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Broken by Religion, Healed by God: *Restoring the Evangelical, Sacramental, Pentecostal, Social Justice Church* by Gordon Dalbey

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This is my personal journey searching for a real and engaging relationship with Jesus, to know Him as fully as possible. It's how I became born again among Evangelicals, discovered the sacrament among Catholics, was baptized with the Holy Spirit among Pentecostals, and transformed by social justice ministries among Oldline Reformers.

But it's also about the crippling brokenness in the Body of Christ today, which that journey revealed--how the Church has divided by these very four ways people meet Jesus, sabotaging both its credibility and mission. In fact, this division in the Body of Christ reflects the same shame-based spirit of religion that fueled both the Pharisees and the 9/11 terrorists.

Above all, this book is about how Jesus is battling to heal His broken Body unto today, and through it, this broken world.

It's time we joined Him. His victory both in and through us demands it.

This call to unite God's Church is no diversion from men's ministry, but rather, its fruit. "Holy Father!" as Jesus prayed 2000 years ago, "**Keep them safe** by the power of your name, the name you gave me, so that **they may be one just as you and I are one**"(John 17:11). Since then, God has been moving to unite His Church not after the shame and fear of religion, but rather, after the trusting intimacy of His Father-Son relationship with Jesus.

In His men's movement, God has been revealing Himself as Father to a fatherless generation of both men and women--who cannot know His heart for His Church until we confess our own unmet need for a father and seek the true Father of us all to fulfill it. Those who know God as their Father can recognize themselves as brothers and sisters, and thereby unite in His purposes.

In an unfathered world, religion has promoted an intermediary, virtual relationship with Father God--substituting laws, behavior standards, rituals, and ideologies for the tears and joys, fears and hopes of trusting relationship. Insofar as an email "protects" you from the discomfort and risk of face-to-face encounter, such religion protects you from God. It thereby domesticates God in order to reinforce the comfortable fantasy that we're in control. To that extent, it proceeds from a distrust of God, and betrays a fear of His presence and activity.

That fear focuses on punishment and is fueled by unbearable shame, which makes you withdraw from open relationship not only with God, but with others—even as Adam and Eve covered themselves and hid from God after they fell. Only the blood of Jesus covers our shame. Insofar as religious performance purports to cover your shame, it co-opts Jesus, and fosters the very division He died to overcome.

9/11 blasted murderously through the Church's addictive denial and revealed what drives the Enemy of God: not hate or even atheism, as Christians have naively been misled to assume, but shame--whose most seductive and ungodly work is hosted by sectarian religion. It was, after all, the most religious ones who engineered Jesus' death--not the atheist Romans, whose spokesman Pontius Pilate found no fault in Him (see Luke 23:22).

The evil of 9/11 was perpetrated by a particular religious faction dedicated not only to separating themselves from others, but indeed, to destroying others who disagree with them. Christians cannot hope to overcome this demonic spirit of division in the world—from global terrorism to family discord--as long as we allow and even foster it among ourselves. "How can Satan drive out Satan?" as Jesus asked (Mark 3:23).

The scandal of today's divided Church beckons scoffers and seekers alike to dismiss Christians as more determined to squabble among ourselves than work together to heal a broken world. Until we let God restore us as His one Church, we can only capitulate to the world's division, forfeit our destiny, and thereby, the world Jesus died to save.

This book is not simply about tolerance for, or fellowship with people different from you. It's about together living out Jesus' determination to unite His Church. It's not about eliminating differences, but securing our common identity in Him, so we can all join Him to save humanity from our divisive, destructive ways

God's antidote to religion is Jesus. Victory in the battle at hand today requires the fullest possible manifestation of His presence and power. For too long, the enemy of God has divided Christians and deprived us of each other's resources by blackmailing us with shame, threatening condemnation if we reveal the awful truth of our sinful nature. Yet in that very truth-telling we discover the Father's grace, and thereby, His power to unite and overcome the world both within and outside us.

In this book, you'll find freedom from universal tolerance on the one hand and from narrow condemnation on the other. You'll be stirred to a faith both passionate about its truth and compassionate in its grace.

But to walk it out, you'll need to give your shame to Jesus.

SOUND BITES

* I found myself sneaking from camp to camp, learning from Catholics, Evangelicals, Pentecostals, and Oldline social reformers, yet being careful not to reveal in any one church my respect for the others.

* Most people don't want to be healed--at least, not as badly as they want to cover their shame.

* God's love is not a zero-sum game. There's plenty to go around. You don't have to condemn someone different in order to affirm yourself. You just have to know how much your Father loves you.

* Logically, you can't be born *again* without first dying. In order to move from physical birth of human parents to spiritual birth of God's Spirit, something akin to our natural human processes must end.

* To look forward with excitement the sacrament of communion--as my friend looked forward to being with his wife again--you must believe that Jesus will actually be there at the table with you, alive and active, even in your behalf.

* Biblical faith redefines safety--indeed, peace itself--not as the absence of threat, but the presence of Jesus. It has nothing to do with circumstances.

* Those who have little of the world's resources reflect the deeper reality that we all have nothing except what God has graciously given us.

* Material comfort and security are good insofar as they are seen as the undeserved gifts of a graceful, loving God, and evil insofar as they separate us from the needs of others and make us unresponsive to their suffering.

* We do not and cannot fit into this world. When you dare to face unto death this fact of life, you understand at last that we're not made to adapt to the world, but to change it. This means you no longer need to project your alienated self onto those of another race.

* Moses came to tell us what to do; Jesus came to show us Who does it.

* When will the members of the Body of Christ surrender our shame to Jesus, unite in His truth and grace, and work together to bring His Kingdom on earth as it is in heaven? A broken and dying world awaits our answer.