

IS GOD “SHOWING UP” TODAY?

The Claims and Confusion of R.T. Kendall

by G. Richard Fisher

The notion of God “showing up” has become a Charismatic cliché, and the idea that it is desirable is evident from the title and subtitle of R.T. Kendall’s book, *When God Shows Up - Staying Ready for the Unexpected*.

Others, as well, think that God “showing up” is a possibility and say so in their accolades for the book. Its back cover bears praise from the likes of Stephen Strang, John Arnott, Mike Bickle, and Paul Cain.

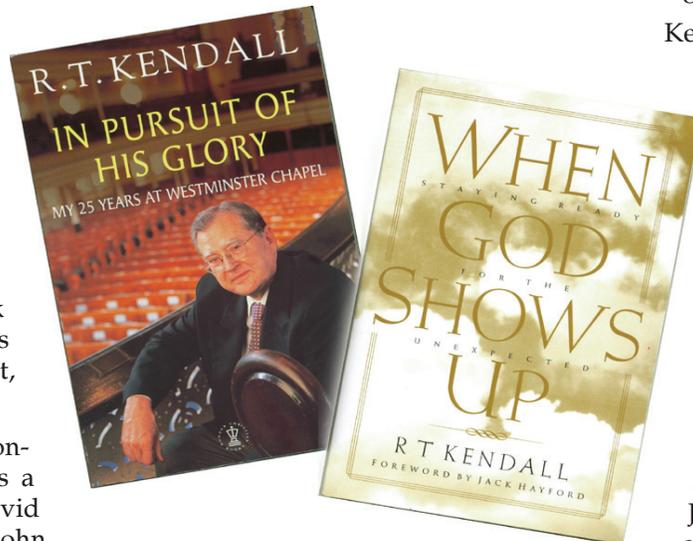
Some in Charismatic and conservative camps see Kendall as a theological heavyweight. David Yonggi Cho, Jim Bakker, and John Stott all endorse him. Even Dr. James Dobson says, “I am privileged to call this good man my friend.”¹

It is not that everything Kendall says in *When God Shows Up* is wrong, but so much of it is. Thus the reader must decide if the good can outweigh the bad. Sometimes, the negative aspects of a book can so overshadow the rest that the reader must discount it entirely.

Foursquare pastor Jack Hayford, in his praises of Kendall, tries to give us a clue as to what God “showing up” means:

“God is ‘showing up’ today! He’s revealing Himself and manifesting His power in remarkable and amazing ways — and hungry souls are the primary candidates for experiencing His arrival after that fashion.”²

So, according to Hayford, God “showing up” is an amazing



manifestation of God’s power. It is God’s “arrival.” One starts to think that God “showing up” can mean anything.

Hayford goes on to say this pursuit leaves one paying a price “of being stuck between the fanatic and the formalist” and causes one to “enter the collision zone” and be “lifted to the heavens.”³ Such unclear statements end up sounding subjective and mystical.

WHO IS KENDALL?

R.T. Kendall is the recently retired pastor at Westminster Chapel in London and the author of a number of other books, including a book on tithing, and one entitled *The Word and the Spirit*, written with Kansas City “prophet” Paul Cain. According to Kendall’s own chronology, he met Cain in 1990.⁴ Cain then became

almost a resident prophet to Kendall’s congregation in the 1990s.⁵

Kendall’s book, *Total Forgiveness*, has what might be seen as psycho-babble concepts of forgiving oneself and forgiving God. These ideas can nowhere be found in Scripture.

Kendall began his ministry at Westminster Chapel in February 1977 and served as pastor for 25 years before retiring in February 2002. Westminster Chapel has a history of eminently capable expositors from G. Campbell Morgan (1904-1917 and 1933-1943) to Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1943-1968). Kendall was able to live off their capital while departing seriously from their theology and practice.

In the 1980s, Kendall became enamored with Arthur Blessitt, a Floridian with a Baptist background who gained fame as the man who walked around the world carrying a 12-foot wooden cross. Blessitt also walked away from his first wife, Sherry, and has remarried. In 1990, upon announcing his divorce, “Blessitt said he felt this was God’s will for him at this time” and asked “that people not judge.”⁶

Following Blessitt, Kendall moved on to introduce his congregation to “Paul Cain, John Arnott, Randy Clark, [and] Rodney Howard-Browne,”⁷ men who represent a further erosion of the orthodox foundation of Westminster Chapel. The biggest change came in 1991 when Kendall and his wife spent time at a Vineyard conference with John Wimber, Mike Bickle,

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One recipient of a “healing” was the woman in the wheelchair who had stood up during the singing. She claimed to have been healed from arthritis and was allowed on the platform with Hinn. Hinn entertained the crowd by “slaying her in the Spirit.”

One who was not as fortunate to make it to the platform was a severely crippled young man. A woman, possibly his mother, worked fruitlessly with him to straighten up. He struggled up and down the aisle, only to finally fall back into his wheelchair.

No doubt, their predicament was one that was repeated all over the auditorium — and in other cities where Hinn takes his Miracle Crusades. People who leave suffering from the same infirmity with which they arrived surely must struggle with an eventual shipwrecked faith. Many will leave the arena with not only a physical problem, but now thinking there’s something spiritually askew. How cruel, unconscionable, and utterly heartless it is for one like Hinn to offer a false hope which leaves in its wake devastating guilt and severe depression. This is the prevalent downside few realize and which is never presented on his *This Is Your Day* broadcasts.

At 10:30 p.m. — and after showcasing only a handful of anticlimactic “miracles” — the crusade came to an abrupt halt. Where were all the dramatic healings that had been proclaimed by Hinn? Although there were a handful of people remaining on the stage, Hinn dismissed the crowd with a reminder of how powerfully God’s Spirit had moved this evening and with a plug for the next morning’s “anointing” campaign. He quickly left the stage, with no indication of an encore — at least not tonight.

As many of the people left the building and walked (or were pushed in their wheelchairs) toward their cars, they passed four large tractor-trailer trucks. Three of these trucks had brought the lighting, sound, video, and stage equipment. The fourth one housed the video production command center for the crusade. For such a show as this, much is needed and hauled from city to city. In just a little over 24 hours, those trucks would again be loaded and soon on their way to another city, once again to create “a mighty visitation of the Holy Spirit.”

Endnotes:

1. Benny Hinn, Benny Hinn Ministries form letter, no date, copy on file.

2. The “before 5:00 p.m.” summoned attendees to be present more than two hours before the “Miracle Service,” which was scheduled to begin at 7:00 p.m.

3. Benny Hinn, *Benny Hinn Testimony*, Orlando Christian Center, July 19, 1987, audio tape on file.

4. William Lobdell, “The Price of Healing,” *Los Angeles Times Magazine*, July 27, 2003, pg. 30.

5. Throughout the entire time of the crusade, but most notably when a few soloists sang either during the offering or between the sermon for salvation and the sermon for healing, people were coming and going incessantly to the refreshment stand. This was obviously very odd, although it fit perfectly into the “performance” aspect of things.

6. Hinn’s appearance on stage less than 20 minutes after the start of the service was a deviation from previous crusades we had attended in the 1990s. During those crusades, the crowds were allured with a much longer duration of group dynamics through the music prior to Hinn’s arrival on stage.

7. Benny Hinn, sermon on healing at Springfield, Mo. Miracle Crusade, Sept. 11, 2003, transcript on file.

8. *Ibid.*

9. *Ibid.*

10. *Ibid.*

11. Richard Mayhue, *The Healing Promise*. Eugene, Ore.: Harvest House Publishers, 1991, pg. 121.

12. A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1931, Vol. IV, Epistles of Paul, pg. 164.

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Jack Deere, and a coterie of “Kansas City Prophets.”⁸ One of Kendall’s friends and former deacons acknowledges: “Some evangelicals believe that R.T. in his pursuit of the glory of God has gone too far.”⁹

When examining Kendall’s life, one is tempted to ask, “Will the real R.T. Kendall please stand up?” He was born in Ashland, Ky., in 1935 to Nazarene parents. He reports he saw Christ and heard His voice on a trip to heaven in October 1955.¹⁰ His alliances constantly shifted and changed. He admits, “I have always been an ambitious man.”¹¹

Kendall became a Nazarene minister for a time, then became an Orthodox Presbyterian minister for a time, then became a Southern Baptist minister, and describes himself as a “four-and-a-half-point Calvinist.”¹² All Kendall’s past personas were left behind when he came under the strong hand and shadow of the still dominant but aging Lloyd-Jones at Westminster. Lloyd-Jones vetted much of Kendall’s ministry. Kendall admits for a time he tried to sound like Lloyd-Jones.¹³

Kendall had his “blessed” Blessitt phase, his “raising Cain” phase, and then for a time Kendall says of Rodney Howard-Browne: “I probably became Rodney’s number one apologist.”¹⁴ At last he joined the outer fringes of what some have called the

counterfeit revival. Kendall has reinvented himself more times than Al Gore. There could really be a book done on the many faces of R.T.

SHOWING UP OR SHOWING OFF?

Kendall says in *When God Shows Up* that God “manifests Himself,” but if we are not paying attention, “we could completely miss seeing His glory — right before our eyes — and we would not even know He had shown up!”¹⁵ If God “showing up” is anything like what happened to Paul on the Damascus Road (Acts 9) or Isaiah seeing God high and lifted up (Isaiah 6) or John’s vision of the glorified Jesus (Revelation 1) it is difficult to imagine such a thing being

missed. Ezekiel certainly did not miss it, nor did Daniel.

It appears then that whatever God “showing up” means, believers must be prepared and attentive if they are to recognize it. This does strongly suggest that there is much of us, self and emotion, in this experiential process, and maybe less of God Himself.

Some would argue, and rightly so, that to suggest such a thing as God “showing up” is to deny, or at least seriously undermine, the whole concept of Jesus Christ coming to earth in the incarnation. *God has already shown up.* Matthew records: “Behold a virgin shall be with child, and bear a son, and they shall call His name Emmanuel, which is God with us” (Matthew 1:23).

Expositor and professor Charles R. Erdman comments on the truth of Emmanuel:

“The ancient prophet may not have had in mind either a miracle or an event of the distant future, but the writer of the Gospel saw that the true meaning of his prediction was realized in the birth of Jesus, for he was no mere pledge of divine deliverance but himself a divine Saviour, not only was his name a token of the presence of God, but he himself was manifest deity.”¹⁶

John further affirms: “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14).

Paul declares: “God was manifested in the flesh” (1 Timothy 3:16) and the writer of Hebrews affirms: “God, who at various times and in various ways, spoke in times past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son” (Hebrews 1:1-2).

Zacharias declared, “the dayspring from on high visited us” (Luke 1:78).

Believers who commit to the omnipresence of God realize that God does not have to show up because He is already here (Psalm 139). They realize

also that He is here in the presence of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Christians are in some sense always *in* the presence of God. Jesus said, “I am with you always” (Matthew 28:20). God is also there in a wonderful way when we open the pages of the Scripture. In Scripture, Calvin suggested that God stands before us, contemporary with us. God has not gone anywhere, so He does not need to show up.

Clichés about God “showing up” are perhaps just examples of sensational and contrived terminology invented by Kendall and others. It does a disservice to the incarnation and work of God in and through Emmanuel, the Lord Jesus Christ. It minimizes the very real presence of Christ in a believer’s life as one who never leaves or forsakes. It seriously undermines the doctrine of omnipresence. The whole premise is sub-Christian. Paul says, “in Him we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28). There is no escape from God, whether darkness or distance.

SAME OLD, SAME OLD

Kendall may have come up with a catchy book title, but it sets up a scenario in which *we need something more than God has already done and is doing.* It convolutes the doctrine of sanctification and makes the Christian life at times a series of emotional experiences, bodily manifestations, and a hunt for altered states of consciousness. It confuses the doctrine of direct divine revelation (in the giving of Scripture), tries to reproduce a completed process, and manipulates people into ecstatic experiences. It is another buzz word, putting people at the mercy of Toronto “blessings,” Pensacola “outpourings,” and God-chasing spasms.

There is no doubt that Kendall tries to open people up to the bizarre. He suggests that *like* the Pharisees, we might “miss God’s Messiah,” so we must be ready to let God manifest Himself in ways He “has never done before.” He goes so far as to say, “I felt I must prepare the people for the unusual — should God want to show

up in a strange sort of way.” Kendall’s premise is: “He loves to show up in a way that offends the sophisticated!”¹⁷ These phrases cause people to be open to manipulation by anyone occupying the stage. The “unusual” and the “strange” are now claimed to be of God. However, both of these can be produced by the flesh and/or the demonic.

ROTTEN ROOTS

Kendall details that his seeking of the strange began when reports from Toronto and Holy Trinity Brompton in England came his way. There was no careful searching of Scripture, as had been promised in the preface of his book. Regarding Toronto, Kendall’s friend Charlie said to have “felt fairly certain it was of the Holy Spirit, although he was aware of how strange it all seemed.”¹⁸ So it was Charlie’s word and not God’s Word that carried the day, even though Charlie was only “fairly certain.”

Kendall then presents the Toronto Blessing as “an illustration of what I meant by being open to the manner in which God *chooses* to show up.”¹⁹ Kendall admits that in “October 1995” the “‘Toronto Blessing’ came to Westminster Chapel.”²⁰

Here, finally, we find that God “showing up” is really shorthand for warmed-over Toronto Blessing. We remember Toronto introduced convulsions, comas, animal noises, and altered states to its revival services in the early 1990s.²¹ Kendall disingenuously states his “book is not about the Toronto Blessing, which, nonetheless, serves as an illustration of what I mean by being ready for the way God can show up.”²² Kendall’s protestations seem hollow. *This is about the “Toronto Blessing.”* This is nothing more than cloning the experiences of others and saying that it is God. Toronto is the illustration, the model, and the paradigm. While the extreme wing of the Charismatic movement boasts of the “new” and the “now,” it is just warmed-over Toronto.

It is hard to understand why the “classic expositional approach that is so historic in British tradition,” which

is promised in the book, is totally ignored.²³ Kendall takes the historic Palm Sunday event regarding Jesus fulfilling prophecy (riding into Jerusalem on a donkey) and contrives the following:

“Countless incidents in the Bible tell of the Lord showing up when He wasn’t expected, although He should have been, and showing up in a manner that was surprising. God continues to do this today, and we must be open to the unexpected time and the unexpected manner of His coming. For we may be surprised to find that He has been around and we haven’t recognized Him.”²⁴

More correctly we could say that Christ showed up as expected because this is what the Word of God predicted and prophesied. Palm Sunday should have been expected since the time that Zechariah gave his prophecy (9:9). It was an event completely within the boundaries of Scripture. Some of the people in some fashion recognized the uniqueness of Jesus, or they would not have shouted, “Hosanna” — save now.

When we declare that God operates on the basis of His Word, we are only declaring what the Bible teaches. God fulfills prophecy as He says and as is expected. God works in accordance with His Word, and Psalm 119:65 assures us of that fact: “You have dealt well with your servant, O LORD, according to your Word.” Carnal experiences and carnal explanations of experiences do not qualify. How the Palm Sunday event can be a basis of what Kendall is proposing is ludicrous eisegesis.

DOCTRINE 101

Kendall, for all of the prestige and status of Westminster, apparently does not understand the distinctions between the concepts of revelation, inspiration, and illumination. Consider the following definitions:

Revelation: “The term revelation means intrinsically the disclosure of what was previously unknown. In Judeo-Christian theology, the term is

used primarily of God’s communication to man of divine truth, that is, his manifestation of himself or of his will.”²⁵ There is natural or general revelation in which God reveals Himself through nature (Romans 1:20), as an artist through his painting. There is also special revelation where God at special times in history communicated with prophets and apostles for the purpose of having these inspired men convey God’s message through preaching and in Scripture.

Inspiration: “Inspiration, then, as defined by Paul in this passage [2 Timothy 3:16], is the *strong, conscious in-breathing of God into men, qualifying them to give utterance to truth. It is God speaking through men, and the Old Testament is therefore just as much the Word of God as though God spake every single word of it with His own lips.*”²⁶ By extension, the same thing can be said of the New Testament. Because the Bible is complete, there is no continued inspiration (or penning of sacred Scripture), nor does there need to be. Cults thrive on claims of ongoing revelation and additional scriptures.

Illumination: “Spiritual Illumination refers to the influence of the Holy Ghost, common to all Christians.”²⁷ Henry Thiessen says, “illumination does not deal with the transmission of the truth, but with the understanding of the truth already revealed.”²⁸ Illumination, then, is the Holy Spirit quickening our minds to understand sacred Scripture.

In writing about his experiences, it is obvious that Kendall is seeking revelation and inspiration when he ought to be seeking illumination. We are promised illumination by God’s Spirit as we seek to understand and follow God’s Word (John 14-16). Wanting God to “show up” is a clear case of coveting the experiences of direct revelation and divine inspiration when it is not promised by Scripture.

There is no way we can repeat the Palm Sunday event, nor must we. The record of Christ’s deeds and the fulfillment of prophecies are there for our edification. We do not have to repeat the experiences of Abraham,

Joseph, or the apostles. Through their inspired stories we are reminded that God will be with us in our afflictions. Scripture does not require us to walk on water or multiply food. The worn out canard that the Bible does not state that these things will cease must be turned around and we must insist that it does not state they will continue, otherwise we would not expect clothes to wear out in the wilderness or no longer have to shop for food or take boats over water.

Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever. He will not change in His nature, character, essence, and promises to be with us (Hebrews 13:5-8), but as Albert Gibbs reminds us:

“A great deal of the confusion of Christendom is the result of failure to appreciate what is called ‘dispensational truth.’ By ‘dispensation’ is meant the basis of God’s dealing with mankind, or a portion of mankind, through various periods of history. Andrew Jukes has defined it as follows: ‘God had dealt with mankind at various periods since the fall of man, in different degrees of intimacy and, in a certain sense, also on different principles. Through it all, He has had one purpose in view: to reveal what He is, and to show what man is; but this one end has been brought out in different ways, and under varied and repeated trials.’”²⁹

DEPRESSING ADVICE

Some of Kendall’s advice is off the mark and may even be dangerous. His advice on depression is shallow, simplistic, and sad:

“Angels Comfort Us When We Are in Extreme Depression ... When we suffer from depression, we ought to know that God knows we are suffering. He understands. If a man of God like Elijah could know depression, then why should we feel guilty because we do, too?”³⁰

Angelic presence and comfort in depression are at best speculations on

Kendall's part. God knowing and understanding is a given. The problem is that the depression might be caused by a real physical ailment that could go undiagnosed and untreated. Anemia can cause depression. Sleep deprivation can factor in as well. Depression can be caused by a number of medications. We must be a bit more compassionate and thorough and ask the person to check on any medications they are taking. If there is a possibility of depression as a side effect, we should recommend that they contact their doctor for a change or reduction in amount. Jesus said the sick have need of a physician and the most godly and humane course of action would be to refer a depressed person to a competent doctor for a physical checkup. It is not compassionate to glibly mouth angel talk.

Depression also can be triggered by guilt. There is no use telling a person to not feel guilty when he should. In the event that the depression is guilt-induced, we can point the person to the One who can forgive, cleanse, remove guilt, and set their minds free. A guilt-ridden adulterer, for instance, should not be pointed to angels, but rather to repentance, God's mercy, and grace. Forgiveness is a great guilt reliever.

Depression can be triggered by self-pity and brooding, in which case the person has to be helped in breaking that habit and developing a Philippians 4 mind set. Depression is complex, and pawning the person off to angels is cruel and dangerous.

The way in which God treated Elijah was specific to Elijah. Elijah's depression appears to have stemmed from a combination of fear, running from God's will, sleep loss, and lack of nourishment (1 Kings 19). God treated each of those problems specifically and in order. Elijah's case should be referred to only in general terms. His depression had physical, practical, spiritual, and peripheral components. God dealt with every one of them.

Os Guinness writes that we usually end up "being either practical at the expense of being spiritual or spiritual

at the expense of being practical."³¹

Joanie E. Yoder also gives the practical advice that, "If you are discouraged because you are tired or overworked, God's initial remedy for you is probably extra sleep or a day off. The most practical remedy, if it's the right one, is usually the most spiritual one."³²

Jay Adams informs us on the complexities of depression:

"Almost anything can be at the root of the counselee's depression: a recent illness in which he gets behind in his work, hormonal changes, a reversal of his fortunes, the consequences of simple negligence, guilt over a particular sin, self-pity arising from jealousy or a disadvantageous turn of events, bad feeling resulting from resentment, worry, etc. The important fact to remember is that a depression does not result *directly* from any one of these factors, but rather comes from a cyclical process in which the initial problem is mishandled in such a way that it is enlarged in downward helical spirals that eventually plunge one into despair."³³

The pastor/counselor needs to be an alert, aggressive, and knowledgeable helper, and his counselee well-informed. It may well be harmful to be under the pastoral care of Kendall, as his grasp of personal problems appears limited.

CANDY FROM STRANGERS?

Kendall's advice on guidance sounds like a recipe for disaster: "*Be open to anybody at any time. You never know if God will send someone who will give you a word that is life changing. I have had it happen to me more than once — by being open to just anybody. God spoke, and the person through whom He spoke may, for all I know, have been an angel.*"³⁴

We are to "test all things" (1 Thessalonians 5:21) and "beware of false prophets" (Matthew 7:15). Just "anybody" could be David Koresh, Jim Jones, or Marshall Applewhite. De-

ceivers come in the guise of "angels of light" (2 Corinthians 11:13-14). Psalm 1 advises that we not be open to just anyone for advice or influence.

SUBJECTIVISM OR TRUE SPIRITUALITY?

A subjective orientation shows up in Kendall's definition of spirituality. He teaches that "we can define spirituality as the ability to close the time gap between the moment the Lord appears and our awareness that it is the Lord."³⁵ This is really just subjective mumbo-jumbo.

Spirituality by any biblical definition or explanation must be related to God's Holy Spirit and the Scriptures. Paul shows that our spirituality is progressive and tied to walking in obedience to the Holy Spirit and the Word as we develop the fruit of the Spirit. The Apostle Paul instructs, "For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth, finding out what is acceptable to the Lord" (Ephesians 5:8-10). Theologians in the past often have referred to *praxis*: living out in the everyday the dictates of the Word. The Puritans saw it as all-around godliness.

In Galatians, Paul urges: "For if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. ... But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law" (Galatians 5:18, 22-23). With God's strength, we can be joyful, peaceful, patient, more gentle, more kind, good, faithful, and self-controlled.

True spirituality — called godliness — consists of the development of godly character qualities (2 Peter 1:1-12) and knowing and following the will of God. John Walvoord points up the varied parts of Christian spirituality:

"Service and our progressive sanctification, our knowledge of the Word of God, our guidance, assurance, worship, and prayer life are not elements which fall

into separate categories, but rather are the varied lights of all the colors of the spiritual life, which combined form a holy life in the will of God."³⁶

Paul shows that the spiritual man will be a thinker and will view things in terms of biblical categories: "But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is judged of no one. For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ" (1 Corinthians 2:15-16).

Adam Clarke expounds the Pauline concept of the spiritual man:

"He who has the mind of Christ discerns and judges of all things spiritual ... *He examines, scrutinizes, convinces, reproveth* ... *The spiritual man* — the well-taught Christian, convinces, i.e. can easily convict, all men, ... his mind is enlightened, and his life is holy."³⁷

Kendall's view of spirituality as awareness seems so shallow when compared with Francis Schaeffer's robust, biblical one. Schaeffer argues that there cannot be a true spirituality apart from a growing, healthy relationship in a local church setting. He calls for substantial healing in personal relationships and substantial healing in the interpersonal relationships in the church.³⁸ True spirituality is connected to character, behavior, and relationships. It is not a subjective inner awareness, but a heartfelt commitment to obedience and the outworking of that obedience in practical biblical terms.

Kendall is confusing at points when he merges God's actions with His presence.³⁹ Kendall tries to use the story in Acts 12, where Peter is released from jail, as an illustration of God "showing up."

In Kendall's view, God "showing up" can be answered prayer, direct revelations, bodily manifestations, and many other things. When something is everything, it is really nothing. Kendall quotes Mother Teresa in her asking, "Did you see Jesus today?"⁴⁰ and strongly implies that

seeing Jesus in others is a way that God "shows up." God blesses works of mercy and sharing our faith, but He does not have to "show up" — He is already there.

SPIRITUAL WARFARE

Kendall's advice on spiritual warfare is fine as far as it goes, but leaves out the believer's *major* defense against the enemy. He writes: "*Remember* that the devil is round about us. ... *Be ready.* ... *Recognize* him for who he is. ... *Refuse* him. ... *Resist.*"⁴¹ Kendall says nothing about quoting the Word of God. Jesus quoted the Word, which resulted in Satan leaving Him (Matthew 4:1-11). The Word of God is the sword of the Spirit in our armor (Ephesians 6:17).

It is hard to understand how Kendall can put a so-called "prophetic word," a so-called "word of knowledge," and even a "suggestion" on exactly the same level as Scripture. However, he does that very thing as he teaches:

"If God speaks to you through a word that's preached or a prophetic word or a word of knowledge, or through a friend gently trying to make a suggestion, and you reject that message, then you leave Him no choice but to do what He has to do to get your attention."⁴²

This comment by Kendall is naive and less than protective of his flock (Acts 20:28-31). Modern "words of knowledge" have been shown to be statistical guesswork and in some cases outright deception and fraud from a crib sheet or ear receiver. It is shameless exploitation that gives false hope.⁴³ Because the word-of-knowledge scam has been run so often, we ought to have nothing to do with it.

LITTLE GODS?

Kendall's statements about Christ, the believer, and the Godhead are troubling. Kendall seems to be saying that Christ has been displaced in the Godhead and has to move over and share His exclusive place in the Trinity with us. It almost sounds like the

old Herbert W. Armstrong heresy of a God-family.

Armstrong taught that the Godhead could not be limited to the Father and Christ, but that the Church would become part of the God family and that, "The GOD FAMILY will then RULE ALL NATIONS with the GOVERNMENT OF GOD RESTORED!"⁴⁴ He taught that the Trinity doctrine destroyed the Gospel.

Kendall puts it this way: "What possibility could there be that Jesus could lose His place in the Trinity, that Jesus could be dislodged from the Godhead? Yet, Romans 8:17 says, 'We are ... co-heirs with Christ.' This means God loves us as much as He loves Jesus."⁴⁵ If Kendall is saying what it sounds like he is saying, then God does not remain God, and the Trinity becomes an extended family.

Being a joint heir with Jesus certainly means that we will share His eternal riches in a resurrected body, but it cannot be taken to the lengths Kendall pushes it. Roman law, according to biblical scholars, considered joint heirs to be "equal inheritors."⁴⁶

We will share Christ's glory in some fashion in the hereafter, but we will not dislodge Him. *The Geneva Study Bible* says, "As all the children in a human family are heirs of the father along with the oldest brother, so believers are God's heirs in and with Christ."⁴⁷ This involves a change of status for the believer, not a change of nature. Jesus shares his future riches in heaven, not His deity or place in the Trinity. Any truth pushed to extremes becomes heresy.

An inheritance is riches promised for the future. Anders Nygren illuminates Romans 8:17 with its emphasis on joint inheritance:

"In these Paul's emphasis on both present and future in relation to Christ comes to expression. In this life it is of primary importance that we are participants with Him in His suffering. But in the life that is to come we are made participants in His

glory; only then shall we enter into the inheritance which has already been assured for us."⁴⁸

An expanding or growing Trinity is nowhere taught in the Bible. The idea of Christ sharing His place in the Godhead with mere creatures is a sibling to Armstrongism and cousin to Mormonism.

THE RETURN OF FREUD

Kendall also seems to buy into questionable modern psychological theory, which suggests a link between a person's inability to believe God loves him and that person's relationship with his or her father. He seems to be about 30 years behind the times as he hitches his wagon to psychological theory. Kendall writes:

"There could be a psychological problem. I know people who can't call God 'Father' because of the relationship they had with their own fathers. It may surprise you to know, I sympathize here. I never quite came up to my own father's expectations."⁴⁹

Kendall, at best, is imposing a debatable psychological interpretation on an event. The person could be using the parent as an excuse for rejecting God's love.

This writer had an abusive, alcoholic, unloving father who abandoned his family following divorce. This writer discovered in the Scriptures the truth of the Fatherhood of God and rejoiced in the new relationship with a perfect, loving Heavenly Father who would never abuse and never forsake. The concept of God as Father was nourishing, comforting, and healing. The Holy Spirit illuminated and applied that truth in wonderful ways. I was not bound to be an abusive father in need of some kind of psychological healing.

Christ would not have told us to pray, "Our *Father* which art in heaven" if it were impossible to do so. Peter assured believers that they have been released and redeemed from the aimless conduct (or vain habit patterns) of their fathers (1 Peter 1:18). If one is unable to accept,

process, and enjoy God's love and Fatherhood, there may be many potential causes, including lack of conversion or inattention to the Word, which must be determined.

Paul Vitz reminds us:

"In the case of both parents, it is high time that these 'explanations' be called by their real name — a new variety of the old prejudice known as 'scapegoating.' When will psychological theory be honest and large enough to allow us the dignity of accepting that the fault is not in our parents — anymore than it is in our stars—but in ourselves."⁵⁰

Jay Adams shows the tie-in to secular self-love and self-image teaching and describes what the New Testament presents:

"What do the writers of the New Testament epistles actually require of their readers? Quite the opposite of self-image practices. They constantly insist that their readers love God and one another in spite of any deprivation they may have experienced in their backgrounds. Indeed the issue of deprivation is never raised as an extenuating circumstance to explain away sinful living. Are we to infer that the recipients of the epistles had none of the deprivations ... wouldn't you expect to see stroke after stroke given to converts in the epistles rather than commands and exhortations to love God and love one another? Commands to love, regardless of background and even in the midst of existing problems of every kind, appear in 1 Corinthians 13 and innumerable other passages. Indeed, Jesus Himself told us that Scripture can be summed up as a group of books that teach us how to love God and one another. If that is so, how is it that the all-important self-worth truth (that love for others rests on love for self, and this in turn on the love of others for one's self) is not spelled out in Scripture?"⁵¹

LAUGHING AT ONESELF

In making light of a "special call," Kendall shows the subjective nature of self-authenticating experiences. The humor he employs inadvertently shows how mystical and silly these claims are:

"A friend I grew up with heard an audible voice saying, 'Dale, preach!' Someone else was plowing corn in the fields when he saw the clouds were formed in a PC. He said, 'God is saying to me 'Preach Christ,' and he quit plowing corn and he started preaching Christ. (Those who heard him very often said the PC really meant 'Plow Corn!')"⁵²

In the end, the lesson is lost on Kendall and his followers.

Kendall is also into personal prophetic words and gives high marks to Paul Cain,⁵³ who teaches that the prophets and apostles of today are greater than Elijah, Peter, or Paul.⁵⁴ Benny Hinn has dubbed Cain "the most accurate prophet on the earth today,"⁵⁵ an inadvertent condemnation if there ever was one. Fallible prophets is a made-up concept fabricated in recent years because of the constant misses and failures of the false prophets dotting our land.

Kendall believes that prophetic words will "*unveil God's secret will*."⁵⁶ Here again, Kendall is dead wrong. There are two kinds of knowledge with God: the things He wants us to know and has revealed in His Word, and the secret things which belong to Him alone. Deuteronomy 29:29 is emphatic: "The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and our children forever, that we may do all the words of the law." Note that the acquiring of biblical knowledge is for obedience, not just to boast in discovery. Jesus spoke openly and said, "In secret have I said nothing" (John 18:20).

Kendall burdens his followers with a yoke that makes things more difficult than they need to be. Supposedly these prophetic words come to en-

courage us, warn us, or give us specific instructions.⁵⁷ At the same time, he makes scant mention of the Bible, which is given to fulfill all these functions (Romans 15:4, 2 Timothy 3:16-17, 2 Peter 1:1-4). Kendall devotes four lines⁵⁸ to Bible reading, but many pages to tell us the other ways that God gives prophetic words. That, in itself, speaks volumes.

HEALTHY AND WEALTHY, BUT WISE?

Kendall hedges when it comes to the “health and wealth” gospel. He presents verses that seem to support the prosperity message and suggests a “balanced view of prosperity teaching.”⁵⁹ Some who endorse Kendall’s book are committed prosperity teachers, or at least would not criticize those who are. In the final analysis, it is hard to have a “balanced view” of error.

Kendall does say that God is sovereign, that He could make one prosperous if He wished, but at times opts not to do that.⁶⁰ But even when Kendall appears to be headed in the right direction, we discover he’s moving under the power of unbiblical reasoning. He writes, “I often talk at Westminster Chapel about The Peter Principle.”⁶¹ Kendall’s point is that we may rise to a level of incompetence and hate our success.

Again, Kendall is far out of even current thinking. *The Peter Principle* is an outdated secular invention. In fact, we may rise to a level of success and love it and be drawn away from God.

The Peter Principle was the work of Laurence J. Peter and was the big rage at the beginning of the seventies. What Kendall failed to note was that Peter claimed to correct, at least in part, the inevitability of *The Peter Principle* in his subsequent book, *The Peter Prescription*, released in 1972, two years after *The Peter Principle*. Peter subtitled the sequel, “How To Be Creative, Confident and Competent.” The trouble with following secular management theories is that they change or are outdated very quickly. The Church is not to be

governed by old management theory, but by the clear structure of the pastoral epistles. The Word of God is adequate for all of Church life.

UNFULFILLED EXPECTATIONS

As a boy of about seven years of age, this writer had a young friend with a wagon with removable wooden sides. We were employed by the neighborhood grocer, old Mr. Gibbs, to go and gather coal from a coal-littered field where full open coal trains rumbled through daily and pieces of the black cargo bounced out. Mr. Gibbs heated with coal and promised us 25 cents for each full wagon load. If we worked all afternoon we might bring in five wagon loads. Exhausted from the summer heat and waiting for our \$1.25 (a huge amount back then), Mr. Gibbs proceeded to throw a quarter at us and tell us to get lost. The disappointment and frustration stayed with us for a long time.

One can feel much the same way with Kendall’s books. While the reader might expect the same caliber of delivery from the long history of solid exposition at Westminster Chapel, Kendall delivers anemic theology and shallow advice. History, doctrine, psychology, management theory, emotions (via Toronto), and various Bible portions are all thrown into a theological blender. The work of God, the ways of God, and the person of God are mixed and matched in a strange fashion. Kendall’s exposition is eccentric, subjective, and confusing. What really shows up is how far the Westminster pulpit has moved from its roots.

Charisma magazine gave Kendall a renewed boost in the summer of 2002. In an article titled, “Don’t Get Trapped in Pigeon Religion,” Kendall confesses that he has had a counterfeit spirit many times:

“It seems to me that many of the claims to the presence of the Dove among us are nothing but pigeon religion — a counterfeit for the Holy Spirit. In my own haste I have presumed the presence of God in my life many times — when it was not the

Dove after all. Often it has been a pigeon — not the heavenly Dove — that gave me a ‘religious’ feeling. ... someone could easily fall to the floor after being prayed for and that there could be an entirely natural explanation for it.”⁶²

In his article, Kendall, in essence, debunks God “showing up” experiences as he describes an experience he had at a church where falling down and laughing had become a norm for worshipers. Kendall says that, “I believe that their expectancy was so high and the preconditioning so powerful that a pigeon could have done the same thing.”⁶³

Just about anything will get people charged up, according to Kendall:

“There is nothing like a large crowd to counterfeit the presence of the Dove. A big group can create an expectant atmosphere. Nothing preconditions a leader or a congregation like a church that’s filled with people. ... But eventually one wakes up and comes to terms with the sobering possibility that it was all hype. ... A powerful leader (even a worship leader or preacher) can sometimes control a crowd with his or her gift and personality. The people out there may not have a clue they are being manipulated.”⁶⁴

So much for God “showing up.” Kendall’s admissions ought to be reviewed before one reads his books.

It is not even correct to speak of ecstatic experiences as God “showing up.” Ecstasy can come out of the human psyche or from the evil spirit world. The way in which God works with us is much different than the way Kendall suggests. Scripture indicates in various places that God works with us through what has been called dynamic understanding. As God addresses us in Scripture, the Holy Spirit gives understanding, conviction, and decision making power, which brings forth transformation. These are cognitive events, as Gerhard Maier explains when he writes:

“...dynamic understanding takes place where revelation meets the person directly, transforming and profoundly altering him. Through contact with the Word the person is not who he was before. A dynamic transformation has taken place. The Word ‘cut[s] to the heart’ (Ac 2:37 KJV).”⁶⁵

Maier further explains that this new dynamic understanding is not thrills, chills, and goose bumps:

“It must be graphically underscored that this has nothing to do with emotionalism or ecstatic excess. Revelation meets a person in the heart, and thus also in the intellect. It does not meet him somewhere beyond the person as a central whole. Nor does the dynamic transformation mentioned above remove the responsibility of response, of decision. Dynamic understanding takes place just as well in a situation where the person is compliant and where the person drags his heels. In any case the coordinating center of his life has been profoundly touched.”⁶⁶

One should feel compassion for people in Kendall’s confusing environment, and for people who get their buttons pushed to create a God “showing up” experience. God is not showing up in many of the ways Kendall suggests. Kendall is only imagining it.

God is not the author of confusion. Kendall himself confesses it may be all man-made, after all, in his “pigeon religion” analogy. The deep exposition of G. Campbell Morgan and the rich exegesis of Martyn Lloyd-Jones—still available in their writings—are a far better choice. Safe and proper encounters with God can be found in His dynamic and transforming Word.

Endnotes:

1. See further, R.T. Kendall’s book catalog listed on his web site, www.rtkendallministries.com/books.htm. Dobson’s endorsement is found in the listings for Kendall’s *Understanding Theology Volume II* and *Volume III*.

2. Jack W. Hayford in R.T. Kendall, *When God Shows Up*. Ventura, Calif.: Gospel Light, 1998, pg. 7, italic in original.
 3. *Ibid.*, pp. 7-9.
 4. R.T. Kendall, *In Pursuit of His Glory*. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2002, pg. xvii.
 5. *Ibid.*, pp. 109-113.
 6. “Blessitt Announces Divorce,” *Charisma & Christian Life*, August 1990, pg. 16.
 7. *In Pursuit of His Glory*, op. cit., pg. xi.
 8. *Ibid.*, pg. 104.
 9. *Ibid.*, pg. xii.
 10. *Ibid.*, pp. 2-3.
 11. *Ibid.*, pg. 81.
 12. *Ibid.*, pg. 26, footnote 1.
 13. *Ibid.*, pg. 33.
 14. *Ibid.*, pg. 132.
 15. *When God Shows Up*, op. cit., pg. 14.
 16. Charles R. Erdman, *The Gospel of Matthew*. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1948, pg. 26.
 17. *When God Shows Up*, op. cit., pg. 14.
 18. *Ibid.*, pg. 15.
 19. *Ibid.*, italic in original.
 20. *In Pursuit of His Glory*, op. cit., pg. xvii.
 21. See further, G. Richard Fisher, “The Animalization of Christianity—Chaos in the Vineyard,” *The Quarterly Journal*, Vol. 15, No. 2, and “All That Glitters... Gold Fillings and Truth Decay in Toronto,” *The Quarterly Journal*, Vol. 19, No. 3.
 22. *When God Shows Up*, op. cit., pg. 16.
 23. *Ibid.*, pg. 8.
 24. *Ibid.*, pg. 26.
 25. Everett F. Harrison, editor, *Baker’s Dictionary of Theology*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1973, pg. 457.
 26. William Evans, *The Great Doctrines of the Bible*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1974, pg. 194, italics in original.
 27. *Ibid.*, pg. 197.
 28. Henry Clarence Thiessen, *Introductory Lectures in Systematic Theology*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1952, pg. 106.
 29. Albert Gibbs, *Christian Baptism*. Kansas City, Ks.: Walterick Publishers, 1966, pg. 16.
 30. *When God Shows Up*, op. cit., pg. 38.
 31. *Our Daily Bread*, devotional entry for Saturday, Feb. 17, 2001.
 32. *Ibid.*
 33. Jay E. Adams, *The Christian Counselor’s Manual*. Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishers, 1973, pg. 375, italic in original.
 34. *When God Shows Up*, op. cit., pg. 40, italics in original.
 35. *Ibid.*, pg. 44.
 36. John Walvoord, *The Holy Spirit*. Findlay, Ohio: Dunham Publishers, 1958, pg. 224.
 37. Adam Clarke, *The New Testament of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*. New

York: Abingdon Press, nd, New Testament Vol. 2, pg. 201, italics in original.
 38. See further, Francis Schaeffer, *True Spirituality*. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers, 1971, pp. 148-180.
 39. *When God Shows Up*, op. cit., pp. 47-48.
 40. *Ibid.*, pg. 55.
 41. *Ibid.*, pp. 86-87, italics in original.
 42. *Ibid.*, pg. 77.
 43. See further, G. Richard Fisher, “Words of Knowledge: Mystical or Statistical? The Truth Behind the Sham,” *The Quarterly Journal*, Vol. 14, No. 1.
 44. Herbert W. Armstrong, *Mystery of the Ages*. Pasadena, Calif.: Worldwide Church of God, 1985, pg. 42, upper case in original.
 45. *When God Shows Up*, op. cit., pg. 104, ellipsis in original.
 46. Kenneth Wuest, *Word Studies in the Greek New Testament*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1973, Vol. 1, Romans, pg. 136.
 47. *The New Geneva Study Bible*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishing, 1995, pg. 1780.
 48. Anders Nygren, *Commentary on Romans*. Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1949, pg. 329.
 49. *When God Shows Up*, op. cit., pg. 107.
 50. Paul C. Vitz, *Psychology As Religion*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1979, pg. 85.
 51. Jay E. Adams, *The Biblical View of Self-Esteem, Self-Love, Self-Image*. Eugene, Ore.: Harvest House Publishers, 1986, pg. 54.
 52. *When God Shows Up*, op. cit., pg. 115, italics in original.
 53. *Ibid.*, pg. 122.
 54. See further, Hank Hanegraaff, *Counterfeit Revival*. Dallas: Word Publishing, 1997, pg. 160.
 55. Benny Hinn, *Praise the Lord* show, Trinity Broadcasting Network, Nov. 20, 1996, tape on file.
 56. *When God Shows Up*, op. cit., pg. 124, bold italics in original.
 57. *Ibid.*, pp. 124-126.
 58. *Ibid.*, pg. 123.
 59. *Ibid.*, pg. 136.
 60. *Ibid.*, pp. 136-137.
 61. *Ibid.*, pg. 138.
 62. R.T. Kendall, “Don’t Get Trapped in Pigeon Religion,” *Charisma*, August 2002, pg. 81. This article is adapted from Kendall’s book *The Sensitivity of the Holy Spirit*, published by Charisma House.
 63. *Ibid.*, pp. 81-82.
 64. *Ibid.*, pg. 82, 84.
 65. Gerhard Maier, *Biblical Hermeneutics*. Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 1993, pg. 74. Note that Maier uses “revelation” in a very loose sense, meaning our personal encounter with God’s revelation in Scripture.
 66. *Ibid.*

