because the baby had NOT gained ANY weight for the past 2 months, from it’s 4 month to 6 month checkup! Baby had gained fine up until 4 months, in fact doubled it’s birth weight, then stood still. She is following the ‘Growing Kids God’s Way’ (Ezzo’s) course and the very scheduled feeding plan. She stated that she will do anything BUT feed more often then every 3 hours ...” (posted on LACTNET, February 28, 1997).

Public Rebukes and Ezzo’s Response

Ezzo has a history of relational problems. In the spring of 1998, the respected *Christian Research Institute [CRI] Journal* published an in-depth expose on Ezzo and GFI’s strange parenting philosophy. The article “More Than a Parenting Ministry? The Cultic Characteristics of Growing Families International”¹⁰ was a painstakingly

accurate portrayal of Ezzo's character problems and the cult-like organization he heads.

In response, Ezzo issued a mind-numbing and confusing refutation of the article that was longer than the article itself. Ezzo questioned the motives of the authors as well as the accuracy of their statements.

CRI responded to Ezzo's lies and half truths with the follow-up article "A Matter of Bias: Examining the Response of Growing Families International to Criticism"¹¹ which appeared in the Fall 1998 issue of the *CRI Journal*. Both of these CRI articles are accurate and reflect the truth about Ezzo and GFI. The footnotes in these articles are as valuable as the articles themselves!

Ezzo has also been dishonest in his response to the public rebukes he has received by two of his former pastors—Dr. John MacArthur of Grace Community Church and Pastor Dave Maddox of Living Hope Evangelical Church.¹² Their public rebukes have been posted on the Internet and were quoted in an article about GFI ("Unprepared to Teach Parenting?"¹³) in the November 2000 issue of *Christianity Today*.

In this *Christianity Today* article, Dr. MacArthur stated Gary Ezzo is disqualified "from Christian leadership or public ministry in any context." The Elder Board at Pastor Maddox's church issued the following comments: "Because of his persistent unwillingness to respond to biblical admonition ... we are fearful that Ezzo's heart has been hardened. ... In the end, it was his impenitence that caused us to put him out of the church."

And impenitent, Ezzo remains. In fact, early in 2001, he began circulating two lengthy letters to Ezzo-supportive churches in an effort to discredit Dr. MacArthur, Pastor Maddox, and many others.

Ezzo has also spread lies about his former accountant and friend Chris Hamilton who was brought in by Ezzo to conduct an investigation into the embezzlement of funds from GFI. When Hamilton confirmed Ezzo's son-in-law Robert Garcia had misappropriated nearly a half-million dollars of company funds, Ezzo told Hamilton he had "loaned" the money to Garcia. Garcia, however, admitted to *Christianity Today* he had, indeed, misappropriated the funds.¹⁴

Hamilton's accounting firm immediately severed its relationship with Ezzo over this incident. Ironically, Ezzo and Garcia are now friends again. Yet, the Ezzo's *honest* son-in-law Paul Luedke resigned from GFI and now works for Chris Hamilton's accounting firm. In addition, Mark Severance, the Ezzo's former personal assistant, also left GFI and is on Hamilton's staff.

Multnomah's Deceit and Ezzo's Guilt

In January 2001, I decided to write an "Open Letter to Multnomah Publishers"¹⁵ to ask them to conduct a thorough investigation of the charges being made against Gary Ezzo by myself, his former accountant, former friends, and former pastors. (Multnomah published all of Ezzo's secularized versions of his parenting materials. This included *On Becoming Babywise*.) In an effort at damage control, Ezzo responded to my Multnomah letter by privately circulating a letter to "Ezzofied" churches attacking my professional writing abilities and my mental health. I responded to his blatant dishonesty point by point in a letter¹⁶ which I posted on the Internet.

To my surprise, I got an e-mail from Jeff Gerke, an editor at Multnomah, telling me he'd been given the assignment of investigating the charges against Ezzo. I was wary of this contact because I believed Don Jacobson (president of Multnomah Press) and his brother Matt were "Ezzofied" parents.

I was surprised when Gerke submitted an honest report to Jacobson at Multnomah. It appeared the decision makers at

Multnomah decided to very carefully sever their relationship with Ezzo and to return publishing rights to him. *Christianity Today* broke this story on March 3, 2001 before Multnomah wanted the publicity. The article, "Babywise Publisher Plans Contract Cancellation,"¹⁷ quoting Gerke's private e-mails to a pediatrician was later followed up by "Babywise Almost Dropped,"¹⁸ an article that also quoted some of Gerke's private e-mails describing the internal debates going on at Multnomah over Ezzo. Jacobson then issued a statement saying the investigation was still "ongoing." Gerke no longer works at Multnomah.

Oddly enough, the day after 9/11, Multnomah issued a small notice on its web site saying it was returning publishing rights to Ezzo. The statement blamed his critics for being unwilling to reconcile with him.

This raises several interesting questions. If Ezzo is innocent of the charges against him, why did Multnomah sever the publishing relationship? If Ezzo's critics are correct, why didn't Multnomah thank them for drawing attention to the truth about Ezzo's materials? In Ezzoland, however, everything is backward and upside down—the critics are painted as the villains, while Ezzo plays the victimology card.

Ezzo is now back self-publishing his books, his materials are still being taught in churches, and he's still being invited by pastors to teach on biblical ethics and parenting.

The Michael Corleone of the parenting movement is still profiting off of naïve pastors and young parents who are hypnotized by what can best be described as his Clintonesque charm—and they still willingly give him their money and their undiscerning allegiance.

One can only wonder when rational Christians will rise up and put him out of the Church—as Living Hope Evangelical Fellowship did to him for his lies and unrepentant heart. Or, have churchgoers adopted the Gary Ezzo/Humpty Dumpty philosophy of truth: It can mean whatever they say it means? Only time will tell. ☐

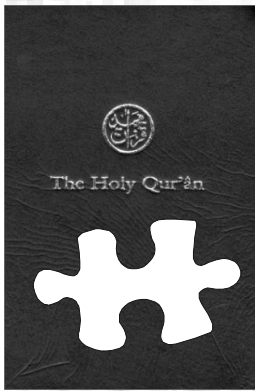
Frank York is a freelance writer working from his home office in Nashville, Tennessee. His newest book (co-authored with Concerned Women for America Attorney Jan LaRue) is *Protecting Your Child in an X-Rated World* published by Focus on the Family and Tyndale Publishers in April 2002. *Protecting Your Child...* teaches parents how they can protect their children from the scourge of pornography.

(Endnotes can be found on page 15)

Is
it
Finished?

Answer on page 15





ISLAM



The Missing Peace

By Cody Lorange

The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, that claimed the lives of thousands of unsuspecting people, have prompted widespread attitudes of anxiety and skepticism toward the obscure teachings of Islam. It seems many people are just no longer comfortable being ignorant of a religion that was used by some of its followers as a warrant for crashing hijacked airliners into buildings.

Karen Armstrong, in her article written for *Time* titled “The True, Peaceful Face of Islam,” suggests, “If the evil carnage we witnessed on September 11 were typical of the faith, and Islam truly inspired and justified such violence, its growth and the increasing presence of Muslims in both Europe and the United States would be a terrifying prospect.”¹ Armstrong may be right. Islam boasts of over 1.2-billion adherents globally and is considered to be the world’s fastest growing religion.² Muslim families live in practically every community in the United States, and mosques exist in every major city in the world. Muslims shop at Wal-Mart, eat at McDonald’s, study at state universities and local colleges, run for public office, serve in the American military, have jobs, and own businesses. The fact is very few people do not have regular contact with Muslims. Therefore, in the wake of September eleventh, the question many people are asking is, “Can I trust my Muslim neighbors?”

In a noble attempt to answer this question and simultaneously calm the fears of a now-apprehensive American audience, many public figures and so-called “experts” have resorted to preaching an ideology of tolerance, harmony, and mutual respect. On September 20, in a joint session of Congress and the American people, President George W. Bush claimed that the Muslims who performed and supported terrorism represented “a fringe movement that perverts the peaceful teachings of Islam.”³ Then, directing his speech specifically to American Muslims, Bush added, “We respect your faith ... its teachings are good and peaceful ... the terrorists are traitors to their own faith, trying, in effect, to hijack Islam itself.”⁴ Bush has said elsewhere that Islamic terrorists “profane a great religion.”⁵

Muslim scholar Sayyid Mujtaba Musavi Lari, in his article “Islam and World Peace,” eloquently portrays Islam as a religion that “brings to human living the delicate feelings of brotherhood and of belonging together. It designs a beautiful pattern of longsuffering, gentleness, and goodness in the hearts of people; and omits all the ugly tears and rents and weaknesses that injustice and the pulling and hauling of rival interests cause in a fabric.”⁶ Finally, Armstrong, who in addition to her article in *Time* has written a number of books on religion including *Islam: A Short History*, argues that Islam is essentially a peaceful religion that opposes terrorism and violence.⁷

While such idealistic sentiments are indeed politically cor-

rect and easily palatable for Western consumption, they are factually inaccurate and fail to provide a faithful representation of the inherently aggressive teachings of Islam as set forth in the Qur’an. There are five key mistakes Armstrong, Lari, Bush, and others make when trying to depict Islam as a peaceful religion: they misinterpret the word “Islam;” they misrepresent the historical origins of the religion; they miscommunicate the meanings of various Qur’anic passages; they ignore the misanthropy of Islamic teachings; and they misappropriate responsibility for religiously motivated violence.

Misinterpreting the Meaning of Islam

The first mistake people like Armstrong make regarding the “true face of Islam” is with the meaning of the word *Islam* itself. Armstrong proclaims the Arabic word *islam* “is related to ... *salam*, or peace.”⁸ This idea, however, is, at best, a stretch. While it is true both *islam* and *salam* are derived from the infinitive—*salama*, this does not necessarily mean their definitions are similar. Consider some of the other words derived from *salama*, like *salima* which means “to escape danger” or others which mean “the stinging of a snake” or “the tanning of leather.” In reality, *Islam* is best interpreted by the English word “submission.” Together with its derivative, *Muslim*, they describe the heart of a religion that emphasizes an attitude of unquestioning obedience to the commands of its god.

Misrepresenting Islam’s Historical Origin

Armstrong also claims Islam’s founder, Muhammad ibn-Abdullah, was motivated by a personal mission to bring “an end to the kind of mass slaughter we witnessed in New York City and Washington.”⁹ She says Muhammad’s attention was devoted “to building up a peaceful coalition of tribes” and succeeded through “an ingenious and inspiring campaign of non-violence.”¹⁰ Armstrong’s comments, however, could not be farther from the truth.

Islam’s roots are traced back to the birth of Muhammad in Mecca, located in present-day Saudi Arabia, sometime between A.D. 570 and 580.¹¹ Muhammad, the greatest prophet of Islam, began introducing “Islamic Monotheism” in the early seventh century to the idolatrous Arabs after claiming to have received messages from an angel while meditating in a desert cave.¹² Undoubtedly a charismatic leader, he quickly developed a following among slaves, the poor, and the oppressed. His movement also quickly amassed opposition from the pagan majority, and Muhammad was forced to flee Mecca.¹³

On September 20, 622, Muhammad and his band of followers arrived at the predominately-Jewish town of Yathrib. He conquered the town, established a theocratic dictatorship under his authority, and renamed it “Medina.” His conquest in-

volved a systematic extermination of the local Jewish community.¹⁴ From there, the early Muslims began conquering other Jewish tribes such as the Banu Qurayza, Banu Qaynuqa, and the Banu Nadr. In these cases, men were killed, women and children were sold into slavery, and property was confiscated unless a ransom called *jizya* was paid to Muhammad.¹⁵ In 630, the Muslims conquered Mecca and two years later Muhammad died.¹⁶ Islamic conquest, however, had just begun.

In the years following Mohammad's death, Muslims engaged in a series of brutal conquests that expanded their territory to Palestine, Syria, Iraq, Persia, Egypt, Tripoli, Spain, and India. Future conquests led the Muslims to Crete, Sicily, France, and various parts of Africa.¹⁷

Armstrong says by 632, Muhammad "had almost single-handedly brought peace to war-torn Arabia."¹⁸ Indeed, war had finally stopped, but not until every one in Arabia either had been killed, converted to Islam, or was forced to pay the *jizya*. After the death of the prophet, there was an era of immediate and widespread apostasy (known as the *Ridda*) among the conquered tribes, further indicating Muhammad had created anything but a peaceful and content society.¹⁹

Miscommunicating the Meaning of Qur'anic Passages

According to President Bush, those who commit evil in the name of Allah (the god of Islam), "blaspheme the name of Allah."²⁰ Armstrong agrees: "extremists such as Osama bin Laden like to quote ... verses [from the Qur'an to justify their violent acts], but do so selectively."²¹ She claims the proper context of the Qur'an's "more ferocious passages" contains "exhortations to peace ... in almost every case." According to her version of Islam, "warfare is always evil."²²

It's interesting, however, to actually examine the various texts Armstrong uses in her defense of Islam. She first quotes from Surah 4:89 which orders Muslims not to form friendships with former Muslims who have turned away from Islam. The text teaches if a Muslim should "... turn back [from Islam], then take them and kill them wherever you find them ..." (Surah 4:89). Verses like these provided clear justification for the wars of *Ridda* that immediately followed Muhammad's demise. Verse 90, which Armstrong uses as her classic example of an "exhortation to peace," teaches peace should only be offered if the former Muslim joins up with another group with which the faithful Muslims have formed a treaty.

Armstrong incorrectly states that Islamic warfare is only permissible if it is necessary for self-defense.²³ She refers to Surah 2:190 which commands all Muslims to "fight in the way of Allah those who fight you." Muslim scholars Dr. Muhammad Taqi-ud-Din Al-Hilali and Dr. Muhammad Muhsin Khan have commented on this verse, saying that it describes, "*Al-Jihad* or holy fighting in Allah's cause with full force of numbers and weaponry [which is] given the utmost importance in Islam and is one of its pillars ... by *Jihad* Islam is established."²⁴

In the verses that follow, "those who fight you" are identified specifically as those who commit *Al-Fitnah*. *Al-Fitnah* is generally defined as disbelief in Islamic monotheism. Al-Hilali and Khan translate the word as "disbelief and worshipping of others along with Allah."²⁵ In short, *Al-Fitnah* describes all non-Muslims. With this in mind, the command of verse 193 becomes very disturbing. It says, "fight them until there is no more *Fitnah*." Of course, Armstrong is not completely wrong; there is an exhortation of peace included in the verse. Those who commit *Al-Fitnah* should be spared if they

cease in their disbelief—in other words, if they embrace or re-embrace Islam.

Armstrong is also correct in saying Muslim terrorists like bin-Laden are choosing selectively when they use verses from the Qur'an to justify their actions.²⁶ The fact is, they have to be highly-selective when choosing Qur'anic verses that advocate violence against non-Muslims, for the choices seem almost limitless. A person reading just the first several Surahs of the Qur'an will find the plethora of passages advocating violence and enmity against *Al-Mushrikun*, non-Muslims, impossible to overlook. In the end, the Qur'anic message is very clear:

"Fight against those who believe not in Allah, nor in the Last Day, nor forbid that which has been forbidden by Allah and His Messenger and those who acknowledge not the religion of truth among the people of the Scripture, until they pay the *Jizyah* with willing submission, and feel themselves subdued (Surah 9:29)."

Ignoring Islamic Misanthropy

The word *misanthropy* describes a generally hateful attitude toward humanity. In the teachings of Islam, misanthropy is codified by numerous verses that express a negative and hateful attitude toward all non-Muslims, but specifically toward Christians and Jews. Armstrong denies such an attitude is prevalent in the Qur'an and instead claims Surah 29:46 is an example of how Muslims are "constantly ... enjoined to respect Jews and Christians, the 'People of the Book,' who worship the same God."

A closer examination of the verse, however, reveals the word "respect" is not mentioned or even referred to. Instead, the verse condemns Christians and Jews because they are disobeying the god they claim to be worshipping. The only instruction the verse gives for Muslims regarding Christians and Jews is to not argue with them "unless it be in [a way] that is better," presumably in order to guarantee winning the debate.

The *true* face of Islam reveals an incredibly negative attitude toward Christians, Jews, and other non-Muslims. Various Qur'anic passages such as Surah 2:221 and Surah 5:51 denounce marriage or even friendship with people from other religions. Often the Qur'an calls non-Muslims "losers" (cf. Surah 2:27, 121, among others); and in Surah 2:65, it actually warns transgression will cause a person to be turned into a monkey. Finally, the Islamic attitude toward non-believers is expressed in Surah 5:33 which threatens the punishment "of those who wage war against Allah and His Messenger," which includes disbelief or *Al-Fitnah*, is "that they shall be killed or crucified, or their hands and feet be cut off from opposite sides, or be exiled from the land."

Misappropriating Blame for Religiously Motivated Violence

Whenever Muslims are confronted about the violent teachings and history of their religion, they inevitably begin pointing fingers at other violence conducted in the name of religion. They are quick to point to the Crusades and the Spanish Inquisition as examples of violence within Christendom. In the same spirit, Armstrong equates bin-Laden with people who attack abortion clinics or kill people in mosques saying it is a "grave mistake" to suggest these maniacs are "authentic representative[s]" of their professed religions.²⁷

Pointing fingers at the violent acts of others, however, fails to provide justification for dismissing the inherent violence of Islam. *Jihad* is not more excusable simply because some one else committed a crime in the name of religion; and terrorism is not permissible

(Continued on page 15)

“Camping” (Continued from page 7)

sages which all cults use to subvert the Gospel of Grace. First of all, it must be understood these words are written to those who are already believers (1:2, 18; 2:1), not to those who are wondering how to merit acceptance by God.

The Bible teaches justification is to be declared legally righteous by God, as a gift, solely on the basis of our faith in the ransom sacrifice of Jesus, apart from the works of the law (Romans 3:24, Romans 5:6-9).

So what did James mean when he said a person is “justified” by works? Does it mean God accepts you on the basis of the works you do? It is very important to realize words may have more than one meaning in Scripture, and the meaning must then be determined by the context. Does the word *justify* (or *justification*) always have the meaning of being declared righteous in the legal sense before God? No. Biblically, the term *justify* can also mean “prove” or “vindicate,” as at Matt. 11:19 where it says, “**Wisdom is justified by her children.**” This verse means the results of a given action *vindicates* or *proves* the wisdom of that course of action.

Show And Tell

Additionally notice in the context of this passage in James, he is speaking of men showing *each other* their faith—nobody is showing *God* anything here. God knows the heart. Just as love in the heart is invisible without outward expression of word or deed, so faith without works of righteousness is invisible (except to God) and useless toward helping a brother or sister in need.

Abraham’s justification is an excellent example of these two uses of the word *justification*: before God and before men. James 2:21 says Abraham was “justified” by his works when he offered up Isaac and refers back to Genesis 22:9. Yet, though it was here Abraham *proved his inward faith by his outward actions*, he had been justified in the legal sense, or declared righteous before God, for many years already at this point in his life. We find this legal justification recorded at Genesis 15:6, where God saw that Abraham believed God and counted this belief as righteousness. Abraham was—from that time on—righteous *before God* purely on the basis of his faith; his *proof* was offered 20-30 years later. Paul speaks of this in the fourth chapter of Romans, correcting the faulty view that Abraham was justified (declared legally righteous before God) by his works. This is *very interesting*. Paul says, “**For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God ...**” (Rom. 4:2). Who, then, *could* Abraham boast before? *Other men only*—I’ll show you and you show me ...

This showing and telling is what Shamblin’s religion is all about, but it is an unrighteous standard—not based upon God’s Word. David Martin and many others of Shamblin’s disciples are convinced of her great righteousness based upon what they believe they *see* in her. In that sense, she is certainly *justified* by her followers, but God—who knows her heart and motives—has yet to be heard on the issue of Shamblin’s holiness. One thing is absolutely certain according to God’s Word, and that is that NO ONE is righteous in their own right (Rom 3:10). There are NONE righteous—all of us fall short of God’s standard.

Don’t jump out of God’s grace and into Shamblin’s leaky “life-boats of doing,” friends. You won’t be able to bail fast enough to keep them from going down.


The Verdict

What’s your verdict, friends? Which of these two remnants is the true remnant of God? Neither—they are both imposters, but unfortunately, it is not a game they are playing. They are playing

with the lives of those who are deceived by them.

Jesus Himself gives these words of warning in Matthew 7:15:

“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves.”

He wanted His followers to be discerning, alert, on the lookout for those who would claim to be speaking with the authority of God. What would these flim-flam people look like? Sheep! They would look, for all-the-world, like the true people of God. They may be carrying Bibles and operating apparently godly ministries, but they are savage wolves in disguise. They seek, for whatever hidden motivation, to drag away God’s people and take a following for themselves. There is no time like the present to be on the alert for the wolves who seek to ensnare the flock, whether they come to you on the radio, through a weight-loss program, or right to your door. 

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"Islam" (Continued from page 13)

simply because "everybody else is doing it." Muslims should refrain from "tattletaling" on other religious groups and allow Islam to bear responsibility for the aggression its doctrines have inspired. Besides, neither the Crusades nor the Inquisitions were conducted by or approved of by Christianity's founder, Jesus Christ, or any of its early leaders. The aggression of Islam, however, was prescribed and modeled by Muhammad himself.

Armstrong closes her article by stating, "the vast majority of Muslims ... horrified by the atrocity of September 11."²⁸ This is undeniably true. Indeed, many Muslims are peace-loving people who sincerely believe such attacks are morally wrong. In fact, non-Muslims have little reason to fear Muslims for the simple reason there is a wide gap between true Islam and the practices of the many people who say they follow Muhammad's religion and teaching. Nevertheless, Islamic terrorists who wish to engage in unprovoked warfare against Americans, Israelis, or others need to look no further than the Qur'an in order to obtain a divine mandate for their brutal attacks.

Of course, it is understandable with the tensions of recent events and the ever-increasing number of Islamic adherents in the United States, people like Armstrong have tried to dissect and reconstruct the religion of Muhammad in order to make it appear gentle, charitable, and kind. More than ever before, there is a great need to promote mutual respect among religious groups. However, superimposing a false "face" on a centuries-old religion and, thereby, misrepresenting its true teaching is not the way to accom-



plish that goal. In the end, Armstrong's efforts resemble someone trying in vain to assemble a large jigsaw puzzle, but never succeeding because they do not have all the pieces. In this case, Islam is the puzzle, and the missing piece is peace itself. ☪

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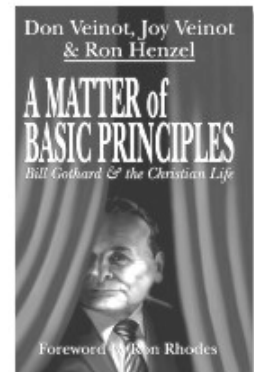
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"Have I now become your enemy by telling you the truth?"
 - Galatians 4:16 -

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