

## INSP NETWORK DROPS CULT'S PROGRAM

After receiving protests for nearly a year, the Inspiration Network has removed an anti-Christian program from its airwaves. The *Armor of God* broadcast, the program canceled by the network, is produced by the Church of God International, the Tyler, Texas-based church founded by the late Garner Ted Armstrong.

In a letter to those who had objected to the program, John E. Roos, Senior Vice President of Marketing for the network, said his company "took the action after it conducted an extensive review of the program in response to the concerns."

According to James Kieferdorf, airing of the *Armor of God* program over the INSP Network ended last September. Kieferdorf was responsible for sounding the alarm that a heretical sect was being allowed to air its programs over a Christian network, and for rallying ministers and ministries to voice complaint for such a lack of discernment by INSP.

The Church of God International promotes a number of unorthodox teachings, including a vigorous denial of the Trinity and the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ. Armstrong, who died in 2003, developed much of his theology from his father, Herbert W. Armstrong. The younger Armstrong was exiled from the group in 1997, stemming from charges of sexual misconduct. The following year he established the Intercontinental Church of God. Two decades earlier, he had suffered the same fate, having been excommunicated from his father's Worldwide Church of God amid charges of sexual improprieties.

The INSP Network is headed by David Cerullo, son of healing evangelist Morris Cerullo, and is based in Charlotte, N.C.

—MKG

## JESUS SEMINAR MARKS 20TH ANNIVERSARY

The Jesus Seminar marked its 20th anniversary at its annual meeting last fall. The controversial group of New Testament scholars, founded by Robert Funk, first met in 1985 to subjectively determine the validity of the words and conduct of Christ.

The group concluded that of all the words attributed to Jesus in the four Gospels, only 15 sayings (or 2 percent) could be authentic. The group further concluded that about 82 percent of what is in Scripture and attributed to Christ was not actually spoken by Him and that the other 16 percent was probably not authentic. The Jesus

Seminar, based upon its judgments, claims to present the historical Jesus as opposed to the Jesus of faith.

The council is made up of liberal Catholics and Protestants, Jews, and atheists. The work of the body has long been criticized. Jesus Seminar board member Andrew Scrimgeour has noted that "fundamentalists and even evangelicals are hostile to the work of these scholars" and that "books, conferences, and Web sites [are] devoted to debating and debunking the work of the Seminar."

Verdicts issued by the group have been published in two books, *The Five Gospels* and *The Acts of Jesus*. The group said it also will make future evaluations of the Acts of the Apostles and Paul's epistles. In addition to its annual meeting, which is open to the public, the group presents more than a dozen weekend seminars annually in churches and on university campuses across the country.

—MKG

## A "LIAR" WHO STAYED TO HELP?

Brennan Manning, author of the best-selling book, *The Ragamuffin Gospel*, and the contemplative prayer guru whom *Christianity Today* labels as "evangelicals' favorite Catholic," was lauded by the magazine for his heroic deeds in the wake of hurricane Katrina.

In a published interview titled "A 'Coward' Who Stayed to Help," Manning described how he sat out the hurricane in his apartment, 15 minutes south of the French Quarter in New Orleans. "The whole issue of staying ... I don't mean it to sound heroic. Because I'm not, I'm basically a coward. But I thought maybe I could help somebody who stayed through the hurricane," Manning told the magazine.

And help is just what he did. "I did see an elderly black woman, somewhere in her 80s, standing on a street corner. I stopped and asked where I could take her. She said, 'Please take me to my sister's house.' I drove her out there and reassured her of how proud I was of her and what a gift it was to be her neighbor," he said in the interview. Manning also says he was able to contact authorities to help identify a child whose picture was broadcast on television and who was one of many children who had become separated from their parents. It's all the conduct of which heroes are made. The only problem is that it wasn't true.

One week after publishing the initial interview, *Christianity Today* posted on its web site a brief editorial note at the beginning of the article. It read, "We regret to inform our readers that, following this on-the-record conversation, Brennan Manning called our office to

apologize. He reiterated that he had been 'disoriented, confused, and depressed' lately and that certain details he provided were not true. He did not help identify a child from his apartment complex. He did not help an elderly woman get a ride. And while he was the last one to leave his complex, 'the truth is that there was nobody around here for me to help,' he said in a voice message to *Christianity Today*. "The essential truth: I lied."

Manning's ensuing apology for his lies, due to his being "disoriented, confused, and depressed," possibly should also be called into question, because in the interview he responded to the magazine with detail and distinctness. Perhaps Manning's embracing of contemplative prayer may be a better explanation. The technique calls for one to empty one's mind, then fill it with imaginative experiences and allowing Christ to be the source of our words and actions.

Hurricane Katrina was not the first disaster Manning has encountered since moving to New Orleans in 1982. In January 2004, a fire engulfed his home. Despite the loss of personal property, Manning escaped the fire unharmed.

—MKG

---

## BOOKS IN REVIEW

(continued from page 24)

that Wicca presents. A full chapter deals with the topic, "Whose Word You Gonna Trust?" While many confuse Wicca with Satanism, the author points out that there are distinctions while remembering the two religions' denial of the truth.

The book is an informative work written either for a searching parent or for a teen who is either dabbling in the craft or who has a friend enticed by it. In addition to discussion questions with Scripture references, there are several appendices with very helpful information, including a glossary of wiccan/witchcraft terms, symbols, and holidays.

—AMG

## UNDER THE BANNER OF HEAVEN:

**A Story of Violent Faith**

by Jon Krakauer

Doubleday, 399 pages, \$26.00

Award-winning author Jon Krakauer has ventured into the world of religion for the first time with this remarkable book about Mormon Fundamentalism, and

its historic ties to Joseph Smith, Jr., Brigham Young, and others revered by mainstream Mormons.

Krakauer, whose earlier works on mountain climbing and wilderness adventure have been acclaimed for their thorough research, richness of detail, and air of suspense, was intrigued by the brutal 1984 murders of a young woman and her 15-month-old daughter, in American Fork, Utah. Within hours of the crime it was determined that the murderers were two of the woman's brothers-in-law, Ron and Dan Lafferty, who hated her because she influenced her husband not to submit to the demands of their cult. She also had encouraged her sisters-in-law to reject their husbands' pressure to accept plural marriage.

Most appalling of all was the fact that Ron Lafferty fancied himself to be the "one mighty and strong" who had been prophesied by Joseph Smith, Jr., (*D&C*, Section 85), and claimed that the murders were in obedience to a direct "removal revelation" from the Lord.

The title of the book is taken from a sermon preached by LDS President John Taylor in Salt Lake City, on Jan. 4, 1880, in which he said, "God is greater than the United States, and when the Government conflicts with heaven we will be ranged under the banner of heaven and against the Government. The United States says we cannot marry more than one wife. God says different. ... Polygamy is a divine institution. It has been handed down direct from God. The United States cannot abolish it. No nation on earth can prevent it, nor all the nations of the earth combined; these are my sentiments and all of you who sympathize with me in this position will raise your right hands. I defy the United States; I will obey God" (pg. 250).

The principal value of this book is Krakauer's description of salient aspects of the history of the LDS church and the powerful way in which he ties the practices of more than 40,000 self-proclaimed Mormon fundamentalists with the origins and the historical development of the Mormon church.

Cautions for potential readers are needed in two areas: Krakauer is not a believer, and in his view all people of faith have the potential to commit the same atrocious acts that the Laffertys acted out for their "religious" convictions. He wrote, "All religious belief is a function of nonrational faith. And faith, by its very definition, tends to be impervious to intellectual argument or academic criticism" (pg. 68). To him, there is an equivalence between fundamentalist Mormons, Catholics, Pentecostals, Evangelical Christians, and members of Al-Qaeda.

Also, *be forewarned* that because of the nature of the crime being reported, descriptions at times are gruesome. And, because of the nature of the criminals, quotes from them are extremely coarse, lewd, and blasphemous. With these cautions in mind, for its historical value and well-written style, this is a significant book.

—RLG