

THE GOD FACTOR

A Critique of *The Parent Factor*, by Robert McGee, Jim Craddock, Pat Springle and *Father Hunger*, by Robert McGee

Two of Rapha's major works focus on how early relationships with parents impact an adult's relationship with God and others. According to their literature, the impact is *profound* and can hardly be overstated:

"A person's relationship with his parents is usually the most profound relationship of his life. It shapes his self-concept, his hopes, his dreams, his perceptions, his relationship with God, and his relationship with everyone else. It is hard to overestimate the depth and scope of the importance of his relationship with his parents." (PF xiii)

Specifically, the hunger for a *father's love* emphasized:

"If children fail to receive enough love from their fathers, they carry the painful effects for a long time to come--usually for the rest of their lives." (FH 10)

McGee applies his work to practically everyone:

"This book is for: (1) people who as children didn't receive the quality and quantity of love they wanted and deserved from their fathers; and (2) others who currently relate to such people. And since fathers are only human, I have found that these two categories include almost everyone." (FH 10)

One of the chapters in *Father Hunger* begins by noting how very few people have *not* been abused to some degree and have *not* suffered "father hunger" (141 FH).

At the outset, we should note this author's condescending attitude to those who reject the theories and methods of psychotherapy, clearly advocating a type of *need theology*:

"Sometimes I encounter people who are quickly alienated by the use of terms which they label as psychological 'buzzwords' or even 'psychobabble.' They become irritated when friends refer to *codependency*, *dysfunction*, *addiction*, and obscure clinical terms. Such phrases may very well be overused in certain circles, yet I suspect a more common

source of this personal discomfort: some people don't try very hard to understand the concepts defined by these words. It's easy to criticize what one does not understand.

I don't know how anyone can argue with the term *father hunger* as an apt name for this common longing. What better word than hunger can describe the sensation of wanting a father's love? Indeed, the desire goes beyond mere want. It is truly a need. We don't just want our fathers to love us; we *need* them to love us. This kind of emotional hunger acts in many ways just like physical hunger. If we aren't provided with what is best for us, we will soon begin to seek other, less healthy, substitutes. Since hunger is a drive that *must* be met, those who are starving try to cope with father hunger in various ways." (18 FH)

Is this true? Is the hunger for a father's love a *need* that absolutely *must* be met? As we will see, Rapha's assumption is not well grounded in Scripture.

McGee describes graphically his own "father hunger" (23 FH), with the result that:

"Every rejection reminded me that as a child I had never experienced the love from my father that I wanted--that I *deserved*." (24 FH)

This type of approach to a book is highly questionable, in that it involves confessing publicly the sins of *others* who may not approve of such exposure. It also assumes that fallen man *deserves* to be loved. Is this true? In addition, there is a subtle shifting of blame here.

It appears evident that one of the goals of these books is to build a case for Rapha's in-patient hospital program. For example:

"I would alert you that much outpatient counseling is never successful for people with deeply buried memories, feelings, and thoughts." (161 FH)

The author goes on to say that:

"Our ultimate goal is to get in touch with how we felt as children...until we do, we will not respond in an adult way. We will respond as we *would* have responded as children--in a very emotional and volatile way." (162 FH)

But such "getting in touch" may trigger something like an "emotional heart attack" which can't be handled well in outpatient counseling (162 FH). That's where the individual is advised to enter an in-patient treatment center such as Rapha provides (for a substantial fee).

It is disturbing to note that McGee considers "rude or obscene comments" made by a person in counseling to be equivalent to "an annoying cough" which is "only a symptom of the problem" (162 FH). This illustrates the medical model of sin that is woven throughout these writings. The diagnosis is based on that medical model, and so is the very expensive "treatment" offered in a hospital setting.

But the "treatment" requires more than a Band-Aid or a couple of aspirins. Concluding comments to *Father Hunger* reinforce the counsel to enter something like Rapha's hospital program:

"My goal has not been to provide a quick fix, but rather to coax you to take off the bandages and see the extent of the wound.... If you discover that your wound is more serious than most, I would urge you to consider some inpatient treatment at a qualified clinic.... The problem of father hunger does not lend itself to a miracle cure...be prepared for a long process...the distorted thoughts and behaviors stemming from father hunger are deeply embedded." (269 FH)

In addition to the erroneous medical diagnosis and treatment proclaimed here, this statement grossly underestimates the power of God. Rapha authors highlight the "parent factor" to such an extreme that they fail to give proper significance to what we might call the "God factor."

Parents do have important, God-given responsibilities to raise their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. However, these two Rapha books attribute excessive power to parents in shaping their grown children's views about God, others, and self. Man is viewed primarily as a victim with unmet needs, rather than a sinner who needs reconciliation with God.

To be sure, there is real child abuse. Scripture calls us to minister compassionately to those who have been grievously sinned against. We are to comfort the afflicted, yet not compromise biblical standards. There is no intent here to be harsh toward those whose parents have sinned against them through violence, incest, neglect, or the like. Rather, by seeing their situation

through God's Word, we propose to offer *more hope* than the psychological counterfeit.

Rapha's Recurring Theme: Self-Worth

The self-worth tunes plays over and over throughout Rapha literature. These books are no exception. The authors attribute low self-worth to inadequate parenting:

"If the child's need for love and acceptance is not met because his parents are condemning or neglectful, he may conclude that there is something wrong with him.... Consequently, he will learn to condemn himself for not being worthy of being loved, and will either deny his need for love and acceptance, or try to win that love by his performance. If this self-condemnation is not stopped by consistent love, it can slowly evolve into a deeply rooted self-hatred." (PF 4)

McGee acknowledges, in *Father Hunger*, the "bounce back" ability of children, but then he warns that:

"While any single offense may not be traumatic in itself, repeated abuse can be devastating. A child's recognition of such a pattern quickly erodes any sense of self-confidence. When father/child relationships become seriously distorted, children lose perspective. They cease to feel valued and valuable. Having learned that more is required than merely *being*, children soon turn to *doing* by trying to behave in a way that pleases the parent." (FH 111)

Using analogies from the animal kingdom, the author describes various "roles" that a child may play in a family where his father's love is lacking:

1. The "show pony" attracts attention by various types of performance (FH 113).
2. The "work horse" attempts to be noticed because of the quantity and consistency of his performance or service (FH 113).
3. The "sacrificial lamb" assumes the blame for others in the family (FH 114).
4. The "mole" hides (often in a home where there is much rage and abuse), fearful of being discovered (FH 115).

5. The "lemming" moves out of the destructive home into other "unhealthy" relationships (FH 116).
6. The "parrot" imitates the parent in order to receive praise (FH 117).
7. The "chameleon" becomes whatever might please the parent (FH 117-118).
8. The "lap dog" is extremely submissive (FH 118-119).

The descriptions are creative, but the underlying assumption is that parents *cause* certain responses in their children. Similar presuppositions are found in discussing father-daughter relationships, to the extent that sexual immorality is explained away:

"If fathers fail to deal with these natural feminine concerns [affirmation]--due to either absence or neglect--young girls are likely to continue questioning their self-worth. They will look in other places to fill the emotional void that was left empty by the father. Some are quick to become sexually promiscuous." (FH 134)

In addition to such "explanations," McGee promises hope to his readers. However, the hope is expressed in terms of self-worth:

"The truth is that you *can* learn to feel good about yourself without meeting someone else's standards. You don't need to gain the approval of your father--or anyone else--to enjoy a sense of self-worth." (FH 150)

Biblically, this is the *wrong goal*! Scripture exhorts us to live for the glory of God, not the glory of self.

Rapha Roots: Scripture?

The authors claim that their teaching is based on the "timeless truths of the Scriptures" and not on pop psychology (PF 35). It would be wonderful if this were true. They are correct in offering *hope* to those who began their lives in an atmosphere of grievous sin, but unfortunately, their explanations and solutions are too strongly rooted in the godless theories of psychotherapy.

Later in the same book, the authors affirm the Bible as "the only source of truth about God, about ourselves, and about the process of restoration that God can perform in our lives" (PF 121). They also affirm the Holy Spirit as the agent of change, stating that "self-effort isn't enough." The role of Christ's body, the church, is emphasized. The authors rightly note the importance of regular, concentrated study in God's Word as opposed to "a chapter a day keeps the devil away" attitude (PF 78). These wonderful statements cover a "multitude of sins" in the form of erroneous psychological theory that is intermingled with the Scripture!

In *Father Hunger*, McGee stresses the believer's personal relationship with the Lord when studying the Scriptures:

"God's Word is certainly important, but we are called to relate to *God*--not merely words on a page. We must be very careful not to simply take his Word and use it as psychological advice. We should not stop with the mere reading of Scripture. We need to allow God's Word to lead us to the divine Author and very Source of life himself."
(FH 275)

Rapha authors claim to be biblical in their counseling. We *do* need a real relationship with the Lord, and mere reading of Scripture is not enough (James 1:22-24). Although we cannot judge the motives of their hearts, we must carefully consider the content of their teachings to see if in fact it really is biblical. Unfortunately, it falls short in many areas.

Rapha Roots: Rational-Emotive Behavior Therapy

Much of Rapha's counsel is rooted in the cognitive approach pioneered by atheist Albert Ellis. That method is known as Rational-Emotive Behavior Therapy, and it is grounded in the assumption that emotions and behaviors can be altered by changing basic beliefs:¹

"Even deeper than the feelings are the thoughts that originated them.... The *thought* motivates the *feeling*, and the feeling motivates the behavior.... If you find yourself confused about why you responded quite as dramatically as you did to some minor incident, perhaps you too have deeply embedded thoughts and feelings." (FH 161)

¹ This is covered in the other Rapha papers. See also Discernment's critique, "The 'Case Against' Albert Ellis."

This is straight out of Albert Ellis!

In formulating his view of "father hunger," McGee lists the "four false beliefs" that form the core of much Rapha teaching. The first two are explicitly concerned with feeling good about oneself by meeting certain standards or having the approval of others (FH 144-145). The third is a belief that those who fail are unworthy of love and deserve punishment (FH 145). The fourth is an expression of personal hopelessness and inability to ever change (FH 146).

"People who are barraged by these lies can wander through life, alone and zombie-like. Their lives seem to have no meaning. They remain unable to feel love from any source." (FH 146-147)

Two full chapters of *The Parent Factor* are devoted to applying the teachings of Albert Ellis. The title of the first sounds biblical, "You Shall Know the Truth." Beliefs about God are specifically addressed here:

"Identifying false beliefs about the character of God...is the first step toward new freedom in Christ Jesus." (PF 86)

Emotional pain is blamed on false beliefs:

"Most of our painful emotions are actually signals which help us uncover deceptions in our belief system." (PF 86)

The author lists several prominent distorted beliefs about God:

"Evil comes from God." (PF 88)

This raises significant theological issues. God is not the author of sin or evil, but He is, however, absolutely sovereign and has foreordained whatever comes to pass.

"God may test us to strengthen our faith, but He never tempts us, because the goal of temptation is to cause a person to sin." (PF 89)

The first chapter of James does teach that trials are for the strengthening of our faith, and that God tempts no one. Note, however, that we are tempted and carried away by *our own lusts* (1:13-14). This is one passage that shows Rapha's error in reducing sinful behavior to mere *thoughts* or beliefs.

"God doesn't care about me." (PF 89)

Rapha's response:

"With open arms, He reaches out toward us. He offers us full access to His wisdom and power if we will follow Him. At the same time, He is not a vending machine to supply all our whims and wants." (PF 90)

The believer does, indeed, have full assurance of God's love. Modern psychology, however, with all its emphasis on self, tends to promote the "vending machine" view of God.

"Trials don't benefit me." (PF 90)

The author warns against the expectation that we'll be perfectly happy with the results of all our trials. Trials serve *God's* purpose, not our own self-serving purposes. God's purposes, however, should be music to any believer's ears: "that you might be mature and complete, lacking nothing" (James 1).

"God doesn't meet our needs as we expected." (PF 91)

Our knowledge is limited. God knows our needs better than we do!

"God should have made me more attractive." (PF 91)

The author warns against making comparisons of our appearance with others, counseling the reader to let the Holy Spirit replace lies with the truth about God's character and our identity in Christ. We should note here the importance of focusing on our growth in the image of Christ rather than outward appearance.

A second chapter utilizing the theories of Ellis is one that concentrates on fear:

"Many of life's situations produce anxiety, a form of fear. Such moments are the best times to discover why you are fearful and anxious." (PF 95)

This author traces fears to *false beliefs*, again utilizing REBT. He discusses many common fears, such as fear of rejection, fear of punishment (and desire to punish others), shame. He says that fears may be used to learn more about God's character, but once again he wants to trace our wrong beliefs about God to parental relationships (PF 96). A three-step plan (thoroughly rooted in

Ellis) is recommended. First is to realize that you are experiencing a particular fear. Second is to reject your wrong perception of God. Finally, you replace this deception with truth from God's Word (PF 98).

It is true that we need to immerse ourselves in God's Word in order to know His character, His purposes, and how we are to live. Rapha, however, mixes biblical truth with the speculations of godless men like Albert Ellis and Sigmund Freud, among others. Their "truth" includes an erroneous, unbiblical emphasis on building up self-worth. Also, there is more to sin than "false beliefs," and more to sanctification than cognitive affirmations. The entire inner man is involved--the thoughts, will, desires. Rapha reduces the truth of Scripture to only one component of the inner man. Sound doctrine--God's truth--is vitally important, but so are changes in the human heart that only the Holy Spirit can orchestrate.

Rapha's View of Sin

Any worthwhile critique of counseling theory must include a review of human sin. A defective view of sin will result in an erroneous approach to counseling individuals who struggle with it. Rapha's approach is a mixed bag, sometimes biblical but more often diluting scriptural teachings about sin.

One error that reoccurs in Rapha writings is that guilt is redefined as an *emotion* rather than a fact:

"Guilt is a devastating emotion, one which should not be tolerated. You must force yourself to remember that the past is past." (FH 270)

It is true that Christ has paid the penalty for the sins of believers, who are assured of eternal salvation. However, it confuses the issue to turn guilt into an emotion rather than a fact based on God's standards.

At one point in *Father Hunger*, several types of "monstrous" husbands are described (FH 138). The author sees the qualities here as "dysfunctional" rather than sinful. This is a major flaw that runs through the entire book, and through Rapha's writings in general.

Similarly, when a number of "alluring, but empty alternative solutions" are listed (PF 29), every one of them involves *sinful* behaviors rather than Freudian type defense mechanisms. (These

include attacking others through gossip, abuse of drugs and alcohol, and other behaviors identified in Scripture as sin.) Each pattern requires God's work of sanctification, not psychotherapy!

Some biblical truth about the solution for sin does emerge, but again there is mixture. Here is a psychological description of the atonement:

"God the Son stepped out of heaven and became a man so that God's love, forgiveness, and care would be demonstrated in person to heal and comfort those who were so desperately hurting." (PF 39)

Where is Scripture is such a view of Christ's work? What about expiation and propitiation for our sins? This sounds like the erroneous "governmental theory" of the atonement, where the cross is merely an example of God's love rather than Christ being our penal substitute! On the next page, however, the authors present a much more biblical account:

"His sacrificial death paid fully for our sins which separated us from God. His atonement justified us--that is, it made us right in His sight. His death propitiated, or averted, the righteous wrath of God toward us. And among other incredible truths His payment for our sins enabled us to be adopted as children of God." (PF 40)

There is certainly confusion in theology with these two quite different presentations of the atonement!

To their credit, the authors of *Parent Factor* do present the gospel to "break the cycle of sin" (PF 120). Christ's death is full payment for the penalty of sin, which needs to be confessed and forsaken. However, the intertwining of truth and error in Rapha literature makes it particularly critical to view their work with caution. As a whole, their perspective presents a weak view of sin. Man is seen as a *victim* tormented by *unmet psychological needs* more than a sinner in need of redemption.

Rapha's "Need" Theology

Rapha authors believe that parental failures result in need deficiencies that control adult behavior:

"If a person has not experienced loving and strong parental modeling, then there will be a vacuum in his life. Virtually

everything he does will be designed to accomplish two purposes: to gain the approval he so desperately wants, and to avoid pain." (PF 29)

Although other types of influences are given some consideration, it is clear that McGee considers *parents* to be by far the *strongest*:

"When a parent does *not* supply the child with love and self-worth, almost nothing else can ever compensate for that deep emptiness." (FH 30)

This explains away a vast amount of sin!

McGee insists on the necessity of two parents and compares that necessity to our diets, continuing his "hunger-need" analogy (FH 19-20). He does note, rightly, that the Bible assigns clear responsibilities to fathers, such as passing along a knowledge of God's law--Deuteronomy 6:4-9 (FH 20). Nevertheless, his theology is permeated with a continuing emphasis on *need* as the driving force behind much human behavior.

He proposes, first, to provide understanding of that "need":

"If you have experienced father hunger, my first goal is to help you understand *why* you feel the way you do." (FH 22)

But don't expect rapid improvement:

"Be forewarned: you aren't going to read this book and be instantly cured of your longing. To be honest, you may feel even worse after you've read it than you do now." (FH 22)

Note how the author discerns the seriousness of the problem:

"How severe is your own father hunger? A clue may be found in the emotions that escape when you remember your own relationship with your father." (FH 103)

The emotions of fallen man are used as the criteria for judging an assumed problem ("father hunger"), which is based on the cravings of sinful man. This is not a biblical approach!

Nevertheless, McGee forges ahead in his diagnosis, assuming nearly epidemic proportions of "father hunger." Labeling one chapter "A Broader Famine in Society," he believes that most of us have assumed that most fathers were good and loving, keeping our

painful "father hunger" mostly to ourselves (FH 43). Meanwhile, he insists that it is a widespread problem:

"Large numbers of hurting people have begun to find others who share their deep inner emptiness, who also wish their fathers had shown more genuine affection." (FH 44)

McGee moves right along, tracing the development of radical feminism (FH 44-45) and the "gay rights movement" (FH 45-47) to this widespread "father hunger," as well as sexual promiscuity (FH 47-48), gangs (FH 48-49), divorce (FH 49-50), the "men's movement" (FH 50-51), and the "recovery movement" (FH 51-52). It seems that a vast array of sin is thus accounted for--and excused--by appeal to a universal "need" that "must" be met.

This is a radical reversal of biblical truth about the underpinnings of man's fallen nature. So is the author's description of what he calls our "comfort cravings," saying that:

"We don't *choose* to want comfort; we can't help but desire it. Comfort is just as necessary as love, food, water, and shelter. If we go too long without receiving it, disastrous results may occur." (FH 36)

McGee claims that children who fail to receive comfort assume that they have done something wrong or that they are bad (FH 37). He teaches that comfort is largely based on trust, and that we generally cannot be comforted by someone we do not trust (FH 39). Parents are handed the blame when trust fails:

"But if you can't trust your own parents, whom *can* you trust? Do you seek comfort from other people--*any* other people--out of desperation? Do you withdraw and determine never to let anyone hurt you again? Do you confront your parents and try to make them love you in the way they should?" (FH 40).

The author says that none of these options work very well (FH 41). Indeed they don't. But is the *goal* truly biblical?

McGee assumes that it is, and some of his comments have elements of biblical truth:

"As you work through this process [seeking comfort and security] you will eventually discover that God Himself will surround you with the security you so desperately need. The secret of finding comfort lies in your willingness to abandon any attempts to remain comfortable." (FH 41)

"The Bible has much to say about comfort and about what to do if we fail to receive it. However, Scripture never promises that we will get through without any *discomfort*." (FH 37)

This author assumes comfort as a primary "need" that must be met, but he admits that the believer experiences much discomfort and is not to *seek* comfort and security. The emphasis needs to be shifted from "security and significance" as basic needs, to serving Christ and forsaking attempts to be comfortable.

Some portions of *Father Hunger* address the issue in terms of sexuality and the father-daughter relationship. The author distinguishes real intimacy from sexual activity. He says that:

"People who are still emotionally empty cannot be truly intimate with each other. They have so many personal needs that they have little, if anything, to give someone else." (FH 182-183)

Such personal "needs" are not sexual in nature, but are claimed to center around the need for a father's pure love:

"Remember that the source of father hunger is the strong craving for unconditional love. Daughters don't want a sexual liaison with Dad. Rather, they want love in its purest form--hugs, cuddling, verbal affirmation, stroking of their hair, being sung to, and so forth. The absence of these expressions of love leaves a massive void." (FH 135)

People do have strong *desires* for expressions of love, and parents certainly have responsibilities in relation to their children. However, Rapha authors place an emphasis on unmet "needs" in a manner that blurs personal responsibility for sin. Although we must certainly have compassion for people who have been grievously sinned against by their parents, responsibility for sinful behavior still rests with the person who sins. Hopefully, believers can present that responsibility in the context of God's gracious love displayed on the cross. Rapha hinders progress in sanctification by focusing on "needs" that they claim *must* be met.

Biblical Responsibilities of Parents

Both *Father Hunger* and *The Parent Factor* devote considerable attention to the influence and responsibilities of parents. In addition, they consider how an adult child should evaluate his own childhood situation.

Citing Jesus in Matthew 18:3-6, the author claims that:

"Today's world offers countless example of fathers who stand in direct contradiction to what God intended. Some of them do cause their children to sin--in any number of ways." (FH 21)

The author needs to consider other relevant passages more carefully, rather than assuming that this one supports his psychological view. Ezekiel 18, for example, separates the responsibilities of fathers and sons. Jesus was not specifically addressing fathers in the Matthew 18 text, but rather everyone. Mutual, overlapping responsibilities do exist (see Galatians 6:1ff, for example), but individual culpability for sin is clear from Scripture. Parental responsibilities should be taken seriously, but the sinful behavior of *adult* sons and daughters cannot be blamed exclusively on parental failures. Parents have a significant *influence*, but that *influence* is not equivalent to being the *cause* of another person's sin.

One major destructive influence, according to McGee, is building a sense of guilt in a child:

"Few things a father can do to a child are as devastating as instilling a sense of guilt, whether or not it is done intentionally." (FH 76)

The emphasis throughout Rapha on elimination of guilt (viewed as a feeling rather than fact) far exceeds any concern about the searing of the conscience!

The influence attributed to parents is enormous, bordering on competition with God Himself:

"Children are supremely moldable. They each have their own God-given personalities, but their confidence and self-concept are shaped by their parents like lump of clay in a potter's hands." (PF 3)

"The child...ascribes god-like characteristics to his parents: what they say is Truth, what they demand is Law, and how they treat him is Love." (PF 4)

"Your life is a lump of clay that has been shaped and molded by your parents." (PF 6)

Parents replace God in this scenario. Scripture refers to God as the potter and man as the clay. Never are parents referenced in such absolute terms, although they are clearly given responsibilities in the guidance of their children.

For the adult reader, the authors state that their goal is "to help you see how your life has been shaped by your parents," not to show you how to be a better parent (PF 4)! Like so much modern psychology, the goal is centered on self rather than God and others.

The decisive, sovereign role of God is seriously obscured. Either uncooperative parents or blind chance make take His place:

"Children instinctively copy the attitudes and actions of those they are exposed to most. It is God's design that they copy loving and protective parents, but many parents don't cooperate in this plan." (PF 26)

"We pick up our life patterns without thought, selecting from this person and that one ways to deal with life. Seldom is any of it intentional. It just--happens." (PF 27)

This is not a *biblical* way of determining one's actions, and surely such thoughtless living can be replaced with conscious effort to follow God's Word! Furthermore, nothing just "happens." The sovereign Lord works all things according to the counsel of His will, and He causes them to work for *good* in the lives of those He has called into eternal life (Ephesians 1:11; Romans 8:28).

In addition to influence, space is also devoted to outlining the specific responsibilities that parents have. Authors of *The Parent Factor* cite Psalm 103:13, Proverbs 22:6, Proverbs 23:13-14, Ephesians 6:4, Deuteronomy 6:6-9 (PF 5-6) concerning parental responsibilities. Later, they discuss biblical examples and admonitions given to parents, including the admonition in Deuteronomy 11:18-21, where parents are to continually instruct their children in God's Word (PF 25). It is certainly true that God places serious responsibilities on parents. However, the emphasis in Deuteronomy is on biblical instruction, not merely offering "a healthy balance of love and discipline" (PF 26) as these authors promote.

Rapha's focus, when discussing the details of parental responsibilities, leans toward the values of modern psychology (such as building self-worth) rather than on clearly defined

biblical duties. McGee, for example, is particularly concerned that a father who makes his children a high priority will develop in them an image of God "without the usual distortion from paternal shortcomings" (FH 31). He discusses what it means to be a man (FH 183-184) or a woman (FH 185), believing that such perceptions are based on our parents. However, he *doesn't* refer to biblical standards of manhood and womanhood. An entire chapter is devoted to the subject of "avoiding father hunger in your kids" (FH 257ff). Here the author notes that many people seek help when they see their children being hurt, even though they don't want to go through the process of dealing with their own personal pain (FH 257). The chapter focuses on some of the things parents can do with their own children, such as: spending time with them, giving focused attention to each child, providing protection and comfort, initiating communication, maintaining trust, forgiving others freely, giving discipline, showing acceptance, offering guidance and advice, providing a positive role model. These aren't necessarily wrong things to do, but Rapha writings tend to focus on building self-worth rather than biblical qualities.

Along with considering the influence and responsibilities of parents, Rapha authors consider how an adult son or daughter ought to evaluate their own childhood situation. McGee describes a process of realizing our fathers aren't perfect, making excuses for them, settling for "whatever we can get out of the relationship," and recognizing that a father is still responsible for his behavior (FH 165-166). He goes on to explore what a father *should* be doing for his children, including spending time with them, giving protection and comfort, listening, communicating, building trust, discipline, forgiveness, acceptance, guidance, advice, and being an example. The discussion concludes with a recommendation to determine where your own father didn't measure up to this list, in order to deal with the feelings you have about his failures (FH 174). The focus returns, once again, to *self*.

This evaluative process may involve a considerable sense of guilt:

"Some people feel guilty when they begin to evaluate a parent's lifestyles and influence. It's as though they were becoming disloyal, unloving children. That's just not the case! Taking an honest look at your heritage does not mean you must respond with vindictiveness or harshly judge your father and mother. It simply means you recognize that they gave you the best they could give at the time!" (PF 17)

Here it seems that Rapha authors turn from blame-shifting to excuse making. There is nothing unbiblical about acknowledging, according to *God's standards* (not the standards of psychology!), that parents have sinned. What *is* unbiblical is to assert that those sins have *caused* a grown child to sin. It is equally unbiblical to let it all slide with the thought that "they gave you the best they could." These authors swing from one error to another. We must acknowledge sin according to biblical standards, then respond to it according to those same divinely ordained standards.

These authors excuse sin once again when they state that an "initial stage of anger and resentment," when seeing how God's character differs from our parents, is "not wrong" (PF 77)! Later they offer a similar explanation--excuse:

"When some people analyze the difference between the character of God and their parents, they experience instant understanding and relief.... But for others, this catharsis comes later. When they begin to recognize the contrast between the unconditional love of God and the neglect, abuse, or manipulation of their parents, they go through a period of great pain before they can experience relief. Years of repressed emotions can't be brushed aside or solved easily and quickly." (PF 101)

This statement denies the power of God and bypasses the work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration and sanctification! Also, it is quite possible that the extreme contrast (between God and parents) may draw a believer to appreciate his Savior all the more.

It is clear that biblical standards have been replaced by those of modern psychology when these authors claim that *unbelievers* have the ability to model God's love, sometimes even better than those who know Christ:

"Even unbelieving parents can model the love, protection, and provision of God while, in some cases, Christian parents don't." (PF 77)

Christians do struggle with sin, and God does mercifully restrain the outworking of sin in unbelievers to various degrees. Such a statement, however, fails to account for the radical difference between believers, who are spiritually alive in Christ, and unbelievers, who are spiritually dead in sin. That distinction is always crucial.

In spite of limited attempts to present the biblical responsibilities of parents, Rapha generally views those duties in terms of erroneous standards set by modern psychology. In addition, they err in attributing to parents a power that belongs to God alone. Such errors limit the believer's hope for change!

Rapha's Victim Theology

In view of the way Rapha authors characterize the influence of parents, it is not surprising to find that they see man more as a *victim* than as a *sinner* responsible before God. People who have been sinned against truly should find compassion from other believers. However, that compassion should not obscure the basic biblical view of man as a sinner in need of redemption. The correct diagnosis of the problem leads to the correct answer--and hope!

One chapter describes several major "types" of "imperfect fathers," including the abusive father, the absent father, the workaholic father, the passive father, the ill father, and the manipulative or perfectionist father. The last category is often associated with "preacher's kids" according to McGee (FH 63-64). (It is incredible how "Christian" psychology so often stands in judgment of the pastor! This is another example that could be added to many others.)

McGee attributes great power to the failure of parents, the father in particular:

"As adults, we may carry a lot of 'emotional baggage' accumulated from our past. We are influenced by a number of variables, some more strongly than others." (FH 27)

"Great numbers of adults continually struggle through life with unresolved emotional problems that can be traced back to the lack of a father's love." (FH 32)

"Our adult process of maturation can be stunted or even halted if we continue to long for a father's love that we never received." (FH 108)

"In almost every case where a father was negligent, abusive, or absent, the child will have some kind of severe emotional problem later in life.... The subsequent problems rooted in a deficient father relationship don't go away on their own." (FH 187)

The power of "father hunger" is supposedly so great that it survives over a long period of years (without psychotherapy, of course!):

"How do children cope with the devastating discovery that their own fathers may not love them or may not be trustworthy? They may hide, or strive to please, or care for themselves, or adopt some other behavior in order to survive. But as the years go by, this problem of father hunger does not simply disappear." (FH 121)

The author *assumes* that the fundamental problem really *is* "father hunger." He compares that "hunger" to external attacks such as assault or cancer:

"People who grow up starved for enough fatherly love become victims in the same sense that someone might be victimized by an anonymous mugger or by a faceless cancer. The person who encounters such a trauma eventually develops discernible patterns of behavior. Unless the root problem is uncovered and dealt with, these reactions may continue throughout the victim's life." (FH 93)

You may be a victim and *not even know it*, according to this author:

"Because we are not usually very good at recognizing harmful patterns, many people may be victims without realizing it." (FH 93)

McGee attempts here to convince people...who did not already see themselves as victims...that they are victims! He describes victimization as a very slow process that occurs by degrees.

"Sometimes people cannot even recall or identify childhood situations that left them feeling traumatized or victimized. But through an insidious series of events--often due to parental insensitivity--they don't receive the encouragement they need to become emotionally healthy adults. They learn to compensate and get by, but they suffer in many ways because their perspective has been seriously warped." (FH 95)

Even if you truly believe you were *not* a victim, McGee encourages you to undergo his psychological treatment approach:

"Whether or not you feel you have been victimized by your father, I encourage you to bravely endure the process of having any embedded splinters removed from your heart and spirit. God is the Master Physician who heals and restores us to complete health. But you must do your part in holding still and bearing the pain of what will be an ongoing process rather than a momentary 'ouch.'" (FH 102)

It seems that seeing "father hunger" in epidemic proportions is not enough. Rapha seeks to immerse *everyone* in its psychotherapy. The implication is that all of us are *victims* in need of a therapist more than we are sinners in need of a Savior.

These statements are broad in scope. However, Rapha authors concentrate on many specific problems they believe to result from the sins of parents. McGee, for example, describes many claimed effects of victimization. He recommends that you consider such effects in order to determine whether or not you're a victim (FH 96). Here they are:

1. Fragility, sensitivity to being offended (FH 96).
2. Extremes in perception, seeing others as all good or all bad (FH 97).
3. Feelings of being misunderstood by others when they make "valid complaints" about their painful feelings; includes a sense that no one could possibly understand (FH 97).
4. Extreme rage, sometimes losing control in expressing it (FH 97-98).
5. Inability to trust others or make commitments; may be manifested in a "pseudo-vulnerability" (98-99). (Psychologists place a lot of emphasis on being "vulnerable" to other people.)
6. Lack of gratitude (FH 99).
7. Demands on others, a sense of being "entitled" to certain responses from others (FH 99).
8. Shifting blame to other people (FH 99).
9. Desire to punish those who offend them (FH 100).
10. Continued "victimization" in other relationships, often alternating between being aggressive and passive (FH 100).
11. Passivity and excuses for their unwillingness to do various things; irresponsibility (FH 100-101).
12. Continuing struggles with the past; unwillingness to deal with the "root problems that cause their pain" (FH 101-102).

This isn't all, however. The two books under review are permeated with descriptions of what these authors believe to be the results of child abuse.

"Roles." McGee describes a variety of "roles" that the abused child may assume in the family structure. He says that:

"Adopting such roles just ingrains the pattern of dysfunction into the family a little deeper than before--pretty much ensuring that the child will have long-term difficulty working through his or her emotional confusion." (FH 119)

People do adopt sinful patterns of response to problems of living, but are children really so deeply locked in to these patterns? Such statements tend to promote psychotherapy and to dilute the power of God.

Craving affirmation and recognition of worth is another major result of abuse, according to Rapha:

"Abused children still crave affirmation. While they may wish their domineering, unreasonable fathers were dead, at the same time they wish that some miracle would suddenly make the abusive fathers recognize the worth of their children and begin to express love." (FH 58)

That craving is claimed to produce either the suppression of emotions or excessive stimulation:

"In the adult years, intense craving for a father's love usually produces one of two extremes: some suppress all emotions and try not to feel *anything*; some look for an outside stimulus that will outweigh the internal pain." (FH 122)

The latter alternative often includes sex or "addictions" to fill the emptiness (FH 127). The author doesn't mention the *sin* in some of these responses.

Marriage. McGee believes that women starved for a father's love will often marry men who are similar to their fathers:

"Because these women still wish their fathers had been more attentive, they may be very strongly attracted to men who are much like their fathers--the very ones who failed to provide affirmation." (FH 134)

The author believes that the father-husband similarities may be either blatant or camouflaged (FH 134-135). There may be similarities in relationship style (FH 136-137). However, all of us are sinners, and there are enough similarities in human sinful nature to account for what the author observes, *without* assuming that women "marry their fathers."

Supposedly, such marriages perpetuate certain behavior patterns *contrary to* a person's best intentions:

"Women who marry men very much like their fathers--fathers whom they resent--provide one of the strongest illustrations of how an undesired pattern of behavior can continue in spite of a person's best intentions." (FH 133)

However, the author goes on to describe how an adult sexual relationship with a husband cannot fill the childhood void, and "both partners in the marriage remain frustrated" (FH 135):

"Even marriage vows and sexual union cannot replace the genuine intimacy and sense of self-worth that so many women crave. Marriage may not be the best step to take, even though it often seems logical to those women who have not been properly loved by their fathers." (FH 135)

In all of this analysis, there is an *assumption* of cause and effect. McGee assumes that "father hunger" is the correct explanation, and *cause*, for certain types of marriages.

The "cycle" of abuse. Rapha authors make the assumption that abused children continue the cycle with their own sons and daughters:

"The abused victim, in many cases, grows up to be an abuser of his or her own children...that's one of the most disastrous effects of father hunger. If the person fails to seek professional help after being abused as a child, it's all too easy for that individual to repeat the exact pattern." (FH 58)

Note the cure-all: psychotherapy! A similar solution is implied in the following:

"Parents need an advanced level of maturity to deal with their own past in order to avoid perpetuating the problem with their children. Unless they do, the problem will never disappear on its own." (FH 109)

Authors of *The Parent Factor* base the "cycle" of abuse on Exodus 34:5-8, saying that:

"The bitterness, anger, neglect, abuse, passivity, and manipulation of a father will be passed down to his children, his grandchildren, and his great-grandchildren. That may seem harsh and cruel, but it is an accurate reflection of the terrible consequences of sin." (PF 119)

It is true that people imitate the sinful patterns of others, including parents. Children who are grievously sinned against may sin against their own children in a serious manner. Again, however, it is important to assign responsibilities *biblically* and individually. The sins of parents, however powerful and influential, do not *cause* the sins of their grown children. Psychological literature blurs the issue significantly and encourages a victim mentality.

The passage cited in Exodus 34 (see also Exodus 20:5-6; Deuteronomy 5:8-10) needs a more careful interpretation than given by these authors and other psychologists. It is regularly cited as evidence of the psychological view of victimization and its impact on adult behavior. However, psychologists rarely (if ever) consider the full context. The emphasis here is on God's covenantal faithfulness, His compassion to *thousands* of generations of those who love Him. God's overwhelming kindness in this instance is compared to only the third and fourth generations of those who sin against Him. Even in that instance, *God* is the subject of the statement. *He* visits the iniquities of the fathers on those third and fourth generations. This hardly supports the psychological perspective that parental sins *cause* the sinful behavior of their adult children. Some of the consequences of those sins will impact the lives of their children, but not in the sense of causing the actual sins of those children.

Erosion of trust. McGee insists that loss of trust, over a long period of time, is one of the main results of deficient fathering:

"Remember that children first assume that fathers are always right.... Eventually we all discover that fathers are not perfect.... But if a father continues to behave in ways contradictory to that belief [that he is trustworthy], the child will eventually lose trust in him." (FH 81)

The author describes several ways in which trust is lost. It may be through what the child hears his father say to him (FH 83), through actions observed (FH 84), or when the father intentionally breaks the bond of trust (FH 86). It may also happen when the child's perspective changes later in life (FH 88-89).

Inability to trust others outside the family is yet another claimed consequence:

"When someone doesn't receive enough love from a father, most of his or her other relationships are affected--perhaps *all* those relationships. Trust is lost; vulnerability disappears; forgiveness becomes impossible." (FH 247)

"When people discover that they have placed their trust in a father who was not actually trustworthy, they can find it extremely difficult to trust anyone.... If left unresolved, a broken trust relationship with a father can absolutely devastate a relationship with a spouse as well as hinder strong relationships with children. It can keep a person from opening up with others at work. No future relationship will ever be as strong as it *could* be if the person's father proved to be unworthy of trust." (FH 89-90)

Note the *absolute* quality to some of these statements, undermining the power of God to make radical changes in the human heart. Note also the underlying assumption here that children are naturally trusting of others, particularly parents. Even psychologists do not agree among themselves on this issue. Looking at the Scripture, man has been separated from God by his sin, and he hides in fear of God's judgment. It can hardly be stated that people, even children, are naturally trusting of others (even parents), in view of this sinful state of affairs.

McGee expresses concern that children will redefine trust:

"Once fathers abandon or abuse children, they are usually unable to put their trust in any other person. Some children, however, learn to redefine trust." (FH 180)

The author says that such redefinition involves trusting because we *must* rather than because we *want* to, and he says that such "trust" is not really trust at all:

"Genuine trust is risky. Trust must be given, not forced or demanded. Yet some people try to generate trust when little or none exists. They use the facade of faulty trust to hide

other feelings, such as loneliness, despair, fear, and so forth. People may appear to be trusting when they are really trying to prevent being hurt." (FH 181)

Biblically, we're looking at the *fear of man* here, which Scripture contrasts with the reverential fear of the Lord. According to McGee, however, trusting God may seem "like a seven-dollar answer to a thousand-dollar problem" (FH 229). However:

"You need to realize that *you* didn't get yourself into this situation. You were the victim, at the mercy of a father who hurt you in ways that may seem impossible to repair." (FH 229)

The author wants you to *see yourself as a victim*, first of all, and then to become a child again--but *God's* child (FH 230). This supposedly involves being creative and having fun (FH 231), along with being vulnerable (FH 232). "Eventually, God will show you how to be an adult as well" (FH 233). The author recommends finding a human role model in addition to depending on God (FH 233). He also suggests finding constructive outlets for your feelings (FH 233) and learning from your mistakes, correcting inappropriate responses (FH 235).

Scripture never exhorts believers to see themselves as the victims of others. Being *God's child* is one essential aspect of the process of redemption (John 1:12-13), and it is something that occurs by the will of God (not man). We do need more mature believers to exhort, instruct, encourage, and admonish us as we become conformed to the image of Christ.

Trust is certainly a key issue for Christians. Trusting Christ is essential for eternal salvation, and that trust is possible only through the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit--not psychotherapy!

The whole area of **emotions** is critical to understanding the perspective of Rapa authors. Authors of *The Parent Factor* insist that "emotions, in and of themselves, are not sin" because they are "the products of many factors including our sins, others' sins, other experiences, our background, hormones, etc." (PF 103). Wrong! Anger, for example, can be either sinful or righteousness. McGee, however, is more concerned about anger being "internalized" when a child "continues to crave a father's love" (FH 95).

The authors believe that:

"Although we cannot change our emotions from negative to positive, we can shift them from being destructively negative to being productively negative." (PF 125)

They also insist that:

"We should not try to change how we feel...if we try to deny or suppress fear or anger, it will only build and, sooner or later, cause either a depression or an explosion." (PF 125)

This Freudian, psychological view does not consider the impact of sin on our emotions, nor does it identify the role of God's Spirit in sanctifying the believer, including his emotions.

Rational-emotive therapy is brought into the picture (again) when McGee connects emotions with false beliefs:

"Thanks to our fathers, many of us face a lifetime of struggles because of deeply ingrained fear or shame. Some of our feelings may be justified, yet others may be based on false beliefs." (FH 150)

Notice the heaping of blame!

Here is how these authors recommend handling emotions:

"The correct response when we realize that we are angry or fearful is to be honest about our emotion, try to understand its root cause, and then choose to act in a way that honors the Lord." (PF 104)

Next, the authors suggest that you "express yourself fully to God...the Lord is never surprised by our emotions" (PF 104). David, in the Psalms, is used as an example of someone who expressed a wide range of emotion to God (PF 105). Indeed, honesty with God is important. If emotions are sinful, we can confess these to Him and He promises forgiveness and cleansing (1 John 1:9). More troubling, however, is the example of a Rapha counselee who screams at the top of his lungs on the freeway, in order to "tell the Lord how angry he feels without any inhibitions" (PF 104). This is Freudian ventilation at its worst!

After expression to God, the authors counsel "appropriate" expression to the other person involved (PF 106). Happily, they state the purpose for such expression as the benefit of the other person, a loving confrontation that considers the other's maturity level. Sometimes, they note, nothing at all should be said (PF

107). It is claimed that honest emotional expression to God and others "will ultimately bring healing to both ourselves and others" (PF 108). Although it is good that the benefit of others is considered, the Rapha approach is too focused on emotional expression rather than following biblical principles in order to honor God.

Unfortunately, the authors buy into Kubler-Ross' stages of emotional response (to death) and insist on applying these stages to "repressed" emotions: denial, bargaining, anger, acceptance, grief, culminating in "catharsis" (PF 107). McGee speaks about various "deficient father" patterns in relating to sons and daughters, concluding that:

"Before either of them can get over the pains of the past, they both must learn to grieve the losses of their childhood" (FH 195).

This whole scenario is unbiblical. Even if some sort of "grief" process were needed (which it isn't), Scripture exhorts believers not to grieve as those who have no hope (1 Thessalonians 4:13).

The concept of **repressed emotions** dominates much modern psychotherapy, devastating the lives of individuals and their families. It is simply assumed that emotions, and even major life events, actually are repressed.

A chapter entitled "Mental Snapshots of the Past" reveals that Rapha, like so many other modern psychologists, buys right into the "repressed memory" syndrome. They recommend searching for buried childhood memories of abuse that can "explain" an individual's behavior and emotions later in life. McGee asks: "How can we use these mental snapshots of the past to relieve our father hunger?" (FH 157). The term "mental snapshots" is used to describe memories that are triggered by certain persons (even strangers), events, smells, sights, and other things that trigger "flashbacks" to the past. Meanwhile, McGee claims that people grasp onto whatever happy memories they're able to recall:

"Most people, even those who suffered considerably during their young lives, tend to cling tenaciously to the meager number of happy memories they can recall.... As their lives overflow with pain and despair, these few emotional connections with their fathers continue to feed their cravings for genuine love and acceptance." (FH 158)

Here is how McGee describes the repression of emotions:

"The snapshots we carry in our minds are not so much true visual images, but more like internal feelings. As we go through traumas while growing up, it's as if a part of us breaks off and never grows." (FH 160-161)

But locating this "part" that has "broken off" is claimed to require extensive archaeological digs into the psyche:

"When the timing is right, the memories will come. You won't need to force them, nor should you resist them.... Hypnotism isn't the answer; quick and easy therapy sessions are a pipe dream. It's going to require emotional excavating--a lot of seeking out and digging up of those long buried, encapsulated emotions." (FH 164)

This is horrendous theology. In fact, it is purely Freudian. Much has been written in recent times about the working of the human memory. Freud's theory of repression is a *theory*, pure speculation, not proven fact. This sort of prolonged psychological process is the antithesis of biblical sanctification and should be emphatically rejected by believers.

Sin impacts the entire inner man, emotions *included*. This important biblical truth about emotions is hidden behind a psychological facade where sin is veiled.

Sin obscured. The authors insist that "a fractured childhood produces a variety of painful results" (PF 22). Some, according to the author, are "driven to succeed to prove their worth," while others withdraw to avoid rejection and failure. Although this view may appear compassionate, the authors obscure the reality of sin when they utilize their theory to "explain" the decision of a young missionary's wife to leave her husband and marry another man, who was leaving his own wife. Although the account ends with her marriage being restored, the author blames the woman's father for her affair (PF 22-24). Clearly, the biblical view of sin is denied by such slanted accounts.

Relationships with others. Authors of *The Parent Factor* blame an adult's treatment of others on the way his parents treated him as a child (PF 5). McGee seems particularly concerned with shedding the "victim" role when he discusses new ways of relating to family members:

"If reestablishing love and forgiveness do not offer motive enough, the personal hope of being released from the victim role in all of your other relationships *should*." (FH 248)

The motive proposed here for seeking out good relationships with other family members...is largely *self-centered*.

Another unbiblical focus is on redefining certain key emotions:

"You will never be able to overcome the hurts of the past until you're able and willing to reach some accurate definitions of such important concepts as love, trust, and intimacy.... Consider what happens to a child who is brought up with distorted definitions of some key emotions. That child is experiencing life and making decisions based on erroneous information. How can relationships be expected to flourish, especially if the other people involved have a few wacky definitions of their own?" (FH 177)

Note the emphasis on giving children "distorted definitions" of *emotions*, rather than biblical truth.

The issue of responding to parents is discussed. Rapha authors note that it can be very difficult and painful to respond in a godly way to parents who have been abusive, neglectful, or manipulative. Also, situations vary widely and there are no "cookie-cutter" answers (PF 129).

The authors also note that:

"Our relationships with our parents are God-given relationships. The Lord wants us to respond to them in a way that honors Him." (PF 129)

The command in Exodus 20:12 is cited, and the authors explore what it means to "honor" your parents (PF 130):

"You are not responsible for their happiness, but you are responsible for developing your own separate identity and then extending your love to them. At that point, you should let them respond in any way they choose to respond." (PF 131)

The authors also acknowledge responsibility "to act in a way that pleases the Lord" (PF 131). This is certainly true. However, the heavy blame-shifting that occurs throughout these books does not facilitate behavior that is loving and honoring to the Lord.

Rather, it encourages ventilation of anger and other hateful emotions. The matter of relating to formerly abusive parents is not an easy one. Our hearts, sinful as they are, most likely will cry out for vengeance. Psychological counsel adds fuel to the fire rather than offering truly biblical solutions.

Blame shifting: beyond parents. Although the authors place significant blame on parents for shaping inaccurate views of God, they also state that "a positive environment doesn't guarantee security and stability" (PF 6). In these cases, blame can be placed on other individuals, such as peer groups! This perspective leaves little basis for real hope, and it nearly obliterates the biblical view of sin. Perhaps Rapha authors sincerely do not intend to place all blame on parents (and others), but their scheme does exactly that. In order to offer real hope to the afflicted person, we must reject this psychological, Freudian view and return to the truth of Scripture.

God the Father

Like most psychologists, Rapha authors focus strongly on the power of relationships. As Christians, they specifically center on the believer's relationship with God:

"Relationships, and especially our relationship with God, are the key to life. They are our foundation of stability and fulfillment. But those who have not experienced love and affirmation often turn to other ways of finding stability and fulfillment: success and possessions." (PF 19)

McGee concludes from his assumed *necessity* of "father love" that one's relationship with *God* is necessarily impaired by a deficient earthly father:

"How can someone even begin to approach God as a trustworthy father when the memories of 'father' cause a vague uneasiness or even intense pain? How can we ever know God in the way He intended if our own dads haven't done an adequate job in fulfilling God's role for fathers? And since fathers are only human, not one ever succeeds perfectly. Most fail to a significant degree. Some do a dismal job, while others may give up completely for a variety of reasons. The challenge is indeed impossible, apart from the grace of God." (FH 19)

Perhaps he means to say, "apart from psychotherapy." The teachings of Rapha consistently point to the necessity for this ungodly sort of intervention.

McGee assumes that:

"As the only authority the child knows, parents instill an image in the child's mind of what God must be like." (FH 30)

However, making an "image of God" in the image of a parent is *idolatry*. The charge may be strong, but biblically it is true. However, God's grace is sufficient to enable the believer to worship the Creator, God the Father, in place of the creation, whether it be a human father or anything/anyone else.

Similar errors occur in *The Parent Factor*, where the authors again assume that God is created in parental images:

"For better or for worse, parents represent God to their children...parents are to model the love and strength of God to their children." (PF 5)

"Our perception of God is colored and clouded by the neglect, abuse, and manipulation of our parents. We, in fact, assume that God is just like them; that He is neglectful, abusive, and manipulative, too. If our perception of God is wrong, then our primary source of wisdom, love, and strength is thwarted. We withdraw from Him. We don't trust Him. We are angry with Him. We feel alone and compelled to find fulfillment in other ways and through other relationships. But these alternatives only result in more pain and emptiness." (PF xiii)

"Whether they have been loving or aloof, kind or harsh, supportive or neglectful, your parents have played a major role in forming your view of God, your view of yourself, and your relationships with others. The results can be wonderful or tragic." (PF 9)

The authors move on to cite verbal abuse, lack of affection, absent fathers, emotional distance, perfectionist expectations, and outright abuse (PF 14-16) as factors causing inaccurate perceptions of God.

Rapha authors make a major assumption here concerning the influence of parental relationships. That assumption is grounded in Freud's teaching that God is merely a "projection" of earthly parents. There is no scriptural basis (nor is any cited) to support the notion that our perception of God is so thoroughly rooted in relationships with our parents. Although the authors no

doubt would disagree with Freud about the reality of God, they borrow heavily from his thoroughly godless system.

Feelings about God the Father. One of the very worst chapters in *Father Hunger* has this title. We must consider very carefully the question of *how* we know God, *how* He reveals Himself, His character, His commandments, and such. Is it through His own revelation, or merely through human fathers and ministers? McGee clearly assumes that it is the latter, and that believers may not properly receive God's love:

"Our ability to receive the love of our heavenly Father can become severely distorted when our earthly fathers fail to meet our needs to a significant degree. For some, the entire concept of 'father' becomes repulsive." (FH 207)

This author has a significant focus on *feelings* about God the Father:

"Powerful *feelings* about God the Father, whether right or wrong, tend to brew and stew in those who suffer from father hunger. Just as we sometimes form incorrect definitions due to our misperceptions about such things as love, intimacy, and trust, we can also develop a very distorted image of God. Many of us continue to struggle against assigning to God the characteristics of a human father who may have been cruel, inconsistent, or simply uncaring." (FH 208)

This assumes that the traits of a person's human father have *more* power than the indwelling Spirit and God's Word. People do have misperceptions about God, but Scripture attributes these to sin (Romans 1) *and* assumes that God is able to correct these errors when individuals come to Christ.

The chapter disintegrates into even more serious error when McGee tells readers that it is "okay" to have negative feelings toward God:

"Be assured that God is big enough to handle any feelings we have toward him, however negative they may be. We may form some unflattering opinions about God, and that's okay. God doesn't hold grudges. Besides, our misperceptions are not usually our fault." (FH 208)

Furthermore, he advocates feeling and expressing anger toward God. After one example of a woman with an abusive father, he concludes that:

"As bad as this woman is feeling now, and as much as it hurts, I believe that it's okay for her to feel angry at God. She's right. It wasn't fair for her to be without a father when she was growing up." (FH 214)

Even intense ventilation of such ungodly feelings is recommended:

"It's not her fault. I don't believe it's God's fault either, yet I truly believe God understands these intensely negative feelings we have toward Him. He will patiently wait as we go to Him crying, kicking, and screaming. And He will be there with His arms out to us when we finish venting our feelings." (FH 215)

This is a gross distortion of Scripture. God is presented as if He were a mere human who is "big enough" to "handle" the negative evaluations of others. God is absolutely holy, righteous, and just. He's "big enough" to "handle" our sin, for sure! But His ways are higher than ours, far higher. He is the *Creator*, not another creature. McGee misses the holy, awesome nature of God. He misses the Creator-creature distinction. It is *sin* to evaluate God in a negative manner. God *forgives* the person who comes to Him with a repentant heart. But that doesn't mean that it's "okay" to have "unflattering opinions" about Him.

McGee again underestimates God's holiness when he says that:

"After living for years with a man who granted acceptance or affirmation on a clearly conditional basis, it becomes almost unthinkable that God would not have similar--if not higher--standards." (FH 208)

Similarly, authors of *The Parent Factor* attribute such misunderstanding to *most* of the body of Christ:

"To a great host of believers, the heavenly Father is a vague spiritual being, a cosmic policeman ten million light-years away.... We tend to ascribe to God the characteristics of our fathers: good or bad, loving or cruel, protective or passive, gentle or aloof, etc." (PF 37)

Is this really true of most Christians? Where do these authors get their information?! If this is such a crucial issue, why do we find *nothing* in all of the New Testament to indicate that believers in general see God in this manner? God *does* have higher (though not *similar*) standards! His standards are the

highest. His standards are absolutely right, true, and just. We can't possibly meet them. However, the good news for believers is that the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us, and the indwelling Spirit enables us to grow in godliness.

In addition to blaming fathers, McGee blames ministers:

"Some of our misperceptions of God are compounded by other father-figures. Not only do we read a lot into God's nature based on the way our fathers behave, but we also watch our ministers closely. We know that they're supposed to represent God, and--being only human--they sometimes contribute to our wrong impressions." (FH 209)

Ministers, like others, can sin--sometimes grievously. They have a serious responsibility before God for the souls entrusted to their care (Hebrews 13:17). They are *shepherds* of God's people. Nevertheless, judging God on the basis of *any* sinful man is wrong. It is also erroneous to presume that God either cannot or does not overpower what we think we've learned about Him from the actions of people. Scripture repeatedly points us to Christ, not to man, to truly know God.

Facts about God the Father. At times these authors are willing to point their readers toward the biblical *facts* about God, rather than mere *feelings*. McGee says this:

"Feelings change; facts don't. And the key to lasting emotional health is to meticulously separate distorted feelings from facts. Let the facts stand on their own."
(FH 217)

The author discusses adoption into God's family, and says that:

"The facts are clear. God loves you. He didn't want your father to neglect you or to abuse you in any way. He's sorry that you're hurting. He wants to help. Right now your feelings may be far too intense to allow your heavenly Father to comfort you, but he's willing to wait until you're ready."
(FH 219)

But is all of this truly factual--and biblical? Yes, God loves His child, the believer. Yes, He willing comforts His child. However, McGee misunderstands God's sovereignty. God is presented here as very limited, *unable* to have halted the abuse. Clearly, we do not wish to make God the author of sin. However, He is described in Scripture as the One who works all things according

to the counsel of His will (Ephesians 1:11). We don't have *all* the answers about why our sovereign, almighty God accomplishes His purposes using even the actions of sinful men, but we do know that He does. The prime example is the crucifixion. Christ was crucified at the hands of sinful men who are fully responsible for their actions. Yet God ordained and intended that crucifixion before the foundation of the world (Acts 2:23, 4:28). There is mystery here that our finite minds cannot comprehend. Nevertheless, we know both that God is good *and* that He is sovereign.

One portion of a chapter ("Facts About God the Father") in *Father Hunger* discusses God's character -- His presence, protection, comfort, discipline, faithfulness, guidance, and such. This section is reasonably biblical (except I disagree with him concerning Jesus only making salvation *possible*, rather than infallibly securing it [FH 224]). *The Parent Factor* contains a full chapter on the names of God (PF 56-70). Aside from a few psychologically tainted examples intertwined in this chapter, most of it is good. It would be a good study if extracted from its psychological context. We do need to know these names of God and learn His character from His Word. One of the difficulties in analyzing this material is that biblical truth is *mixed* with much psychological error, particularly the erroneous teaching that parental relationships *determine* a person's relationship with God. Discernment is even *more* critical than in material where the errors are obvious.

Adoption into God's family. When Rapha authors discuss their plan of "recovery," they warn against expecting rapid results:

"Quick fixes sound great, but they seldom work. For most of us, deep issues take time. Don't look for an instant solution to the transformation of your perception of God."
(PF 79-80)

Citing 2 Corinthians 10:3-5, the author says that:

"The misconceptions we have about God are *speculations*. Our wrong perceptions are '*lofty things raised up against the knowledge of God.*' These are fortresses that require a siege mentality, patience, and endurance." (PF 80)

The believer's sanctification is indeed not an instantaneous event. Although the new Christian is *sanctified* immediately in the sense of being set apart to belong to God, he grows in godliness over a lifetime. However, remember that Rapha authors

are promoting their professional counseling program and their inpatient psychiatric clinics. Although we must beware of judging their hearts, we must at least wonder if this long-term perspective is not an invitation to psychotherapy rather than a biblical assessment.

Moving right along, the authors list four principles "that define and describe the stages of our metamorphosis to a new perspective of God" (76):

1. Recognizing the contrast between the character of God and that of your parents;
2. Dwelling on the character of God as the source of security and significance;
3. Choosing His love, forgiveness, and power at any and every given moment;
4. Being patient; developing a "siege" mentality.

This is a psychologically tainted list. We are certainly to recognize the character of God *from Scripture*, but making comparisons with human fathers is not a biblical necessity. Nor are "security and significance" valid biblical goals. The third "step" is one where the authors talk about "a multitude of daily decisions to choose the love, forgiveness and power of God as our source of security and significance" (PF 78). The emphasis here is wrong, being on self rather than on God and His glory. There is also misunderstanding about the nature of sanctification as the Holy Spirit's gracious work. "A multitude of daily decisions" all too quickly becomes focused around human works, the work of man rather than the work of God. Sanctification does involve our responsible, conscious participation, but we work *because God is at work within us to will and to do His good pleasure* (Philippians 2:13). Patience, the last of the basic principles, is a fruit of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23).

The concept of **adoption** is central to understanding the believer's new relationship with God. The authors make some correct statements concerning our adoption as God's children at the time of saving faith (PF 83). People are not automatically *born* children of God.

The subject of adoption includes some discussion about human adoption, noting an example of a couple who adopted several children who had previously been abused. They note that it took a

lot of time for these kids to begin to trust their new parents (PF 43), then claim that we are like those children when we're adopted into God's family:

"Until we are convinced that our Father is loving and strong, we will continue to be bitter and self-reliant or fearful and withdrawn. We desperately need to comprehend our new identity as adopted children of God." (PF 44)

But is there truly such widespread misunderstanding of God when the Holy Spirit comes to indwell the new believer, and to *bear witness* with his spirit (Romans 8:16)? These authors make sweeping statements without adequate support. They are expressing *opinions*, not giving biblically based *facts*.

The authors go on to cite the prodigal son's older brother as an example of their *theory*:

"His younger brother, who had come back expecting to be a field hand, was experiencing the blessings of being a beloved son. In contrast, the older brother, who had been around his loving father all of his life, saw himself as only a field hand. His poor perception of his father had cost him dearly!" (PF 45).

This exegesis is wrong; the older brother did *not* perceive himself as a "field hand" at all! Quite the opposite. He was jealous because he perceived himself as deserving of his father's love, whereas his brother had sinned and was undeserving. The point of this text concerns God's gracious, forgiving love, not poor self-worth.

In view of Rapha's emphasis on self-worth, it is not surprising that the authors move from correcting our perception of *God* to correcting our perception of *self*:

"A person's identity changes as his perception of God and of himself changes. It usually takes a blend of three elements: cognitive, volitional, and relational. The consistent and specific study of God's Word gives him the basic truths to meditate on." (PF 47)

Once again, we are faced with a mixture of truth and error. Scripture doesn't exhort us to focus on our own identity. However, the authors are correct in pointing us to God's Word for basic truths. They also make some good statements about the characteristics of God's children:

1. God is their refuge (PF 48).
2. God is their source of supply (PF 49).
3. They know they are precious to God (PF 50).
4. God is worshipped (PF 51).
5. God reigns over them (PF 51).

These statements are true. However, the authors continue their focus on *victimization* and *healing*, in place of sin, when they consider solutions to inaccurate perceptions of God:

"If we could go through a second childhood, if we could relate to someone who is consistently accepting and loving, we could be healed from the damage of our childhood. But can we? We not only *can*, but this is exactly what *should* take place beginning at the point of salvation. We are born again, with a new Father, who loves and cares for us completely. And we enter a family that can provide warmth, affirmation, encouragement, and hope." (PF 35)

The believer does have a new Father at the point of salvation, but the focus of this new relationship is not on "healing" the damage of one's childhood. Rather, the emphasis is on forgiveness of sins. It is dangerous to minimize or dilute that emphasis, although God certainly *does* provide comfort to those who are truly afflicted.

The authors say that it is possible to *choose* a role model, namely God (PF 35-36). However, they warn about Satan's attempts to blind you to the character of God (PF 36):

1. He wants to distort the character of God;
2. He wants you to believe that your relationship with the Lord is conditional and based on how good you can be;
3. He wants you to depend on another person for your security and significance instead of depending on God.

Notice, again, the unbiblical emphasis on seeking security and significance. The believer *has* security, the Holy Spirit being the guarantee of his eternal inheritance (Ephesians 1:13). He has significance in a sense, because his name is written in the book of life and he is being renewed in the image of his Creator. However, his own personal significance pales in comparison to glorifying *God*, and that is his purpose in life.

God's sovereign purposes. Fortunately, these authors give some recognition to the fact that God has purposes for our trials:

"Has it occurred to you that God can use even the most neglectful or abusive parents to produce strengths in your life?" (PF 109)

The authors believe that the following questions are appropriate to ask:

"Why? Why did God let this happen in my life? Couldn't a loving God have given me strong, loving parents?" (PF 109)

Responding to their own question, they state that:

"We need to understand that our sovereign God has allowed (not caused) evil in the world." (PF 109)

The authors examine three causes of suffering: (1) man's fallen nature; (2) sin's consequences; (3) God's work in pruning His children for greater fruitfulness (PF 109). They note, correctly, that we are not immediately delivered from all sin by the cross (PF 110). We still have to live with it, in ourselves and others, during this lifetime. Meanwhile, God accomplishes His purposes:

"Whether the cause of suffering is sin or fruitfulness, God can use our pain for good." (PF 111)

The example of Joseph is properly noted. The authors note several strengths that can be developed through our pain, including compassion (PF 112), dependence on God (PF 113), increased perception of others (PF 115), better reflection prior to acting (PF 116), and increased effectiveness (PF 116).

God is sovereign yet not the author of sin. In ways we cannot fully comprehend, He uses even man's sin to accomplish His glorious purposes. We do know something about those purposes from the Scripture, such as the testing and strengthening of our faith (James 1:2-4), the transformation of our character (Romans 8:28-29), teaching and fatherly discipline (Hebrews 12:3-11), plus providing a testimony to the world (1 Peter 4:12-14). We know that the suffering of the present time is not worthy to be compared to eternal glory (Romans 8:18), and that our "light and momentary" (!) affliction is working an eternal weight of glory (2 Corinthians 4:17).

We know God the Father through His Son (Hebrews 1:2) and through the inward testimony of God the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:16). Scripture never suggests that imperfect human fathers (and all of them are!) set our image of God in concrete (not even wet cement!). Rapha must borrow heavily from the godless theories of Freud in order to make such connections.

Rapha's Solutions

The solutions proposed by Rapha are a mixture of biblical truth and psychological error. Some of that error, as we will see, results from an unbiblical analysis of the basic problems.

Grieving. Here is one of the most unbiblical solutions proposed by Rapha. McGee has the following comment concerning those who have been abused or neglected by their fathers:

"Before they can find some relief from their pain, move on with their lives, and stop passing along those harmful patterns of behavior, they must go through a grieving process." (FH 197)

"Most victims of father hunger have much to grieve" (FH 198)

The author describes numerous forms that emotional pain may take, claiming that "all of these can be traced to a common source: an inadequate or completely absent relationship with Dad" (FH 198). The "grieving process" is compared to an actual *death* of one's childhood (FH 198). The author believes it isn't possible to "simply forget about the past" because of "mental snapshots and memories" that he claims will affect us in various ways "until we uncover them and grieve the losses which they signify" (FH 199). Drawing on the unbiblical process created by Kubler-Ross, an unbeliever whose writings have a New Age slant, McGee explains that:

"After years of repressed memories and denial, followed by a period of anger, grief is a logical next step when someone begins to confront the pains of the past." (FH 199)

The author cautions, however, that the goal is to "work *through* the grief--not to get stuck there" (FH 199). One of the unbiblical techniques utilized by Rapha is to ask people under their care to write letters to deceased parents, as an outlet for their feelings (FH 201). Such time would be far better spent on relationships with those who are living!

McGee does make *some* small effort to see the responsibility and sin of the individual who has been sinned against:

"Besides taking action to heal a damaged past relationship, we must also be willing to admit to the things that we have done wrong. The father may have been responsible for ninety-nine percent of the problem, yet we need to take responsibility for the one percent that might have been our fault. And usually the ratio is not nearly so skewed." (FH 202)

The author anticipates the objection that digging up old memories does no one any good, and fails to actually restore relationships. His answer is clearly self-focused:

"But without sounding selfish, you need to forget about those people for a moment. Until *you* regain an emotionally healthy outlook on life, you are likely to continue doing things you don't really want to do. If for no other reason, you are important enough to work through all these unresolved issue. You need to see beyond the father who let you down, realize you aren't to blame, and know that healing is precious for your own sake." (FH 203)

The thought of "grieving" one's former life in this manner is foreign to Scripture. So are such self-focused motives for doing it (Philippians 2:3).

Forgiveness. Like many other psychologists, this author's view of forgiveness is similarly tainted by selfish motivations and is biblically inadequate:

"You need to forgive your father for any ways in which he might have failed you--to whatever extent you're able to do so.... You also need to forgive yourself for wrong behaviors or for nursing grudges--even if much of it seemed justified by what you faced. You also need to recognize that you had reasons for thinking and acting as you did." (FH 204-205)

Contrary to Scripture, there is no rush about forgiveness, which evidently must await "feeling like it":

"You may not be able to forgive (or feel forgiven) right now, but keep in mind that it will come to pass if you seek it." (FH 205)

Continuing to focus on feelings, McGee says that:

"The key to healing is to take action *before* the level of pain becomes so severe." (FH 205)

The author recommends an "emotional check-up" which he compares to a visit to the dentist. Note the focus on *pain* as opposed to biblically defined *sin*.

Substituting a "recovery" process for ongoing sanctification, this author warns that one must *continue* the same actions:

"Grieving, taking responsibility, and finding forgiveness are steps in an ongoing process." (FH 205)

The slanted view of forgiveness found in Rapha literature needs to be replaced by the biblical view. Forgiveness is a gracious, tender act concerned with the restoration of the person who has sinned, not the "healing" of the one who forgives.²

Servants of Christ. The authors rightly state that "our compelling purpose in life should be to honor Christ in everything we think, say, and do" (PF 124). True! Elsewhere, they tell us that following the time of salvation:

"The Holy Spirit will reveal areas in our lives which are not under the total Lordship of Christ. We are to then yield those areas as He makes us aware of them." (PF 52)

Having identified us as bondslaves of the Lord, they state that:

"The voluntary commitment of the servant to his master is a deliberate one with far-reaching consequences." (PF 53)

There's a good emphasis at this point on the faithful study of Scripture. However, there's a false understanding of sanctification and Christ's Lordship. If an individual is genuinely a Christian, his life already *is* under the Lordship of Christ. He's a bonds slave because *God chose him*, not because of his own free will. The view presented here is too man-centered. Although believers are anything but passive in their service to God, sanctification is very definitely a God-centered process. Rapha authors obscure this important truth:

² Recommended reading: *From Forgiven to Forgiving*, by Dr. Jay Adams; "Forgiving Who?" by Discernment Publications.

"God has given each of us a will so that we can play our role in the process. It is our choice to depend either on ourselves or on Christ to produce change." (PF 122)

Man does have a will, and that will is renewed by the action of the Holy Spirit in regeneration. However, the author doesn't adequately credit the Spirit in the process of *perseverance*. We work *because* God works. There is never a point where our will works by itself, apart from the power of the Holy Spirit.

Reconciliation. McGee believes that even though you can't erase the past, you can start over with new perceptions and definitions (FH 237). At *Rapha*, counselors recommend that their counselees write unmailed letters to fathers, even those who are deceased--in order to "crystallize their feelings, to recall any positive memories, and to express any negative ones" (FH 238)

The author gives several reasons for reconciliation, to those who believe it isn't worth effort:

"Maybe your craving for acceptance hasn't changed." (FH 238)

"Maybe your father is more open to change than you think."
(FH 239)

"Maybe your father isn't as much at fault as you think."
(FH 241)

"Maybe your father had good reasons for acting as he did."
(FH 243)

"If you keep putting it off, you may wait too long." (FH 244)

There are no truly biblical reasons on this list. The last one needs more emphasis on eternity, with some discussion about witnessing to parents who are not believers. The entire section on reconciliation is lacking in biblical principles about *how* and *why* to reconcile with those who have sinned.

Breaking the "cycle." Authors of *The Parent Factor* make several general recommendations about responding to parents. Here they are, with comments:

1. See yourself as a conqueror, not a victim." (PF 132)

"If we see ourselves as conquerors, we will have a deep sense of both purpose and thankfulness, realizing that God uses difficulties to build strength of character in us." (PF 133)

This one is good. For once, the "victim" mentality is cast out in favor of God's sovereign purposes.

2. "See your parents as people, not villains." (PF 133)

"Young children see their parents as gods." (PF 133)
Where does he get this information? Freud?

"Very few parents intentionally hurt their children. The vast majority are simply living out their own heritage" (PF 133). This minimizes the biblical view of sin. Psychologists want to continue their shifting of blame from generation to generation! Parents who sin against their children are *responsible before God*. The children are also *responsible before God* for their responses.

"Many of them are deeply hurt themselves. They need our understanding, not our condemnation" (PF 134). We do need to demonstrate compassion if our parents have also been grievously sinned against, but at the same time, real sin needs to be acknowledged according to God's standards.

3. "Develop a healthy sense of independence." (PF 134)

"Some people base their whole identity on their parents. This is understandable for a child, but it is devastating for an adult" (PF 134). The author recommends a "separate identity based on the truths of God's Word" (PF 135). Instead of "separate identity," we need to speak in terms of biblical admonitions to "leave [parent] and cleave [to one's wife]." It is not so much a matter of individual identity, but the establishment of a new household. (Meanwhile, some individuals are gifted for singleness and are to use that gift to serve the Lord.)

4. "Make godly choices." (PF 136)

"If a person has been deeply hurt by his or her parents, the normal response is either withdrawal to avoid pain or revenge to inflict pain (or some combination of

these). But withdrawal and revenge do not honor Christ" (PF 136). True, these actions do not honor God.

The author insists that it is necessary to first *experience* God's love, in order to express it to others, such as abusive parents (PF 136). People who don't know the Lord are clearly not going to express God's love to their parents, whether or not those parents sinned against them in childhood. However, the true believer *has* experienced God's love.

"The transition from self-defense and revenge, to unconditional acceptance of others who have deeply hurt us is awkward, long, and difficult. Our emotions often go haywire" (PF 137). The author says to live by truth rather than by emotions, recognizing that emotions are often based on "our old identity." True, we must not live by emotions. The first statement, however, is one that promotes a long process of psychotherapy before it is possible to live a godly life and obey God's commands.

5. "Be prepared." (PF 138) This preparation concerns actual contact with one's parents. They may perhaps never change, or even see your attempts to reconcile as an attack. The author recommends careful preparation for communications with parents. Those careful preparations, however, need to involve careful study of God's Word rather than psychological teachings such as Rapha offers.

Thankfulness. Authors of *The Parent Factor* rightly bring out the importance of "radical thankfulness that rivets our attention on the Lord, not on the fickle approval of others or the often distressing circumstances of life" (PF 79). The whole subject of thanking God deserves far more attention than is ever given to it in the psychological literature, beginning with thankfulness for eternal salvation. God's incredible free gift of salvation overshadows the seemingly immense concerns of psychotherapy about the past.

Knowing God. Rapha authors evidently assume that salvation is inadequate. Their attention is subjectively centered around emotion and experience:

"It is very important to distinguish between intellectually *knowing* that Jesus loves you and personally *experiencing* the love of Jesus Christ.... The most consistent emotion many of

us experience is not love but fear. It drives us. It pushes us.... We're afraid of being rejected. We're afraid of being abandoned.... It is impossible to consistently feel fearful and at the same time drink deeply of the love of Jesus."

(FH 274)

But for the believer, perfect love casts out fear (1 John 4:18)-- the fear of eternal punishment that haunts the unbeliever. God has not given the believer a spirit of fear, but of power, love, and self-control (2 Timothy 1:7). McGee is thinking in psychological rather than biblical categories when he attributes this level of fear to Christians.

McGee summarizes Rapha's perspective when he says:

"Father hunger, and all the problems that arise from it, is like a deadly poison that spreads and kills. It kills relationships; it kills love; it kills hope. But the antidote is God's love." (FH 277)

All of this confuses "father hunger" with *sin*. It is sin that kills relationships, beginning with the rupture between God and man that occurred at the fall. The "antidote" is indeed God's love, demonstrated on the cross when He sent Christ, the supremely righteous Son of God, to die for *sinners*. Although Rapha's writings contain some grains of biblical truth, the literature is permeated with huge psychological error that renders it unfit for Christian growth in godliness.

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