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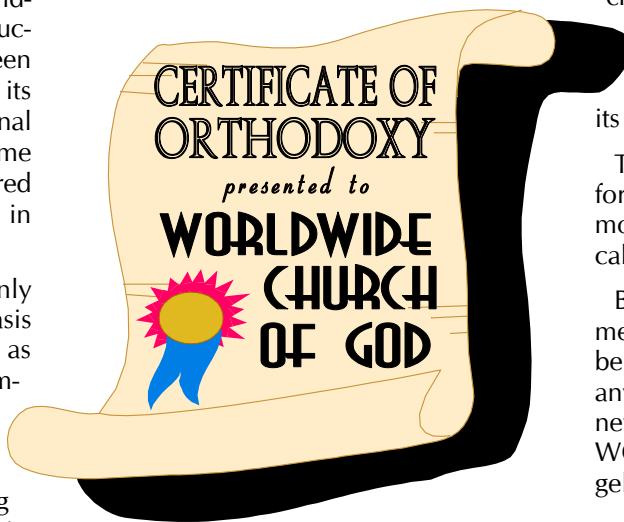
New Wine in Old Wineskins

Has the Worldwide Church of God Really Moved from Cultism to Orthodoxy?

by Peter Ditzel

Since the death in 1986 of Herbert W. Armstrong, the founder of the Worldwide Church of God (WCG), his successor, Joseph W. Tkach, has been trying to steer the church away from its image as a cult. Certain recent doctrinal changes have been so striking that some evangelical Christians have wondered whether the WCG deserves a place in orthodox Christianity.

Some of these changes are certainly positive. They include a new emphasis on salvation through Jesus Christ, but as we will see, WCG literature still implies that this is not through Jesus Christ **alone**; an admission of the Trinity; backing off from its disapproval of medical treatment; dropping British-Israelism; stating that Jesus Christ rose from the grave in the same physical body in which He died; softening the polemics against Christmas and Easter; abandoning Armstrong's claim



that marriage between the races is a sin; playing down speculative prophecy; rectifying its teaching on the meaning of "born again"; ceasing to make

public accusations that all other churches preach a counterfeit gospel and are the churches of Satan; de-emphasizing the absolute power of the WCG's ministry and its office of apostle.

These changes have led to hard times for the church.¹ But have they metamorphosed the WCG into an evangelical church?

Based on my experience as a former member of and writer for the WCG,² I believe it is at best premature to declare any such transformation. In fact, it may never be the best option to accept the WCG as an organization into the evangelical fold. Here's why.

Clearly Cultic History

The WCG has made no public denouncements of its heretical and notorious founder. In an April 3, 1995, letter from the WCG's Manager of Church Relations, J. Thomas Lapacka, to PFO's M. Kurt Goedelman, Lapacka states, "The Worldwide Church of God regards Herbert Armstrong as its founder and as a minister of Jesus Christ."

Armstrong believed he had sole
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Editorials

AUTHORSHIP WITHOUT INTEGRITY

Just a few miles from Benny Hinn's Orlando Christian Center in Florida, at Universal Studios, one can see what, at first glance and from a distance, looks like a New York street. A closer look reveals cleverly built facades with nothing behind them.

Benny Hinn's new book, **Welcome, Holy Spirit**, is like those facades. He has published a book intended to be mainstream and inoffensive as possible. He has even tried to paper over some old errors, but a closer look always reveals the same Benny Hinn: dodging a charge, claiming to renounce a certain teaching, denying a claim, then later coming back with the same story or teaching that got him in trouble in the first place.

One example is his backing off a claim that his father once was the major of Jaffa, Israel. His new characterization of his father as having "a prominent position ... in the political life of Israel" (pg. 74) remains an overstatement.

Another is his story of escaping serious injury in a 1983 plane crash. "I did not have a scratch," he writes on page 254, while newspaper and other reports from the time reveal he was in a state of shock and was hospitalized for three days. He might not have had a scratch, but the inference one draws from his statement — that he was not harmed — is hardly accurate.

On page 50, Hinn writes that he knows whom God is healing and from what. Yet during an interview with *Inside Edition* (March 2, 1993), Hinn told reporter Steve Wilson, "I'm told by my staff this lady had this — it's gone. ... It's not my job to call their doctor." When questioned about an

actress who pretended to be healed of polio, Hinn said, "that was one we missed."

However, more offensive than all the contradictions in **Welcome, Holy Spirit** is Hinn's appealing to the likes of Charles Ryrie, Lewis Chafer, John Walvoord, D.L. Moody, R.A. Torrey and A.J. Gordon to support his claims. It is obvious that Hinn is working overtime to look like the normal, average, moderate Pentecostal.

Bearing in mind that Hinn has spent the last year or so with one foot in the Word-Faith camp and the other in the Assemblies of God camp, anyone familiar with the above list of theologians and evangelists is going to see a contradiction akin to Mormons favorably citing the works of Walter R. Martin or Jerald and Sandra Tanner.

For example, Ryrie believed the Pentecostal position of tongues "is not valid" (**The Holy Spirit**, pg. 89) and that sign gifts "were also temporary" (pg. 92). Lewis Chafer, in Volume 7 of his **Systematic Theology**, lists seven errors of professional healers (pp. 183-185), calling their teachings "cruel and unscriptural." He says that "many are driven insane" by the treatment and teachings of modern day healers.

A.J. Gordon was a Baptist minister in Boston during the 19th century, an evangelist heavily involved in foreign and local missions. He was clearly a non-Charismatic who lived long before the modern Pentecostal movement. **Who Was Who in Church History** details the sound, sane, Scriptural and practical life (pp. 168-169) of this ardent supporter of D.L. Moody.

R.A. Torrey deplored mysticism and emotionalism, writ-
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News Updates

TITHING CHANGE SPURS FINANCIAL CRISIS FOR WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

Brisk winds of doctrinal change have stormed the Worldwide Church of God. Its latest theological adjustment has left the church, founded by the late Herbert W. Armstrong, facing severe financial troubles. In January, the sect replaced its strict Levitical legalism of compulsory tithing with the belief that giving, according to the New Testament, is voluntary. The turnabout has caused the church to lose as much as 30 percent of its income during the first few months following the announcement.

Church income peaked in 1990 at more than \$210 million, but during the past five years has steadily eroded. In 1994, the church's income was estimated at \$130 million.

The shortfall has caused the church to lay off 180 employees, cut by half the annual donation to its Ambassador University in Big Sandy, Texas, and cut the monthly circulation of *The Plain Truth* magazine to 750,000. The periodical, a key public relations tool, once had a circulation of more than seven million.

The church is being forced to sell a fleet of 250 automobiles, two limousines and a jet plane. At risk also is the 56-acre headquarters in Pasadena, Calif., which soon may be put up for sale.

The Worldwide Church of God was founded by Armstrong in 1933. Upon his death in 1986, leadership was transferred to Joseph Tkach Sr., the current Pastor General. The church currently claims 92,000 members in 110 countries.

—MKG

MORMON LEADER HUNTER DIES

Howard W. Hunter, leader of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, died March 3 at his home in Salt Lake City. He was 87. His death came just nine months after being installed as "prophet, seer and revelator" of the 9 million-member Mormon church. His reign marked the shortest term of any of the previous 13 presidents of the 165 year-old church.

The cause of death was stated as prostate cancer. During the past two decades, Hunter had weathered a series of ailments. The prostate cancer first was diagnosed in 1980. In 1986, he had quadruple-bypass surgery, and the following year had surgeries for a bleeding ulcer and lower-back condition. In 1993, following gall bladder surgery, he lapsed into a three-week coma as a result of a

reaction to medication. His succession of ailments left him frail and unable to get around without the aid of a walker or motorized cart. In spite of his weakness, Hunter continued to be active until his death.

On March 18, Gordon B. Hinckley was elected 15th president of the LDS church. *Christianity Today* said Hinckley's presidency "may be an anti-Mormon's worst nightmare." The April 24 issue of the magazine quoted former Mormon Sandra Tanner as noting that Hinckley "is an extremely effective, knowledgeable leader and is completely aware of the problem areas of Mormon history." Tanner says this awareness will help supplant information that would otherwise discourage converts.

Hinckley, 84, is in good health and was installed in the leadership by the church's senior apostolic succession policy.

—MKG

THE SOAP OPERA CONTINUES: BENNY HINN AND "GENERAL HOSPITAL"

What do Benny Hinn and General Hospital have in common? If your first thoughts are of the television soap opera, then the answer is nothing. However, if your first thought is of the wildly embellished account of his visit to a hospital in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, recorded in his recent book, **Welcome, Holy Spirit**, then you are right on the money.

As chronicled in the PFO book, **The Confusing World of Benny Hinn**, the televangelist-faith healer has a well-documented reputation for fabrications, embellishments, truth-twisting, exaggerations, and misstatements. Following up his stories usually leads to a series of hyped-up claims that cannot stand the light of truth.

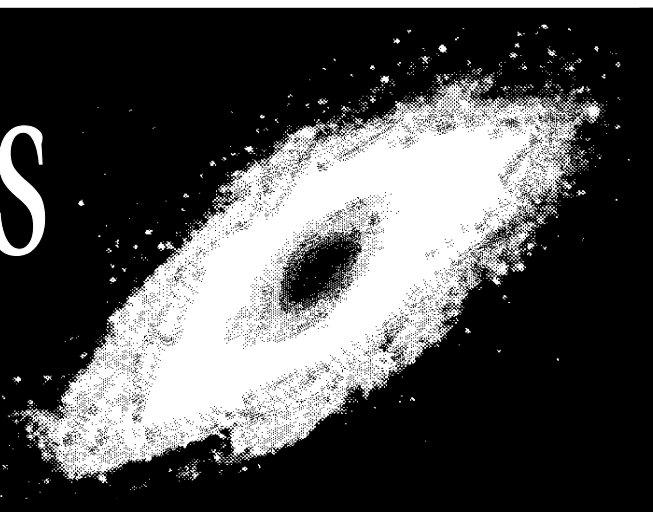
Hinn has misrepresented everything from his three conversion stories to his father's political career, his boyhood stutter and a plane crash in which he said he escaped without even a scratch.

Hinn's latest tall tale purportedly is the fulfillment of prophecies by Demos Shakarian and Kathryn Kuhlman. Shakarian prophesied that someone would walk through a hospital and instantaneously heal patients. Kuhlman's prophecy was an aspiration that all would be healed in one of her own services.

These "prophecies" provoked Hinn to think and record: "I wondered, would God raise masses of people from their beds of affliction?" (pg. 230).

In 1976, Hinn went to Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, for a
(continues on page 19)

Large Plates Small Plates



A Black Hole in The Book of Mormon

by Stephen F. Cannon

Unknown to most of the world, valuable research into some of the more serious deficiencies in **The Book of Mormon** has been ongoing for the past several years.

Jerald and Sandra Tanner of Utah Lighthouse Ministry again have proved their importance and sound scholarship in the arena of Mormon historical investigation. Adding to their long list of published material exposing the historical and theological errors of the Mormon Church, in 1990 the Tanners published **Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon**.

This book has sparked such controversy, that the Latter-day Saint Church has finally decided to break its strategy of silence concerning the Tanners' work and openly "answer" them.

Discovering the Black Hole

It has long been known that Mormon Prophet Joseph Smith incorporated large portions of the King James Bible into **The Book of Mormon**. In their epic work, **Mormonism, Shadow or Reality**, first published in 1963, the Tanners documented hundreds of "plagiarisms" from both the Old and New Testaments (pp. 72-79, 1979 edition).

Not satisfied that they had thoroughly covered the subject of plagiarism, when the LDS Church released their computer version of **The Book of Mormon**,

the Tanners decided to do further research.

"We felt that this program would help us in studying the questions of plagiarism and authorship with regard to the Book of Mormon," they said. "We had the program installed on our computer and began to obtain some remarkable results."¹ The "remarkable results" were the discovery of the black hole.

All is lost! All is lost!

In 1828 Joseph Smith was "translating" what was to become **The Book of Mormon**. He had dictated 116 pages to his scribe Martin Harris. Joseph's mother Lucy recounts what happened at that point:

"Martin Harris, having written some one hundred and sixteen pages for Joseph, asked permission of my son to carry the manuscript home with him in order to let his wife read it. ...

Joseph... inquired of the Lord to know if he might do as Martin Harris had requested but was refused. ... Still, Martin Harris persisted as before, and Joseph applied again, but the last answer was not like the two former ones. In this the Lord permitted Martin Harris to take the manuscript home with him. ... Mr. Harris had been absent nearly three weeks, and Joseph had re-

ceived no intelligence whatever from him. ...we saw him walking with a slow and measured tread toward the house. ... Harris pressed his hands upon his temples, and cried out, in a tone of deep anguish, 'Oh, I have lost my soul! I have lost my soul!'

Joseph... sprang from the table, exclaiming, 'Martin, have you lost that manuscript?...'

'Yes, it is gone', replied Martin, and I know not where.'

'Oh, my God!' said Joseph, clenching his hands. 'All is lost! All is lost! What shall I do? I have sinned... He wept and groaned and walked the floor continually... he continued pacing back and forth, meantime weeping and grieving, until about sunset...'

The manuscript has never been found; and there is no doubt that Mrs. Harris took it from the drawer...²

Joseph was in a quandary. Because he had not kept a copy of the 116 pages, and did not know whether the original had been destroyed or merely hidden, he could not take the chance of "re-translating" and later having the original show up with possibly different names, dates and events. This would

(continues on page 11)

Hermeneutics

that Harm

Benny Hinn's Misuse of Scripture to Support False Doctrine

by W. E. Nunnally

In the previous edition of *The Quarterly Journal*, numerous examples of Benny Hinn's interpretations were discussed, which pointed to a logical, systematic attempt to establish himself as an authoritative biblical commentator. The primary purpose of this study below is to investigate the effect Hinn's hermeneutics (methods of interpretation) have on doctrine and practice.

To a select few who have questioned the unorthodox teachings of Benny Hinn, the faith healer has claimed lack of formal Bible training as a primary reason for his unbiblical declarations.

"You know, in a way, I really envy those who have had Bible training. ... I was really hoping I could go to Bible school or something. But it never really happened that way."¹

"But I knew so little about biblical teaching at that time."²

Yet to the thousands of patrons of Hinn's books and telecasts, a quite different scenario is painted. In his 1995 publication, **Welcome, Holy Spirit**, he claims that:

"After over a decade of Bible instruction [combined with] a lifetime of living in the Holy Land ... you could say I had mastered the Bible. ... I have spent thousands of hours studying the Bible and reflecting on practically every word."³

In the last issue, an entire section was devoted to examples of Hinn's appeal to exceptional "insiders knowledge" of the biblical world.

Hinn has even enlisted testimony from some of his "partners in ministry" to further boost his credentials as an authoritative interpreter of Scripture. In a recent advertisement for Hinn's ministry, actress Donna Douglas said:

"The *insight* that Benny has into the Scriptures is absolutely amazing to me."⁴

The hermeneutical or interpretive framework of Hinn is not simply a matter of academic curiosity. Historically, those who have departed from the commonly accepted and time-tested methods of legitimate Bible interpretation have erred sooner or later in matters of faith and practice. Hinn is no exception.

Hinn's past unorthodox theology is well documented. As sensational as his aberrations were, and as much criticism as they attracted, the reader should be aware that despite his rhetoric to the contrary, many of his positions have remained unchanged. A prime reason for this is that his basic hermeneutical methodology (interpretive approach) has remained the same. Because it has not changed, his core beliefs about the nature of the Bible, its message, and the character of God remain unaltered.

Additions and Changes to the Biblical Text

Hinn is a man of great conviction. He believes so strongly in the correctness of his theological presuppositions that

he has gone so far as to actually *change* or *add* to biblical revelation to support them. For example, in the past, he has said with respect to Job's declaration, "The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away" (Job 1:21):

"I have news for you. That is not Bible. That is not Bible. The Lord giveth and *never* taketh away!"⁵

Hinn's edict caused him embarrassment. In 1993, he apologized for his criticism of Job's pronouncement and said,

"Now let me tell you something else I said once that I so regret I said. Poor Job, I hope he's still my friend in heaven. ... I made a statement one day, I said uh, something about Job, 'The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away,' that he was in unbelief."⁶

To support his belief in the lordship/dominion of man over the earth, Hinn added this statement to the text of Genesis, "[God told Abram He] could not touch this earth 'til a man gave it back to Him."⁷

In 1991, Hinn wrote that on the basis of Ephesians 5:23, all Christians should pray, "You are the savior of my [physical] body." In support of this statement, he reread the biblical text, "He Himself being the savior of *my body*." Hinn's rendering is in opposition to the inspired words of Paul, "*the body*," which in context, refers to the Body of Christ, the Church. Based on his change/addition to the text, Hinn con-

cludes, "If Jesus Christ is the savior of the body, then your body ought to be made whole."⁸ This is a perfect example of the equation: additions/changes to the text result in faulty exegesis (interpretation), which in turn results in erroneous faith and practice.

In the past, Hinn's additions to biblical revelation have not been limited to a word or two. In a fund raising homily for the Trinity Broadcasting Network, Hinn introduced an entirely new concept to the Church, which the Holy Spirit supposedly confirmed by direct revelation, and further supported by reference to the Scriptures:

"I want to break **the Devil of Poverty** tonight. **You say, 'Well, Benny Hinn, I don't believe there's a demon of poverty.'** **Oh, yes there is.** Do you realize that...in my bedroom I had a vision. Now...if you have troubles with this, it's your problem. But I woke up one night and saw a man in my bedroom and you say, 'Wow!' Look, I've seen more visions than you realize and those things, when you deal with the supernatural, supernatural visions are just common things, all right? I saw in my bedroom a man standing mocking me. He was thin and his clothes were torn off. And the Spirit of God said, 'That's the Devil of Poverty.' And I sat up in bed—I wasn't asleep; I wasn't dreaming—that thing was *there*. And I said, 'I rebuke you in Jesus' name.' And the Holy Ghost stopped me and said, 'You're rebuking it wrong. ... You don't rebuke with saying, "I rebuke." You rebuke with, "Thus saith the Lord!" Use the Word against that devil.' ... And you know what I did? I said, 'The Bible says, just like Jesus said, 'It is written.' And when I did that, that thing vanished. And from that day 'til this, I'm telling you, I'm telling the truth, I don't have debts.' [The clear implication is that this should be done by all Christians, and they will become free of debt, too.]⁹

Just after his extrabiblical revelation about the existence of this special spirit-being, its purpose, his explanation from the Scriptures on how to deal with that spirit, and what result it will have

in the life of the believer, Hinn continues on the themes of prosperity and healing:

"Make a pledge, make a gift. Because that's the only way you're going to get your miracle. Miracles don't happen when you lay around and say, 'Let me feel something.' Miracles happen when you *do* something, and then you [sic] gonna get it. Then you [sic] gonna feel it. **The man at the Gate Beautiful never got healed...while he was sitting. No. He was healed as he stood.** The Bible says Peter *picked him up* and while he stood the power of God hit him. **As you give, the miracle will begin.** All right, so get to the phones and get busy."¹⁰

The above passage to which Hinn refers appears in Acts 3:1-11. In verses 6 and 7, the origin of both the faith and the action is Peter, not the man about to be healed. An unbiased reading of verses 7 and 8 contradict Hinn's assertion that God responded to the man standing up, and that he was healed "*as he stood.*" This rereading constitutes yet another addition to the inspired biblical record. Verse 8 specifically states, "*and leaping up he stood...*" Therefore, in verse 7, it would appear that Luke is trying to say that the miracle took place before the man stood, at the approximate time that Peter began to lift him up.

Thus, rather than an objective reading of the text in question, Hinn's interpretation appears to be driven by his theological presupposition that people must first exhibit faith and then put that faith into physical action before they can become candidates for healing. This would appear to be in closer conformity to the Roman Catholic emphasis on works rather than to biblical revelation.

Richard Mayhue has noted these presuppositions on the part of Hinn.¹¹ After careful analysis of the entire Bible, however, Mayhue demonstrates conclusively that effort, and even faith, on the part of the afflicted is not a prerequisite for healing according to the biblical pattern.¹² From examples such as the Creation, the Flood, the raising of Lazarus and Jairus' daughter, and other biblical miracles, it is clear that God

does not require human action or faith in order to display His power.

Elsewhere in the same homily, Hinn observes:

"The same way you activate your faith for a physical miracle, you activate your faith for a financial miracle. When you want a miracle physically, you have to move your arms, your legs, whatever. Jesus saw one day a man with a withered hand. He said, 'Stretch it!' OK. **How do we get a financial miracle? By giving! That activates our faith!** That gets our faith loose! ... Every time I put my tithe in...or an offering, I say, 'Thank you for my harvest.' Audibly, I say it. Audibly. 'Thank you for my harvest.'"¹³

In Hinn's interpretation of the healing of the man with the withered hand, Jesus commands, "Stretch it!" His understanding of this command is clearly the same as that delineated in his previous comment: you must begin to move the ailing part before God will heal it. In other words, the same presuppositional error he exhibited above is evident in this example as well. In place of the clear intent of the command (to expose the ailing limb for all to see), Hinn has added a theological significance to the act which exists in his belief system, but which is not readily evident in the text itself.

Having committed one error of interpretation, Hinn compounds the problem by applying the principle of "action to energize faith" to the action of *giving*. Because the concept is unbiblical with respect to the physical realm, it only follows that the same concept is unbiblical when applied to the financial realm.

Hinn has again illustrated his belief that faith is an external creative force which has to be "activated" and "loosened." In addition, his emphasis upon the importance of the spoken word in this process is at the very heart of the Confession/Faith Message and not that of the Bible.

The Bible has strong words to say about the negative results which follow when its revelation is supplemented by man. Most interpreters living on this side of the Reformation are deterred by

the warnings found in scriptures such as Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32; Proverbs 30:6; Revelation 22:18, etc. It is quite telling that Hinn is not.

More Recent Expressions of Heterodox Theology

The Nature of Christ. In recent days, Hinn has become less bold than to add to the Bible outright. By employing his own brand of pre-Reformation hermeneutics, however, he still manages to support all of his favorite doctrines. For example, Hinn continues to teach that Jesus actually became sin, and took on the nature of Satan himself.

“Now the Lord said to Nicodemus, ‘As Moses lifted up the serpent, so shall the Son of Man be lifted up.’ You know, that verse...years ago used to bother me. ... I thought, ‘Why the Lord [sic] comparing Himself to a snake?’... Well—I—someone put in my hand a book by Martin Luther, the great reformer. And I’m riding on a bus...reading this book called **Justification by Faith** by Martin Luther. ... In this book he says, ‘There is a verse in the Bible that used to bother me.’ ... I was so amazed, I spoke out and said, ‘You, too?’ [Laughter.] ... God used his book to give me an *incredible* truth. Martin Luther says in his book, he says, ‘The Holy Spirit showed me what Jesus meant in this.’ And he goes into describing the fact that **serpents are symbols of sin in the Bible**, that the lowest animal on earth is the snake, and **the lowest thing on earth is sin, and that Jesus became the lowest thing on earth when he took our sin** and gave the scriptures how, ‘He who went to the lowest became the highest and fills all in all,’ and so on. Powerful! And somehow I began to understand, dear God! **Jesus was made sin for me!**”¹⁴

Analogies used by authors of Scripture are usually of such a nature that when every aspect of the analogy is taken to its logical conclusion, the analogy breaks down. By use of the word “As,” Jesus has set up an analogy. His intent is to draw Nicodemus’ attention to the fact that He will be “lifted up” for the purpose of healing in a manner similar

to an event which happened under the ministry of Moses. When the analogy is taken to the extreme, Jesus must then be analogous to the serpent, and since serpents are symbolic of sin, Jesus must become sin or sinful. A similar example of the danger of pressing analogies too far appears in the parable of the unjust judge (Luke 18:1-8). If the analogy is pressed to the extreme, the unjust judge must be interpreted as an allusion to God, which is contradictory to His character as revealed elsewhere in Scripture (e.g. Deuteronomy 32:4, etc.).

Hinn also notes that his source for this teaching is the book, **Justification by Faith**, by the great reformer Martin Luther. He states that Martin Luther wrote that he was troubled by the same passage which concerned him. Further he asserts that Luther was led to the correct interpretation by divine revelation from the Holy Spirit.

To set the record straight, it must be observed that Martin Luther never wrote a book entitled **Justification by Faith**. Nor did the great reformer ever express confusion about the meaning of this text. Nor did Luther claim divine revelation for his interpretation of John 3:14. In no place in his works does Luther ever suggest that Jesus took on a sin nature or the nature of Satan. What Luther *does* say is that as He hung on the cross, He was “regarded” as evil, despised, and “an archvillain” by *ungodly, worldly men* in fulfillment of Isaiah 53:12, etc. He states uncategorically that Christians:

“Must even then learn to ignore this figure and outward appearance of Christ. ... I will still regard this vile worm as the Savior...not as a worm, serpent...devil. ... The *world* regards Him as an accursed, damned man. ... In reality, of course, He is not a serpent; He is the lamb of God. ... Christ is not a serpent, a vile worm...a dragon, or a demoniac, as His slanderers claim. ... *Let them perish!*”¹⁵

Quite the opposite of supporting Hinn’s interpretation, Luther places a curse upon those who hold such views!

If the origin of this interpretation is not Martin Luther, where could Hinn have obtained such an unbiblical view

of the nature of Christ? This doctrine originated with the mystic E.W. Kenyon, and was probably passed on to Hinn in the teachings of faith teachers such as Kenneth Hagin, Frederick Price, and Kenneth Copeland.¹⁶ That Hinn continues to draw from his roots in the Faith movement in such a recent broadcast should be an indication to all interested that his past repudiations have been in word only.

As in the case with Hinn’s interpretation of the “prophecy” of Kathryn Kuhlman,¹⁷ Hinn exhibits the same problem interpreting the communication of Martin Luther as well. In other words, whether the communication under consideration is from 1400 BC, AD 30, AD 1500, or AD 1970, the theological agenda of Hinn is of paramount importance, not the intentions of the original communicator. Individuals who exhibit a pattern of misconstruing messages such as this should be approached with great caution.

All Christians Should Walk in Divine Health. It is well-known that in the past, Hinn taught that no Christian should ever be sick and should walk in divine health. One of the ways he grounds this in Scripture is by drawing an analogy between the Church and Israel at the time of the Exodus. In essence, because all Israel was healed in the Exodus, all members of the Church should also be healed. He taught this in his 1993 book, **Lord, I Need a Miracle**.¹⁸

He reiterated this teaching, however, as recently as December 1994:

“When Israel came out of Egypt, God performed an incredible miracle. And that is when **He healed all of Israel**. I mean the Bible says, ‘Not one feeble among them were traveled [sic] when they came out.’ But what happened? ... the amazing thing is, in Exodus 12 we find they ate the lamb and the blood was sprinkled on the doorposts. And the cross was presented to Israel. Even though they did not know it, it was because of eating the lamb, it was the first Passover, is what brought that great miracle. ... The Israelites were all healed when they ate the Passover. **When people are saved**

they ought to be healed at the same time. ... The Bible says, 'When He brought them out. ...' The reason so many are not healed, they're not *out* yet. In Psalm 105:37 it says, 'When God brought Israel out of Egypt. ...' Then it says, 'there was not one feeble among all the tribes.' [Paul Crouch interjects, 'And Egypt is a type of sin.'] Egypt is a type of the world. The reason they are not healed is that they aren't brought out yet. ... God healed all under the law. Why not all under grace? It is God's will to heal. ... When, when, when Jesus said to the man, 'I will. Be thou clean,' that was clearly a promise. He said, 'I will.' Well, if He'll heal one, He'll heal two. If He heals two, He'll heal three. If He heals three, He'll heal four. **Otherwise He's a respecter of persons. ... when we take that bread [of the Lord's Supper], we should get our healing at that [moment].** ... When they [Israel] ate the Passover, they were all healed. That's when the miracle took place in Egypt."¹⁹

What should be observed here is that this passage evidences Hinn's continued belief in the Faith Message, and that he goes so far as to suggest that those who are not healed when partaking of communion are still living in sin or are not saved. In some respects this would appear to be an even more radical position than he espoused before he "renounced" the Faith message.

With respect to his statement, "God healed all under the law. Why not all under grace?" Hinn has begun with one false premise and preceded to build another on top of it. It is a matter of the biblical record that not all saints were healed or walked in continual divine health, in either the Old Testament or the New Testament. The same situation may safely be said to exist today.

When Jesus said, "I will," or better, "I want to," it was in response to the sick man's statement, "Lord, if You want to, You can make *me* clean." In Jesus' response to the man, He said, "I want to. Be *thou* (singular) clean" (Matthew 8:3). In context, Jesus' statement was to this one man. It was not a blanket "promise" which extends to all people, in all places, in all ages. If Benny Hinn

were to apply this same methodology to all the words of Jesus, he would have to sell all that he has and give it to the poor (Matthew 19:16-21).

When God expresses His sovereignty, it is never at the expense of other aspects of His character (e.g., His justice). To suggest such, and thus remove the sovereignty of God, is to create a theological impossibility.

Equally important, the Lord's Supper is not a magical ritual. The will of God cannot be manipulated or dictated by our consumption of the elements of bread and wine. This assumption by Hinn is again dependent upon his faulty interpretation of Exodus 12 and Psalm 105:37, and therefore must be judged illegitimate.

Recently, Hinn further advocated the same teaching to Trinity Broadcasting Network viewers in reference to the fulfillment of a statement (which Hinn calls a "prophecy") by the late Kathryn Kuhlman, to the effect that there will be end-time services in which everyone will be healed. Hinn states that this prophecy will be fulfilled in his services:

"Now, we are going to see that happen. We *will* see that happen, Paul [Crouch]. Before Jesus comes back, I am going to see that happen. ... I have begun to pray...that God will heal all. And why not? ... **Exodus 12...when they all partook of the Passover...a people who came out of slavery *should* be healed in one glorious service before leaving Egypt.** God healed them all. ... Psalm 105:37."²⁰

Transubstantiation. Hinn has also aligned himself with a medieval superstition by promoting the Roman Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation. This doctrine teaches that the elements of communion are changed into the literal body and blood of Christ.

He informed a recent Trinity Broadcasting Network audience:

"God really gave me a revelation...that when we partake communion, it's not just communion, Paul [Crouch]. We are partaking Christ Jesus himself. He did not say, 'Take, eat, this *represents* my body.'

He said, 'This *is* my body, broken for you...' When you partake communion, you're partaking Christ, and that heals your body. When you partake Jesus how can you stay weak? ... sick? ... And so tonight, as we partake communion, we're not partaking bread. We're partaking what *He* said we would be partaking of: 'This is my *body*.'"²¹

Confession, Prosperity and Commanding God. Part and parcel with Hinn's teaching on the divine health of all Christians is his continued emphasis on the importance of positive confession as a means to obtain and keep one's healing.

In 1990, with reference to Proverbs 13:22, Hinn encouraged his studio and viewing audience to confess:

"Say after me, all of you, everybody say it, 'The wealth of the wicked is mine.' [The audience repeats.] One more time. [The audience repeats.] One more time. [The audience repeats.]"²²

Likewise, with regard to Numbers 14:28, Hinn offered this interpretation:

"'If you'll say it, I'll do it,' that's what God says. ... So when you confess it you are activating the supernatural force of God. Do you know that **confession activates heaven? Confession releases the spirit world.** I'm telling you. Do you know, Paul [Crouch], something? A witch told me ... 'As a witch I used to kill birds with words. ... There are three words they [witches] continually speak on your life and every Christian: poverty, death and sickness.' ... And then suddenly a scripture popped into my mind. ... 'No weapon formed against thee shall prosper,' —Isaiah 54— 'and every tongue that shall arise against thee in judgment thou shalt *condemn*.' ... I said to the Lord, 'Lord, how do I condemn?' He [God] said, 'With words.'... **And do you know what the Holy Spirit said to me? He said, 'If witches can speak death, you can speak life. If they can speak poverty, you can speak prosperity.'** **And the Spirit of the Lord said to me, He said, 'Words activate heaven.'** Jesus said, 'The words that I speak, they

are spirit; they are life.' When you speak, you speak spirit, you speak life. ... We confess tonight that we are blessed. We are prosperous."²³

The context of Numbers 14:28 is negative. God is actually judging the people for their ungodly murmuring. Hinn announces, "When you confess it you are activating the supernatural forces of God ... confession activates heaven ... releases the spirit world." Faith as an external force and human ability to manipulate the supernatural by words are beliefs common in pagan magic, but are entirely foreign to biblical faith.

The historical position of the orthodox Christian church has no place in its doctrine of revelation for theology to be informed by the faith or practice of those involved in the occult. Revelations, experiences, and practices of witches are of no consequence to the faith and life of a New Testament believer.

To think that the Holy Spirit would agree with revelation derived from the occult, and then use this revelation as a basis for further extrabiblical revelation, which in turn informs faith and practice, is blasphemous beyond words. This is another teaching which Hinn has never disavowed.

As much as Hinn would like to believe that we are of like nature with Christ, we are not Jesus. Our words are not "spirit and life." We are not "little gods" and do not speak with the same life-giving, creative authority with which He spoke. No amount of wishful thinking or exegetical gymnastics will place man above the status in which God placed him within the created order. He reserves this privilege for Himself alone. To usurp this privilege makes us not one in nature with God, but rather one in nature with the generation of the tower of Babel (Genesis 11:1-9) and Lucifer (Isaiah 14:12-15).

In more recent, post-reformation, broadcasts, Hinn again affirmed his continued belief in the doctrine of Confession:

"It is God's will to heal...but...we as believers must claim the promises.

... You take the Word and say, 'You said in Your Word,' and something happens. ... Healing is ours. It's a part of our inheritance. There is a place for violent faith. ... If we get that kind of faith, we're gonna see miracles. Sometimes it's not enough to say, 'Lord, heal me.' ... Sometimes it takes, it takes aggressive faith. The Bible says, 'The prayer of faith will save the sick.' Not just prayer, the prayer of *faith*. That prayer must be full of faith and power to bring salvation from that sickness. And sickness, Paul [Crouch], is limited death. Think about it. When a body is sick, that sick part is dying. That's limited death. God wants to give us life. 'I have come that they might have life and have it more abundantly.'"²⁴

"...violent faith. I think the time has come that we take what is ours aggressively. You see, God will not give you anything until you go after it *hard*. ... People are tired of hearing, 'Maybe.' They want to hear the positive. God will do it no matter what the devil does, no matter what the world says, no matter what the skeptic says. *God will do it!*"²⁵

"I believe it is not only God's will for you to be healed, but **it is His will that you live in health until He calls you home (see Job 5:26).** ... **I am not one who prays, 'If it be your will, Lord, grant healing to this person.'** **It is His will! You will never hear me pray such faith-destroying words as 'If it be Your will, Lord, heal them.'** God intends for you to rise and be healed. Today. Tomorrow. Always!"²⁶

These fresh proclamations are no different in substance than those made in his 1991 book, "**Rise & Be Healed!**":

"Ladies and gentlemen, saint of God, healing *is* the will of God for you. **Never, ever, ever go to the Lord and say, 'If it be thy will...'** **Don't allow such faith-destroying words to be spoken from your mouth. When you pray 'if it be your will, Lord,' faith will be destroyed. Doubt will billow up and flood your being. Be on guard**

against words like this which will rob you of your faith and drag you down in despair. It is His will. Jesus said, 'I will.'"²⁷

In 1993, Hinn approvingly recounts an incident in the life of heretic William Branham in which Branham began to demand his healing on the basis of Isaiah 45:11:

"Then he [Branham] said, 'Lord, if the Word is health to all *my* flesh, I will stand on Your Word that says "concerning the work of My hands, you command Me"' (Isa. 45:11). **The Lord did not say to 'ask,' He said 'command Me.'** And that is what Branham did. God promised it and the evangelist commanded Him to do it."²⁸

One of Hinn's recent discourses included the statement:

"You can tell God what you want. You just express your faith in what you want. ... You can tell God what you want."²⁹

Hinn lays down four "simple" laws which, if obeyed, "...you will live in health. **And when sickness comes, you'll command it to leave your body.**" On the basis of Exodus 15:26, the first of Hinn's conditions is *Heed*:

"You must 'hearken' to the voice of the Lord. In Hebrew, the word means both to 'hear and declare.' You must hear it, **speak it, and confess it.** The importance of this first step cannot be overlooked."³⁰

On the basis of Jeremiah 17:5, Hinn continues to believe and teach that healings, once obtained, may be lost as a result of lack of faith.

"The Lord not only wants you to receive your healing, He wants it to continue. Here are seven specific ways you can keep your healing. 1. *Trust in God.* 'Cursed is the man who trusts in man / And makes flesh his strength, / Whose heart departs from the LORD' (Jer. 17:5)."³¹

The thread of commonality which binds all these pronouncements together is Hinn's undaunted commitment to the doctrine of Positive Confession. It makes no difference to what length he has to go to make the

Scriptures say what he needs them to say. It matters not that he has to cite a known heretic to establish authority for his pronouncements.³² No leap of logic is too great for this mentality. Positive confession accentuates an unbiblical emphasis on works and results in unbiblical doctrines such as the possibility of "losing a healing."³³ Even the concept of the "Full Counsel of God" is run over roughshod (Matthew 26:39; James 4:3, 4, 15; I John 5:14, etc.) in every attempt to establish the theological agenda of the interpreter.

After numerous renunciations of the Prosperity Gospel, little seems to have changed with Hinn. In April 1994, he proclaimed:

"And now here's something wonderful. The Bible says in Genesis 26 that in the same year Isaac sowed, he reaped. The same year. **Well, God Almighty wants to give you that miracle the same year you sow for it.** Let's believe Him tonight for it. And really, it's according to your faith."³⁴

A New Twist on an Old Issue. In recent days, Hinn has appeared to tone down his flamboyant style and his doctrinal rhetoric, possibly because of his status as a newly ordained minister of the Assemblies of God. Perhaps this allegiance would finally put him on the road to reform. Then in February 1995 he announced:

"My friend, if you've had, hear this, if you've had a face-to-face encounter — *my, I feel the anointing under this!* — if you've had a face-to-face encounter with Christ Jesus, you *cannot* turn away from Him! You *can't* turn your back and live the old life again! *It's impossible!* Peter said, 'They have gone from us, for they were never a part of us. The dog has gone back to its vomit.' If you go back to the old life, I don't think you've ever met the Redeemer."³⁵

Many readers will not have a problem with Hinn's espousal of the doctrine of "Eternal Security." Numerous denominations hold this as a cardinal tenet of their belief system. These same religious bodies would, however, have a problem with the fact that Hinn has attributed I John 2:19 to Peter (espe-

cially since he claimed to be under the "anointing"). They, too, may have concerns about Hinn's citation of II Peter 2:22, since this has historically been used against the doctrine of Eternal Security (cf. the larger context of II Peter 2:20-22). More appropriate to support a belief in Eternal Security would have been a passage such as John 10:28-29 or 11:26.

What is even more significant is that Hinn recently signed a doctrinal statement in order to qualify for ordination with the Assemblies of God which singles out the doctrine of Eternal Security as a doctrine which **cannot** be believed by its ordained ministers. Indeed, all Pentecostals and most Charismatics (along with Methodists, Freewill Baptists, etc.) have rejected belief in Eternal Security *on the very basis of scriptures like II Peter 2:22!*

Conclusions

From a brief survey of the variety of the dates of the citations in this investigation, it should be abundantly clear to those who wish to know the truth that Hinn has not changed *any* of his teachings despite his many promises. If the premise of this study is correct, that the interpretive framework of any individual lies at the heart of his ministry, Hinn's inability to change his theological positions makes perfect sense. His theology *cannot* change until his interpretive practices come into line with those of historical orthodoxy.

Hinn has the cart in front of the horse. His agenda drives his hermeneutics. His need to produce novel interpretations, to establish his own credibility/authority, and to support his heterodox theological agenda is the motivating force which keeps his hermeneutics in a deplorable state. He is therefore trapped. His theology cannot change until he changes his interpretive approach, and he cannot change his interpretive approach because his theology is dependent upon it.

Hinn's popularity is a visible reminder of the poor spiritual health in which the Church finds itself today. That one man can create a "cult of personality," an elite priesthood which can pronounce authoritative interpretations binding upon thousands of believers is almost

inconceivable. Such popularity is a sad indication of the willingness of the majority to follow any authoritative voice which feeds the carnal craving of so many in the body of Christ for the "new."

His past explanations of heterodoxy as resulting from lack of formal training would appear to be a step in the right direction. His recent actions, however, such as his successful circumvention of the educational requirements for ordination in the Assemblies of God, indicate that his priorities lie elsewhere. Nevertheless, his observation is still legitimate, and should encourage clergy and laymen alike to develop a strong foundation in both theology and hermeneutics.

Finally, we must reject both the methods and the results of ministers whose track records indicate a cavalier regard for the Word of God (see II Corinthians 2:17; 4:2; II Timothy 2:15; II Peter 1:20, etc.). In order for the Church to enjoy a sustained, truly biblical revival, we must first return to the concepts of *Sola Scriptura*, "Scripture interprets Scripture," "the Priesthood of the Believer," and evidentially based interpretation. If we do, the blessings of God are sure to follow. As we exalt His Word above personalities, agendas, human emotion, personal experience, and opinion, God will also exalt us. If we do not heed the call to another Protestant Reformation, we are doomed to return to the spiritual darkness of the Middle Ages.

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Endnotes:

1. Audio tape made of a three-way telephone interview (9/3/91) involving Randy Frame, J. Rodman Williams, and Benny Hinn in preparation for Frame's article which appeared in the 10/28/91 issue of *Christianity Today*, "Best-selling Author Admits Mistakes, Vows Changes," pp. 44-45.
2. Benny Hinn, Signs & Wonders Conference, General Session, March 9, 1995. Video tape #95SWC52.
3. Benny Hinn, **Welcome, Holy Spirit**. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1995, pp. 57, 199.
4. Video vignette from the 1994 "Covenant Partners In Ministry Conference on the Holy Spirit" featured

on the Orlando Christian Center broadcast, Trinity Broadcasting Network, 2/20/95.

5. Benny Hinn, Orlando Christian Center broadcast, Trinity Broadcasting Network, 11/3/90.

6. Benny Hinn, Orlando Christian Center broadcast, Trinity Broadcasting Network, 6/13/93.

7. Benny Hinn, World Charismatic Conference, Cassette tape, 8/7/92.

8. Benny Hinn, "Rise and Be Healed!". Orlando: Celebration Publishers, 1991, pg. 64.

9. Benny Hinn, Praise-A-Thon, Trinity Broadcasting Network, April 1990. In a November 1990 version of this story, the Holy Spirit gave him different directions, and his address to this demon contained only the "blessings of God." See G. Richard Fisher, et al., *The Confusing World of Benny Hinn*, second edition, pp. 99-100 for a transcript of the alternate episode.

10. Praise-A-Thon, April 1990, op. cit.

11. Richard Mayhue, *The Healing Promise*. Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1994, pg. 33.

12. *Ibid.*, pp. 91, 102, 134, etc.

13. Praise-A-Thon, April 1990, op. cit.

14. Benny Hinn, *Praise The Lord Show*, Trinity Broadcasting Network, 12/6/94. This unbiblical doctrine has been repeated time and again by Hinn. See for example Benny Hinn's sermon of 12/9/90, op. cit. See also Stephen F. Cannon, *The Quarterly Journal*, "Good Morning, Holy Spirit - Benny Hinn and Revelation Knowledge," Vol. 11, No. 3, pp. 11-13.

15. *Luther's Works*, edited by Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehmann. 55 volumes. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1955-1986, 22:341-344).

16. See E.W. Kenyon, *New Creation Realities: A Revelation of Redemption*. Seattle: Kenyon's Gospel Publishing Society, 1964, pg. 44; Kenneth E. Hagin, *The Name of Jesus*. Tulsa: Kenneth Hagin Ministries, 1981, pg. 31; Frederick Price, "Identification, Number 3." Inglewood, CA: Ever Increasing Faith Ministries, 1980, tape FP545; Kenneth Copeland, "What Happened from the Cross to the Throne." Fort Worth: Kenneth Copeland Ministries, 1991, audiotape #02-0017.

17. *The Quarterly Journal*, Vol. 15, No. 2, pg. 21, endnote 29.

18. Benny Hinn, *Lord, I Need a Miracle*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1993, pp. 63, 64, and 67.

19. *Praise The Lord Show*, 12/6/94, op. cit. See also, Benny Hinn, *Praise The Lord Show*, Trinity Broadcasting Network, 1/24/95 where he expressed the same unbiblical concept. See further comments regarding Hinn's use of Exodus 12 and Psalm 105:37 (cf. Isaiah 63:13-14) in *The Quarterly Journal*, Vol. 15, No. 2, pg. 18.

20. Benny Hinn, *Praise The Lord Show*, Trinity Broadcasting Network, 12/27/94.

21. *Ibid.* See *The Quarterly Journal*, Vol. 15, No. 2, pg. 17 for additional comments.

22. Praise-A-Thon, April 1990, op. cit.

23. *Ibid.*

24. *Praise The Lord Show*, 12/6/94, op. cit.

25. Benny Hinn, Orlando Christian Center broadcast, Trinity Broadcasting Network, 9/26/94.

26. *Lord, I Need a Miracle*, op. cit., pg. 63. See also the *Praise The Lord Show*, 1/24/95 where Hinn expresses the same unbiblical concept.

27. "Rise and Be Healed!", op. cit., pg. 37.

28. *Lord, I Need a Miracle*, op. cit., pp. 74-75.

29. Benny Hinn, Praise-A-Thon, Trinity Broadcasting Network, April 1994.

30. *Ibid.*, pp. 72-73.

31. *Ibid.*, pg. 100.

32. Stanley Burgess and Gary McGee, Editors, *Dictionary Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*. Grand Rapids: Regency Reference Library, 1988, pp. 95-97; C. Douglas Weaver, *The Healer-Prophet, William Marrion Branham: A Study of the Prophetic in American Pentecostalism*. Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1987; and Stephen F. Cannon, *The Quarterly Journal*, "A Prophet Sent from God? Examining the Life and Claims of William M. Branham," Vol. 8, No. 4, pp. 1, 8-9.

33. See further, *The Healing Promise*. Mayhue proves conclusively that there is no healing in the biblical record which was subsequently reversed for any reason (pp. 34-35).

34. Praise-A-Thon, April 1994, op. cit.

35. Benny Hinn, Orlando Christian Center broadcast, Trinity Broadcasting Network, 2/20/95.

BLACK HOLE

(continued from page 4)

prove that the entire enterprise was a fraud!

Joseph's fertile mind went to work to try to devise a plan to overcome the problem of the missing pages. The Tanners thoroughly document the evolution of ideas that Joseph had until he arrived at the solution, the one that is generally accepted today.³

Large Plates and Small Plates

It seems that God foresaw that the first pages would indeed be stolen after they had been translated, so He prepared for that eventuality by inspiring the ancient prophets to engrave additional metal plates for Joseph to translate. All of this God made known to Joseph within *The Book of Mormon* itself and in a revelation that was included in another Mormon Scripture called *Doctrine and Covenants* (Section 10). *The Book of Mormon* records the events as:

"And now, as I have spoken concerning these plates, behold they are not the plates upon which I make a full account of the history of my people; for the plates upon which I

make a full account of my people I have given the name of Nephi; wherefore, they are called the plates of Nephi, after mine own name; and these plates also are called the plates of Nephi. Nevertheless, I have received a commandment of the Lord that I should make these plates, for the special purpose that there should be an account engraven of the ministry of my people. Upon the other plates should be engraven an account of the reign of the kings, and the wars and contentions of my people; wherefore these plates are for the more part of the ministry; and the other plates are for the more part of the reign of the kings and the wars and contentions of my people. Wherefore, the Lord hath commanded me to make these plates for a wise purpose in him, which purpose I know not. But the Lord knoweth all things from the beginning; wherefore, he prepareth a way to accomplish all his works among the children of men; for behold, he hath all power unto the fulfilling of all his words. And thus it is. Amen."⁴

So God had Nephi prepare two sets of engraved plates. One set that contained

a detailed history consisting of the "reign of kings, and the wars and contentions of my people," and another set that contained details of "the more part of the ministry" of the Nephite people. These two differently focused accounts were compiled for "a wise purpose" the whys of which were never revealed to Nephi.

Joseph Smith would have us believe that the reason was given to him in a revelation in the summer of 1828. According to *Doctrine and Covenants*:

"Now, behold, I say unto you, that because you have delivered up those writings which you had power given unto you to translate by the means of the Urim and Thummim, into the hands of a wicked man, you have lost them. ... And because you have delivered the writings into his hands, behold, wicked men have taken them from you. ... And, behold, Satan hath put it into their hearts to alter the words which you have caused to be written, or which you have translated, which have gone out of your hands. And behold, I say unto you, that because they have altered the words, they read contrary from that which you

translated and caused to be written; And, on this wise, the devil has sought to lay a cunning plan, that he may destroy this work; For he hath put into their hearts to do this that by lying they may say they have caught you in the words which you have pretended to translate. Verily, I say unto you, that I will not suffer that Satan shall accomplish his evil design in this thing. For behold, he has put it into their hearts to get thee to tempt the Lord thy God, in asking to translate it over again. They will say that you have lied and that you have pretended to translate, but that you contradicted yourself. ... And now, verily I say unto you, that an account of these things that you have written, which have gone out of your hands, is engraven upon the plates of Nephi; Yea, and you remember it was said in those writings that a more particular account was given of these things upon the plates of Nephi. And now, because the account which is engraven upon the plates of Nephi is more particular concerning the things which, in my wisdom, I would bring to the knowledge of the people in this account — Therefore, you shall translate the engravings which are on the plates of Nephi, down even till you come to the reign of king Benjamin, or until you come to that which you have translated, which you have retained; And behold, you shall publish it as a record of Nephi; and thus I will confound those who have altered my words. I will not suffer that they shall destroy my work; yea, I will show unto them that my wisdom is greater than the cunning of the devil. Behold, they have only got a part, or an abridgment of the account of Nephi. Behold, there are many things engraven upon the plates of Nephi which do throw greater views upon my gospel; therefore, it is wisdom in me that you should translate this first part of the engravings of Nephi, and send forth in this work. And, behold, all the remainder of this work does contain all those parts of my gospel which my holy prophets, yea, and also my disciples, desired in their prayers should come forth unto this people. And I said unto them, that it

should be granted unto them according to their faith in their prayers.”⁵

Looking at these two revelations we see the rationale for the current belief regarding the lost pages:

Joseph gives the pages to Martin Harris, a wicked man, who gives them up to other wicked men. Under the influence of Satan, they altered the original words in hopes of proving Joseph a fraud should he retranslate the missing pages. God foresaw that this would happen, so he caused Nephi to make a shorter, more spiritual, version of his people’s history. This was done so that Joseph could replace the record that would be stolen.

God then commands Joseph not to retranslate the large plates of Nephi, lest the altered version be brought forth. He is to translate the small plates and in so doing, thwart the wicked men.

It is in this portion of **The Book of Mormon** that the Tanners discover the “Black Hole.”

Warp Speed to the Black Hole

“It was during this period of intense research in the Book of Mormon that we began to question why the accounts of the wars in the latter portion of the book were given in such great detail, whereas the material replacing the lost 116 pages was so surprisingly sparse in details.

This question aroused our curiosity and we began to look at names, dates, cities, lands, directions, kings, etc. In all of these areas we found an abundance of material in the later books, but scarcely anything in material coming from the ‘small plates of Nephi.’ This discovery eventually led to the formulation of our theory that there is a black hole in the Book of Mormon:

1. The first portion of the Book of Mormon as it was originally written — i.e. the missing 116 pages — contained a great deal of information concerning history, wars, kings, names, dates and other matters which no longer appear in that part of the Book of Mormon, i.e. the books that cover the same period. This can be inferred from Nephi’s

own description of the contents of the larger plates. [See 1 Nephi 9:4 above.]

2. From the references cited above it seems very likely that the 116 missing pages contained many names of people, cities and lands. It probably had the names of many kings and the years in which they reigned. Since it was concerned with wars, it would undoubtedly mention the names of the prominent leaders who took part in important battles and when they occurred. The location of these battles would likely appear in the record. This would be entirely consistent with the latter portion of the Book of Mormon.

3. Since the first 116 pages of the Book of Mormon were lost and Joseph Smith did not have a copy, it would be almost impossible for him to reconstruct all the detail he had previously written concerning the ancient Nephites and Lamanites. He would undoubtedly make many mistakes with regard to names, cities, lands, kings, military leaders and battles. While the idea of having a second set of plates from which to translate released him from having to come up with the exact wording he had previously used, it did not free him from the possibility of making mistakes regarding names, dates, locations and other matters.

4. Because the first part of the Book of Mormon as it was originally written was supposed to contain ‘a full account of the history’ of Nephi’s people (1 Nephi 9:2), what Joseph dictated to replace the missing pages had to be as vague as possible. To avoid contradicting the 116 pages if they should appear, the new pages must be very indefinite regarding details. While these pages would have to cover the same period as the original pages and give some appearance of being history, they would actually be very obscure when it came to particulars that Joseph Smith could not clearly remember. Many important things, therefore, which had evaporated from Joseph Smith’s memory would also have to vanish into a ‘black hole’ in the Book of Mormon.

Joseph Smith apparently thought that some people might become suspicious that he was trying to sidestep the problem that confronted him. In an attempt to offset any criticism that he was evading the real history of the Nephites and Lamanites, Joseph had Jacob, the second author who wrote upon the 'small plates of Nephi', explain that Nephi had told him that he should 'write upon these plates a few of the things that I considered most precious; that I should not touch, save it were lightly, concerning the history of this people. ... he said that the history of his people should be engraven upon his other plates (Jacob 1:2-3).

The more material that Nephi and the other writers put in the plates concerning 'preaching,' 'revelation,' and 'prophesying,' the less history of the Nephites and Lamanites would be needed.

5. Our theory presupposes that it would be rather easy for Joseph Smith to have remembered the major details of the first part of the 116 missing pages. This portion relates to Lehi and his family leaving Jerusalem and coming to the New World. The names of the main characters would probably be indelibly written upon his memory. As he progressed with the story, however, the names and details would become increasingly difficult to remember. There seems to be some elements of the black hole beginning in the early chapters of the small plates of Nephi, but when Lehi and his children reach the New World (1 Nephi 18:23), the record becomes far more nebulous. The evidence for the black hole seems extremely strong from this chapter onward and continues until the book of Omni, verse 12 — the last book contained in the small plates of Nephi. The black hole, therefore, extends to page 141 of the 1981 edition of the Book of Mormon and obscures over four hundred years of the history of the Nephites and the Lamanites."⁶

As the Tanners cranked up the computer and started doing word searches on the various names, places, and

events, the paucity of details began to mount. The findings are astounding.

A Nameless People

While Joseph had no difficulty remembering the main characters of the small plates of Nephi as writing progressed, new characters became increasingly nameless. Besides the many Old Testament characters referred to by name in the 'black hole,' and even some New Testament ones (allegedly by prophecy), there are few new names given. In 1 Nephi 1:1, we are given the name, Nephi; Nephi's father Lehi appears in verse 5; Sariah (his mother) in 2:5; Nephi's elder brothers Laman, Lemuel and Sam are also named in that verse; his younger brothers Jacob and Joseph are mentioned in 18:7; a man named Laban is in 3:3 and his servant Zoram in 4:35; Ishmael appears in chapter 7; and three prophets Zenok, Zenos and Neum in chapter 19. After these identifications, names get pretty scarce. The Tanners write:

"Although Nephi could see far into the future and give the names of people who would live in New Testament Times, he seemed to have been oblivious to the names of most of the people that he lived with. For example, he did not mention the names of his brother's children: '...my father ...called the children of Laman, his sons and his daughters, and said unto them: Behold, my sons and my daughters of my first born ...after my father had made an end of speaking ...he caused the sons and daughters of Lemuel to be brought before him ... he spoke unto them saying: Behold, my sons and my daughters, who are the sons and the daughters of my second son... . ' (2 Nephi 4:3,8,9) The children of Ishmael also seemed to have no names: 'Laman and Lemuel and the two sons of Ishmael and their families, did rebel against us; yea, against me, Nephi, and Sam, and their father, Ishmael, and his wife, and his three other daughters.' (1 Nephi 7:6) It seems that Nephi was almost struggling to keep from giving them names: ...'one of the daughters of Ishmael, yea, and also her mother, and one of the sons of Ishmael, did plead with my

brethren, insomuch that they did soften their hearts ...' (1 Nephi 7:19)"⁷

Nameless Kings

Now, Nephi was the first king of the Nephite people. When, however, we come to the second king of that people, we begin to encounter the 'black hole.' When Jacob tells of his father's successor, no name is mentioned: "Now Nephi began to be old, and saw he must soon die; wherefore he anointed a man to be a king and ruler over his people now, according to the reigns of the kings" (Jacob 1:9). Jacob further informs us that the people "were desirous to retain in remembrance his (Nephi's) name." Therefore, "whoso should reign in his stead were called by the people, second Nephi, third Nephi, and so forth, according to the reigns of the kings; and thus they were called by the people, let them be of whatever name they would" (Jacob 1:11).

The Tanners write:

"In the 15th verse of the same chapter, Jacob informed his readers that 'the people of Nephi, under the reign of the second king, began to grow hard in their hearts...'. .

This terse reference to the second king is the last reference to any king for hundreds of years. It is only after we come out of the black hole (Omni, verse 12) that we encounter the name of another king: '...Mosiah, who was made king...'. This is the same Mosiah that was also a prophet. After speaking of king Mosiah, Amaleki goes on to mention a 'king Benjamin.'

The reader will remember that kings were supposed to be called 'second Nephi, third Nephi and so forth ... let them be of whatever name they would,' yet when we come out of the black hole, they are called Mosiah and Benjamin. This even puzzled the Mormon writer J.N. Washburn: 'Was Mosiah one of these kings? If so, why was he not called Nephi X or Nephi XI or whatever he would happen to be? ... Where, we must ask again, does Mosiah fit into all this? It appears most certain that he had been a king

in the land of Nephi. Why, then was he not called Nephi?' (**The Contents, Structure, and Authorship of the Book of Mormon**, pp. 24, 27).⁸

Nameless Places

The early section of 1 Nephi, which has the family of Lehi in the Holy Land, is fraught with geographical details. In the first chapter verse 4 we learn that Lehi lived in Jerusalem, and that Zedekiah was the king of Judah. In 4:4, Jerusalem is described as a walled city, and 5:13 identifies Jeremiah as a prophet during that time. 1 Nephi 16:14 mentions the place of Shazer and the Red Sea. Our researchers determined:

"As soon as Lehi's group land in the New World, however, serious problems in the account become evident. While the account of their sojourn in the Old World does have some details about their location, things are completely different in the New World. To begin with, the account of their landing is very vague. Instead of giving the details that we would expect, Nephi seemed evasive, 'And it came to pass that after we had sailed for the space of many days we did arrive at the promised land; and we went forth upon the land, and did pitch our tents; and we did call it the promised land' (1 Nephi 18:23). ...it should be noted that no date is given about when these people arrived. Moreover, there is no description about where they landed. It could be any place from Alaska to the tip of South America. In verse 25, Nephi gives very specific information concerning the animals that they found, but no information concerning the geography of the region. The same verse informs us that the people 'journeyed in the wilderness,' but there is nothing to indicate which direction they traveled in... .

There is, in fact, no use of the words north, south, east or west to locate any people or geographical place. The first statement to use directions was written by Amaleki, and appears in Omni verse 22... [after the black hole]. From that point on,

directions are again used freely ... For example, in Mosiah 7:16 we read of 'the hill which was north of Shilom,' in 9:14 of that same book, we read of the 'land of Nephi, away on the south of the land of Shilom...'. To emphasize how dark the black hole really is we only have to examine the book of Alma. In that book alone there are over 100 places where directions are used!⁹

"The LDS Church's computer program gives us some information concerning the use of the word 'city' in the Book of Mormon. It shows that in his two books, Nephi uses the words city 12 times. None of these references, however, relates to the New World. They are all Old World cities referred to by Nephi or in quotations from the prophet Isaiah of the Bible. The book of Jacob does not contain the word 'city' at all. Neither do the books of Enos, Jarom nor Omni. Even the Words of Mormon, which is inserted between Omni and Mosiah, does not have the word 'city' in it. When we reach the book of Mosiah we have a different story. The word 'city' appears 20 times, and in the book of Alma it is used 195 times! This, of course, provides a great deal of support for our black hole theory. Joseph Smith did not want to name cities in the portion of the record that replaced the missing 116 pages, but after he bypassed that portion, he felt free to use the names of many cities."¹⁰

"We decided to use the church's computer program to see if we could find anything in the small plates of Nephi that would help us establish some type of geographical or historical base for the story after Lehi's people reached the New World. We asked the computer to find the following words: shore, shores, sea, seashore, hill, hills, valley, valleys, river, rivers, mount, mountain, mountains, lake, border, borders, bordered, bordering, place and places. The search proved futile... . All the evidence indicates that there was a deliberate attempt to suppress any details that might contradict the 116 missing pages."¹¹

The Church Strikes Back!

Since the beginning of the Tanners' publishing career in 1959, the Mormon church has been officially silent concerning their work. An article in the February 1978, *Utah Holiday*, said, "The official attitude of the Mormon hierarchy toward the Tanners has been one of silence and apparent unconcern. They have, however, actively discouraged LDS scholars and intellectuals from jousting with the Tanners..."¹²

After the publication in 1990 of **Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon**, that official silence was broken. Beginning in 1991, the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (F.A.R.M.S), began publishing critical reviews of "Black Hole" in their periodical "Review of Books on the Book of Mormon." Between 1991 and 1993, this group of scholars based at the LDS-owned Brigham Young University wrote seven critical reviews of Tanner publications. Four were responses to "Black Hole," two tried to answer some aspects of their encyclopedic **Mormonism: Shadow or Reality?** and one was a rebuttal of **Archaeology and the Book of Mormon**.

BYU scholar Matthew Roper, in his review of **Mormonism: Shadow or Reality?** explains his reasons for breaking the silence: "There are several reasons why this book merits review. First, the Tanners are considered by their fellow critics to be among the foremost authorities on Mormonism and the Book of Mormon. Their arguments are central to most anti-Mormon attacks on the Book of Mormon today. One recent critic describes the book as 'the heavy-weight of all books on Mormonism.' Even some of the more sophisticated Book of Mormon critics will often repeat methodological errors exemplified in the Tanners' work."¹³

It seems that the Tanners have finally touched a nerve with the LDS church. Could it be that with the publication of "Black Hole," it has been determined that too many Mormon members have been negatively affected? It is indeed curious that publications deemed unmentionable for the last 30 years now merit review.

It also seems telling that shortly after the Tanners published their latest criticism of **The Book of Mormon**, there comes another major critical work on that book from inside the church. Former Mormon Missionary and church security employee Brent Lee Metcalfe edited a group of essays by Mormon scholars titled **New Approaches to the Book of Mormon** (Signature Press). These essays attempt to prove that **The Book of Mormon** is not of ancient origin, but is the product of a 19th-century mind. Many arguments of this volume enhance the Tanners' thesis. Just as with "Black Hole," F.A.R.M.S. has expended a great deal of energy ridiculing and attempting to disprove "New Approaches."

It could well be that the Achilles heel

of Mormonism has been exposed. There is certain to be much more written about the subject. The Tanners already have completed their first volume, **Answering Mormon Scholars**, and are at work on the second. Volume 1 shows just how weak the counterarguments of Mormon scholarship are.

Christians interested in the study of Mormonism, or those who have loved ones entrapped in that church would do well to acquaint themselves with the ongoing research into **The Book of Mormon**.

I can think of no better place to begin than with **Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon**.

Endnotes:

1. Jerald and Sandra Tanner, **Covering Up the**

- Black Hole in the Book of Mormon**, (Salt Lake City, Utah, published by the authors, 1990) pg. 13.
2. "Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith the Prophet," 1853, pp. 117, 118, 120-123, as quoted by the Tanners in **Covering Up**, pg. 9.
3. See **Covering Up**, pp. 41-47.
4. **The Book of Mormon**, 1 Nephi 9:2-6.
5. **Doctrine and Covenants**, Section 10:1, 8, 10-19, 30-31, 38-47.
6. Jerald and Sandra Tanner, **Answering Mormon Scholars, A Response to Criticism of the Book 'Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon'**, (Salt Lake City, Utah, Published by the authors, 1994) pp. 62-63
7. **Covering Up**, pg. 14.
8. **Answering Mormon Scholars**, pg. 74.
9. **Covering Up**, pp. 19-20.
10. *Ibid.*, pg. 20.
11. *Ibid.*, pg. 21.
12. **Answering Mormon Scholars**, pg. 1.
13. "Review of Books on the Book of Mormon," Vol. 4, 1992, pp. 169-170. Cited in **Answering Mormon Scholars**, pg. 2.



NEW WINE

(continued from page 1)

power to bind and loose and did not need to seek the approval of any elders or board. The WCG's founder was not reticent about the position he believed he held; he billed himself as God's apostle for this age and comparable to Peter.³

Among Armstrong's heresies (this list is not exhaustive): The claim that humans can become "very God," "just like Himself — Divine"; the accusation that the Trinity doctrine is a Satanic deception; the teaching that the Holy Spirit is an impersonal it — a force or energy like electricity; the belief that man is capable of contributing to his own salvation and must keep Old Testament laws to be saved; the doctrine that this is not the only day of salvation and that most will be saved; the assertion that the Gospel preached by orthodox Christianity is a "counterfeit gospel"; the belief that Jesus Christ did not rise bodily from dead; and the declaration that "the Church shall become co-saviors with Christ. ... co-saviors with him in saving the world."⁴

This heretic, then, is the man the WCG **today** looks to as its founder and claims was "a minister of Jesus Christ."

When Armstrong died in 1986, he was succeeded by Joseph W. Tkach. Some advisors told Tkach that certain of

Herbert Armstrong's teachings were so blatantly faulty that they were detrimental to the credibility of the church. It soon became routine to critically examine the teachings in all of Armstrong's booklets, most of which then received extensive rewrites or were completely removed from circulation.

Armstrong loyalists began defecting, and a majority of the membership felt great discomfort as their basic beliefs were altered. Most who stayed with the WCG did so only because they believed that is where God placed His government. True to cultic behavior, they followed their leader and believed what they were told without logical thinking or questioning.

Many WCG teachings are now similar to orthodoxy. But as Norman Geisler was quoted in the April-June 1995 *Quarterly Journal*, "You don't tell a counterfeit by the similarities, you tell a counterfeit by the differences" (from *More Last Words from the Apostle Paul*, cassette tape). Dangerous beliefs continue to show themselves in WCG literature.

"We Can Be Partakers of God's Own Divine Nature!"

Herbert W. Armstrong clearly and unmistakably taught that man's potential is to become God: "The sole value of human life lies in the human spirit and the potential of being begotten of

God, later to be born **very God**."⁵ And, "How could the **great God** ... reproduce **Himself** into multiplied **millions** of others **just like Himself** — Divine, supreme in power, perfect in character. ... the next chapter will reveal **how** God planned to carry out this incredibly **awesome** feat of **reproducing Himself**."⁶ After Armstrong's death, Joseph Tkach wrote the following:

"Even though some may have thought they knew what they meant when they said that 'we are to be **Gods**,' the term 'Gods' implies complete equality with God and a certain independence of being. That is definitely not the Church's teaching. ... The saints will be immortal children of God. It is accurate to say that the saints will be members of the household of God, the sons of God, on a God-plane relationship, members of the God kingdom. But we understand that we do not mean we will be **God** as God is God in all his attributes."⁷

Tkach's claim that man's "complete equality with God ... **God** as God is God," "is definitely not the Church's teaching" contradicts what every WCG member learned from Herbert Armstrong. Despite Tkach's assertion, this definitely was the WCG's teaching.

Not much more was written on the subject until recently when the WCG published its *God Is...* booklet.

After explaining that the Holy Spirit is God and that, as Christians, the Holy Spirit lives in us, this booklet takes a giant, illogical step and relates Colossians 2:9 to Christians:

“God revealed himself fully in Jesus Christ. ‘For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form’ (Colossians 2:9). What can this revelation mean to us? We can be partakers of God’s own divine nature!”⁸

In the King James Version of 2 Peter 1:4, we read that by God’s promises we “might be partakers of the divine nature.” But this must be properly understood; and it is not properly understood by relating this thought to Colossians 2:9, as the WCG has done here.

Colossians 2:9 describes the utterly unique position of Jesus Christ as fully God and fully man. It does not apply to Christians as partakers of the Divine nature.

The NIV Study Bible explains that 2 Peter 1:4 “Does not indicate that Christians become divine in any sense, but only that we are indwelt by God through his Holy Spirit Our humanity and his deity, as well as the human personality and the divine, remain distinct and separate.”⁹ The WCG’s confusing this concept with having all the fullness of the Deity in bodily form is dangerously close to Armstrong’s we will be “very God,” “just like Himself — Divine” teaching.

“Made God’s Son”

The WCG also has problems with its understanding of the Son of God. According to Armstrong, “At that pre-historic time of the first verse of John 1, the Word was not (yet) the Son of God. ... He was made God’s Son, through being begotten or sired by **God** and born of the virgin Mary.”¹⁰ Rather than withdrawing this error as a part of its teachings, the WCG has incorporated it into its *Statement of Beliefs of the Worldwide Church of God*: “During his earthly life, Jesus was the Son of God.”¹¹

But the Bible teaches that Jesus has eternally been the Son of God. It was through the Son that God made the universe (Hebrews 1:2); God sent the Person who was already His Son into

the world (John 3:16-17; Galatians 4:4; 1 John 4:10, 14; Romans 8:3); and Jesus prayed to the Father to glorify the Son with the glory he had before the world began (John 17:1-5).

This is important because if God made Jesus His Son only through Jesus’ human birth, the Son would be a creation of the Father. This gives rise to enormous theological implications that are clearly not supported by Scripture.

“We Do Not Believe The Doctrine of Original Sin”

The new WCG booklet, *What Is Salvation?*, states, “Sin entered the world in the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve sinned, and all their descendants have continued down the same path. In Romans, chapter 3, the apostle Paul explains that the human race is sinful.”¹²

Someone who knows little of the WCG might read those sentences and assume that the WCG believes in imputed sin and depravity. In a newspaper circulated only to members of the WCG, however, Joseph Tkach plainly states, “We do not believe the doctrine of original sin.”¹³ Although *What Is Salvation?* makes the WCG appear more orthodox, the WCG’s beliefs on this subject are apparently still those of its founder — that sinners are today neither saved nor lost; and that humans are not depraved (their natures utterly corrupted by sin) and unable to contribute to their salvation, but merely have their human nature tainted by the influence of Satan.

Legalism

One of the most outstanding characteristics of traditional WCG teaching is its legalism. Much of this has been softened since 1986, but its belief that justification is not by faith alone is still in evidence. Notice this statement in a post-Armstrong WCG booklet: “Some think all they have to do to become Christians is to accept Christ.”¹⁴ Obviously, the WCG thinks more is needed.

In its *Statement of Beliefs*, the WCG gives grace this definition: “Grace is the free, unmerited favor God bestows on a sinner who repents.”¹⁵ The WCG makes repentance a condition of grace. By making repentance come before grace, the WCG makes repentance a

human work and grace dependent on human merit. (In reality, it is by grace that God grants repentance, which is not a human work — Acts 11:18; Romans 2:4; 2 Corinthians 7:10; 2 Timothy 2:25.)

Merrill F. Unger writes, “Grace thus rules out all human merit. It requires only faith in the Savior. Any intermixture of human merit violates grace.”¹⁶

Since the WCG says repentance includes purposing “to forsake all sin and walk in all God’s commandments,”¹⁷ repentance, according to the WCG, becomes a sort of legal payment for grace. This is legalism.

It should not be surprising, therefore, to find injected into otherwise orthodox-sounding statements in the WCG’s *What Is Salvation?* assertions that our salvation is dependent on obedience.¹⁸ For example, this booklet teaches that Christians “are ‘partakers of the inheritance of the saints’ as long as they continue to trust and obey him.”¹⁹ But the scripture the WCG partly quotes here — Colossians 1:12 — says that it is the Father who qualified us to be “partakers of the inheritance of the saints.” Nothing is said of the human work of obedience. Works are the outgrowth of true faith and a vital part of a believer’s sanctification.

The WCG’s view of baptism as a work necessary for salvation serves as an example: “But it is we who must take up the challenge and walk the required steps to salvation. We must undergo repentance, baptism and spiritual rebirth through the Holy Spirit.”²⁰ To the WCG, there is no salvation (except in extreme, extenuating circumstances) without baptism: “So baptism is a vital part of the process of salvation.”²¹

The most encouraging step the WCG has taken in this area is its recently telling members that tithing and strict adherence to the seventh-day Sabbath and the Old Testament laws of clean and unclean meats are optional.²² But unless the problems mentioned above are completely corrected, the WCG must still be seen as legalistic. And, despite official changes, most members still feel duty bound to observe Old Testament commands with little regard for historical context. Once legalism is relied upon, it is difficult to root out

without feelings of guilt.

This Is Not the Only Day of Salvation

One of the most insidious of all WCG doctrines is the teaching that this is not the only day (period of time) of salvation.²³ The WCG continues to assert this doctrine as a part of its teaching that there are three resurrections.

The first is the resurrection of the saints at Christ's return. The second occurs at the end of the millennium:

"It is a time when those who died in ignorance will be given an opportunity to receive salvation. Ezekiel 16:53-55 makes this very plain. Those who died in their sins will be given their first opportunity to understand the truth of God and his way (Ezekiel 37). This is precisely the salvation that Jesus mentioned in his sermon on that great day of the Feast."²⁴

This is followed by a third resurrection when "the wicked — those who disobey — are seen perishing in the lake of fire."²⁵

These WCG doctrines of near universalism (nearly everyone will be saved) and annihilationism (those few who stubbornly rebel will be destroyed and not suffer in hell for eternity) tempt those deluded by them into complacency. Many who hear this teaching neglect the only hope of salvation for themselves and their loved ones. An after-death opportunity for sinners to be saved is certainly not supported by sound biblical exegesis and contradicts the teachings of orthodox Christianity.²⁶

Dodging Accountability

Joseph Tkach recently admitted, "I too used to teach things that Christ has now shown me are not accurate."²⁷ This statement and the apology and thanks to the Lord for forgiveness that followed it are some of the most encouraging words to ever come out of the WCG. This stops short of a full, genuine confession, however. Those teachings were far more than "not accurate." They were heresy.

I had my part in promoting the teachings of the WCG. But I would consider myself guilty of withholding the truth if I were to simply confess that

what I taught was merely "not accurate." Since all humans are fallible, everyone can confess to some degree of inaccuracy in what they say or write. I openly confess that — ignorance and well-meaning motives aside — I taught spiritually damaging heresies to unknown numbers of people. For teaching heresy, and not merely for inaccuracies, I have obtained God's forgiveness. Joseph Tkach has made no such confession.

While it has given the appearance of becoming more orthodox, the WCG has not confessed its sins, broken with its past, or publicly admitted that its founder was among the century's worst heretics. Instead, it has quietly changed a doctrine here and there. Almost always — although millions may have read the error in the WCG's popular literature — the correction has appeared only in internal publications. Literature has been quietly revised with no confession of the years of heretical teaching that preceded the revision.

Then, because it has continually quietly changed its literature, the WCG accuses reviewers of using "outdated materials." This accusation is a ruse the WCG has used for decades.

Suppose a scientist claims in a magazine read by millions that his calculations prove the earth will be gripped by a sudden ice age within months. This gives him enormous publicity, but when asked by scientists to account for his claims he states that he no longer teaches this. He acts offended that these scientists have used "outdated materials." As evidence, he cites a newsletter that he distributed to his friends last week in which he states that his calculations merely show there will be a cold winter in Minnesota.

Would the scientific world embrace such a person? Not likely. They would hold him accountable for making such wild claims, and they would question his integrity for not confessing his errors and withdrawing his claims in as public an arena as that in which he made the claims. They would, in fact, likely consider him a charlatan.

Likewise, if the WCG prints a heresy, that heresy is its teaching until **publicly** withdrawn and corrected. And the fact that it printed such a heresy at all

makes the document in which the heresy appeared valid evidence in any review of the WCG's treatment of the Bible. The WCG's defense of accusing its critics of using "outdated materials" is unacceptable and is an indication of cultic, rather than Christian, behavior.

Honesty, integrity, and accountability demand that Joseph Tkach — as publicly as possible — admit Herbert W. Armstrong taught heresy, that Armstrong was wrong to claim the WCG was the true church, that Armstrong ran the WCG as a cult, that the WCG was a false church, and that WCG teachings have damaged untold numbers of people.

In fact, full candor would lead to the admission that the orthodox Christianity Armstrong so vehemently condemned has been right all along. The WCG, if it is to continue at all, should then adopt a completely orthodox creed and abandon the hierarchical government that entrapped so many minds.

But this has not happened, and I am convinced that it is a mistake to accept the WCG as orthodox before such a complete confession is made. I am not saying this out of vengeance or a cold heart, but rather the opposite.

The members of the WCG are my friends. I went through college with them and worked with them. I ate with them, fasted with them, prayed with them. I rejoiced with them and mourned with them. I was one of them, and I pray for them continually.

No one wants to extend the hand of fellowship to them more than I. But this must be done on an individual basis as each, by the grace of God, sees his or her utter sinfulness and need to accept Jesus Christ alone as Savior. I believe some have already done so, but are hindered in their sanctification by warped WCG doctrines and old associations. As the apostle Paul saw his background in Judaism, all must see their life in the WCG as rubbish and count it as loss (Philippians 3). But they will be hindered in this if the WCG as an organization is prematurely accepted as orthodox.

Christians must not forget that the result of the WCG's efforts includes thousands of people crippled by legal-

ism, blinded from seeing God's love by fear and doubt, damaged in their hearts because they do not understand their sinfulness and depravity as members of the human race, infected with the deadly message that they or others need not be saved now because this is not the only day of salvation, deluded into believing their potential is to be on the same plane with God, and mentally confused by other senseless doctrines.

The WCG is a man-made organization, the brainchild of a heretic. It was not and is not a godly ministry.

Jesus Christ likened the religious world into which He came to an old wineskin unfit to hold the new wine He brought. He did not try to transform that old wineskin, but simply called those who were His out of it to be individually transformed by a renewing of their minds. The WCG is an old wineskin, stretched or conformed to Armstrongism.

While I will not limit what God can or might do, the best hope I see for its membership right now is to leave and attend a Bible-believing church rather than wait for their leaders to try to untangle the web spun by Herbert W. Armstrong. I have no doubt that Christian churches will warmly accept former WCG members — as I and my family have been accepted.

True repentance, including a complete restructuring of doctrine and practice, should be met by acceptance and help from the evangelical community. But such repentance by the organization as a whole has not appeared.

Until it confesses to its illegitimate history of cultism and heresy and to the

spiritual damage it has inflicted on countless adherents over the years, the WCG — changing a doctrine here and a practice there — will continue to be entangled in its own web, "always learning and never able to come to a knowledge of the truth" (2 Timothy 3:7).

Rather than being accepted as orthodox before it has demonstrated a full accountability, the WCG should — as with all cults — be kept in check by an orthodox Christianity that rises to its rightful and historical place as the moral and spiritual leader of western society by faithfully proclaiming the gospel, "the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes" (Romans 1:16).

Endnotes:

1. See news update item in this issue of *The Quarterly Journal*.
2. I am a graduate of Ambassador College and worked for the WCG for ten years in Pasadena as a Senior Correspondent in the Personal Correspondence Department and a contributing writer on the staff of *The Plain Truth*.
3. Herbert W. Armstrong, "How Christ Gives the Church Its Beliefs," *The Good News*, November 20, 1978, pp. 1, 14.
4. Throughout Herbert Armstrong's publications. For these and others of Armstrong's teachings, see particularly **Mystery of the Ages** (Pasadena, CA: Worldwide Church of God, 1985) and **The Incredible Human Potential** (Pasadena, CA: Worldwide Church of God, 1978).
5. **Mystery**, softcover edition, pg. 92.
6. **Incredible**, softcover edition, pg. 59.
7. Joseph W. Tkach, Personal from Joseph W. Tkach, *The Worldwide News*, August 5, 1991, pp. 1, 3.
8. *God Is...* (Pasadena, CA: Worldwide Church of God, 1993), pp. 31-32.
9. **The NIV Study Bible** (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1985), pg. 1899.
10. **Mystery**, pg. 34.
11. *Statement of Beliefs of the Worldwide Church of God* (Pasadena, CA: Worldwide Church of God, 1991), pg. 2.

12. *What Is Salvation?*, (Pasadena, CA: Worldwide Church of God, 1992), pg. 3.
13. Joseph W. Tkach, "How do you react to change?," *The Worldwide News*, July 22, 1991, pg. 4.
14. *Why You Should Be Baptized* (Pasadena, CA: Worldwide Church of God, 1991), pg. 5.
15. *Statement*, pg. 4.
16. Merrill F. Unger, **Unger's Bible Dictionary** (Chicago: Moody Bible Institute, 1966), s.v. "grace."
17. *Statement*, pg. 6.
18. *Salvation*, pp. 10, 12.
19. *Ibid.*, pg. 12.
20. "*He Is Risen...*" (Pasadena, CA: Worldwide Church of God, 1994), pg. 3.
21. *Baptized*, pg. 5.
22. Mark A. Kellner, "Move Toward Orthodoxy Causes Big Income Loss," *Christianity Today*, April 24, 1995, pg. 53.
23. Peter Ditzel, "Are They Condemned Because They Never Heard the Name of Christ?," *The Plain Truth*, October 1989, pp. 21-22. Ronald Kelly and Peter Ditzel, **The Millennium and Beyond** (Pasadena, CA: Worldwide Church of God, 1990), chapter five.
24. *God's Festivals and Holy Days* (Pasadena, CA: Worldwide Church of God, 1992), pg. 35.
25. *Ibid.*
26. Ezekiel 16 and 37 point to national restoration, not physical resurrection as taught by the WCG; the full context of 2 Corinthians 6:2 shows that Paul is writing with a sense of urgency concerning "now is the accepted time...now is the day of salvation"; Matthew 10:15; 11:20-24; and 12:40-42 say nothing of a time of future repentance and salvation, but of degrees in severity of punishment; Revelation 20:11-15 gives no hint of God offering these people salvation or of these people exercising saving faith. These people are called the dead because they are spiritually dead. Those whose names are not found already written in the book of life (checking the book is a formality of the judgment process and is further proof that the fate of these people was sealed when their normal, earthly life ended) are thrown into the lake of fire. The wicked do not go into unconscious oblivion, but suffer for eternity — despite the weight of other scriptures on the subject, the WCG has tried to split hairs over what "the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever" means in Revelation 14:11, while ignoring in the same verse the fact that "they have no rest day or night."
27. "Move Toward Orthodoxy," pg. 53.

EDITORIALS

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ing, "filling with the Spirit that is not maintained by persistent study of the Word of God will soon vanish. ... Anyone who wishes to obtain and maintain fullness of power in Christian life and service must constantly feed upon the Word of God" (**How to Obtain Fullness of Power**, pg. 18).

The use of sources in this way is misleading and wrong. It creates an illusion of credibility, respectability, endorsement and scholarship. The cults have been doing this for years. One of the greatest manipulators using this technique has

been the Jehovah's Witnesses. (See PFO Newsletter, Vol. 5, No. 1, "A Lie Grows in Brooklyn.") It is a cultic trend to appear to have support when there is no support.

Hinn, like many big-name "Christian" authors, has editors and ghost writers who produce his books. However, the buck still stops with Hinn. His name on the book's cover confers responsibility for its contents. Hinn and the creators of **Welcome, Holy Spirit** have promulgated a scholastic deception.

Christians should see through the misuse of sources, whether it is a so-called Christian author or a cult.

—GRF

crusade at the invitation of Pastor Fred Spring at Elim Pentecostal Tabernacle. Hinn said the meetings drew overflow crowds (“God moved mightily in that city,” pg. 231) and were covered by the secular media.

Joan Dorse, who handles the archives of Sault Ste. Marie’s only newspaper, *The Sault Star*, checked the records and found one small article about Hinn. However, that article appeared in 1977, during his third crusade in the city. Apparently the media were not paying much attention to his earlier campaigns. The events Hinn describes are neither recorded nor documented.

Hinn continues:

“I received a special invitation from the Reverend Mother of a Catholic Hospital in the area. She wanted me to conduct a service for the patients — along with three other Pentecostal preachers and seven Catholic priests. The chapel of the large hospital seated about 150” (pg. 231).

Hinn describes the chapel as being filled with chronically ill, bed and wheelchair patients, and doctors and nurses watching “from the balcony” with some being turned away because of limited space (pg. 231).

The hospital described is General Hospital, 941 Queen St. E. in Sault Ste. Marie. The only other hospital in town, Plummer Hospital, does not have a chapel that fits the description.

General Hospital has 182 beds. The picture being painted is that many of those patients were at that meeting if the 150-seat chapel was so full “that many could not attend because of the limited space” (pg. 231).

Hinn recounts that he took control that day and with anointing bottles in hand, ministers and priests were told to anoint and pray for everyone present. Hinn says one priest kept knocking down patients as he anointed them. Hinn adds that patients all over the chapel were being healed instantly (pp. 233-234).

At this point even Mother Superior got caught up in the excitement, according to Hinn:

“After the service in the chapel, the Reverend Mother asked, ‘Oh this is wonderful. Would you mind coming now and laying hands on all the patients in the rooms?’ ... More than fifty doctors, nurses, Pentecostal preachers, priests and nuns joined this ‘Miracle Invasion’ team as we headed for those hospital rooms” (pg. 234).

Hinn recounts that as they walked down the hall “you could feel God’s Spirit all over the building. Within a few minutes the hospital looked like it had been hit by an earthquake. People were under the power of the Holy Spirit up and down the hallways as well as in the rooms” (pg. 234).

Even the visitor’s lounge could not escape the power:

“We entered the lounge ... One by one, they fell under the power. In fact, as we began to pray for one gentleman who was smoking, he fell under the power with a lit cigarette still in his mouth” (pg. 235).

The full account in **Welcome, Holy Spirit**, is much more embellished and tops anything in the book of Acts or in the annals of Church History.

Something of this magnitude probably never would have been forgotten at Sault Ste. Marie (1977 population: 80,219) or General Hospital. How did it ever escape the attention of the news media? As described by Hinn, this could be the most incredible happening Canada had ever experienced. Many people could verify it. Yet there is neither anyone at the hospital who remembers it as Hinn tells it nor records to confirm facts clouded by faulty memories. The real story is neither extraordinary nor miraculous.

Our connection with the hospital got us the response, “Benny who?” Director of Community Relations for Sault Ste. Marie General Hospital, Lois C. Krause, instantly denied all that Hinn claimed. She said that it could not have happened in the way Hinn’s book describes. She laughed after reading a copy of the story. No miracles occurred in the hospital, as Hinn claims, she said, adding that “no patients left that day” due to miraculous occurrences.

Some older staff members did recall Hinn’s name, but did not remember anything as extraordinary as his book describes. They did not deny the possibility that chapel meetings were held, but did not recall the meeting as recounted in **Welcome, Holy Spirit**.

Mother Superior Mary Francis, of the Gray Sisters of the Immaculate Conception order, also disputed Hinn’s account. She affirmed that she did not invite Hinn, but reluctantly allowed his chapel service in deference to the Pastoral Care Department, which initiated the service.

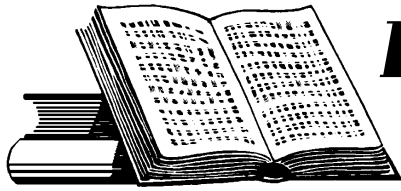
The hospital then released to PFO a statement, which included the following remarks:

“No such events have ever occurred at General Hospital. His pronouncement can neither be verified through the medical records nor by testimony from past or present personnel of this hospital. Mr. Hinn’s claims are outlandish and unwarranted.”

If pastors are to be “above reproach” (I Timothy 3:2), and Church leaders are to “have a good reputation with those outside the church” (I Timothy 3:7), then Hinn fails the test. He has fabricated another story for self-promotion and self-aggrandizement.

Distorting facts and reality is lying. Hinn continues to do so, which makes one wonder if he no longer knows what truth is. In both Middle Eastern culture and Word Faith doctrine, one can speak untruths to create facts. Hinn is a product of both. In the Western world, it will not work for very long. Reality always catches up.

—GRF



Books in Review

THE HEALING PROMISE

by Richard Mayhue

Harvest House Publishers, 288 pages, \$8.99

In the face of all the confusion and exploitation surrounding the subject of divine healing, more books like this need to be written and read.

Richard Mayhue, vice president and dean of The Master's Seminary in Sun Valley, Calif., has the background to address this weighty subject. In its subtitle, "Is it Always God's Will to Heal? Will He Heal Me?" the book poses questions that it sets about to answer.

"I am not writing to debunk every healer on the scene," says the author in the book's Preface. "Were that my intent, the book would be quickly outdated, since a new group will undoubtedly arise before long. Rather, I intend to develop a biblical model of healing by which we can test anyone who claims to heal — past, present, and future. With this approach we can minister biblical truth and protect Christians from the pain and anguish that come as a result of unbiblical teaching and practice. At the same time we can positively and correctly understand God's healing promises in the Scripture." He succeeds admirably in his purpose.

While giving an overview of all that the Bible teaches about healing Mayhue also names some prominent "healers" and takes exception to many of their tactics calling them "illusions."

Chapters three and four, "Are Faith Healers for Real?" and "Understanding Reported Healings," are especially helpful. The chapter, "What about Faith, Prayer, and Doctors?," is equally insightful and based solidly in Scripture. His "final word" ("Your Healing Ministry," pp. 261-265) is very practical.

Mayhue is to be commended for cutting a straight biblical course through a very misunderstood and controversial subject. Hopefully this book will get a wide reading.

—GRF

NO LAUGHING MATTER

by Larry Thomas

Double Crown Publishing, 159 pages, \$7.99

Holy Ghost bartenders, designated drivers for those too intoxicated from church services, and Holy Ghost hangovers are but a few of the fruits being flaunted within "laughing revival." **No Laughing Matter** issues a strong warning and delivers a biblical analysis of this so-called "revival." The movement has gained momentum and widespread acceptance in the United States, Canada, Europe, and other parts of the world. Its impact has not

been limited to Pentecostal/charismatic circles, but has pollinated into evangelical denominations.

Thomas tracks the history of the movement, not only in its modern heritage from Rodney Howard-Browne into the Vineyard churches, but as an offspring of the heretical Latter Rain movement of the 1940s. Thomas shows the modern day "revival" to be lacking scriptural design and how the movement is marked by inadequate attention of sin and man's need of the saving work of Christ. As he notes on page 98, "The push for evangelism is quenched, according to Airport Vineyard pastor John Arnott, by God. Whenever, he tries to preach salvation messages, Arnott claims, the Lord checks him. He says God told him, 'You are pushing Me. Just let me love My people.'"

Thomas, by virtue of his Pentecostal background, is immune from criticism that his book is merely the work of someone who doesn't understand the Pentecostal mind set.

Appendices to the book examine the phenomenon of being "slain in the spirit" and the "touch not the Lord's anointed" defense against accountability.

As the "laughing revival" grows more contagious, the discerning Christian needs to know of Thomas' work on these subjects, which shows that the road to spiritual maturity and a godly life does not take a short cut through Toronto or Lakeland, Fla.

—MKG

SOLVING THE MYSTERY OF THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS

by Edward M. Cook

Zondervan Publishing, 191 pages, \$12.99

This has to be the finest book around on the Dead Sea Scrolls. It could be subtitled "Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About the Scrolls, the Scroll Controversy and the Key Players." It reads like a who's who of major figures since the scrolls' discovery in 1947 and cuts through and explains the ups and downs of scroll research.

Edward Cook, a Ph.D. from UCLA and specialist in Aramaic and Hebrew, is acquainted personally with many of the major players in scroll research. He gives personal insights and also debunks the conspiracy theories about the scrolls.

Though scholarly and well-documented, this book is not a difficult read. What makes it appealing is that it is fact-filled but not heavy. For the introductory student or the more advanced who want a lot of inside information this is the book.

A synopsis of the book's intent is found on page 10: "Finally, the story of the Scrolls and their discovery is a narrative rich in excitement and mystery, with the best and worst of human nature on display. I have tried to update that story in brief compass as impartially as possible."

This little volume was an enjoyable adventure. If you could have only one volume on the topic, this would be the one. History, key figures, color, myth-debunking, explaining controversies, exploding conspiracies — this book succeeds.

—GRF

Editor's Note: The publications featured in our **Books in Review** section are available from Personal Freedom Outreach (P.O. Box 26062, Saint Louis, Missouri 63136). Please add \$1.50 to the price listed to cover postal costs. These publications are also available to those who help to financially support the work of PFO. Please see our funds appeal flyer for details.