

tion package amounted to more than \$1.25 million." This amount, critics charge, is "too high" and made him one of the highest, if not the highest, paid non-profit director for the San Antonio area. Also, "Hagee's compensation was among the highest packages for television evangelists in 2001, according to IRS 990 filings," the *Express-News* further stated. The \$1.25-million figure reflected \$540,000 in compensation from Global Evangelism Television (the television unit of Hagee's ministry), \$300,000 for serving as president of Cornerstone Church, and \$410,000 in benefits from GETV, including contributions to his retirement package.

Hagee's retirement package, known as "The John Hagee Rabbi Trust," includes "a \$2.1 million 7,696-acre ranch outside Bracketville, with five lodges, including a 'main lodge' and a gun locker. It also includes a manager's house, a smokehouse, a skeet range and three barns," the newspaper disclosed.

Hagee and his wife, Diana, own a six-bedroom, 5,275-square-foot home. The house, said to be "in one of San Antonio's most exclusive gated communities," is valued at nearly \$700,000.

Televangelists like Hagee and Meyer have long tried to justify their lavish and unrestrained lifestyles by claiming those in the secular business sector easily demand such financial compensation. They also tend to excuse their living in extreme wealth by wrongly claiming that critics say Christians should live in extreme poverty. There is, however, middle ground and Scripture clearly establishes the character for those devoting their lives to ministry. It is one of virtue, reputation, moderation, and balance (1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1).

Those who hunger for earthly palatial mansions, private jets, and costly sports cars, would do well to attempt to satisfy their insatiable desires in the secular world rather than bring scorn onto the Gospel. The Gospel of Christ is one of self-denial and self-sacrifice, not an abundance of possessions (Luke 12:13-21).

—MKG

GARNER TED ARMSTRONG DIES

Garner Ted Armstrong, disgraced televangelist and son of the late Herbert W. Armstrong, died Sept. 15, 2003. Armstrong died from complications of pneumonia and had been hospitalized for several weeks. He was 73.

In 1978, Armstrong was excommunicated from the Worldwide Church of God, the sect founded by his father. He earned all his degrees — a bachelor's, master's, and doctorate — from the Worldwide Church of God's Ambassador College in Pasadena, Calif. Until his ouster, Armstrong was vice president of both the church and its college, and was the movement's primary spokesman.

Following excommunication from his father's church, Armstrong established his own ministry, the Church of God International, based in Tyler, Texas. In 1995, Armstrong resigned as church president and board chairman amid charges of sexual assault. He continued with the church's television broadcasts until removed by church leaders in 1997.

Armstrong continued his media presence through the Garner Ted Armstrong Evangelical Association and, in 1998, established the Intercontinental Church of God.

Despite his expulsion from the Worldwide Church of God, the younger Armstrong remained true to the many unbiblical and heretical teachings taught by his father. These included a defective view of the nature of God, conditionalism, Sabbath worship, festival keeping, and British Israelism.

Claims of Armstrong's viewing audience for his broadcasts varied from 5 million to 20 million. According to the *Los Angeles Times*, "his splinter churches amassed only about 5,000 members, compared with an estimated 80,000 for his father's Worldwide Church of God."

—MKG

CODE TWO FOR DROSNIN

Perhaps former *Wall Street Journal* reporter Michael Drosnin thinks the old saying, "One good turn deserves another" should be revised to say, "One bad book deserves another." At least that's how Drosnin's *Bible Code II* is being received. The book, released in December 2002, is the sequel to his 1997 best-seller, *The Bible Code*.

Drosnin claims "a Bible beneath the Bible," and that by skipping across an equal number of characters or spaces, one can form new words revealing the hidden messages or codes of the Bible. Drosnin's technique of equidistant letter sequencing (ELS) has been debunked by most countercult groups and secular investigators (see further, *The Quarterly Journal*, January-March 1998, pp. 4, 9-13). This kind of "letter play" can be done with any secular book. How exact could all of this be anyway, because Drosnin uses a particular Hebrew Bible that is not the same as other Hebrew Bibles? It is much like our choice of modern translations, which may be the same in substance, but not necessarily in style or word order.

Because of the popularity of Drosnin's contrived methods and ominous predictions, the practice of finding coded messages within Scripture has been successful grist for other dabblers in biblical prophecy, including Paul Crouch, Grant Jeffrey, and Hal Lindsey.

In *Bible Code II*, Drosnin says he has uncovered a prophecy that speaks of an atomic holocaust in 2006. His earlier volume designated 1996 (the Hebrew year 5756) as being "encoded" for an "atomic holocaust."