

John McLario and Bill Gothard's Shared Cover-Up of Immorality

1980 was the year many of us first met John McLario of the law firm McLario, Helm and Bertling, S.C., of Menomonee Falls, Wisconsin. Dr. McLario was then associated with Bob Jones University and we believe was recommended by Bob Jones III as a solution to Bill Gothard at the ministry organization of Institute In Basic Youth Conflicts (IBYC) during the crises it faced in 1980 from reports of gross immorality and mismanagement. Dr. McLario seems to be currently involved with the Bob Jones University as a member of its Executive Committee, Board of Trustees (2014. January).

<http://www.scribd.com/doc/71215504/Bob-Jones-University-2011-2012-Board-Members>

From the written accounts by the 1980 staff of Bill Gothard's organization, two facts seem quite evident.

1. Bill Gothard had detailed knowledge of gross immorality over at least a 7 year period and had covered it up until the ongoing immorality and damage to staff women was discovered in 1979-1980 and brought to the organization's Board of Directors. They asked Bill Gothard to resign, which he did. Temporarily.
2. John McLario was asked to become President of the IBYC organization and Chairman of its Board of Directors in 1980 to bring control back to the Board and to drive away any staff that might yet be protesting the continuation of a Christian ministry with such wide ranging disqualifications.

Dr. McLario stayed in these posts only a very short time which he vacated when he was personally and directly confronted about an account of his own continuing immorality involving a prostitute.

Until his sudden departure, Dr. McLario participated in assisting Bill Gothard in continuation of the cover up of Bill Gothard's involvement in the ongoing sexual immorality and providing protection for him, preventing needed Biblical review of the disqualifications of Bill Gothard.

The account of Dr. McLario's involvement with a prostitute in Florida was never reviewed or investigated by Bill Gothard or his organization as far as we know.

The excerpts about the confrontation of Dr. McLario below are taken from materials addressed to Rev. Bill Gothard (dated December 5-6, 2008) and sent to Rev. Gothard and the organization's current Board of Directors on Dec. 30, 2013. These materials were presented by a 1980 staff member, Tony G and are titled "Request by Bill Gothard for Truth and Reconciliation, 2013-2014."

Background

To regain control of his Board of Directors (that had terminated Bill Gothard from President of the ministry, July 6, 1980) and to remove undesirable staff that were unable to support Bill Gothard's immediate continuation of his ministry in such a failed spiritual condition, in 1980, Bill Gothard brought in an attorney (July 8, 1980), Dr. John McLario, as the new IBYC president and chairman of the Board or Directors.

One Way of Getting to Know Dr. McLario

It is also correct that I did not know why I had been fired. I was fired by a temporary President and Chairman of the Board, John McLario (whom I had never met until the hour he fired me) and board member Rev. Sinclair. John McLario was a nationally known Christian attorney, who himself bragged to the staff in a great threatening tone of voice that he had "never lost a legal case in his professional career," and that he expected the staff to get in line, and promptly! His fancy automobile featured a vanity license tag "LEGAL ONE." Dr. McLario was member of the Executive Committee of Bob Jones University and was apparently recommended to the IBYC post by Bill Gothard's friend, Dr. Bob Jones.

On July 10, 1980, in a one hour meeting McLario had called me into, he spent most of the first one hour asking me if I would resign. I repeated myself for the hour how the Lord had led me to work at the ministry, how God had blessed me with many great spiritual benefits from the seminar and teachings of Bill Gothard. I repeated to them over the one hour that I had no leading from the Lord or peace that I should resign and leave the ministry if I could still serve it in some ways as I had over the years.

The attorney, John McLario then brought out a piece of paper, a letter pre-signed and dated, stating that the Board was firing me from my job. I then asked them on what basis I was being fired. They did not give any response to that question repeated several times. And no cause was given in the letter that I recall.

Is the Story of John McLario and the Prostitute True or False?

On July 22, 1980, I did telephone John McLario, the new President of IBYC a few days later at his Milwaukee office. He did take my call. After a brief greeting I asked John McLario if he could deny or verify if a story circulating was true or false. He asked what that story might be. I recounted to him that the story detailed his monthly stay at a certain motel in a certain city in Florida where he spent the evening with a certain prostitute, and that his wife and daughters were not aware of these visits. I asked Dr. McLario that if this story was true, that I thought he should resign as President of the Institute in Basic Youth Conflicts and as Chairman of its Board of Directors by Friday at noon. And that if the story was not true, that he would simply tell me then that it was not.

Dr. McLario did not say good-by. He did not say "thank you for asking." He simply hung up the phone. I heard that he resigned 2 days (July 24, 1980) later from both positions at the ministry after less than 3 weeks on the job!

Why would Dr. Bob Wood and Dr. Bob Jones be offended?

I would have had no authority to invite random speakers to speak to the IBYC ministry staff. I might have occasionally recommended several different speakers but these invitations would have been controlled by Bill Gothard himself or Department managers assigned to “chapel” duties. I had met Dr. Bob Wood only once briefly during a seminar in the region of Bob Jones University where he was a board member or professor (I believe) and did not know him personally at all. Dr. Bob Wood might have been offended, along with Dr. Bob Jones, during a tour they both led through the Bob Jones University Art Museum which included a very large exhibit hall where they keep an expensive and very large collection of genuine false gods from the condemned religions of the Scripture. During this tour, I did ask these two men what their view was of the Scriptures where God commanded the Israelites to not collect false gods and to rather break them into small pieces. (See Exodus 23:24, Deuteronomy 7:5; 12:3). Being men of the Word and representing Bob Jones University, they were uncharacteristically quiet and completely unresponsive to this sincere and honest question. They abruptly ended the tour without saying Good Bye!

These men might have been offended when their Bob Jones University board member, Dr. John McLario, the famous Christian attorney, quickly resigned (July 24, 1980) from the IBYC positions of President and Chairman of the Board (in the days after Bill Gothard resigned (July 6, 1980) per the request of the Board of Directors, July 1980). They might have learned that he, John McLario, was likely involved himself in ongoing immorality and prostitution in a Florida motel on a repeating schedule. When I asked Dr. McLario about this story directly and privately, and gave him every opportunity to deny it, Dr. McLario hung up the phone, would not answer the question, and abruptly resigned from his posts at IBYC several days later.

Attempting Recovery

Four months after May 28, 1980, I was living and working on the family farm in Kansas, having been unceremoniously terminated from employment by the temporary president of the ministry, John McLario. My focus during those months was to direct the many men and women involved in the immoral affairs at the ministry (most who no longer had any help available to them) referring them to resources for counseling they so desperately needed. I also responded to contacts from other staff friends who had resigned and were attempting to find employment and understanding for this most destructive spiritual episode in their lives.

Laying Hands upon Two Men Too Hastily

By Dec. 12, 1980 I was seeing enough continued wickedness, deception and lies by Bill Gothard to make the entire situation much more serious and complex. It is proper and Biblical to carefully examine the life of a pastor, elder or spiritual leader before you install him into a position of trust and ministry to the lives of the church of Christ. John McLario had been installed as President and Chairman of the Board of the IBYC ministry apparently without any discovery of his personal life that obviously disqualified him from such a leadership position. Or did Bill Gothard actually know? Or when asked by Bill Gothard, did Dr.

McLario lie about his spiritual condition and ongoing immorality? There is considerable evidence Bill Gothard was himself orchestrating the quick installment of this new administrator, to meet his own objectives. Bill Gothard himself was quickly re-installed to the position of President and spiritual teacher of the IBYC ministry so soon after his termination by the ministry Board (only three weeks earlier!!!) as to not have adequate repair of and ministry to his own soul and life and requalification by a clear conscience and a pure heart and clean hands. This simply set him up for further spiritual failure and darkness. I Timothy 5:22 is clear that we are not “to lay hands upon anyone too hastily and thus share responsibility for the sins of others; keep yourself free from sin.”

The IBYC Board of Directors in Dec. of 1980 (after accepting his resignation only 5 months earlier) were again discussing the same question: “Has Bill demonstrated to the Board’s satisfaction that he is under their authority as he teaches others should be under authority?” Dr. Sam Schultz in that same meeting asked his fellow Board members, “Gentlemen, I ask you, can we with a clear conscience before God endorse Bill for public ministry for 1981?”

Continuation of Ministry without God’s Blessing

Some notes from the Board of Directors regarding this same day and process reveal what Bill Gothard either does not know or does not care to recall:

“On Sunday morning, July 6th, Dr. Van Gelderen met with us (Board of Directors) at Bill’s request. He advised Bill that he had no options left but to resign. His resignation resulted in a concession by the staff that they would promote the seminars beginning the next day. Mr. Gothard Sr. who also had lost the confidence of the staff, resigned as treasurer and member of the Board. Through the services of Dr. McLario, the seminars were continued throughout July at the expense of losing a large segment of employees. This staff attrition has been and is continuous.” (Board notes of Dec. 11, 1980).

What Bankruptcy Looks Like

As to decisions being made by the Board of Directors or key management staff and if they were “Scriptural” or not, we know that many of the decisions by Bill Gothard that led to this entire tragedy were certainly not “Scriptural.” So I am sure it is easy for him to make this judgment on others. For readers of this letter to determine if these decisions were Scriptural or not would need more detail and examination, to be sure.

In reality, the entire staff returned to work the next day, July 7, 8 and through the week. The newly arrived Dr. McLario met with me later in the week (Thursday, July 10) and terminated my employment (as described in some detail above). It is only after my termination did any staff decide to resign and leave, I believe approximately 50 or so in the next few months.

The “fruit” Bill Gothard is referencing here of spiritual confusion, corporate / business leadership vacuum, resignations and any sense of hurt and bitterness that might have existed was quite clearly a result of Bill Gothard’s bankrupt leadership and his own spiritual failure, resistance to the teachings of

Scripture, and outright rebellion against God and God's authority in his life.

Is the Story of John McLario and the Prostitute True or False?

When a highly qualified and experienced lawyer is asked directly and personally whether or not an account is true or false about his life, you would expect a definite and clear answer. When Dr. McLario was asked directly and personally about his involvement with a prostitute at a specifically named hotel in a specifically named town on a repeating schedule, it would seem that would be enough detail that a man of integrity and of Dr. McLario's court room experience and judgment of the importance and gravity of the question, could easily and quickly dispatch such a story as patently untrue. Dr. McLario's response was to hang up the phone, failed to say "good bye" and resigned his two prominent posts at the Bill Gothard organization within two days!!!!

It would seem that Bob Jones University would want to make the same inquiry of Dr. John McLario. It could well be that Dr. McLario has acknowledged this sin in his life, God has graciously forgiven him his sins. It could well be Dr. McLario has confessed these sins to his wife and daughters and they have worked through their own forgiveness of him. It could well be that Dr. McLario has acknowledged these sins and failures to the Bob Jones University Trustees and they have graciously forgiven him and invited him to continue his good work with the University. These would all be occasions for rejoicing in the forgiveness and mercies of our Lord.

If these sins and wrongs have been covered up they become lies and disqualifications.

The Bob Jones University and Dr. Bob Jones III ought to at least consider asking these questions. If they do not, the alumni and donors of the University ought to require such an inquiry.