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# Still Wide the Divide

## A Critical Analysis of a Mormon and an Evangelical in Dialogue

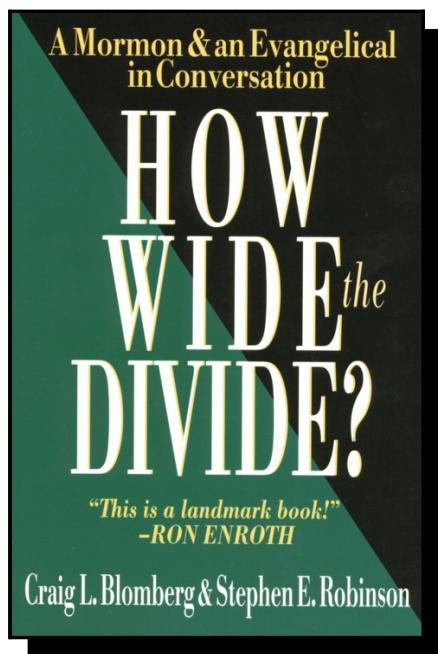
by Stephen F. Cannon

During the past two decades The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has gained great success in its portrayal as just another "Christian church down the street." The emphasis on terms such as "Mormons" and "Latter-day Saints" is being lessened, while the "Jesus Christ" within the sect's name is stressed. Modern television campaigns are even including the opportunity to call a toll-free number to receive a free Bible (rather than a *Book of Mormon*) from the church. The barriers that once separated this group from Orthodoxy have steadily eroded.

### Can We Talk?

I think most of us would agree that when two groups of people have discord over virtually any subject, meaningful dialogue will go far to bring resolution to the disagreement.

"Let's sit down and talk about it and maybe we will find out that we're not as far apart on the issues as we thought. ... Let's dialogue ...



talk it through ... define our terms ... come to a meeting of the minds."

These are but a few of the many current popular phrases that are invoked.

And surprisingly it very often works. When we take time to communicate clearly, disputes seem to be resolved with greater dispatch. And even when differences still remain, civilized dialogue make us feel better about ourselves and those with whom we disagree.

"We've cleared up some misunderstandings ... gotten beyond the rhetoric ... clarified some silly semantics ... and even though we still disagree on some issues, we're not as far apart as we thought."

Because of this, when Evangelical publishing house InterVarsity Press produces a book of conversation between an Evangelical (Dr. Craig L. Blomberg, Professor of New Testament at Denver Seminary) and a Mormon (Dr. Stephen E. Robinson, Professor of Ancient Scripture at Brigham Young University), hopes are raised that meaningful dialogue is contained therein.

While there certainly is meaningful and sometimes surprisingly candid dialogue between the conversationalists in this book, there are some over-arching questions that must be answered before

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# Editorials

## BROWNSVILLE PASTOR CONFIRMS NON-PROPHET STATUS

On April 6, Pastor John Kilpatrick of Brownsville Assembly of God Church in Pensacola, Fla., asked his congregation to "pardon me for being beside myself." He said his passion resulted from receiving "a word from the Lord" the previous night, which he would share with the congregation. He informed them that, "And the Lord said, 'I want you to go before My people and I want you to tell them something.' He said, 'Even in regard to what you're upset about and worried about.'"

Kilpatrick had been angered by comments made by Christian Research Institute president Hank Hanegraaff on CNN's *Larry King Live*, where the Southern California apologist said those attending the Pensacola meetings were being worked into altered states of consciousness. Kilpatrick responded by denouncing Hanegraaff before his faithful: "I'm going to prophesy to you that if you don't [stop criticizing the Brownsville Revival] ... within 90 days the Holy Ghost will bring you down."

Both the Christian (including Pentecostal and non-Pentecostal alike) and the secular media reported on the dispute and Kilpatrick's prophetic warfare. The revelation of Hanegraaff's demise was an issue that even caught the eye of the General Council of the Assemblies of God in Springfield, Mo., whose leader stated "very clearly we have been monitoring" the situation.

Following Kilpatrick's declaration, PFO addressed letters to both the Brownsville Assembly and the denominational headquarters inquiring what would the response to Kilpatrick's failed prophecy be when Hanegraaff, his ministry and his criticisms of the Brownsville spectacle continued

unabated on July 5, the day following the 90-day deadline. Would disciplinary action be taken against Kilpatrick by his church board and/or the leadership of his denomination? Claiming a "word" or "prophecy" from the Lord is a serious matter and should be judged in a likewise solemn manner (1 Corinthians 14:29).

Brownsville's resident theologian, Dr. Michael L. Brown told PFO, "We take prophecy seriously." And then offered this rebuke to director G. Richard Fisher who asked what would be done when the prediction failed: "Your presumption ('when' instead of 'if') is surprising. We will address things if Hank (not CRI) is fully in business after July 5th" (parenthesis and underline in original). As it turned out they had to address things before July 5th and Fisher's inquiry proved to be valid.

The General Superintendent of the Assemblies, Thomas E. Trask, replied in a letter that, "It was unfortunate that Pastor Kilpatrick made the statement relative to the matter of Hank Hanegraaff. I have talked with pastor on this and it would have been better had he not made any statement. ... John Kilpatrick doesn't have to be the mouthpiece for God." However, Trask avoided any remarks that disciplinary action would or would not be initiated against the pastor when the prophecy failed and Kilpatrick was proven to be a false prophet.

The media attention, letters from other apologetic ministries to both Pensacola and Springfield, and almost daily exposure on Hanegraaff's daily radio broadcast all combined to keep the prophetic declaration of Kilpatrick alive. The pressure was on. Would Hanegraaff and his ministry be brought down by the Holy Spirit or would Kilpatrick be proven a false prophet?

Measures were implemented to lessen the fallout of the  
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# News Updates

## DESPITE OPPOSITION MORMONS BREAK GROUND IN BOSTON

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, undaunted by the threat of a lawsuit, has begun construction on its \$30 million Boston Temple. The Mormon edifice is being built in the city of Belmont, which limits the height of structures in residential neighborhoods to 67.5 feet. A 139-foot steeple is at issue.

Originally, the Mormon church planned to build a three-story, 94,100-square-foot building with six spires, but scaled back to the current plan. The temple will be built on an 8.9-acre tract next to a current stake house or church. The formal ground breaking ceremony, with leaders from Salt Lake City, was held June 13.

In April, a zoning permit was issued by the city allowing the building to be built under its current design with the 139-foot steeple intact. However, in May, six residents filed a lawsuit in Middlesex Superior Court, "contending that the town violated its own special permitting authority and misapplied a special exemption for churches to the project."

According to a report in *The Boston Globe*, Grant Bennett, bishop of the local LDS congregation, believes a judge will ultimately side in favor of the LDS church. "We plan to build the building without the spire, but expect to add it as designed once the appeals process has concluded," he said.

John Forster, a resident opposing the temple, said the Mormons' action is "a tactic of intimidation and an attempt to change the momentum in their favor."

"We expected this might happen, even though they kept telling us they were negotiating with us as good neighbors, because this is how they got their meeting house built over the town's objections 20 years ago. In that instance, even though they were denied a parking lot permit, they built their structure and then sued the state successfully for the parking lot," Forster added.

The temple, when completed, will accommodate LDS church members from Southern Canada and New England.

—MKG

## NEGATIVE DAY FOR POSITIVE THINKER

The Rev. Robert Schuller was questioned by FBI agents for five hours about allegations that he physically assaulted a flight attendant. All other passengers in the plane's first-class section also were detained for questioning. According to an Associated Press story, Schuller "roughed up" a United Airlines flight attendant after he refused to hang up the

televangelist's garment bag and then later refused to serve him fruit without cheese.

Schuller, who gained fame as a "positive thinking" preacher, was traveling to New York City, on the June 28 cross-country flight to speak at the memorial service of Betty Shabazz, the widow of Malcolm X.

Schuller denied assaulting the flight attendant, but admitted that he might have touched him. "I'm very proud of who I am. I am innocent. I have not broken a single one of the Ten Commandments. I have not broken any of the teachings of Jesus Christ, and so I'm proud of my faith and message," Schuller said at a July 1 news conference after the incident.

An airline representative said Schuller "made physical contact with the flight attendant and the flight attendant was injured." The attendant went on medical leave following the episode claiming physical pain consistent with whiplash.

Schuller indicated that he was making attempts for reconciliation with the man. In August, the Crystal Cathedral pastor pleaded not guilty to a count of misdemeanor assault, but then read an apology in court and agreed to pay a \$1,100 fine and undergo a six-month diversion program.

—MKG

## DENNIS RODMAN FINED FOR INSULTING MORMONS

Chicago Bulls basketball star Dennis Rodman has received the largest fine in the history of the National Basketball Association for his disparaging comments about followers of the Mormon religion. Rodman's remarks, and the subsequent fine, came in June as the Bulls played the Utah Jazz in the NBA championship finals.

Following a road loss by the Bulls to the Salt Lake City-based Jazz, Rodman said, "It's difficult to get in sync because of all the (expletive deleted) Mormons out here. And you can quote me on that." He said his remarks were brought on by Jazz fans who were making obscene gestures at him. According to an Evangelical Press report, the controversial basketball player had made lewd comments about Mormons on two other occasions.

Rodman later apologized, claiming, "If I knew it was like a religious-type deal, I would have never said it. I'm sorry about that." Bulls coach Phil Jackson also tried to rationalize Rodman's remarks by stating, "To Dennis, a Mormon may just be a nickname for people from Utah. He may not even know it's a religious cult or sect or whatever."

—MKG

# THE INTOXICATING SPELL OF RODNEY HOWARD-BROWNE



## An Eye-Witness Report on the Canadian Escapades of the “Holy Ghost Bartender”

by Yves Brault

In this day and age as frantic spiritual manifestations attract the masses, becoming wilder as present-day religious leaders continually offer greater spiritual and physical benefits to their flock, an ever-increasing disregard for biblical principles and doctrines pervades the Church while many call these days the greatest revival we have ever known.

While the gifts of the Spirit are greatly emphasized, the fruit is rarely even mentioned. The word “anointed” has become the religious sales pitch of the nineties. There are anointed preachers, anointed singers, anointed messages, anointed praise-a-thons. Everything seems to be anointed – with a catch. True, we “have an anointing from the Holy One,” and “we have received an anointing which abides in us” (1 John 2:20, 27), but the meaning often carries a sense of “getting” it by attending some special kind of meeting and giving a certain sum of money in return.

The phenomenon of being “slain in the Spirit” has become commonplace, particularly in well-orchestrated demonstrations of laying on of hands that include a “catcher” behind the one being prayed over. Of course, that person is well aware that the catcher will gently deposit him on the floor. This sense of safety is essential. I myself, volunteered on a regular basis in those sessions. It always bothered me to see the abuse of the practice. It becomes a show where the preacher lays flat a follower as the gladiator of old would overcome a captive. Many

times you can hear an “ouch” as the individual hits somebody or the floor too hard. Or you can see those on the floor waving their hands or positioning themselves more comfortably. If they’re conscious enough to feel pain or move their body, they’re conscious enough to remain standing.

The laughing phenomenon has had a phenomenal impact since the early nineties. It is characterized by uncontrollable laughter and is often accompanied by body jerking, convulsions, spinning, or in other cases catalepsy, or even slumber. Interestingly, the Bible doesn’t mention these phenomena as being a norm for Christian living. Laughter and joy are discussed aplenty, but no ecstatic physical contortions of this nature is said to manifest an inward feeling of joy.

One may argue that such effects will not hurt, that although there might be some abuse caused by excess zeal from the part of the followers or lack of control from the part of the leaders, as a whole the Church can only benefit from this laughter revival. But ultimately any doctrine or action that has no basis in the Bible should raise concern. If it’s not found in the Bible, where does it come from? In this case, if the source is not the Holy Spirit, there are only two options left: the flesh, and darkness.

A number of believers blame the devil or demons for causing wild physical demonstrations.

While it is true in some cases, the main agents are manipulative techniques that stimulate the flesh, or carnal nature, whose works are contrary to the Spirit. Several works of the flesh are listed in Galatians 5:19-21. They are in sharp contrast with the fruit of the Spirit. Paul also tells us not to partake with those whose practices are not fitting for the saints (Ephesians 5:3-7), and admonished us “not to have any fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them” (vv. 8-11).

One has to realize that hysterical laughter, twitching, uncontrollable body spasms and the like occur in metaphysical pagan and other non-Christian groups. The manipulative technique “mesmerism” defined as the capacity to raise the emotional state of an individual or a crowd by different means, to an abnormal but controllable intensity, frequently causes faintings, convulsive movements, immoderate laughter, piercing cries, slumber, and so forth. Sometimes this technique is even used in the name of God, that is, disguised with Christian terminology. We could even say that we’re experiencing a revival of this technique. This is mainly due to an overemphasis on “signs and wonders,” an obsession with sensational experiences, and a disregard for true Christian doctrines, character and living.

I have witnessed the use of numerous manipulative and deceptive methods by popular religious leaders. This was  
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# Benny Hinn's Move Into Necromancy

## Faith Healer Claims Contact with the Dead Foretells New Direction for His Ministry

by G. Richard Fisher  
with M. Kurt Goedelman

The Disney Corporation in Orlando, Fla., is always coming up with new theme parks and new attractions with which to captivate and draw in tourists. Disney has to get not only new customers but repeat customers to survive. The world of televangelism appears almost the same.

To keep the gears of the ministry well-lubricated with the donations and gifts of the faithful, it seems nearly every month there has to be a new attraction, a new "prophecy," a new "word from the Lord" or some new sovereign act of God. These claims and revelations serve to hold onto a floating, thrill seeking, quickly dissatisfied Charismatic population.

### Easily Dissatisfied

The superstars of televangelism overpromise to an audience they know is fickle and has a short attention and commitment span. What is popular this month may not be next month. What's hot and what's not depends on the creativity of the man and his organization. Rising fortunes and empires can begin to dwindle if new "power" centers or new spiritual "power brokers" offer a new and more exciting ride, attraction or innovation. *Charisma* magazine and the Trinity Broadcasting Network (TBN) are the main marketplaces for the wild, weird and bizarre world of Charismania.

So what does Benny Hinn have to offer? As repeatedly documented in PFO's *The Confusing World of Benny Hinn*, the Orlando-based faith healer

has spawned many a new vision, a new testimony, a new claim, a new gimmick, a new cure-all, and a new twist on an old "deliverance" scheme over the past several years.

In all, the world of televangelism really has become as unrestrained as professional wrestling with Hinn being crowned as the current "reigning champ." False prophecies, heretical doctrines, spurious healings, an exorbitant lifestyle and fabricated personal historical accounts have not been able to dethrone Hinn as the leading guru of Charismatics.

In the mid-1990s, Hinn sought donations from those attending his crusades and from the viewers of his daily telecasts to go head-to-head on cable and television networks featuring psychic hot lines. The donations he received would permit his evangelistic efforts to reduce the spread and success of occultism being broadcast into homes. Yet today, these psychic hot lines are bigger and more intense than ever and Hinn has become a fellow traveler in the world of the occult.

### Kathryn Kuhlman Returns

Hinn has long been infatuated with the late faith healer, Kathryn Kuhlman. His books and sermons are replete with the impact she supposedly made on his life and ministry. Now, Hinn has her as a female spirit guide. And with this claim, he is introducing a deadly spirit-

ist virus to his followers.

Hinn recently claimed that he was shown the future of his ministry from Kuhlman and Jesus in what he described as a "vision of the night." This revelation undoubtedly will electrify the bulk of his following. But perhaps, for some, they may now view Hinn as having crossed the line into dark and dangerous territory. This may be a ride that sounds the alarm and wakes them up to Hinn's pragmatic unorthodoxy and false teaching.

His account of this alleged vision was delivered to those attending a recent "Partner Conference" in Atlanta and to those viewing the June 11, 1997 installment of his daily *This Is Your Day* program.

On the broadcast, he stated:

"Ladies and gentlemen, I'm going to tell you something right now. The Lord showed me a vision about — goodness it's almost been a year now. And I—I—I—I can tell you I sense now the time has come when this vision is gonna be fulfilled. I had a vision of the night. What I saw, myself walk into a room. I've shared this before but just in case you — you've not heard it I want you to hear it. I saw myself walk into a room and there stood Kathryn Kuhlman. And I've not seen Kathryn in a dream or a vision [in] years. Uh, when she died, the day she died, the morning she died, I had a dream what I — what I saw in a — in a — in a — in a casket with

a white dress. And when I woke up in — in the morning, I knew she had died and it was on the news that same morning. And so it's been many years. And there she was standing in this room and she said to me—of course this was a dream, but really more of a vision. A lot of times dreams are really visions of the night, and the Bible calls them that. When — when God gives to you in the fashion it really came with me. When I was a little boy, I saw the Lord in this dream. It was really so real, it was really a vision because when — when he appeared to me my body became electric just like electricity went through me and when I awoke that electricity was still on my body.”<sup>1</sup>

Hinn goes on recounting his “vision”:

“Well, anyway, in this one, in this vision that—that I saw—saw Miss Kuhlman. And she said, ‘Follow me.’ That’s all she said. And I followed her to a second room. In that second room stood the Lord. When the Lord, uh—when—when I saw the Lord, Kathryn disappeared. She was just gone [Hinn snaps fingers]. And now the Lord looked at me and said, ‘Follow me.’ And I followed him to a third room. In the third room sat a gentleman — I still remember his face. I can tell you, I still remember the man’s face. And the man sat in this wheelchair in that third room. There was a big hole in his neck. A tube down his throat. He was crippled on that wheelchair. And he had tubes down his body. Totally crippled, totally para—totally, of course, paralyzed. The Lord laid his hands on this man and as he did the tubes disappeared, the hole closed, he was completely healed and got up off the wheelchair. It was a creative miracle. Now I’m standing watching the Lord in this vision heal this man. And now as the man was healed, the Lord looked at me with piercing eyes — I’ll not forget that one I’ll tell you. Looked at me with piercing eyes and said, ‘Do it!’ And the [Hinn snaps fingers] — and the dream and the vision came to an end.”<sup>2</sup>

Hinn next interprets the “vision” for his faithful:

“When I woke, when I got up, when I came out of the vision, I was trembling and perspiring from head to toes. I know exactly what that vision means. It was Kathryn Kuhlman who took me, who introduced me to the Holy Spirit. That is the meaning of that first room when she said, ‘Follow me.’ But when Kathryn was gone, Jesus was there. Kathryn did her job and was gone and the Lord said, ‘Follow me’ into a third room. And there was this man. I believe I’m about to enter that third room. [Audience applause.] I’m telling you I feel it. I sense it. I believe that room speaks of a dimension, a new dimension in the Spirit. I believe I’ve been in that second room now for the last seven years. What is amazing to me, what’s amazing to me is God works or has worked in my life in seven year cycles. I’m now in the seventh year — beginning the eighth of the ministry of these crusades. 1990 we started — March. This is what? ‘97. And just now I feel another platform, another dimension, another level is really coming. Well, saints, you’re going to be a part of it. God—God has sent you as partners to be a part of it. So how many are ready to see greater things for the glory of God?”<sup>3</sup>

Hinn’s description is somewhat confusing and at one point he says the apparition “was a dream.” And, if left at that, would be less of a concern. However, he qualifies the nature of the “dream” by claiming it was “really more of a vision.” In fact he uses the word “vision” ten times to describe the experience. Moreover, he is using this event as a mystical prescription from the other side. This apparition, Hinn says, declares and describes what is to become the new by-product of his ministry. It moves him to a claimed oracle from Jesus of new “creative miracles” — a higher level of signs and wonders. He is using it to solicit support from his followers. And as such, must be considered and examined in a serious and biblical manner.

### Hinn’s “Mount of Transfiguration”

A few months earlier, Hinn lured the audience at his Honolulu Crusade with his revelations of not only Kuhlman but the Old Testament prophet Elijah.<sup>4</sup> “I

have not just seen angels, I’ve seen saints,” he announced. His narrative there being even more brazenly spiritistic:

“You may have a problem with this, but I don’t honestly care. I’ve walked in [the supernatural] world. I’ve seen things you would never be able to understand, unless you were in it. *I’ve had individuals appear to me in my room.* Not only angels. I’ve seen sights in prayer. Incredible sights!”<sup>5</sup>

What were the “incredible sights” Hinn had “seen”? He detailed for his faithful one powerful encounter:

“Can I tell you something? I’ve never shared this. Never! I was in prayer one day and a man appeared in front of me. Happened for two days in a row, twice one day and the next day. The same man appeared. I’ve never told this, never. ... This is recently, I’m not talking about a long time ago. He was about six feet two. Old man. Had a beard. ... Glistening white beard. His face was somewhat thin, but very bold! Eyes — crystal blue. He had on a white garment, whiter than my shirt could ever get. On his head was a shawl, like a — like a covering. He looked like a priest. Every part of him glistened like crystal. And I spoke out and I said, ‘Lord, who is this man I see?’ I know you may — you may think I lost my mind, but the Lord said, ‘Elijah the prophet!’”<sup>6</sup>

Hinn next brought Kuhlman into the performance:

“Seven and half years ago, just before the ministry started, before these crusades began, suddenly in front of me I saw a group of people. I couldn’t even tell you who they were. I recognized only one of them. It was Miss Kuhlman. And every one of them seemed to be urging me to pray. Now I know this sounds crazy, but it’s all right. I don’t mind crazy because I liked what I saw.”<sup>7</sup>

The purpose of Kuhlman’s and the saintly host’s visitation is then explained by Hinn:

“At least fifty to seventy of them sitting in a group, and they were saying to me, ‘Pray! Ask God to

give you a healing ministry that will touch the world!’ And suddenly I heard Kathryn’s voice, and suddenly there she was — it’s crystal clear. And she in her beautiful smile, she said, ‘Ask! We’re waiting for you to ask! We’re praying with you to ask!’ And the vision disappeared.”<sup>8</sup>

Interestingly, video tapes of Hinn’s 1997 Honolulu Crusade are not being made available by Hinn’s ministry.<sup>9</sup> Perhaps, someone more theologically astute in the faith healer’s organization realizes the occultic implications of his revelations.

### On Deadly Ground

From the very inception of his ministry, Hinn has had a penchant and an obsession with the late Kuhlman. Hinn has publicly stated that Kuhlman’s grave carries a supernatural “anointing.” He alleges the same effect from the body and grave of Aimee Semple McPherson. The theatrical, twice divorced McPherson, who probably died by suicide, is hardly a model of Christian anointing.<sup>10</sup>

During a sermon on the Holy Spirit, Hinn offered the following, eerie, testimonial:

“One of the strangest experiences I had a few years ago [was] visiting Aimee’s tomb in California. This Thursday I’m on TBN. Friday I am gonna go and visit Kathryn Kuhlman’s tomb. It’s close by Aimee’s in Forest Lawn Cemetery. I’ve been there once already and every so often I like to go and pay my respects ‘cause this great woman of God has touched my life. And that grave, uh, where she’s buried is closed, they built walls around it. You can’t get in without a key and I’m one of the very few people who can get in. But I’ll never forget when I saw Aimee’s tomb. It’s incredibly dramatic. She was such a lady that her tomb has seven-foot angels bowing on each side of her tomb with a gold chain around it. As—as incredible as it is that someone would die with angels bowing on each side of her grave, I felt a terrific anointing when I was there. I actually, I—I, hear this, I trembled when I visited Aimee’s tomb. I was shaking all over. God’s power came all over me. ... I believe the anoint-

ing has lingered over Aimee’s body. I know this may be shocking to you. ... And I’m going to take David [Palmquist] and Kent [Mattox] and Sheryl [Palmquist] this week. They’re gonna come with me. You—you—you gonna feel the anointing at Aimee’s tomb. It’s incredible. And Kathryn’s. It’s amazing. I’ve heard of people healed when they visited that tomb. They were totally healed by God’s power. You say, ‘What a crazy thing.’ Brother, there’s things we’ll never understand. Are you all hearing me?”<sup>11</sup>

The prophet Isaiah talked about the abomination of seeking an “anointing” and contact with the other world at a grave and called it “rebellious” and “a way that is not good” (65:2), “iniquity” and blasphemy (v. 7). He further indites those: “Who sit among the graves, and spend the night in the tombs” (v. 4). The worst of judgments are pronounced on these vile practices (vs. 13-15).

Jewish teaching was that dead bodies were unclean (for instance Numbers 19:11), but Hinn thinks otherwise. Hinn apparently has never shaken his Arab roots. Arabic people superstitiously believe in the efficacy of praying at tombs of famous or “saintly” people. Arabs regularly make pilgrimages to “venerated, holy” graves.<sup>12</sup> It seems Hinn has never gotten rid of the superstitions of his childhood.

### A Grave Deception

Hinn tries to buttress his morbid preoccupation with graves and the dead (in the above) by referring to the Old Testament miracle of Elisha’s bones bringing a man to life. In a similar vein one could refer to manna to insist on getting free food from heaven, but it just won’t work. A close examination of the Elisha event shows no comparison or parallel to what Hinn is claiming.

The miraculous event after the death of Elisha is found in 2 Kings 13:20-21. A dead man was thrown into the tomb of Elisha and upon coming into contact with Elisha’s bones “he revived and stood up on his feet.” A careful study of the passage will note clearly four things:

1. This is a miracle of resurrection from the dead — not some nebulous feeling or quivering. There is nothing in

the verses in 2 Kings 13 about some subjective or lingering “anointing.” Hinn is not raising the dead and neither are the corpses of Kuhlman or McPherson. The Elisha event is clearly about life from death — resurrection of a body.

2. It is obviously a seal of divine attestation to Elisha’s dying prophecy regarding Joash’s victory over Syria (2 Kings 13:14-19).

3. Even though Elisha died of sickness (2 Kings 13:14) God’s approval was still on his life and death. Certainly this is contrary to the faith teachers like Hinn and others. You can be sick and die of that sickness and still have God’s favor and approval. This event contradicts and proves just the opposite of the health gospel preached by Hinn.

4. Hinn’s loose use of the passage opens the way for all kinds of weird excesses. Adam Clarke cites one of the misuses: “This is the *first*, and I believe the *last*, account of a *true miracle* performed by the bones of a dead man; and yet on it and such like the whole system of miraculous working *relics* has been founded by the popish Church.”<sup>13</sup> As creation was unique, as manna was unique, as clothes that would not wear out were unique, this was a unique resurrection event. Hinn cannot claim it for validation of his trips to the graveyard.

### Vision or Revision?

Hinn’s Atlanta claim of a “vision of the night” with Kuhlman and Jesus also demonstrates his blatant misuse of the vocabulary of the Bible. It is a failed attempt to make what he is practicing, somehow, appear to have justification from the Word of God. He is deceptive in this. Even a cursory look at this expression, its context, and biblical meaning demonstrates Hinn’s erroneous interpretation.

The word “vision” appears approximately 100 times in the Bible, most of which are Old Testament passages (except when referring to false prophets and false visions). The majority of these have to do with *God giving direct revelation of Himself, about Himself and His plan, or prophetic information*. It is revelatory, special, life-giving information. This information was written and inscripturated for us in the Bible. Hinn is trying to impress his followers that his extrabiblical revelation is on a

par with the inspired Scriptures.

Never, ever, when used in a positive way (of legitimate information and revelation from God) is the word "vision" ever linked with the occult or the dead. The exact phrase "visions of the night" is found in Genesis 46:2 and has to do with God revealing Himself directly to Jacob. It is not a message from the realm of the dead. Our God is the Living God. It is a message from heaven. Messages from demons and the dark underworld should not be referred to as "visions of the night." This is clear and obvious chicanery on Hinn's part.

The word "vision" in Hebrew is *marah* and literally means to "see." Jacob saw God in some form and fashion (a theophany or Christophany) and heard Him give promises and comfort. To connect this with efforts to raise funds to support one's ministry is Scripture twisting of the most horrible and pernicious kind. Shame on Hinn for this deception and distortion of God's truth. Once again Hinn has proven that he does not have even an elementary understanding of biblical interpretation.

Hinn's so-called "vision of the night" fits better into the category of Jeremiah 14:14 and 23:16:

"And the Lord said to me, the prophets prophesy lies in my name. I have not sent them, commanded them, nor spoken to them; they prophesy to you a false vision, divination, a worthless thing, and the deceit of their own heart."

"Thus says the Lord of hosts: Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you. They make you worthless; They speak a vision of their own heart, not from the mouth of the Lord."

### **Dark Seduction: A Grave Delusion**

Perhaps Hinn's "visions" detailed in Atlanta and Hawaii are merely contrived fiction as foretold by the Apostle Peter (2 Peter 2:3). Or the tales may be the result of actual dreams or delusions and embellished for effect. Yet, a worse case scenario does exist — if he is receiving "visions" of the dead, he is in contact with demons! If the latter is true, then Paul's warning surely is being fulfilled:

"The Spirit speaks expressly that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their consciences seared with a hot iron" (1 Timothy 4:1).

For all the moral failings of Jim Bakker and Jimmy Swaggart, they did not try to introduce their followers to the world of spiritism and spiritualistic practices. Hinn has entered into a dangerous practice called necromancy which literally means *divination by consulting the dead*.<sup>14</sup> In practicing necromancy, hidden, secret or clandestine knowledge is brought forth by someone who has died. Direction is sought from the other side. However, the Bible reveals that the real source of the information when obtained can be demonic entities or evil spirits *who imitate the dead*. This practice is at odds in every way with the Bible and the true worship of God.

A careful reading of Isaiah 8 and research into the language shows a medium being manipulated by a demon spirit. Isaiah's blunt question (v. 19) cries out for an answer: "And when they say to you seek those who are mediums and wizards, who whisper and mutter, should not a people seek their God? Should they seek the dead on behalf of the living?" The obvious answer is that God's people should never seek the dead on behalf of the living.

Bible commentator, Dr. H.A. Ironside's observation on Isaiah's words is both "prophetic" and chilling:

"It is a grievous offense in the eyes of God for anyone to turn from His revealed Word to those who profess to have power to summon the spirits of the departed in order to give light and help. Such are either charlatans deceiving those who go to them or else possessed by impersonating demons misleading all who follow them."<sup>15</sup>

### **Dead End**

So there are numerous strong prohibitions against contacting the dead *in any fashion*. Our guidance is to come from Scripture, not the departed. The ancient pagan cultures that clashed with Israel, practiced this and other occultic abominations. To consult mediums or familiar

spirits was viewed as apostasy from God. The death penalty was required for the practice of necromancy.<sup>16</sup>

J.R. Dummelow's *A Commentary on the Holy Bible* spells out who the objects of this severe judgment are in Leviticus 19:31 with these words: "That have familiar spirits; necromancers who profess to hold communication with the dead."<sup>17</sup>

King Saul earned the death penalty as a severe judgment from God for the practice of seeking enlightenment and information from the dead. "So Saul died for his unfaithfulness which he committed against the Lord, because he did not keep the word of the Lord, and also because he consulted a medium for guidance," First Chronicles 10:13 declares.

Merrill Unger captures the demonic underpinnings of necromancy:

"But mediumship and spiritism are closely connected with the ventriloquist whippers and mutterings, which the seducing demons employ in their human agents in subtle imitation of the utterances of the dead, in order thoroughly to deceive and win over their ready dupes."<sup>18</sup>

Unger also forcefully reminds us:

"If it is forbidden in the Scriptures for a child of God to resort to a 'familiar spirit,' then it is equally wrong for the departed dead, either godly or wicked, to communicate with the living. By so doing, both infringe upon the law of God."<sup>19</sup>

Indeed, a familiar spirit can be translated as the spirit of a departed family member or friend as demons convey information as if from someone close or familiar to us.

### **Gleanings from the Great Vine**

The vigilant research of W. E. Vine on "Spirit (of the Dead), Necromancer" is worth reading in its entirety:

"The word usually represents the troubled spirit (or spirits) of the dead. This meaning appears unquestionably in Isa. 29:4 '...Thy voice shall be, as of one that hath a familiar spirit, out of the ground, and thy speech shall whisper out of the dust.' Its second meaning, 'necromancer,' refers to a professional

who claims to summon forth such spirits when requested (or hired) to do so: 'Regard not them that have familiar spirits, neither seek after wizards' (Lev. 19:31 – first occurrence). These mediums summoned their 'guides' from a hole in the ground. Saul asked the medium (witch) of Endor, 'Divine for me from the hole.'"<sup>20</sup>

Vine then points out God's prohibitions:

"God forbade Israel to seek information by this means, which was so common among the pagans (Lev. 19:31; Deut. 18:11). Perhaps the pagan belief in manipulating one's basic relationship to a god (or gods) explains the relative silence of the Old Testament regarding life after death. Yet God's people believed in life after death, from early times (e.g., Gen. 37:35; Isa. 14:15ff). ... Necromancers' unusual experiences do not prove that they truly had power to summon the dead. For example, the medium of Endor could not snatch Samuel out of God's hands against His wishes. But in this particular incident, it seems that God rebuked Saul's apostasy, either through a revived Samuel or through a vision of Samuel. Mediums do not have power to summon the spirits of the dead, since this is reprehensible to God and contrary to His will."<sup>21</sup>

The message delivered to Saul for the above practice was a message of judgment and death.

In Jesus' account of the afterlife in Luke 16 a man seeks to go back from the dead to warn others of torment. He is not permitted and told, "they have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them" (v. 29). The Word of God is to be our information source for our life and ministry, not occultic pursuits.

### Spiritism by Any Other Name

According to Robert Burrows of the Spiritual Counterfeits Project, full blown spiritism hit our country in the mid-1880s, beginning in New York and generated by the teenage sisters, Margaret and Katie Fox. At its height, it had ten million followers including Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, the creator of Sherlock Holmes. Its "central belief is implicit in the spirit contact founda-

tional to it: the dead continue to exist and communication with them is possible."<sup>22</sup>

Spiritism went through ebbs and flows of popularity and then mutated into its modern form — channeling. Actress Shirley MacLaine is probably the most well-known endorser of channeling.

British apologist Alan Morrison traces the modern revival of necromancy through Jane Roberts:

"In the present New Age scenario, Channelling began with a vengeance with the contribution of a woman called Jane Roberts (1929-1984). In 1963, she and her husband had begun to experiment with an ouija-board and they were soon contacted by an alleged spirit-entity calling itself *Seth*. Within a short time, she found she could go into a trance during which this spirit-being would speak through her. This led to a series of best-selling books in which a great deal of occult information about every aspect of life — past, present and future — is presented in a readable style. Interestingly, it is common for these spirit-entities which channel through humans to adopt a biblical name. Whether this is the case with Jane Robert's 'Seth' is not immediately apparent. ... Other well-known channelling [sic] works are Virginia Essene's 'New Teachings for an Awakening Humanity', and Amy Brown Loomis' channelled messages which were alleged to be from Jesus Christ and several of the Apostles. By far the best known and most popular of all the New Age channelled works is the 1200-page book, 'A Course in Miracles'."<sup>23</sup>

Spiritists have "churches" in which they practice seances and other occultic specialities. *They even claim healings and prophesies* and have joined together under the umbrella of the National Spiritualist Association. The N.S.A. lists as one of its nine principles:

"5. We affirm that communication with the so-called dead is a fact scientifically proven by the phenomena of Spiritualism."<sup>24</sup>

Hinn would fit better with the N.S.A. than anywhere else.

J. Stafford Wright reminds us:

"If for a moment we consider what the Bible says about attempting to communicate with the departed, we may be astonished to find that, whenever this is mentioned, it is condemned as something evil. ... The Christian similarly is not to aim at gathering information from the departed, but at hearing the message of Christ. ... It is clear that the Biblical verdict on Spiritualism is completely hostile. One may assume that the reason is because the deception (conscious or unconscious) that is inherent in it. There may, in fact, be two sources of deception. 1. *The unconscious mind of the medium*. ... The sitter cannot be certain of being in touch with the one who has passed on, for the medium may in fact be interpreting a projected image from the sitter's own mind. 2. A more dangerous deception would arise if we suppose *the intervention of evil spirits*. Spiritualists themselves recognize this possibility."<sup>25</sup>

Hinn's move in the direction of the occult should not be a surprise. The modern-day Pentecostal movement, which began in 1906, has muddled beginnings and a prior history of involvement in spiritism. Azusa Street drew in spiritualists and mediums and contemporaries of that day were reporting seances, trances and other outlandish and occultic behavior.<sup>26</sup> Once the door of unrestrained subjective mysticism is opened, Satan and the flesh can have a field day. God's Word is our *only* protection against the demonic as well as ourselves.

In all of this, Hinn moves toward the worst groups in history. He even, knowingly or unknowingly, mirrors in himself and his following the bizarre Convulsionaries of the 18th century whose focus was tombs and miracles:

"Groups of visitors to the tomb were gripped by uncontrollable urges to dance or fall into seizures. In these states the 'convulsionaires', as they came to be called, seemed to lose contact with the external world, even to the point of becoming insensitive to pain. They had religious visions and reported miraculous healings. On one occasion, a skeptic who came to the tomb to mock the proceedings found herself struck with paraly-

## Back to Basics

How many more dead people will Hinn report "visions" of? Hinn has yet spun another yarn as he has so often or is being duped by demons. God's Word leaves him no other options. Either choice ushers his followers into deep deception and may well give them leave to seek such encounters from the other side. In either case, Hinn needs to repent before God and seek the forgiveness of the body of Christ. Following that, he needs to step down and enroll in some basic doctrine courses and stop his overt approval of the occult.

Hinn, in the recent past resigned from the Assemblies of God denomination. Following his resignation he returned to being accountable and answerable to no one but himself. His new attraction and "ride" is a ride that can lead his faithful to darkness and destruction. These followers need to get off quickly and stay off. The truth is out. But will even the truth be able to convince the emotion intoxicated followers?

### Endnotes:

1. Benny Hinn, *This Is Your Day*, June 11, 1997, video tape on file.

2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Benny Hinn, Honolulu Crusade, February 28, 1997. Transcript of Hinn's comments made by Mike Oppenheimer, Let Us Reason Ministries. Audio tape and transcript on file.
5. Ibid., emphasis added.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. Phone call from M. Kurt Goedelman to Benny Hinn Media Ministries, July 25, 1997, confirmed that Hinn's organization is not making available, nor will be making available, tapes from the 1997 Honolulu Crusade.
10. See Hank Hanegraaff, *Counterfeit Revival*. Dallas: Word Publishing, 1997, pp. 168-169.
11. Benny Hinn sermon, *Double Portion Anointing*, Part #3, Orlando Christian Center, Orlando, Fla., April 7, 1991. From the series, *Holy Ghost Invasion*. TV#309, tape on file.
12. Israel Pocket Library, *Religious Life and Communities*. Jerusalem, Israel: Keter Books, 1974, pg. 154.
13. Adam Clarke, *The Holy Bible with a Commentary and Critical Notes*. New York: Abingdon Press, no date, The Old Testament, Vol. 2, pg. 525, commentary note on 2 Kings 13:21.
14. See further *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, Vol. 4, pg. 401 and *Biblical Demonology* by Merrill Unger, pp. 143-164.

15. Henry A. Ironside, *Expository Notes on the Prophet Isaiah*. New York: Loizeaux Brothers, 1952, pp. 55-56.
16. See for example, Leviticus 19:31; 20:6, 27; Deuteronomy 18:10-11.
17. J.R. Dummelow, *A Commentary on the Holy Bible*. New York: Macmillan Company, 1958, pg. 97.
18. Merrill Unger, *Biblical Demonology*. Wheaton, Ill.: Scripture Press, 1952, pg. 148.
19. Ibid., pg. 152.
20. W.E. Vine, *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary Of Old And New Testament Words*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1985, pp. 241-242, 1 Samuel 28:8, author's translation.
21. Ibid., pg. 242.
22. J.D. Douglas, Editor, *New 20th-Century Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1991, pg. 782.
23. Alan Morrison, *The Serpent and the Cross*. Birmingham, England: K&M Books, 1994, pg. 142.
24. Frank S. Mead, *Handbook of Denominations in the United States*. New York: Abingdon Press, 1965, pg. 206.
25. J. Stafford Wright, *Man in the Process of Time*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1956, pp. 107, 109-110, italics in original.
26. *Counterfeit Revival*, op. cit., pp. 127-128.
27. Leonard George, Ph.D., *Alternative Realities*. New York: Facts on File, 1995, pg. 55.

## RODNEY HOWARD-BROWNE

(continued from page 4)

unexpected and motivated me to examine, search and compare their teachings and methods with an in-depth study of the Scriptures. We're told to "test all things, holding fast what is good" (2 Thessalonians 5:21).

Jesus tells us that some will prophesy, cast out demons, and do many wonders in His name (Matthew 7:22), but in spite of that Christ will declare, "I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness" (v. 23). Several times the Lord warns the believers about great deception (Matthew 24:4, 5, 11, 24). Paul warned the church of Ephesus for three years against savage wolves who speak perverse or misleading things (Acts 20:28-31). In his second epistle to the Corinthians, Paul writes, "For we are not, as so many, peddling the word of God" (2:17), and "we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling

the word of God deceitfully" (4:2). Evidently, there are some who adulterate the Word of God for their own gain and benefits.

In a meaningful passage Jesus states, "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves" (Matthew 7:15). They look Christian! But inwardly, they are hungry and greedy for something you have! And Paul exposes false apostles, deceitful workers as being individuals who transform themselves into apostles of Christ, into ministers of righteousness (2 Corinthians 11:13-15). Peter and John have also found it important to write on the subject. It is therefore important today for believers to be watchful and aware of these facts.

One whose works must be tested is Rodney Howard-Browne. Howard-Browne is the prominent leader of the "laughter phenomenon." I first encountered him in the fall of 1992 when he ministered at the Orlando Christian

Center (now World Outreach Center), the church founded and pastored by faith healer Benny Hinn. The early 1990s was Howard-Browne's debut in the United States. More recently, a second opportunity to see him in action presented itself in the city of Vancouver, British Columbia. From Nov. 19 through 23, 1996, he held a series of meetings which my son, Stephen, and I decided to investigate.

Howard-Browne is a South African preacher who says he was saved at age 5, baptized in the Spirit at 8, and received a special touch from heaven many years later in 1979. But it was only in 1989, while being in New York, that he decided to put his knack into practice. His laughter ministry was born.

More than once during the crusade held in a 2,000-seat church auditorium, a member of Howard-Browne's organization warned the audience early in the service not to bring in any camera or tape recorders because "they can be

used in a bad way." We were also advised to be careful at the altar and not walk on those lying on the floor because "even if they are under the power of the Holy Ghost, they still feel pain!" After the warnings and instructions, a sales pitch for their videocassettes and books, and the essential crowd-warming songs, Rodney Howard-Browne would appear on stage and sing a few more songs.

His technique is very simple and very charismatic. The song service, lasting 60 to 90 minutes, was active and the lyrics of the songs invite you to participate. At the song, *I Walk by Faith*, the leader urged the audience to walk sideways in the pews, which had everybody marching left and right. In a case like this, you must cooperate unless you want to be stepped on by your neighbors. The favorite *Makes You Want to Dance* produced delirious dancing in the crowd, where some individuals ran up front, jumping and twisting after the very first verse.

Howard-Browne plays a very active human role in the laughter. The man acts like a stand-up comedian. He repeatedly told jokes like, "I'll read from *The Amplified Bible*, so if it comes out loud, it's because it's amplified." Howard-Browne, himself a Caucasian, born and raised in Africa, now living in America, has come to the conclusion, "That makes me an African-American." The crowd just loved it. Or when comes the time of the offering he suggests, besides cash and check giving, "You can use your credit card: Mastercard, Visa, American Distress." Well, he repeatedly used this one too.

Adonica, Howard-Browne's wife, also made an appearance on stage. At the first meeting she was asked by Rodney to greet the audience. Estimating that the crowd's response lacked enthusiasm, she said, "Are you just shy Canadians, or what? Are you just as the Americans?" Not such a tactful remark! The attendees did not seem to appreciate, nor do I think Americans would either.

Howard-Browne seems to believe that he needs to instruct people on how to laugh and behave. He even defies those who do not respond according to his desires. It comes close to threatening when he accuses the more conservative type of person of not acting wild

in response to his jokes or commands, "We'll cast the religious devil out of you." There's actually not much liberty in his meetings. One feels intimidated and compelled to obey, or comply lest you be labeled according to Howard-Browne's own offensive categories.

In each and every meeting we attended, he did not miss an opportunity to put his critics down, those who question his method of operating. He said, "Some people have got more faith in believing the devil can come into this place tonight to touch people. How dumb can you get and still breathe!" And referring to North American theologians, which he names dead heads, "Bunch of whitewash, full of dead bones, like a constipated mule." The Americans and Canadians, in particular, don't weigh much in his eyes. "Jesus is alive. It's only North Americans that don't believe that."

Howard-Browne also played the game of faith healing. And he played it well. The first night he prayed for a man suffering from cancer. The next day he laid hands on a woman with the same disease. He even gave an example of a successful healing that occurred in one of his crusades, though he provided no documentation. And of course, Howard-Browne talked about the anointing, saying that God gives it to individuals and confirms it with signs, wonders, and miracles.

As he was uttering these words, he was standing just a few feet from a man whose task was to translate by sign language the preaching to a small group of deaf attendees. Curiously, Howard-Browne did not pray nor lay hands on them, nor did he pray for the man in a wheelchair whose legs were clearly atrophied. A young lady whose gait and talk revealed a severe physical disorder, probably cerebral palsy, was never addressed. How many in the crowd discerned the scheme?

Howard-Browne, like faith healers, is clever, selective and deceptive. Implying that he has an anointing from God, he threatened once again his critics or would-be critics, "If you can't produce the real of that which you criticize you'd better shut your mouth. Just shut your mouth. Amen." People must realize that the criticism is not about laughter, though, but about the wild

physical manifestations occurring in the meetings.

One of the scariest moments came on the last day, the day Howard-Browne would lay hands on everybody in the house. He preached his regular 25 or so minutes on the subject of offerings, then told the crowd he wanted them to listen to a compact disc of one of his crusades. The soundman played it very loudly. All we heard were applause and cries, but the crowd did not react, not really knowing what to do. So the song leader got to the sound booth and raised the volume much higher. Howard-Browne started clapping and screaming, "Jesus, Jesus." Then the crowd started imitating him, clapping and screaming repetitively. A scary moment indeed. The fruit of gross manipulation and imitation. Men and women were dancing like under a spell. Howard-Browne had them where he wanted. They were under his mesmeric spell.

I find no edification in such meetings. Music is used as a tool to bring individuals into a hyper-suggestible emotional state, fanciful and exaggerated stories are told to gain the people's trust and confidence, and the Scriptures are misused or distorted to support their unbiblical teachings and practices. Rodney Howard-Browne not only orchestrated the show by instructing people on how to behave, but he clearly showed his arrogant nature through his statements and attitude. Where is the fear of God today?

What shall we say about his ministry? It is the result of a deceptive scheme of manipulation and crowd control, not the genuine work of God. Jesus said, "You will know them by their fruits." Remember: Power, signs and wonders are insufficient to determine someone's true nature. Israel was misled and deceived in their days, and numerous Christians are misled and deceived today. Just look deeper than what meets the eyes.

**Editor's Note:** Yves Brault, a native of Montreal, Quebec, is the author of *Behind The Scenes*, an autobiographical volume which surveys and challenges the false anointing of Benny Hinn and other popular faith healers. He currently resides in Vancouver, B.C., with his wife Nicole.



we can rub our hands with relish and say with conviction "Now, we're getting somewhere!"

### Who Has Authority to Speak for Whom?

This question is of most importance because from the Latter-day Saint (LDS) perspective you have a church that is organized along strict hierarchical lines with clear levels of authority from the top down. As we will see, there are fixed channels of communication within the LDS church and these can be used to render all voices that dissent from standard church doctrine null and void.

I include here a slight modification of a section, from a previous PFO *Journal* article<sup>1</sup> that I wrote in 1994:

The LDS church is an hierarchical, top-down authoritarian organization. At the apex of this structure is the Prophet, Seer and Revelator (PSR) of the church. Together with his two counselors, the First Presidency is formed. Then, in descending order, comes the Council of the Twelve, the Patriarch to the Church, Assistants to the Twelve, First Council of the Seventy and the Presiding Bishopric. These offices make up the General Authorities of the LDS church.<sup>2</sup>

Any of these General Authorities wields great power, but it is to the Prophet, the President of the church in whom all earthly power and the keys of the heavens are given. The late Mormon Apostle Bruce McConkie wrote:

"The President of the Church is the mouthpiece of God on earth. Thus saith the Lord: *'Thou shalt give heed unto all his words and commandments which he shall give unto you as he receiveth them, walking in all holiness before me; For his word ye shall receive, as if from mine own mouth, in all patience and faith.'* (D.&C. 21:4-5.)"<sup>3</sup>

This is not Mormon tradition. This is Mormon doctrine. It has been true from the beginning of the church. The quote from *Doctrine and Covenants* 21 above is supposedly a revelation given to Joseph Smith by God. The investiture of authority is absolute.

In an address given in Salt Lake City on Nov. 8, 1857, then Counselor to the First President, Heber C. Kimball stated:

"In regard to our situation and circumstances in these valleys, brethren, Wake Up! WAKE UP, YE ELDERS OF ISRAEL, and live to God and none else; *and learn to do as you are told*, both old and young; learn to do as you are told for the future. ... Brother Brigham (Young) is my leader: he is my Prophet, my Seer, my Revelator; *and whatever he says, that is for me to do; and it is not for me to question him one word*, nor to question God a minute."<sup>4</sup>

As time progressed, and the Mormon church evolved, the absolute authorities became more important. Many of the embarrassing and more bizarre doctrines were discarded in favor of ones that would stand up to public scrutiny. For example, the doctrine of plural marriage (polygamy), the doctrine of personal blood atonement, and certain Masonic-cult temple rituals, while not totally repudiated, have at least been publicly minimized.

Problematic to church leaders was how to take doctrines that were held in the past to be essential to salvation, and remove them to the status of relative unimportance. This problem was exacerbated by a vivid paper trail of supposed revelations by past Prophets and Scriptures unique to the Mormon church. Critics of the church (both internal and external) became more vocal and began actively publishing evidence found along this paper trail. The church decided that something must be done.

As shown above, the Prophet, Seer and Revelator has absolute authority in the LDS church. But what about when a present Prophet contradicts a former one? The stock Mormon answer used to be that this wouldn't happen. However, when the paper trail showed irrefutable contradictory revelations, the stock answer went away. There had to be a way to deal with this thorny problem. Enter Ezra T. Benson.

On Feb. 26, 1980, then Apostle Benson gave an address in the Brigham Young University Devotional Assembly. In this assembly he gave the students "Fourteen Fundamentals in Following

the Prophets." In this revealing address Elder Benson broadened the parameters for dissension behind the "Deseret Veil."

Space does not permit examining all 14 points, but we must look at some of the more important ones. I cite the points and summary as reported by a local Mormon newspaper, *The Phoenix Voice*, dated May 12, 1980.

"1. The Prophet is the only man who speaks for the Lord in everything. The *Doctrine and Covenants* states, 'We are to give heed unto all his words as if from the Lord's own mouth.'"

"2. The living prophet is more vital to us than the standard works.<sup>5</sup> In a meeting in Kirtland [Ohio], Joseph Smith said the standard works are the word of God. Then he had Brother Brigham to give his views on the living oracles and the written word. He [Brigham Young] said, 'When compared with the living oracles, those books are nothing to me; I would rather have the living oracles than all the writings in those books.' Joseph Smith told the congregation that 'Brother Brigham has told you the word of the Lord and the truth.'"

The implications of the last point are obvious. If the prophet and the Scriptures disagree, then the prophet, the living prophet, takes precedence. There will be no conflict.

"3. The living prophet is more important to us than a dead prophet. The living prophet has the power of TNT [*Today's News Today*]. The most important reading we can do is words of the prophet contained each week in the *Church News* or the *Church magazines*."

"5. The prophet is not required to have any particular earthly training or credentials to *speak on any subject or act on any matter at any time*. Sometimes there are those who feel their earthly knowledge on a certain subject is superior to the heavenly knowledge which God gives on a subject. ... We encourage earthly knowledge in many areas, but remember — if there is ever a conflict between earthly knowledge and the words of

the prophet, you stand with the prophet and you'll be blessed, and time will vindicate you" (emphasis added).

When you link the fifth fundamental with the ninth, you will see that the prophet has been invested with absolute power, not on just religious matters, but on any matter!

The eighth fundamental just sets the stage:

"The prophet is not limited by men's reasoning. There will be times when you will have to choose between the revelations of God and the reasoning of men — between the *politician* or *professor*" (emphasis added).

"9. The prophet can receive revelation on any matter — temporal or spiritual. In a meeting in Kirtland, Joseph Smith asked the elders to draw a line of demarcation between the spiritual and temporal so he could understand it. No one could do it. Then he said '...temporal and spiritual things are inseparably connected and ever will be" (emphasis added).

And then comes the clincher:

"10. The prophet may be involved in civic matters. When people are righteous, they want the best to lead them in government. Great leaders in the Book of Mormon and in church history have been involved deeply in political matters. Those who would remove prophets from politics would take God out of government."

Then the rope that ties it all together:

"14. The prophet and the president — the living prophet and the first presidency — follow them and be blessed; reject them and suffer."

Now we have an absolute leader endowed from the Creator to be the only man on Earth to speak for Him on any matter, who cannot be disagreed with on any basis. He cannot be approached on the basis of reason because he is above the reason of man. He cannot be approached on the basis of scripture or pronouncements of past prophets, because he is "more dear" than any of those. This prophet has the

power to regulate not only the doctrine of his church, but can control any facet of the life of any individual in the church no matter how detailed, upon pain of excommunication.

Read these chilling words from the LDS magazine, *The Improvement Era*, under the section entitled "Ward Teachers' Message for June, 1945":

"It should be remembered that Lucifer has a very cunning way of convincing unsuspecting souls that the General Authorities of the Church are as likely to be wrong as they are to be right. This sort of game is Satan's favorite pastime, and he has practiced it on believing souls since Adam. He wins a great victory when he can get members of the Church to speak against their leaders and to 'do their own thinking.'"

"He specializes in suggesting that our leaders are in error while he plays the blinding rays of apostasy in the eyes of those whom he thus beguiles. What cunning! And to think that some of our members are deceived by this trickery."

"When our leaders speak, the thinking has been done. When they propose a plan, it is God's plan. When they point the way, there is no other which is safe. When they give direction, it should mark the end of controversy. God works in no other way. To think otherwise, without immediate repentance, may cost one his faith, may destroy his testimony, and leave him a stranger to the kingdom of God" (emphasis added).

This type of magisterium puts a severe crimp in meaningful dialogue on a broad level. Now we are forced back to the original question as it relates to our analysis. By whose authority does Robinson speak? Does he have the blessing of the LDS magisterium (LDS/MGS)? Is he speaking for and in agreement with the Prophet, Seer and Revelator?

Robinson answers this question himself:

"Indeed, my part of this book represents only the views of one Latter-day Saint, though I hope a

credible one. I do not speak in this volume for the LDS Church, only for myself, but I think I qualify as the world's authority on what I believe, and I consider myself a reasonably devout and well-informed Latter-day Saint."<sup>6</sup>

Blomberg corroborates these sentiments:

"We each speak officially for no one other than ourselves, but unofficially we reflect a fair cross section of the religious traditions we represent."<sup>7</sup>

While it is true that Robinson is the best authority on what he personally believes, the question of whether what he personally believes is in line with what the LDS magisterium pronounces is not answered in this volume. This is the most important question. For as the Prophet, Seer and Revelator goes, so goes the church. The problem is that we don't know what the General Authorities in general, and the Prophet, Seer and Revelator in particular think about the views of Robinson and other progressive Mormons.<sup>8</sup>

The problem is compounded by the way Robinson's dialogue shifts from the specific, "I do not speak in this volume for the LDS Church, only for myself,"<sup>9</sup> to the general, "Latter-day Saints do not, in fact, seek to be accepted as historically 'orthodox' Christians or as Evangelicals."<sup>10</sup>

Then consider these statements: "Mormons would agree with Evangelicals that new Scriptures must and do agree with older Scripture"<sup>11</sup> and "Mormons think of themselves — or at least should — as being one hundred-watt bulbs and other denominations as being, say, forty-, sixty-, eighty-watt bulbs."<sup>12</sup> If Robinson, as he claims, is speaking only for himself, shouldn't he be using personal pronouns "I" and "me"?

Admittedly, Blomberg sometimes falls into this erroneous generalization. He too makes the point that he is speaking for himself and ends up speaking for Evangelicals, but outside of a few instances he mostly uses qualifiers like "most Evangelicals,"<sup>13</sup> "some Evangelicals,"<sup>14</sup> and "few Evangelicals."<sup>15</sup> However, to be precise, he too should have avoided the generalizations that make it

appear he is speaking for a larger group than he is. One would think that trained academics would be more precise in their language.

Bottom line, what you have in this volume of dialogue is a private conversation (made public) between an Evangelical, and a progressive Mormon, expressing what *they* personally believe and offering opinions of what they think others in their respective religious traditions believe. While they are most certainly correct in stating what *they* personally believe (who else can?), their opinions of what others believe are not necessarily correct. This especially holds true of their overgeneralized vilification of counter-cult researchers.

### Those Narrow-Minded Fundamentalist Bigots!

Both professors set out, in the preface, to neutralize those who would probably be the most vocal critics of their work: Christian apologists and ex-members. Unfortunately, they do so with unwarranted and unjustified *ad hominem* attacks. They commit the same error of overgeneralization that they accuse critics of having. While this is to be expected from Robinson, it is somewhat surprising coming from a fellow Evangelical. Robinson states:

“Though unfortunate, it would be fair to say that the average Latter-day Saint honestly believes the average Evangelical to be mean-spirited and dishonest — mean-spirited because, as Prof. Blomberg has pointed out, we tend to identify *all* Evangelicals with the fundamentalist anti-Mormons who incessantly attack us, and dishonest because these so-called anticultists *always* insist the LDS believe things we do *not* in fact believe. Since the Evangelicals of *our* experience — Professor Blomberg calls them fundamentalists — usually attack us and usually tell whoppers about us when they do (i.e., are mean-spirited and dishonest), we naturally assume that all Evangelicals think and behave the same way.”<sup>16</sup>

Robinson continues:

“In fact, most Evangelicals *do* at least passively accept and even actively disseminate the picture of Latter-day Saints created by rabid

anti-Mormons, and so they share some responsibility for the continuation of these impressions. It was always a mystery to me as a Latter-day Saint how the Evangelicals who so consistently misrepresent my beliefs could be so right and so admirable in many other ways. Perhaps if mainstream Evangelicals could distance themselves a little from the repugnant literature of ‘extreme fundamentalists,’ as Prof. Blomberg calls them, Mormons could in turn do a better job of distinguishing between *mainstream* Evangelicals and fundamentalists.”<sup>17</sup>

Just like Robinson, I am a little sensitive about people telling me what I do and do not believe, even when they know me — which he most assuredly does not. This is true of the apologists that I have come to know in almost 25 years in the field, of which there are not a few. I am the one who is the most competent to state my beliefs, and the only one capable of rendering a judgment on my motives. While I cannot prove the motives and beliefs of my colleagues, I can and do test their accuracy and honesty.

Regrettably, there are some Evangelical researchers who criticize the LDS church (and others) inaccurately. They have a tendency to overgeneralize and sensationalize. It has always been my policy to publicly expose and disagree when this happens. I have found this to be generally the case with all reputable research groups. To paint all critical LDS research groups — be they non- or ex-Mormon — with the broad brush of “mean-spirited, dishonest, rabid, anti-Mormon fundamentalists” is to do exactly the same thing that Robinson accuses us of doing.

I think there is a larger agenda here. By isolating and dismissing non- and ex-Mormon researchers as dishonest, mean-spirited and extremist, and by calling those whom he disagrees with within his own church as “ill-informed”;<sup>18</sup> Robinson hopes to eliminate from the debate those best positioned to expose Mormonism’s more embarrassing beliefs which he wishes to discount. It is obvious that he wishes to set the boundaries for dialogue.

Even the term “anti-Mormon” is a misnomer. A Mormon is a person that embraces the theology of the LDS church. Mormonism is the designation for that theology. I and those whom I work with are in no way anti- (against) Mormons (individuals). I do embrace the term anti- (against) Mormonism (LDS theology). I have several friends and associates who are LDS. They are aware of my stance on “Mormonism,” but also know that I have nothing but the highest respect and love for them as persons. It is because of my respect for the Mormon people and my fascination with their history that I have devoted hundreds (maybe even thousands) of hours of primary research into Mormonism. My motive is simple and can be summed up in one word: evangelization. It has been my experience that these are the motives of most of the counter-cult ministries.

A few words, if I may, about honestly expressing beliefs. Robinson accuses the anti-Mormon fundamentalists of telling “whoppers” about them. He accuses Evangelicals of having a distorted stereotype of LDS and that, “It has become *their* orthodoxy that Mormons believe X, Y, and Z, even though the Latter-day Saints emphatically deny it.”<sup>19</sup>

Part of the activity that leads to the above charge is the propensity of LDS leaders to deny past doctrines of the church which have been changed, or present doctrines that they wish to keep out of the public eye for some reason. A recent interview with the living Prophet, Seer and Revelator, Gordon B. Hinckley, will demonstrate my allegation.

In an interview with President Hinckley published on April 13, 1997, *San Francisco Chronicle* religion writer Don Lattin asked, “Don’t Mormons believe that God was once a man?”

President Hinckley responded:

“I wouldn’t say that. There was a little couplet coined. ‘As man is, God once was. As God is, man may become.’ Now that’s more of a couplet than anything else. That gets into some pretty deep theology that we don’t know very much about.”

Just a few months later, Hinckley used the same subterfuge with *Time*

magazine. *Time* writer David Van Biema reported:

“On whether his church still holds that God the Father was once a man, he sounded uncertain, ‘I don’t know that we teach it. I don’t know that we emphasize it ... I understand the philosophical background behind it, but I don’t know a lot about it, and I don’t think others know a lot about it.’”<sup>20</sup>

If this was coming from some average LDS member, one could appreciate that he might be theologically challenged, and so not aware of the deeper theological truth. But Mr. Hinckley is supposed to be quite literally the mouthpiece of God on Earth! That is the mission of a Prophet. He is the one who is qualified to speak doctrine directly by inspiration of God!

“We are not dependent only upon the revelations given in the past as contained in our standard works—as wonderful as they are. ... We have a mouthpiece to whom God does and is revealing his mind and will. God will never permit him to lead us astray. As has been said, God would remove us out of our place if we should attempt to do it. You have no concern. Let the management and government of God, then, be with the Lord. Do not try to find fault with the management and affairs that pertain to him alone and by revelation through his prophet—his living prophet, his seer, and his revelator.”<sup>21</sup>

Hinckley’s reply is remarkable. When asked a point blank question about a doctrine of God, he gave an evasive, but still negative answer, and then tried to relegate the subject to “pretty deep theology that we don’t know very much about.” However, the Prophet, Seer and Revelator that God supposedly chose to restore the true church to the Earth, Joseph Smith Jr., proclaimed:

“God himself was once as we are now, and *is an exalted man*, and sits enthroned in yonder heavens! I am going to tell you how God came to be God. We have imagined and supposed that God was God from all eternity. I will refute that idea, and take away the veil, so that you may see. These are incom-

prehensible ideas to some, *but they are simple. It is the first principle of the Gospel to know for a certainty the character of God*, and to know that we may converse with him as one man converses with another, *and that he was once a man like us.*”<sup>22</sup>

Who am I to believe? Hinckley contends that he wouldn’t say that God was once a man, Joseph Smith said that He was. Hinckley says that it is pretty deep theology. Smith said it was a simple idea. Hinckley says that Mormons don’t know very much about the doctrine. Smith said that the doctrine is the first principle of the Gospel.

If Hinckley personally does not know much about this doctrine, why wouldn’t he go to God for clarification? Don’t you think that God would want his children to know the “first principle of the Gospel”? As God’s mouthpiece on Earth, wouldn’t doctrinal clarification come from Hinckley?

The problem of General Authorities honestly discussing church doctrine is not new. It can be traced back to the first Prophet, Seer and Revelator Joseph Smith. Conflicts between what the LDS church has taught previously and privately have often been at odds with what is taught presently and openly.

For example, there is evidence that as early as 1831 Joseph Smith privately taught the doctrine of the plurality of wives:

“Joseph Smith learned of the principle of plural marriage as early as July 1831, near Independence, on the border of Missouri and what later became Kansas.”<sup>23</sup>

It is a historical fact that Joseph took plural wives long before the revelation was ever written in 1843:

“Moreover, available evidence attests that the Prophet began to take additional wives by 1836, in Kirtland, Ohio. Although plural marriage did not become a law of the Church until its public announcement in 1852, Joseph Smith, and later Brigham Young, did instruct a select number of faithful Mormon brethren to take additional wives before that date.”<sup>24</sup>

So, privately he was practicing the doctrine, while publicly he was repudi-

ating it:

“What a thing it is for a man to be accused of committing adultery, and having seven wives, when I can only find one. I am the same man, and as innocent as I was 14 years ago; and I can prove them all perjurers.”<sup>25</sup>

When critics of the church (both internally and externally) accused Joseph of preaching one thing but practicing another, he responded with the accusation that they were telling whoppers about what the church believed.

Yet, not long after the above statement was issued, the LDS/MGS went public with the doctrine and suddenly it was the will of God.

Quite confusingly, while the concept of the doctrine of plural marriage is still the will of God (Section 132 is *still* in the *Doctrine and Covenants*), the *practice* has been suspended. Although a Mormon caught practicing polygamy will be excommunicated from the church, it is still technically a doctrine of that church. Yet, if an Evangelical writer were to pen the words “Mormons believe in polygamy,” (although imprecise, still a true statement) LDS apologists would decry the statement, say they don’t practice it anymore, and vilify the Evangelical for telling “whoppers” on the church!

These examples speak directly to the issue of LDS critics supposedly telling Robinson and other LDS what they believe and earning the charge of “telling whoppers” about LDS doctrine. The good professor admits that Mormon theology is a moving target: “Pure LDS orthodoxy can be a moving target, depending on which Mormon one talks to.”<sup>26</sup>

The reason for this is, because of progressive revelation, the theology of the LDS church is constantly changing. What was once a law of God, and determined how one earned eternal progression, can change diametrically with the next living prophet. When researchers follow the paper trail I mentioned above and point out the old doctrines that the Professor and other progressive Mormons find embarrassing and don’t want to deal with, then we are accused of telling lies about what

Mormons believe. It is the old debating tool of attacking the messenger and belittling the source.

It makes no difference that Robinson does not want to discuss the issue, the clear fact is that the most compelling question facing Evangelicals and Mormons is that of the authority of the LDS/MGS. Any faction or belief within the LDS church exists at the suffrage of the current Prophet, Seer and Revelator. As the prophet goes, so goes the church!

Individual Evangelicals and Mormons (be they average lay-people, or college professors) can dialogue until they are blue in the face, but nothing is really settled until the Prophet speaks "ex cathedra" on the issue! Unfortunately, even then the issue is not fully resolved, for the next Prophet, Seer and Revelator can (and has) changed what the previous one has pronounced. While this deals a serious blow to the line of prophetic succession, in their zeal to follow the present living Prophet, Robinson and others wish also to sweep this embarrassing issue aside.

An example is necessary: On page 68 the professor tells us how previous Prophet, Seer and Revelator Ezra T. Benson would like to have the modern church defined:

"The only change precipitated by President Benson is that Mormonism now seeks to define itself in terms of its own canonized Scriptures rather than the sometimes polemical or speculative sermons of the nineteenth century or the popular theology of the twentieth century."

While our conversationalist would certainly like for this to be true. It puts him in the classic position of "doublethink."<sup>27</sup> For purposes of clarity I will use the designation Dr. A and Dr. B to refer to the two sides of Dr. Robinson.

On the one hand Dr. A wants to have only the standard works of the church define LDS doctrine. He strongly states:

"Nevertheless, the parameters of LDS doctrine are clear — Scripture is normative; sermons are not. Almost anything outside the Standard Works is also outside those parameters."<sup>28</sup>

He then, in an endnote, equivocates this statement and introduces Dr. B by saying:

"The exceptions being official statements of the First Presidency and/or the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles."<sup>29</sup>

Which is it? You can't have it both ways. But, that is exactly what Dr. Robinson wants. He wants to retain Brigham Young as a prophet, (so he can keep the LDS apostolic succession) yet dismiss Brigham's prophetic utterances given in his sermons. Dr. A muses:

"Thus, much of the sermons and other homiletic material from the late nineteenth century recorded in the *Journal of Discourses* (which is not part of the LDS canon) has a distinctly different historical context and therefore a distinctly different flavor than the LDS Scriptures themselves or similar homiletic material from the late twentieth century."<sup>30</sup>

Yet Dr. B tells us:

"For Latter-day Saints, the church's guarantee of doctrinal correctness lies primarily in the living prophet, and only secondarily in the preservation of the written text [i.e., standard works]."<sup>31</sup>

Moreover, Dr. B adds:

"Just as the apostle or prophet is necessary to receive what becomes the written word of God in the first place, he is necessary to authoritatively interpret it in the second. ... God is constant — we are not. As long as 'holy men of God' (apostles and prophets) remain in the church to interpret and apply the written revelations that they and their predecessors have received to changing times and cultures, there is a presumption of doctrinal continuity and correctness."<sup>32</sup>

Yet Dr. A counters with:

"Never mind the *Journal of Discourses*; return to the Scriptures; stick to the Standard Works."<sup>33</sup>

And maintains:

"Finally, it irritates the LDS that some Evangelicals keep trying to add the *Journal of Discourses* or other examples of LDS homiletics to the canon of LDS Scripture. The

*Journal of Discourses* is not part of the LDS canon; it is a collection of nineteenth-century talks and sermons. It is often a valuable resource, but it does not have normative force in declaring LDS doctrine. Most of the anti-Mormon rhetoric coming from Evangelical circles focuses on the *Journal of Discourses* rather [than] on our *Scriptures* — on what one or another nineteenth-century Mormon may have believed instead of what all twentieth-century Mormons must believe."<sup>34</sup>

The *Journal of Discourses* is a 26-volume set of books that records discourses of Prophet, Seer and Revelators and Apostles from the nineteenth century. Most of the discourses contained therein are in sermon form. These sermons contain prophetic utterances from Joseph Smith, Brigham Young and others. In them are recorded doctrines of God supposedly given by revelation to His mouthpieces on Earth. While some of the sermons are opinions and advice given in a 19th-century context, much of what is written has the weight of "thus saith the Lord" to purported living prophets. Brigham stated:

"I have never yet preached a sermon and sent it out to the children of men, that they may not call *Scripture*. Let me have the privilege of correcting a sermon, and it as good *Scripture* as they deserve. The people have the oracles of God continually."<sup>35</sup>

At the time that Brigham uttered these words he was the living prophet. The statements he made are either true or false. If true, they carry the weight of *Scripture*; if false, then Brigham was not a true prophet. No amount of semantic subterfuge on the part of the present Prophet, Seer and Revelator or Robinson can make Young both true and false at the same time. This brings us back question of who has the authority?

I cannot stress this question strongly enough. With one stroke of the Prophet, Seer and Revelator's pen, Robinson, and all those who believe like him, can be excommunicated from the LDS church! There is ample historical proof of ecclesiastical purges within the LDS church.<sup>36</sup> The good professor is sadly mistaken if he thinks that his

priesthood and livelihood does not exist at the pleasure of the LDS/MGS. One conversation with his recently terminated Brigham Young University colleague, Steven Epperson, would show him how it works.<sup>37</sup>

### An Evangelical Responds

As distasteful as Robinson's comments are, even more distressing are Blomberg's:

"Most Evangelicals gain their information about the Mormon Church, more properly known as The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS), from three sources: (1) anticult literature, written by fellow Evangelicals in an often polemical spirit, (2) doorstep conversations, as members of the two groups share their faith house to house using a standardized and extremely simplified presentation of their beliefs, and (3) information from ex-Mormons who have left the Church because they are bitter about how it treated them."<sup>38</sup>

Blomberg continues his analysis:

"None of these sources provides thorough, balanced knowledge of the LDS. Yet every religion should be allowed to speak for itself. Evangelical writers, however well-intentioned, are not likely to know nearly as much about Mormonism as LDS writers, unless they have lived and ministered for years in predominately Mormon parts of the country."<sup>39</sup>

Wow! Blomberg is the first theologian I have run across that has had the time and opportunity to peruse every piece of "anticult literature," examine all "ex-Mormon information," and take part in every "doorstep conversation" to the extent that he knows "none" of them "provides thorough, balanced knowledge of the LDS."

One wonders if Blomberg has never met a former member of the LDS church (and they are legion) that have left because they came to the realization that the gospel of Mormonism is, in fact, not the true Gospel, or that the anthropomorphic god of Mormonism is, in fact, not the true God of the Bible. I know many, and much of their research is quite outstanding.

One also wonders if Blomberg includes his colleague Dr. Gordon R. Lewis' chapter on Mormonism in his 1966 book, *Confronting the Cults* in the ranks of the unbalanced and not thorough?<sup>40</sup>

It seems that the Denver professor has bought into the progressive Mormon way of thinking that those who research and write about the less attractive side of LDS church are to be relegated to the scrap heap of fundamentalist bigotry.

Of course "every religion should be allowed to speak for itself." Yes, this includes the LDS religion. And when it speaks, it behooves all of us to evaluate the content of that speech. But, how can we make meaningful evaluation if those who commit themselves to long hours of research to give us the tools of evaluation are excoriated as extremists and dismissed as dishonest.

If the LDS/MGS hadn't, through the years, engaged in publicly denying what has been privately believed and then trying to rewrite history to cover it all up, there wouldn't be the need to evaluate closely every word that proceeds from LDS church headquarters.

Blomberg further asserts:

"But for our conversations to be fruitful and honoring to God, we must stop misrepresenting or caricaturing each other, always speaking the truth to each other in love."<sup>41</sup>

The operative phrase in this quote is "speak the truth in love." This does not mean that we sweep aside embarrassing or hard parts of the truth so we can appear loving. True love deals with the truth — the good, the bad, and the embarrassing.

It is indeed unfortunate that in his desire to find a middle ground in his conversation with Robinson, Blomberg has agreed to "silence by innuendo," the ex- and non-Mormons who speak the truth, lovingly but honestly, about Mormonism. It is also sad that apparently, for the same reason, he has followed Robinson's lead in dismissing statements made by past Prophet, Seer and Revelators that cannot practically be dismissed.

On page 109, Blomberg writes, "Robinson insists that the Adam-God theory,

as proposed by the various interpreters of Brigham Young, makes no sense and was never officially endorsed." He apparently accepts this as truth. Yet Young, speaking of the Adam-God doctrine said, "Now, let all who may hear these doctrines, pause before they make light of them, or treat them with indifference, for they will prove their salvation or damnation."<sup>42</sup> Not official? You be the judge.

As long as the authority issue (as it pertains to present and past prophets) remains, then the doctrinal discussion engaged in by our two professors loses much of its significance. Any conclusion drawn about Mormonism can be negated or even reversed by President Hinckley or his successors, and Robinson would have to follow or face excommunication. Then the joint doctrinal conclusions of the two conversationalists would have to be redone.

### What About the Divide?

In two words: *still wide*.

Make no mistake. There is still a need for meaningful dialogue. But the discussion must begin at the proper place and proceed in a logical fashion, with the ultimate goal to be the truth, no matter who is embarrassed or uncomfortable.

The initial discussion *must* be "what constitutes a Mormon?" Who has the authority to define what LDS beliefs are? Is the person in dialogue officially representing the LDS/MGS or are the conclusions drawn from the dialogue just one man's opinions of how he hopes things are?

This writer does not personally know either of the professors and is giving them the benefit of the doubt as to their honesty and integrity until proven otherwise. However, neither one of them was the right choice for this type of book. Robinson seems too eager to conceal, and Blomberg seems too quick to agree.

Apologist Don Veinot, director of Midwest Christian Outreach, in his review of the book, astutely points out:

"Intervarsity Press has produced one of the best evangelistic tools the Mormon church has had in a while. When an Evangelical tells a Mormon missionary at his door that Mormonism is not true Christianity,

but is a different faith altogether, the missionary will be able to pull from his bag of materials a book by an Evangelical publisher which says on page 195, '...we jointly and sincerely affirm the following foundational propositions of the Christian gospel as we both understand it.' IntVarsity Press and Dr. Craig Blomberg need to realize their grave error and either retract the book or correct it to show that, in fact, Evangelicals and Mormons do not agree on these areas."<sup>43</sup>

And to that this writer adds a hearty AMEN!

### Endnotes:

1. Stephen F. Cannon, *The Quarterly Journal*, "Behind the Deseret Veil," Vol. 14, No. 4, pg. 6.
2. Cited from Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966, pg 309.
3. *Mormon Doctrine*, op. cit., pg. 592, italic in original.
4. *Journal of Discourses* (JOD), Vol 6, pp. 32-33. Reprint of the Original Edition, Salt Lake City: Fifth Reprint, 1967, upper case in original, italic emphasis added.
5. The four standard works of the LDS church in order of importance to doctrine and practice are: *Doctrine and Covenants*, *Pearl of Great Price*, *The Book of Mormon* and the Bible.
6. Craig L. Blomberg and Stephen E. Robinson, *How Wide the Divide?*. Downers

Grove, Ill.: IntVarsity Press, 1997, pg. 14, emphasis added.

7. *Ibid.*, pg. 25, emphasis added.

8. I use the term "progressive Mormons" to identify a group of people within the LDS church that seem to be trying to downplay the more embarrassing and bizarre elements of the historic LDS church and more closely identify with mainstream Christianity. It is my opinion that the LDS/MGS is using this group to help in the church's ongoing public relations campaign to make the LDS seem more mainstream, but that their eventual agenda is to absorb and ultimately supplant Evangelical Christianity. Any hint of tolerance toward Evangelical Christianity can be eradicated in a heartbeat with the absolute power possessed by the LDS/MGS.

9. *How Wide the Divide?*, op. cit., pg. 14.

10. *Ibid.*, pg. 20.

11. *Ibid.*, pg. 70.

12. *Ibid.*, pg. 165.

13. *Ibid.*, pg. 38.

14. *Ibid.*, pg. 41.

15. *Ibid.*, pg. 118.

16. *Ibid.*, pg. 11, italics in original.

17. *Ibid.*, italics in original.

18. *Ibid.*, pg. 16.

19. *Ibid.*, pg. 12, italics in originals. Also I find it interesting that Robinson decries "stereotyping," yet all counter-cult researchers are "extremist," "mean-spirited" and "dishonest" fundamentalists.

20. David Van Biema, *Time* magazine, August 4, 1997, "Kingdom Come," pg. 56.

21. Harold B. Lee to seminary and institute of religion personnel, July 1964, pg. 16, DCSM:45.

22. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*. Salt Lake City: De-

seret Book Company, 1976, pg. 354, emphasis added.

23. Lyndon W. Cook, *The Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1982, pg. 293.

24. *Ibid.*

25. Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1978, Vol. 6, pg. 411.

26. *How Wide the Divide?*, op. cit., pg. 14.

27. The ability to hold two mutually exclusive beliefs at the same time.

28. *How Wide the Divide?*, op. cit., pp. 73-74.

29. *Ibid.*, pg. 208.

30. *Ibid.*, pg. 68.

31. *Ibid.*, pg. 57.

32. *Ibid.*, pg. 58.

33. *Ibid.*, pg. 68.

34. *Ibid.*, pg. 73, italics in original.

35. Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 13, pg. 95.

36. See further my article, "Behind the Deseret Veil" as cited above.

37. See further, Scott Abbot, *Sunstone* magazine, "On Ecclesiastical Endorsement at Brigham Young University," April 1997, Vol. 20:1, Issue 105, pp. 9-14.


38. *How Wide the Divide?*, op. cit., pg. 22.

39. *Ibid.*, emphasis added.

40. Dr. Gordon R. Lewis is Professor Emeritus of Systematic Theology at Denver Theological Seminary.

41. *How Wide the Divide?*, op. cit., pg. 27.

42. Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 1, pg. 51.

43. L.L. (Don) Veinot, *Midwest Christian Outreach, Inc. Journal*, "Why The Divide?", Vol. 3, No. 3, July/August, 1997, pg. 9. 

## EDITORIALS

(continued from page 2)

false prophecy. The Brownsville Assembly stopped making available the videotape of the April 6 service. However the Brownsville staff stood by Kilpatrick's words. PFO learned that internal pressures were being turned up on Kilpatrick at Brownsville as the weeks rolled on.

And then, with only 18 days left, Kilpatrick issued a "public statement," faxed to Hanegraaff and posted on the Internet. The pastor, evidently knowing the imminent failure of his "word from the Lord," admitted that "in April [he] got in the flesh and lashed out" at Hanegraaff. Acknowledging his "unChristlike behavior," he claimed "I was not speaking that as a prophet but as a shepherd putting something in the ears of God." He further contended, "This is by no means to be interpreted as an attempt to wiggle out of a prophecy."

Yet, PFO maintains that Kilpatrick's statement is intended to do just that, for the following reasons:

- In his April 6 declaration, Kilpatrick said emphatically,

"I'm speaking this not just to you, friends, to impress you, but I'm saying this as a man of God from behind this holy desk in this holy environment of a great outpouring of the Holy Spirit. ... I'm going to prophesy to you."

- For nearly 2½ months following Kilpatrick's declaration, the warning stood as a prophecy. Even Kilpatrick's Brownsville colleague, theologian Michael Brown, did not disavow it was a "prophecy" and said they would address it if Hanegraaff "is fully in business after July 5th."

- Kilpatrick is not being honest in disclaiming his pronouncement. He now claims he "felt indignation and anger." Yet in his original prophetic diatribe, he asserted: "I speak that as a man of God. I don't speak that out of vengeance, I don't speak that out of selfishness, and I don't speak it out of a hurt feeling, because my feelings are not hurt. I feel as normal today as I've ever felt. I don't have a chip on my shoulder, I don't have an ax to grind." All the while Kilpatrick knew he was lying.

- God's Word says the false prophets will be humiliated by their spurious predictions. Zechariah 13:4-5 declares: "On that day every prophet will be ashamed of his

prophetic vision. He will not put on a prophet's garment of hair in order to deceive. He will say, 'I am not a prophet. I am a farmer; the land has been my livelihood since my youth.'" How strikingly similar Kilpatrick's diversion: "I was not speaking that as a prophet but as a shepherd." Often false prophets when caught, try to shift the emphasis and evoke sympathy by falling back on their humanity. They would like everyone to forget the original facade and arrogance as they pretended to be the pipeline of the Holy Spirit.

Some within Pentecostal and Charismatic circles have long used visions, dreams, revelation and prophecy as a means to validate their "anointing." They often become militant against those who hold to the Bible alone as the believer's sole and final authority, complete for all matters of Christian belief and practice. Kilpatrick and his Brownsville staff are no exception. According to Luther Edwards in his article, "The Silencing of the Lambs," Brownsville evangelist Steve Hill argued "that God seekers are open to 'new revelation.' That is, those who are so hung up on the Bible that they can't receive new revelation do not qualify as 'God seekers.'"

Edwards also correctly notes that Brownsville advocates categorize doubters and critics as "Pharisees, resisters and blasphemers of the Holy Spirit." The article "Pensacola Intimidation" from March/April 1997 edition of *The End Times and Victorious Living* concurs with the spiritual strong-arming of the Brownsville team:

"If you want to be intimidated and lampooned, go to the Brownsville Assembly to 'try the spirit.' I know because I went. Steve Hill was very upset when he came to the pulpit to preach that night. He said that he had to get something said before he could preach. Then he talked about the 'FBI,' which he defined as the 'Fault-finding Brothers International.' He spoke so arrogantly about anyone questioning this 'move of God' that I had to claim the Blood to resist his criticism" (pg. 14).

Kilpatrick wants to be taken seriously as a prophet of God and respected by the Body of Christ for his efforts to "pastor the revival." His recent action has clearly demonstrated that he will even resort to "prophetic" terrorism in order to realize his ambitions.

While pastors do make mistakes, most pastors are not pretending to be the direct mouthpiece of God. Most pastors are not claiming to be prophets like Isaiah or Ezekiel or Jeremiah and are just humbly struggling to exegete the Scripture. They are not lambasting enemies with phony prophetic utterances. The godly pastor welcomes "Bereans" (as did Paul) to keep them close to Scripture.

Kilpatrick claimed to speak in the name of God with extrabiblical revelation. By virtue of his retraction, he is now admitting that God did not speak through him. He has, therefore, borne a false witness against God. This begs the question: Just how many other proclamations emanating from the Brownsville bunch have originated in the same carnal fashion, yet are purported to be imparted under the

auspices of the "anointing"? (See Jeremiah 23:16.) Truth be known, there are, no doubt, numerous other "spirit-anointed" "ex cathedra" statements which John Kilpatrick has made that were equally just products of his own flesh or wild imaginings.

While his "repentance" and "apology" to Hanegraaff was warranted, he still must face the fact that false prophets must be judged as such, exposed and rejected. *Disciplinary action must and should be directed at Kilpatrick.* Making false pronouncements and charging them as divine revelation is a grievous and flagrant offense. In the Old Testament, the transgression was punishable by death: "But a prophet who presumes to speak in my name anything I have not commanded him to say, or a prophet who speaks in the name of other gods, must be put to death" (Deuteronomy 18:20).

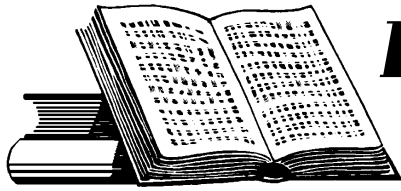
False prophecy should be regarded just as severely as were all the other capital crimes of the Old Testament. It was a public violation on the same level as witchcraft and gross immorality and therefore is subject to ecclesiastical censure. It is time for Kilpatrick's board and denomination to get serious about dealing with false prophecy and false prophets. They must not allow him to wiggle out of a prophecy or sweep it under the carpet. Michael Brown needs to make good on his pledge. Until now, this serious issue has not been dealt with.

In 1 Timothy 5:19, Paul commands: "Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses." John Kilpatrick's foolishness and sin was not done in a corner. It far exceeded two or three witnesses as he paraded his deceptions before his entire congregation and the Christian public for over two months.

Further, Kilpatrick should have well thought out the possible consequences of such flesh-induced statements, lest an overzealous, unbalanced follower tried to "fulfill" the "prophetic" pronouncement by causing serious bodily harm to Hanegraaff (or one of his family members) all under the guise of carrying out God's will. This was a legitimate concern for Hanegraaff and CRI. All in all, Kilpatrick had created a shameful spectacle.

In the same morning message, Kilpatrick "spoke in the ears of God" and declared that if someone brought a bomb in a truck to his church, it would not explode! He was almost inviting someone to bring explosives to his Pensacola church. In this day and age, he must realize that he may have invited carnage on his own people. Having a man like this out of the pulpit would be a favor to the Christian world. One may repent of false prophecies, but public trust is broken and shattered and the man is no longer "blameless" or demonstrating "good behavior." These actions and activities of false prophecies and speaking nonsense "into God's ears" should disqualify a man from public ministry for a time pending counseling and a probationary period. The Assemblies of God is just as culpable as the man himself for the fallout and harm that he has created — and is continuing to perpetuate.

—MKG



# Books in Review

## WHAT YOUR CHILD NEEDS TO KNOW ABOUT GOD

by Ron Rhodes

Harvest House Publishers, 304 pages, \$9.99

### MORMONS

#### HOW TO WITNESS TO THEM

by John Farkas and David Reed

Baker Book House, 208 pages, \$11.99

Former Latter-day Saint John Farkas and former Jehovah's Witness David Reed have again teamed up for another volume in their research and analysis of the Mormon church. *Mormons*, the pair's fourth installment examining the 9.7 million member sect, is subtitled as a textbook on *how to witness to them*, but is, in fact, that and a whole lot more.

LDS history, doctrine and authority are all adequately surveyed in the publication. Nearly half the book is divided into three sections: the first for potential converts and new converts to Mormonism; the second, for both Mormons and non-Mormons; and the third, specifically for the practicing Mormon. However, each of these divisions are equally rewarding for all readers. The chapter, "Responses — Mormons' and Yours" is a thorough review and response to objections given by seasoned Mormons to Christians and provides a series of penetrating questions for Mormons.

Several appendices also enhance the book's value. "Brief History of Mormonism" is an excellent time line of LDS history. Another defines LDS terminology and doctrine, so that the differences with orthodox Christianity are clear. Subject, Scripture and LDS scripture indexes round off the volume.

During the past several decades, the LDS church has made great inroads in shedding its "cult" and non-Christian image. And now with Christian publishers, such as InterVarsity Press, helping to further the Mormon facade, books like *Mormons* are even more essential to the Body of Christ in discerning the unbiblical beliefs of Latter-day Saints. We applaud Farkas and Reed and Baker Book House.

--MKG

Ron Rhodes' book gives parents an easy-to-read, easy-to-apply guide for teaching and training their children about God. Readers of this book will find lasting knowledge and wisdom from the Scriptures and learn ways to effectively relate them to children.

Rhodes takes readers step-by-step to encourage the fundamental principles of teaching, training and modeling as he covers areas such as the family and its home, a virtuous heart, quest for success, growing strong in the faith, the importance of a church home for fellowship and worship, the fundamentals of the faith, and, yes, even the dangers facing our kids today including cults and several facets of Eastern thought.

Each chapter is broken down into sections four to ten pages long. While part of each segment in the chapter is for parents only, there also contains a "Sharing Time" with a story to help parents with practical teaching of the concepts.

Biblical principles are explained in simple terms from examples of popcorn to toothpaste for the young mind to understand. For instance, popcorn in the form of a kernel cannot be eaten. It first must go through the fire for it to become what it was intended to be. So, too, will Christians be tested and tried as each of us achieves his or her potential.

Also contained in most chapters is a "Pass It On" principle, which is compared to passing the baton in a relay race. It depicts transferring to our children basic biblical principles to have a fulfilled Christian life. Choices and actions are always presented in terms of having consequences, whether good or bad. Wisdom, knowledge and good judgment are gained from the Scriptures as the Lord blesses those who obey Him.

*What Your Child Needs to Know About God* helps children's faith to grow as they can learn to apply a godly foundation to their lives with solid biblical principles. It's a perfect volume to help today's parents establish the roots of tomorrow's apologists.

--AMG

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