



STATEMENT DP061

## **Freedom from the Faith Movement The Personal Testimony of Jeff Beard**

“God, I want more of you in my life!”

That was the prayer that pushed me through eight years of intense involvement in what is commonly called the “faith movement” and the “positive confession movement.”

I began my journey in 1980. I often reflect on those years — the teachings I devoured, the ministers who proclaimed “faith” interpretations of God’s Word, and the thousands of people who followed them. Like so many others, my hunger for a more intimate walk with God was accompanied by the question: *How?* So, when I heard Christian ministers describing how they had personally heard from the Holy Spirit, worked tangible miracles, and had visions in the spirit realm, *I listened*. This must certainly be the fruit of an intimate walk with God. I reasoned.

I was introduced to the faith movement through the Kenneth Copeland television broadcast, and soon found a church in line with Reverend Copeland’s teachings and the faith movement. I was quick to attend a three-day meeting that featured faith teacher Charles Capps. He delivered a message on faith and positive confession entitled, “Calling Those Things That Are Not as Though They Were.” He knew more Bible than I did and spoke with such authority that I was led to trust his exposition of Scripture. Not realizing it at the time, I was subtly buying into the idea that I had the ability to alter reality or even create it, all by using the power of faith.

Sensing a call to the ministry two years later, I attended the only school I knew of that trained its students in the “true” power and revelations of the Bible. That was Rhema Bible Training Center (RBTC) in Tulsa, Oklahoma, founded by Dr. Kenneth E. Hagin, the grandfather of the faith movement. The next two years at Rhema were nothing less than a spiritual roller coaster. RBTC and Kenneth Hagin Ministries overlapped one another, and everything revolved around one man’s vision, prophecies, and interpretations of Scripture. This man was a prophet, I and many others thought, and his divine calling was attested to by tales of visitations from angels and, of course, Jesus Christ Himself.

It was made clear to me and other students during the first week of orientation that “thou shalt not touch God’s anointed one” — whether in a friendly way or an aggressive way. After all, we were told, “Dr. Hagin is much too busy with the ministry and walking in the spirit for our questions or problems.”

I can now relate to how easy it is to become caught up in cultic groups. The best way I know to describe what happened to me is the “boiling frog” experiment. In this experiment, a frog is placed in a jar of water and then placed over a small flame. While the water temperature ever-so-slowly rises, the frog sits calmly and is completely ignorant of what is really happening. Over a period of time, the water eventually reaches the boiling point and so goes the frog. Never feeling the change in temperature, he dies — unaware that anything was ever amiss. For the entire time I was devouring this heretical “faith” theology, I honestly believed I was learning historic orthodox Christianity. I was convinced that the so called educated scholars at other universities only knew the letter of the law and had no real grasp of spiritual things.

I recall sitting in one class at RBTC in which everyone was instructed on how to prophesy and how to speak in tongues with interpretation. Another class entitled “The Laws of Giving” addressed the issue of how to work God’s laws of giving and receiving. From Dr. Hagin, we learned about healing and spiritual growth, along with a smorgasbord of other subjects. I attended such classes because I wanted “the anointing” something I had heard was

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necessary to effectively help the sick, the hurting, and the lost, I was convinced by what I had heard from the faith teachers that this was indeed the road to a more powerful spiritual life.

I met my wife, Lisa at RBTC and we were married after her graduation in 1985. We soon accepted a position as associate pastors and Bible school directors in another state and shoved off to put to use all we had been taught. To prepare for my Bible classes, I studied for hours in the Bible alongside the writings of A.W Pink. (No, Rhema did not endorse or promote the writings of Pink.) This was probably the best thing I had going for me. After a few months of Pink's writings conflicting with my Rhema theology, I knew I needed some answers.

I decided to visit two Bible teachers I knew in Tulsa and explained that I could not find verification in the Scriptures for many of the things I had learned and observed in the faith movement and at RBTC. The answers I received were like poison to my soul, which led me even further from the truth. "You have to realize, Jeff, that there are some things in the spirit that cannot be found in the Bible; you just know it's right by the witness within," I was told. Yes, I was hungry enough for spiritual power to accept this feeble reasoning. I was told that the faith prophets who had attained this deeper spiritual level had done so by hours of praying in the spirit and fasting. So, I "fueled my engine" and began my spiritual search once again, more determined than ever. I soon ended up in the "Latter Rain movement," which put me in the circles of "deliverance" and "intercessor" groups. I was told that every Christian had demons, even though they were born again.

I continued to pastor a church for two years, practicing the "faith" equations, formulas, and confessions I had learned — trying to "help Jesus set the captives free." But I grew weary and frustrated because I was not seeing the results I was told would come. "Something must be wrong," I thought to myself. I was ready for some real answers — *scriptural* answers.

My eagerness for answers was soon satisfied, for I received a book from John MacArthur, Jr., that addressed many of the concerns I had — *and he used Scripture*. I then purchased a book by G. Campbell Morgan, and was given still another book by Dr. Martyn Lloyd Jones. For the first time, I felt I was eating real spiritual food. The Bible was coming together at last, and I saw clearly that God was a *personal* God and not just a bunch of spiritual laws to tap into.

Things continued to look better and better. My wife and I soon took a pastorate in Bakersfield, California where we were introduced to CRI's "The Bible Answer Man" broadcast with Dr. Walter Martin. "Where has this man been hiding?," I asked myself. I felt like an Israelite being led out of Egypt by Moses. The Lord used this broadcast to place real spiritual food on my plate as fast as I could swallow and digest it.

My wife and I came to realize that there is nothing wrong with faith — that is, *biblical* faith. We learned that the faith movement had completely redefined faith. "The Bible Answer Man" broadcast clarified this for us, and day after day we were fed a steady diet of orthodox systematic theology.

During this time, I purchased a book that played a major role in clearing up many of the false beliefs I had held to: *The Kingdom of the Cults*, by Walter Martin. I read about the teachings of Christian Science, Mormons, metaphysics, and others, and I was stunned to find bits and pieces of what I had been formerly taught. Now, I am not calling the faith movement a cult, but the movement does have many cultic elements. I know firsthand.

Today, having left the faith movement, I am happy to say that I am solidly entrenched in historic orthodox Christianity. And, like an ex-alcoholic cares for other alcoholics, I hurt deep within for those deceived by aberrant and heretical doctrines. I feel that my eight years in the faith movement has enabled me to better help those who are now involved in the movement, and I have a burden for them.

Some may ask, "Do your present beliefs, doctrines, and theology differ *that much* from what you learned at Rhema?" I would answer "*most definitely*!" In fact, in a short testimonial article like this, it is impossible to mention all the doctrinal issues I would like to address. I now hold to what is popularly called "Reformed theology" — an orthodox theology rooted in the Reformers of the sixteenth century. Unlike Reformed theology, the faith movement focuses on health, wealth, and how much power one can obtain. Reformed theology is God-centered; the faith movement is man-centered. I can honestly say that for the duration of my stay at Rhema, *not once* was the sovereignty of God mentioned. Today, I know that God would not be God at *all* unless He were sovereign (*see* Ps. 103:19; Dan. 4:17, 25,34:5:21; 7:14; Eph. 4:11).

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At Rhema, I was taught the heretical doctrine that Jesus had to die spiritually, which, by the way, renders Jesus' work on the cross insufficient for man's redemption and justification. I remember Kenneth Copeland telling us that when Christ died on the cross, the Second Person of the Godhead was broken off from the other two Persons. I now know that Jesus Christ is God and *God cannot die*, nor does God ever cease being God, for He changes not (Mal. 3:6; Heb. 13:8; James 1:17). Moreover, in dire contrast to faith teaching, Scripture is utterly clear that Jesus completed the work of redemption *at the cross* (see John 19:30; Col. 2:13-14).

As I look back over my experience, it becomes clear to me that there were two primary frustrations that led me to question the faith theology I was preaching to my church congregation. First, I was consistently disappointed because people were not truly being helped with their problems and their heartaches. According to faith theology, these people *should* have been helped, but they weren't. By contrast, today I find that people are receiving comfort, strength, and hope as they rest in their faith in the Savior (*biblical* faith, that is). And what a joy it is for me to rest in God's grace and His sovereignty!

The second frustration I had relates to the motivation for my spiritual search ("God, I want more of you in my life!"). My desire for God has finally been satisfied. Today, I have a *true knowledge* of the *true God* — a knowledge based on Scripture. The "god" of the faith movement is fashioned to fit experiences, but I know that experiences must fit properly with Scripture and the true character of God, or they are as the flowers of the grass that fade away.

I close with a word of caution and encouragement. To those who are involved in some of these faith teachings, you are like the frog in the jar of water over a small flame. I challenge you to test everything in the strictest manner with the Scriptures, and have an open heart that settles for nothing less than the truth. For those with loved ones caught up in this movement, pray that their understanding will be enlightened, and love them. Learn what they believe and become equipped with Scriptures to lead them to the truth. May they, like my wife and I, find freedom from the faith movement, and exercise *biblical* faith based on the objective Word of God.