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Don't Confuse Me With the Facts . . .

“I Have a Testimony!”

by Stephen F. Cannon

As a young man in Bible College, in the early 1970s, I became fascinated with the subject of comparative religion. At that time, I began to read everything I could get my hands on about the subject of other religions, world religions, as well as those that had their origin in the United States. As I read books like *The Kingdom of the Cults* by Walter Martin and *The Four Major Cults* by Anthony Hoekema, my interest was piqued by the Mormon religion.

I decided very early that if I were to get a good grasp of the beliefs of these people, I would have to do a great deal of research into their records and documents. I then began to haunt the libraries around the Atlanta area and spent more and more time at the Emory University (Candler School of Theology) library. As my knowledge of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) began to grow, I found myself thrust into situations of witnessing and talking to members of the LDS church as they proselytized members of my own church and others. This, of course, led me into deeper research and began a pattern of debate and



counter-debate that led to even further research. My fascination with the history, doctrines, and psychology of that church grew exponentially.

The first barrier that I had to overcome in my dialogues with LDS officials and missionaries was that of term redefinition. I addressed this problem in a recent issue of *The Quarterly Journal* in an article that I wrote challenging the historicity and authenticity of *The Book of Mormon*. In that article I mentioned the frustration that many have when trying to dialogue with Latter-day Saints about spiritual matters.

In it I opined that, “When discussing doctrinal or historical points with Mormons, one must be careful to define terms. Mormons use the same terms as Orthodox Christians, but define them differently.”¹

This can be amply demonstrated by looking at how differently evangelicals and LDS define the word “Scripture.” In historic orthodox biblical

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THE GREEN RIVER OF BROWNSVILLE

Lifestyles of the Rich and Not-So Famous

A lot of things get counted at the Brownsville Assembly of God. It is the site of some fantastic claims and what has been called "the largest local church revival in the history of America."

Since the inception of the so-called "Pensacola Outpouring" on Father's Day 1995, grandiose claims have been made about the revival services hosted four nights a week, 48 weeks a year for the past three years. More than 2.5 million people reportedly have attended these services. The number of "decisions for Christ" is claimed to top 133,000.

All sorts of figures abound as a result of this purported "last days" revival and outpouring of the Holy Spirit. But these figures are quite selective and ambiguous. For example, the attendance total and number of decisions, in many cases, reflect the same person making repeated visits and decisions.

What is more disturbing is what is not being reported. Throughout the revival's public relations campaign, little, if any, coverage has been devoted to the large amount of cash being funneled into the church's coffers and into the key leaders' independent ministries through donations

and by way of the sale of videotapes, literature and revival paraphernalia. Once Pensacola's local newspaper got involved, the public learned how lucrative the revival business is.

Beginning in the fall 1997, following several months of exceptional investigative work, the *Pensacola News Journal* released a series of award-winning articles challenging the questionable practices of the leadership of the Brownsville Assembly of God church. The paper revealed a carefully planned and orchestrated revival by the church's leadership — the antithesis of the claimed spontaneous move of God — and has shown how some claims have been fabricated to enhance the revival's reputation.

The Brownsville leadership's financial benefits have become a focal point for the newspaper's ongoing reports. PFO has long contended that the revival was more commodities and merchandising than biblical sanctification. (See "The Murky River of Brownsville," *The Quarterly Journal*, April-June 1997.) The *News Journal* information only sustained in greater detail what PFO had already discerned.

For 1997, the newspaper estimated "the total revival revenue was between \$4.3 million and \$5.4 million for that one year." These figures were based upon on-site donations and contributions, sales of books, tapes and other literature, and funds from two ministers' conferences sponsored by the revival.

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WATCHTOWER ISSUES DOUBLE STANDARD ON BLOOD TRANSFUSION

A lawsuit over human rights by the Watchtower Society against the government of Bulgaria has resulted in the sect issuing conflicting statements about its ban on blood transfusions. For over a half-century, the Watchtower has placed in jeopardy the lives of its members with a restriction on accepting blood transfusions. The longstanding policy of the organization has been that "the receiver of a blood transfusion must be cut off from God's people by excommunication or disfellowshipping" (*The Watchtower*, Jan. 15, 1961, pg. 64).

In mid-1997, the Christian Association of Jehovah's Witnesses petitioned the European Commission on Human Rights, alleging that its members were victims of persecution at the hands of the Bulgarian government. Government officials from Bulgaria maintained that their conduct was warranted because the Watchtower teaches "disrespect for the democratic institutions" and "does not have respect for human life as it requires [members] to refuse blood transfusion even when this brings death."

According to a July 1997 press communiqué issued by the Secretary to the European Commission of Human Rights, the Watchtower apparently disavowed its harmful prohibition. The dispatch stated that, "In respect of the refusal of blood transfusion, the applicant association submits that there are no religious sanctions for a Jehovah's Witness who chooses to accept blood transfusion and that, therefore, the fact that the religious doctrine of Jehovah's Witnesses is against blood transfusion cannot amount to a threat to 'public health'."

The Watchtower apparently repeated this new position. A communiqué last March from the European Commission announced that, "The applicant undertook with regard to its stance on blood transfusions to draft a statement for inclusion in its statute providing that members should have free choice in the matter for themselves and their children, without any control or sanction on the part of the association."

David Reed, a former Jehovah's Witness, suggests three possible explanations for the new stance: 1) The action is merely "theocratic war strategy" (i.e., permissible lying to its enemies); 2) The Society believes that the anomaly could be confined to the small country of Bulgaria and that word of it would not spread outside Bulgaria; or 3) Ground work is being laid for a withdrawal of its ban on blood transfusions.

Reed also notes that the concessions made in Bulgaria will have far-reaching effects: "The JW leadership's agreement to stop enforcing its ban on blood will automatically affect Jehovah's Witnesses throughout Europe because the European Commission of Human Rights is an agency of the Council of Europe, with its decisions serving as legal precedent for member states."

In late April, the Watchtower issued formal word of an "amicable settlement agreed to by the Government of Bulgaria and the Christian Association of Jehovah's Witnesses." However, the news release from the Public Affairs Office of the Brooklyn-based sect which announced the "settlement" carefully shrouded the free choice on blood by stating only, "The agreement also includes an acknowledgement that each individual has the freedom to choose the type of medical treatment he receives." It further added to the deception by stating, "The terms of the agreement do not reflect a change in the doctrines of Jehovah's Witnesses."

During the past several years, the Watchtower has experienced pressure to suspend its prohibition on blood transfusions from a group calling itself, "The Associated Jehovah's Witnesses for Reform on Blood — Elders and Hospital Liaison Committee Members."

—MKG

SCIENTOLOGISTS ENCOUNTER GUNFIRE

Members of the Church of Scientology were greeted with gunfire after they allegedly trespassed onto property owned by retired investment banker Robert S. Minton. Minton is a millionaire who has, in recent months, funded anti-Scientology efforts after learning of the church's effort to censor information about itself on the Internet.

In late July, Minton was at a weekend home on his 200-acre farm in southern New Hampshire with a former Scientologist, Stacy Young. He had been helping Young and her husband, Vaughn, also a former Scientologist. The Youngs are prominent critics of Scientology who have worked with other former Scientologists and as consultants in lawsuits against Scientology.

According to a story published in the *St. Petersburg Times*, Sandown, N.H., police chief Scott Currier said "the Scientologists and a private investigator they hired had been in town trying to dig up dirt on Minton." Minton said that a member of the group came on his property to

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The Alpha Course

Final Answer or Fatal Attraction?

by G. Richard Fisher

When the April 27, 1998, edition of *Christianity Today* magazine ran a full-page advertisement promoting a new line of resources by the respected Christian publisher, David C. Cook Communications, how could one doubt the trustworthiness of such materials? If along with that, they were endorsed in that same promotion by J.I. Packer, Alister McGrath, Luis Palau and Leighton Ford, how could one hesitate even for a moment — how could one resist? Surely this is a bandwagon worthy of a ride.

The Alpha program sounds like a great idea. After all, with such heavyweights backing it and a program to facilitate an introduction to the Christian faith (with weekend retreats and group discussions) it has to be good — or does it? If nothing else, one must admit that Alpha is packaged impressively for maximum sales.

Popularity does not mean that something is true. If it did, Santa Claus and the Easter Bunny would be real entities. Popularity does not automatically equal truth nor can it create truth.

ALPHA ROOTS

The Alpha Course originated in the United Kingdom at Holy Trinity Brompton Church — an Anglican church in London — through curates Nicky Gumbel and Sandy Millar. The earliest versions go as far back as 1977. Gumbel began teaching the current version in 1990. He acknowledges that it is always open to revision.

Author Dave Hunt reminds us that “Holy Trinity Brompton in London ... became the center of holy laughter for England and Europe.”¹ It has become known for the knock ‘em down services and “slaying” marathons that are traced to a purported anointing by the former Toronto Airport Vineyard Church pastored by John Arnott. Taxis are provided at Holy Trinity for parishioners too “drunk in the Spirit” to drive home from services. Such activity is a blatant violation of the rules of decorum in worship outlined in 1 Corinthians 14.

Evangelist Stephen Hill, who helps oversee the pandemonium at the Brownsville Assembly of God in Pensacola, Fla., claims he received his “anointing” and powerful “slaying in the Spirit” abilities from Holy Trinity Brompton. People believe he is a conduit for the “power.” Our personal experience with Hill is you go down only if you want to go down.²

“The Brownsville Outpouring” has now become a traveling road show with all kinds of “revival” paraphernalia for sale which generates hundreds of thousands of dollars a year for the revival’s key players.³ *The Pensacola News Journal* articles document that Brownsville leaders continue to be loose with the truth as they rake in incredibly huge amounts of cash which are being partly socked into personal real estate. Brownsville’s

“power,” in the words of Rev. Ike, seems to be “green power” in the final analysis.

ALPHA BRITS

The Feb. 9, 1998, issue of *Christianity Today* featured a four-page news report on the Alpha Course titled “The Alpha-Brits Are Coming.” The magazine explained the acronym ALPHA:

“A—Anyone interested in finding out more about the Christian faith; L—Learning and Laughter; P—Pasta (eating together gives people the chance to know each other); H—Helping one another (small groups are used for discussion of issues raised during the lectures); A—Ask anything. No question is seen as too simple or too hostile.”⁴

The same article went on to say that not all is well in Alpha land:

“An infectious enthusiasm, entrepreneurial spirit, and a bold plan for growth are all trademarks among Alpha’s top leaders. But not everyone is cheering Alpha onward. Some church leaders have found Alpha teaching too charismatic, too experience-driven, and too negative about traditional churches. Martyn Percy, director of the Lincoln Theological Institute for the Study of Religion and Society of the University of Sheffield, England, has commented about Alpha that it is ‘a package rather

than a pilgrimage.' In a recent essay, he said, 'It is a confident but narrow expression of Christianity, which stresses the personal experience of the Spirit over the Spirit in the church. ... The Alpha approach has been faulted for pushing an experience-driven approach to evangelism that sidesteps intellectual difficulties.'⁵

There is no doubting that the Alpha program, like many other fads, caught on with the help of slick marketing by David C. Cook Communications and is enjoying worldwide success, at least for now. The previously mentioned *Christianity Today* advertisement says that a half-million people took the course in 1997 alone.

ALPHA BITS

The Alpha Course is an array of videos, audiocassettes, books, booklets, testimonials and leader's videos and guidebooks. One would have to spend hundreds of dollars to buy all the paraphernalia.

The Alpha Course and program is also promoted and endorsed by glowing personal testimonies but on close examination has many weaknesses and falls short of meeting biblical scrutiny. Isaiah 8:20 reminds us: "To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." Jim Jones, even in the final hours of his regime in Guyana, could produce glowing testimonials. Collective cheerleading does not create truth.

One such testimony reported by *Christianity Today* is that of Keith Prestridge, a former punk rocker:

"Prestridge offered a pugilist's description of Alpha's Holy Spirit weekend: 'They laid hands on me, and I knew release, you know? I know those of you who have felt the Spirit know what it's like. It's like being in a good fight and suddenly being knocked out.'⁶

One would have to search long and hard to find a verse that would compare the Holy Spirit to a boxer who beats up people! This is reminis-

cent of John Wimber's fantasy of Jesus as a sumo wrestler who beats people around.⁷ And one has to look even harder for a Scripture verse that says you can "feel" the Holy Spirit.

Though the Alpha Course is mostly held in Vineyard and Charismatic churches, Roman Catholic, Anglican and other groups are using them.⁸ Doctrinal issues have been diminished or ignored in spite of 1 Timothy 4:13, 16.

ALPHA CRITICISM

The British publication, *The Christian Research Network Journal*, has scrutinized the Alpha program and come up with six major criticisms. The *Journal* says the Alpha Course is: "massively over-hyped and spiritually deceptive ... with its wholly inadequate view of Christian conversion and experience."⁹

Chris Hand in his analysis of Alpha concludes the following:

"1. The God of Alpha is not the God of the Bible. ... it does not present us with the God who has revealed Himself in the Bible. ... It simply fails to tell us anything we need to know about God.

2. The plight of man in Alpha is not as serious as in the Bible. ... Alpha does not use strong terms and leaves us rather unclear about where we stand. As one follows its argument, sin is more to be seen in the way we have 'messed up our lives.'... For all the gravity of sin, Alpha never allows us to feel too bad about ourselves. It never permits us to see ourselves in God's sight. That is a big omission.

3. The Jesus Christ of Alpha is not the Jesus Christ of the Bible. ... despite having part of the course titled 'Why did Jesus die?', it is unable in the final analysis to answer this question. ...

4. The love of God in Alpha is not the love of God of the Bible. ... The God of the Bible is love but it is love that is seen in His willingness to save sinners. ... without the context of God's holiness and absolute perfection,

the meaning of love is lost to us

5. The Holy Spirit of Alpha is not the Holy Spirit of the Bible. ... Alpha's 'Spirit' appears to work in ways that lie *outside* the confines of Scripture. Whoever it is that people are 'introduced' to at the Alpha Weekend, it is not the Holy Spirit. But whoever this mysterious guest is, he is equally at home with the ecstatic gatherings of New Age enthusiasts and non-Christian religions alike.

6. Conversions in Alpha are not like the conversions in the Bible. ... More often than not it is an emotional experience about the love of God but without *any* understanding of holiness or the need to be saved from our sins. ... For all its efforts, Alpha does not help us to know God. It does not describe the true and living God for us. It does not diagnose man's condition accurately enough. ... it is unable to supply us with the 'good news'.¹⁰

Alpha is just new window dressing on the old "Holy Ghost bartender" theme, the Toronto theme and the Brownsville reruns. It could be retitled "Steps to Frenzy" or "Finding God in My Feelings", or "Letting Out the Animal Inside." The result is not unlike the old Esalen groups, primal scream therapy or the lunacy of a drug experience.

ALPHA DEFICIENCIES

Alan Howe informs us:

"Central to the Alpha Course is not the Christian gospel, but the so-called 'Holy Spirit Weekend' which is in fact a thinly-disguised opportunity for initiation into the Toronto Blessing experience. Nicky Gumbel, curate at Holy Trinity, Brompton had received the 'blessing' from Eleanor Mumford of the South-West London Vineyard following her return from Toronto in May 1994. Subsequent to this event, Toronto-style teaching concerning the reception of the Holy Spirit took centre-stage. An unknown evangelistic tool had thus

become a syncretistic mixture of orthodoxy and heresy."¹¹

ALPHA SHAKE AND BAKE

A close look at the words of Nicky Gumbel, as quoted by the *CRN Journal*, show the real direction of the Alpha Course. Gumbel unashamedly is trying to move people into esoteric experiences, altered states of consciousness, self-hypnosis and mindless emotionalism and then tell his followers it is all of God. Gumbel uses "God's words" to move people toward the ultimate end which is hysteria, loss of control and mindlessness.

Gumbel says that the purpose of the Holy Spirit weekends is to expect all kinds of strange manifestations and bodily agitations. Consider his comments:

"Sometimes, when people are filled, they shake like a leaf in the wind. Others find themselves breathing deeply as if almost physically breathing in the Spirit. ... Physical heat sometimes accompanies the filling of the Spirit and people experience it in their hands or some other part of their bodies. One person described a feeling of 'glowing all over'. Another said she experienced 'liquid heat'. Still another described 'burning in my arms when I was not hot'."¹²

Surely this cannot be far behind the Mormon's "burning in the bosom" where truth is sacrificed for feeling and we no longer walk by faith but by tingles, sensations and subjective, fallible impressions.

Someone should make Gumbel aware that one can get the same results practicing pagan Kundalini. Edward Andrews, in documenting the emotional excesses of the heretical Shakers, reports phenomenon that would parallel Gumbel's excesses.

To suggest that the kinds of manifestations encouraged in Alpha could be remotely connected to Christianity is absurd. They are more readily a product of self-hypnosis, suggestion and altered states of consciousness or even perhaps the demonic and occultic.

The Alpha Course may very well be a huge success in a society driven by a need for new experiences, new highs and out-of-control emotionalism but when held up to the pure light of Scripture, it is an enormous failure. No matter who publishes it or who endorses it, the final question is: How does it *all* conform to the Word of God?

In his interview with *Christianity Today*, Gumbel indicated that the Alpha Course is evolving. What Alpha is today, it may not be tomorrow. Could it get worse? Gumbel said: "We haven't got everything perfect. Alpha is alive. It's not fixed."¹³

ALPHA SOURCE

This writer has read Gumbel's book, *Questions of Life*, which is the main text for Alpha teaching. The 263-page volume relies on mainstream evangelical writers, as well as the likes of the aberrant John Wimber. Though agreeing for the most part with the *CRN Journal* article, this writer might have stressed things from a slightly different perspective and have had less concern for a few of the points. Maybe we could call it giving the devil his due.

CRN said that "The God of *Alpha* is not the God of the Bible." It is true that *Questions of Life* presents no real doctrine of God nor does it seek to teach about His person, character or attributes. Alpha leaders would probably reply that their introduction to the Christian faith is limited in nature or to a particular theme. Namely, that it mainly addresses Jesus, salvation and living the Christian life and is not presenting systematic theology of all the doctrines of Scripture as do other books.

But failure to present even the basics about the person of God (in evangelism) may leave the person being witnessed to, in various forms of mental idolatry or a new age mentality, which is a faulty foundation for any supposed conversion. Alpha passes over the person of God. Evangelization without some proper understanding of God is suspect and deficient. Here CRN is absolutely right.

Secondly, the plight of man in Alpha is not as serious as in the Bible. In fairness, Gumbel does talk of the "pollution of sin," as well as "the power of sin" and "the penalty of sin."¹⁴ He does elaborate on Romans 3:23.¹⁵ Gumbel does talk about the evil that comes out of a man's heart and our guilt because of breaking God's laws.¹⁶ Gumbel's emphasis on the consequences of sin, which he discusses early in the book, pulls the reader in by way of identification. Gumbel has not entirely missed it here, though he does at other points.

Next is the comment that the "Jesus Christ of *Alpha* is not the Jesus Christ of the Bible." In his chapter, "Who Is Jesus?," Gumbel draws straight from Josh McDowell, C.S. Lewis and F.F. Bruce. Gumbel does a fairly good job on the deity of Christ, fulfilled prophecies and the resurrection of the Savior. How could he not have in transcribing from the three above-mentioned scholars? In Gumbel's section, "Why Did Jesus Die?," there was enough information on substitution and crucifixion, as well as Scripture citations on the work of Christ, to satisfy this writer.

The successive comment that the "love of God in *Alpha* is not the love of the God of the Bible" is a deficiency which could well go back to the first point. In stressing the love of God apart from the balance of all His other attributes, one is left with faulty views of God. Love without holiness and justice is not real love at all.

Concerning the observation that the "Holy Spirit of *Alpha* is not the Holy Spirit of the Bible," Gumbel devotes 13 pages giving a fairly mainstream answer to "Who Is The Holy Spirit?"¹⁷ The Holy Spirit, in *Questions of Life*, is presented in orthodox terms and in textbook fashion. The big problem comes in the pages to follow, which speaks to the issue of: *How does the Holy Spirit act and what does He do to believers?*

Here, Gumbel wanders off the biblical path and into the twilight zone of speculation and emotionalism. The Holy Spirit of Alpha is not the Comforter who assists us in the development of the fruit of the Spirit and

practical Christian living but is a capricious being who makes us do all kinds of weird and crazy things. His theme song could well be "Shake, Rattle and Roll." If one could speak of heresies in sanctification, it would be here. If there are converts, they are now thrown into the briars and thickets of pure speculation, human imagination and emotional excess.

The "believer" is inundated with teaching about tongues-speaking and burning body parts.¹⁸ We are asked and expected to believe in the late John Wimber's words of knowledge.¹⁹ The old party line on healing is spelled out.²⁰ We are instructed to seek guidance in visions, voices and dreams.²¹ The maternity room turns into the twilight zone and a maze for the new converts.

This is typical charismatic fare without a hint from Gumbel that some things in the Bible may be historic and descriptive, not necessarily prescriptive. No one has recently reproduced the parting of the Red Sea (or any sea), manna from heaven, the raising of the dead or miraculous deliverances from prison, but only sensationalism that man can produce emotionally and in altered states. In fact, Gumbel's speculation about how the Spirit works misrepresents the Holy Spirit and His work today. There is much attention to sensationalism and little to the fruit of the Spirit. CRN is "right on" in this criticism.

Finally, CNR remarks that the "conversions in *Alpha* are not like conversions in the Bible." Time will tell on this one. But conversions based on a faulty foundation and misinformation about God cannot last. Converts (if they are) led into the quicksand of emotions, altered states of consciousness, wild emotional weekends, and the pursuit of dreams and visions, have no real future and will wash out. The conversion stories that CRN detailed are questionable and are more like occultic experiences than Christian ones. One can only mourn for these "converts." Only God knows if they are truly born or "stillborn."

ALPHA KINGDOM

One area of major concern not addressed by CRN is Gumbel's teach-

ing of Kingdom Now theology. Kingdom Now theology (sometimes called Dominionism or Triumphalism) is the teaching that we can now have (with enough faith) all or most of the physical and health benefits promised at Christ's ultimate and perfect Kingdom. In other words, we can begin to claim for ourselves most Kingdom benefits here and now.

The illusion that we can now have the physical aspects of God's perfect future Kingdom is expressed in this way by Gumbel, "The Kingdom is both 'now' and 'not yet.'" ²² Gumbel also says that the age to come can be realized in principle in this age. He goes on to affirm:

"We live between the times, when the age to come has broken into history. The old age goes on, but the powers of the new era have erupted into this age. ... healing is one of the signs of the Kingdom which was inaugurated by Jesus Christ and continues to this day. Hence we should expect God to continue to heal miraculously today as part of His Kingdom activity."²³

Apologist Hank Hanegraaff praises the Kingdom Now illusions in these words:

"Leaders of the Counterfeit Revival demand the Kingdom now! — in this life, with all of its attendant material wealth, public accolades, physical health, and earthly power."²⁴

Gumbel bases his Kingdom Now theology on his misinterpretation of two Scriptures. First, he cites the questionable (and often disputed) Mark 16:15-20. And like most of his persuasion, he is selective. He does not press the verse and suggest that he handles poisonous serpents or that he can empty out cemeteries. Why not do it all?

The Mark 16 passage cited above is hotly disputed as to authenticity. Historically the orthodox position on the Scripture has been the inspiration and inerrancy of the original autographs. No one should base major claims on a few verses that are legitimately questionable. The rejection of these verses

based on internal and external evidence in no way alters crucial doctrines of the Christian life.²⁵

Charles R. Erdman, commenting on the Gospel of Mark, affirms that: "The closing verses of this Gospel are commonly regarded as an appendix, added by a later hand."²⁶

The Geneva Bible explains the controversy over the ending of the Gospel of Mark:

"Scholars differ regarding whether these verses were originally part of this Gospel. Some important early Greek manuscripts lack these verses, other manuscripts have vv. 9-20 (known as the 'Longer Ending'), and still others have a 'Shorter Ending' (roughly one verse long). A few manuscripts have both the 'Shorter Ending' and the 'Longer Ending.' Because of these differences some scholars believe that vv. 9-20 were added later and not written by Mark."²⁷

In his further attempts to justify Kingdom Now ideas, Gumbel also quotes John 14:12 that says those that believe will do greater works than Jesus. If Gumbel's view is true, he should lead the way in regularly walking on water, multiplying food, raising the dead, demonstrating a transfiguration body, changing water to wine, healing masses of incurable diseases, controlling storms and getting tax money from the mouth of fish. After all, how else could we do greater works than Jesus? Certainly Gumbel is not a model of his own teaching. Having someone fall down or say their headache is gone or they have a warm feeling in their elbow is a comic illusion and a charade when compared to the power and scope of the ministry of Christ.

Gumbel should be honest and point out that many able expositors say that the greater works have to do with more extensive results in the conversion of more sinners. The word "greater" is not used to show the exertion of power but rather the effects of Gospel preaching. Christ's lifetime ministry (as miraculous as it was) ended with just a few at the cross. His post-resurrection ministry

through the Apostles and the Church has brought untold millions to the experience of salvation.

Alexander Maclaren observes:

"... the comparison is drawn between the limited sphere and the small results of Christ's work upon earth, and the worldwide sweep and majestic magnitude of the results of the application of that work by His servants' witnessing work. The wider and more complete spiritual results achieved by the ministration of the servants than by the ministration of the Lord is the point of comparison here. And I need only remind you that the poorest Christian who can go to a brother soul, and by word or life can draw that soul to a Christ whom it apprehends as dying for its sins and raised for its glorifying, does a mightier thing than it was possible for the Master to do by life or lip whilst He was here upon earth."²⁸

Likewise, distinguished Bible teacher Oliver B. Greene points out:

"Greek scholars tell us that this phrase in the Greek reads, 'And greater than these shall he do.' Notice the word 'works' is not there; therefore it stands to reason that Jesus was not referring to physical miracles, but rather to something else that would be of greater magnitude than raising a dead person or healing a sick body. The apostles would do something *greater* than the miracles He had performed, and I do not doubt that He was speaking of the preaching of the Gospel. Preaching the Gospel of a risen and exalted Christ, proclaiming the grace of God to every creature, pointing souls from darkness to light and causing unbelievers to be born of the Spirit is a far greater miracle than healing a leper or causing a withered arm to be made whole."²⁹

Dr. Harry Ironside further points out:

"When you realize that when Jesus left this scene, committing

His gospel to a little group of eleven men in order that they might carry it to the ends of the earth, at that time the whole world, with the exception of a few in Israel, was lost in the darkness of heathenism. But in three hundred years Christianity closed nearly all the temples of the heathen Roman Empire, and numbered its converts by millions. These were the greater works, and down through the centuries He still carries on this ministry."³⁰

Charles Ryrie comments on John 14:12:

"Greater in extent (through the worldwide preaching of the gospel) and effect (the spiritual redemption and placing in the body of Christ multitudes of people since the day of Pentecost)."³¹

In *The Geneva Study Bible's* Gospel of John, the following commentary is offered:

"14:12 greater works than these. History proves that Jesus is not affirming that each believer will do greater miracles than He did. The church's work in the power of the Holy Spirit will be 'greater' than Jesus' works in number and territory."³²

Is the Kingdom "now," in any sense? Certainly the Kingdom was embodied in Christ. There was a partially "now" aspect as the King walked the earth healing sicknesses and commanding demons, giving us a glimpse of the perfect Kingdom. Since His Ascension, our Lord, through the Holy Spirit, extends the *spiritual* blessings of the Kingdom through forgiveness, redemption and salvation. He Himself said, "My Kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36). The perfect and completed Kingdom is yet to come.

A Sunday school child would know that earth is not heaven and that we pray for the Kingdom to come. That complete final perfect Kingdom will come when the King comes again (Matthew 26:29).

Our physical corruption awaits the day it will put on incorruption and perfection (1 Corinthians 15). We wait for the redemption of our body (Romans 8:23).

George Eldon Ladd describes the sharp differences between spiritual blessings (and benefits of the mediated Kingdom at this time) and the completed and perfect Kingdom with all its physical benefits and blessings in this way:

"The presence of the messianic salvation is also seen in Jesus' miracles of healing for which the Greek word meaning 'to save' is used. The presence of the Kingdom of God in Jesus meant deliverance from hemorrhage (Mark 5:34), blindness (Mark 10:52), demon possession (Luke 8:36) and even death itself (Mark 5:23). Jesus claimed that these deliverances were evidences of the presence of the messianic salvation (Matt. 11:4-5). They were pledges of the life of the eschatological Kingdom *which would finally mean immortality for the body*. The Kingdom of God is concerned not only with men's souls but with the salvation of the whole man."³³

Ladd continues:

"The limitation of these physical deliverances illustrates the nature of the present Kingdom *in contrast to its future manifestation*. In the eschatological Kingdom, all 'who are accounted worthy to attain to that age' (Luke 20:35) will be saved from sickness and death in the immortal life of the resurrection. In the present working of the Kingdom [Christ's earthly ministry], this saving power reached only a few. Not all the sick and crippled were saved, nor were all the dead raised. Only three instances of restoration to life are recorded in the Gospels. Men must come into direct contact with Jesus or His disciples to be healed (Mark 6:56). The saving power of the Kingdom was *not yet* universally operative."³⁴

ALF - ALPHA

Alpha's deficiencies outweigh any merit. The acrostic ALF can be used to remember the deficiencies.

Advocating Kingdom Now theories.
Locked into fickle emotions.
Faulty biblical understanding.

Gumbel has some truth but much error. The Alpha course is a well-packaged meal with a dose of *e. coli*. The non-discerning are at risk. The naive may "hold the finger of a small idea and forget the fist of falsities that are smuggled in, in the process."³⁵

The idea of a fatal attraction has come to mean a relationship that was thought to be wonderful, finally turning out to destroy a person. The Alpha Course may very well fit that description as it claims to take people through Bible terrain but in reality turns them inward to their emotions and experiences. It locks them into a detour and cycle of fickle emotions, carnal feelings and self-focus and away from the true lover of their souls. It will be another fad that will leave people dazed, confused, and worse off in the long run. So-called Holy Ghost weekends cannot compare to a sane and balanced daily walk with Jesus Christ through the Scriptures.

As a pastor, hardly a week goes by that there is not someone on the phone trying to sell me a new program, a new video, or new curriculum that is going to "make" my church all it needs to be. My conviction is that the Scriptures are all I need to make my church what it should be. The problem is so many

people are sidetracked and detoured, keeping up with all the new fads being shoved in their faces and hawked at every turn. We need to "just say no" to the deluge of new programs, so-called revival paraphernalia, the marketing and prostitution of Christianity, as well as the hucksters and sit down with the Scriptures daily and let God's Word minister to us (2 Timothy 3:15-17). We need to turn from the distractions and fatal attractions and pour ourselves into our local churches, using our gifts for ministry.

Endnotes:

1. Dave Hunt, *Occult Invasion*. Eugene, Ore.: Harvest House Publishers, 1997, pg. 521.
2. See further, *The Quarterly Journal*, April-June 1997, "The Murky River of Brownsville" and January-March 1998, "The Ragging River of Brownsville."
3. See further, *The Pensacola News Journal's* series of feature articles from November 16-20, 1997. Also subsequent articles by the newspaper on March 5, 1998, April 5, 1998 and June 21-24, 1998. Also see the editorial "The Green River of Brownsville — Lifestyles of the Rich and Not-so Famous" in this issue of the *Journal*.
4. *Christianity Today*, Feb. 9, 1998, pg. 37.
5. *Ibid.*, pp. 37, 39.
6. *Ibid.*, pg. 38.
7. See further, Hank Hanegraaff, *Counterfeit Revival*. Dallas: Word Publishers, 1997, pg. 191.
8. *Christianity Today*, op. cit., Feb. 9, 1998, pg. 38.
9. *The Christian Research Network Journal*, Spring 1998, pg. 22.
10. *Ibid.*, pp. 20-21.
11. *Ibid.*, pg. 12.
12. *Ibid.*, pg. 21.
13. *Christianity Today*, op. cit., Feb. 9, 1998, pg. 39.
14. Nicky Gumbel, *Questions of Life*.

- Colorado Springs, Colo.: David C. Cook Communications, 1996, pp. 44-47.
15. *Ibid.*, pg. 44.
 16. *Ibid.*, pp. 44-45.
 17. *Ibid.*, pp. 119-131.
 18. *Ibid.*, pg. 152.
 19. *Ibid.*, pp. 199-200.
 20. *Ibid.*, pp. 199-215.
 21. *Ibid.*, pp. 103-118.
 22. *Ibid.*, pg. 44.
 23. *Ibid.*, pp. 204, 206.
 24. *Counterfeit Revival*, op. cit., pg. 108.
 25. For a fuller investigation, see James R. White, *The King James Only Controversy*. Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1995, especially pp. 150, 255-257.
 26. Charles R. Erdman, *The Gospel of Mark*. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1967, pg. 198.
 27. *The Geneva Bible*, pg. 1597.
 28. Alexander Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture - St. John*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1984, pg. 307.
 29. Oliver B. Greene, *The Gospel According To John*. Greenville, S.C.: The Gospel Hour, Inc., Vol. 2, 1973, pp. 369-370.
 30. Harry Ironside, *Addresses on The Gospel of John*. Neptune, N.J.: Loizeaux Brothers, 1984, pg. 619.
 31. *The Ryrie Study Bible*, New Testament, pg. 191.
 32. *The Geneva Bible*, pg. 1691.
 33. George Eldon Ladd, *Jesus And The Kingdom*. Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1964, pg. 207, emphasis added.
 34. *Ibid.*, emphasis added. For a fuller treatment of Kingdom Now theology, the people who advocate it, and the nuances of difference between them, see: Michael G. Moriarty, *The New Charismatics*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992; H. Wayne House and Thomas Ice, *Dominion Theology: Blessing or Curse?* Portland, Ore.: Multnomah Press, 1988; and Bruce Barron, *Heaven on Earth?* Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992.
 35. Quote from Ravi Zacharias, *Deliver Us From Evil*, tape #2, Word Video Resources, 1997.

I HAVE A TESTIMONY!

(continued from page 1)

Christianity, the term "Scripture" (Greek: *graphe*) has come to mean that body of writings incorporated from the Hebrew (Old Testament) and Greek (New Testament) inspired writings known today as the Bible. Latter-day Saints, however, have added three other volumes to the canon of Holy Writ and thus greatly expanded the meaning of the term "Scripture."

Along with the Bible, they recognize *The Book of Mormon*, *Doctrine and Covenants* and the *Pearl of Great Price*.

Thus, when engaging in dialogue with Latter-day Saints, Christians have to be aware when the LDS person quotes Scripture to prove a point or define the term, of exactly which "Scripture" are they quoting: the Bible, *The Book of Mormon*, *Doctrine and Covenants* or the *Pearl of Great Price*. It is often difficult to tell because the other three volumes in

their canon have been produced using King James English, so that they sound like the Bible.

Another key word that bears discussion and clarification is the word "Gospel." Christians committed to the sufficiency of the Bible allow this Scripture to define what the word Gospel means (Greek: *euaggelion* = good news). According to 1 Corinthians 15:1-4, this "good news" is that Jesus Christ died for our sins, was buried, and that on the third day was

resurrected, all according to the Scriptures (the Bible). Therefore, the good news, the Gospel, is the atoning work of Jesus Christ!

However, just as they expanded the Scripture, the Mormons also expand the meaning of the word "Gospel." The late Mormon Apostle Bruce R. McConkie, stated in his work *Mormon Doctrine*:

"The *gospel* of Jesus Christ is the plan of salvation. It embraces all of the laws, principals, doctrines, rites, ordinances, acts, powers, authorities, and keys necessary to save and exalt men in the highest heaven hereafter. It is the covenant of salvation which the Lord makes with men on earth."²

A key element of this expanded definition (that would fall under the term "authorities" above) is the recognition of Joseph Smith as "the Prophet of the restoration." We will see, in Mormon thought, that faith in the good news of Jesus Christ alone is not sufficient to secure one's salvation. To the devout Latter-day Saint, it is Jesus Christ *and* Joseph Smith, and then the rest of the above definition.

These are only a couple of the many theological terms and words that the LDS people redefine. When entering into any meaningful dialogue with them, it is necessary at the outset of the dialogue to agree on just what you mean when you use a word. Though it may seem a little bit tedious at first, term definition is absolutely essential in order to keep everyone straight on what is being discussed.

HEAD FIRST INTO A BRICK WALL

Once I understood that term definition was essential, I began to see the dialogue sessions take on new depths. Although the missionaries or LDS friends rarely agreed with my definitions, at least when I spoke they knew the context in which I was speaking. Major hurdle No. 1 was cleared and I started picking up a little more speed in the discussions.

At that time I began serious research into the history of the Mormon

church. I was reading the LDS' seven-volume *History of the Church*, selected volumes of the *Journal of Discourses*, and contrasting them with Mormon historian Fawn Brodie's penetrating biography of Joseph Smith, *No Man Knows My History*, and Jerald and Sandra Tanner's *Mormonism - Shadow or Reality?* I then obtained photocopies of the first editions of the standard works of the LDS church and started documenting the many changes that had been made to these "revelations" through the years. Suddenly, it seemed that the dialogue sessions had reached a new level. I began to notice a new level of discomfort in those with whom I was talking. This was especially true with a couple of sets of missionaries with whom I had been meeting regularly on opposite sides of the city. It actually began to look as though I was making some headway with one of these young men in particular.

I remember, that in the next-to-last session with one duo, I had been pointing out the discrepancies in the several different versions of Joseph Smith's first vision. I documented these differing versions with some photostats sent to me by a friend who had left the Mormon church. The young elders admitted that this was the first they had heard on the subject. One of them seemed particularly interested/troubled by the information. They wanted to take the documentation back to their mission president, discuss it with him, and have a final session the following week.

At that follow-up meeting, the missionary that seemed to be most interested did not return. He was replaced by an older missionary who from the outset became the spokesman for the duo. When I asked what they had found out about the differing versions of the first vision, "Elder Spokesman" countered with a question of his own, and the conversation took a completely new direction. The dialogue went something like this:

Elder: Mr. Cannon, have you ever read *The Book of Mormon*?

SC: Well, yes. I've read it all the way through once and read cer-

tain portions several times.

Elder: Then you are familiar with the challenge of Moroni 10?

SC: I think so. But let's look it up together just to make sure I'm thinking about the correct passage.

Other Elder (reading aloud): Moroni 10:3 — "Behold, I would exhort you that when ye shall read these things, if it be wisdom in God that ye should read them, that ye would remember how merciful the Lord hath been unto the children of men, from the creation of Adam even down unto the time that ye shall receive these things, and ponder it in your hearts." Verse 4 — "And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost." And verse 5 — "And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things."

SC: Okay. Yes, I am familiar with those passages.

Elder: Have you ever accepted that challenge? Have you ever prayed and asked Heavenly Father if these things are true?

SC: By "these things," do you mean the first vision or *The Book of Mormon*? If you mean *The Book of Mormon*, then yes, I have prayed and asked God if the things therein are true. I have not prayed specifically about the first vision.

Elder: And did you receive a witness of the Holy Ghost that *The Book of Mormon* is true?

SC: No, I did not receive such a witness.

Elder: Well, I'd like to tell you that I too took the challenge of Moroni 10. I asked my Heavenly Father if those things were true and it was revealed to me through the power of the Holy Ghost that they are true. I can

honestly say to you tonight that I *know* that God hears and answers my prayers. I *know* that Joseph Smith is a prophet of God and that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the only True and Living Church on the earth. This I testify to you in the name of Jesus Christ and by the power of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

SC: I find that very interesting. You say that you *know* these things to be true.

Elder: Yes, that's right.

SC: You know that these things are true because you prayed about them and somehow God answered you. How did He do this, did you hear an audible voice or was it an impression in your mind or what?

Elder: It's a little hard to describe, but when I asked Heavenly Father if these things were true, there was a feeling that welled up inside me and a heat that went through me and from then on, I *knew* that it was the truth.

SC: So, your basis for confirming truth from that time forward is based on a feeling? I find that a little thin, but let me ask you, have you ever prayed about all the different versions of the First Vision? Do you have a feeling as to which version is correct?

Elder: Well, let me just say quickly, before we have to go to another appointment, that despite the fact that you have shown us some pretty interesting historical documentation, and I would have to study much deeper into the whole issue, that despite all this [holding documentation] I *know* that Joseph Smith is a Prophet of God, and that God and Jesus Christ did appear to him in the woods that day to begin the restoration of the True and Living Church. You have to understand that the Church has many enemies and many false things have been said and written about the Church, but I can tell you honestly that I *know* that this is His Church.

SC: And you know this because of a feeling? Despite whatever evidence exists to the contrary?

Elder: I know this because I have a witness of the Holy Ghost. You could show me a thousand books and papers or call up a thousand disgruntled people who have left the Church and despite all of that, I still *know* that this Church is true. I know this through the revelation and power of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

I had just run full tilt into the brick wall of *The Testimony*. I later would learn only too well the full ramifications of encountering this cleverly orchestrated device of psychological warfare used very ably by the power structure of the LDS church to recruit new and maintain existing members. It is with this subjective mystical "feeling," that those who ordinarily govern their day-to-day life by the rules of logic, reason, and evidence, are able to suspend those rules and "sustain" all manner of incredible and conflicting beliefs.

THE SEARCH FOR TRUTH

As postmodernism gains increasing popularity in our culture, it may sound passé to talk about objective truth, but the foundation of the Christian religion is rooted in articulating and establishing claims of universal objective truth. The work of prophets, apostles and ultimately Jesus Christ Himself (as God Incarnate) was to reveal certain objective principles that were right (good) over against other objective principles that were wrong (evil). This was accomplished by articulating basic truths and establishing those truths by reason, logic, and the rules of evidence.

God in His infinite wisdom chose not only to work out His plan of reconciliation with His fallen creation in space-time history (the Mormons call this "mortality"), but also to provide means of verification of that plan in the same realm. He did not leave us at the mercy of subjective inner impressions (mysticism) for reasons to believe.

Jesus was continually appealing to objective history (not myth or fable)

for reasons to believe. There was *never* any appeal by Him to listen to my words, pray and ask God if they are true, and you will get a feeling that they are true, even if there is objective evidence that demonstrates the opposite.

True, there were supernatural signs to demonstrate the power of the Savior and His disciples, but these were always pointed to as fulfillment of prophecy. The only supernatural sign (miracle) that was pointed to as the reason to believe was "the sign of the prophet Jonah":

"But He answered and said unto them, 'An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth'" (Matthew 12:39-40).

And this sign was shortly to become an objective historical event, verifiable by the rules of evidence. When among His Jewish brethren, Jesus appealed to the extant Scriptures (Old Testament) to establish his mission:

"And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up: and, as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto Him the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written, 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.' And He closed the book, and He gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on Him. And He began to say unto them, 'This day is this scripture

fulfilled in your ears” (Luke 4:16-21).

When He was among His apostles, His appeal to the truth of His mission was to the Scriptures:

“And He said unto them, ‘These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me.’ Then opened He their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures” (Luke 24:44-45).

When the Apostle Paul preached his Gospel sermon to the Bereans, he didn’t suggest that they “pray about what I say” and “get a witness of the Spirit that these things are true.” Nor did they by their own initiative retreat to their prayer closets seeking divine confirmation via the agency of a burning feeling in the chest.

“And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews. These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so. Therefore many of them believed; also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few” (Acts 17:10-12).

Even former Mormon Prophet, Seer, and Revelator David O. McKay recognized the importance of the above passage and stated in his book *Ancient Apostles*:

“Persecution and suffering could no more stop these inspired workers from preaching the Gospel than it could stop them from breathing; so as soon as they arrived at Berea, ‘they went into the synagogue of the Jews.’ The Jews here were more noble than those in Thessalonica, and would reason from the scripture, which was the Old Testament, kept in sacred rolls in the synagogue. So

we conclude that the Bereans, not only listened attentively to what the missionaries told them but searched the scriptures to see if what they said was in harmony with the Law. When they found that it was, many believed, ‘also of honorable women who were Greeks, and of men not a few.’”³

No, Paul was a firm believer in the efficacy of the Scripture to establish the truth claims of the Gospel. It was to them that believers should appeal and in them that believers have hope.

“For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope” (Romans 15:4).

Clearly, God our Heavenly Father, the creator of the universe, could have chosen to reveal everything about Himself (that He wants known) supernaturally to every individual. He could have imprinted directly on our spirits every fact couched in Scripture, so that we would have no need of a printed record. It is just as clear that He chose not to order His creation that way. And since God is sovereign of the universe and does nothing in a haphazard or capricious fashion, His choosing not to proceed that way was the correct choice. The Apostle John soberly warns believers:

“Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1).

But just how do we test these spirits? Do we do it with feelings gained supernaturally (personal revelation)? To do so would be testing the thing we want tested *by* the thing we want tested! If a person prays about *The Book of Mormon* and gets a personal revelation (a feeling) that it is true but is not sure that the spiritual communication is from God, does he then pray to get a feeling that the feeling is true? Or did our Heavenly Father give us something by which we can benchmark personal revelations? The answer to that is a

resounding *yes!* He gave us a written communication that is outside ourselves that gives us the principles by which to try those spirits.

It is the Law and the testimony of the Prophets (Hebrew Scriptures) and then the Gospels and Epistles of the Apostles (Greek Scriptures). We know this as the Bible. This is the Scripture by which we judge all other supposed communications from God, both supernatural and natural. Paul tells us:

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Moreover, God is consistent. He is not a changeable being.

“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variable-ness, neither shadow of turning” (James 1:17).

He does not say something one day and then contradict Himself the next. If a revelation is truly from God it will be consistent with what he has already told us. If he has already spoken on a matter, then we don’t have to pray about that particular matter to see if it is true. God has told us in the Bible that it is wrong to murder. If a person gets a feeling that God wants him to murder someone in cold blood (as did Son of Sam, for example) then I know that feeling is wrong, it is not from God. A person’s feeling on the matter may be very strong, but there is an objective written communication from God against which we can test that feeling. We don’t have to rely on faulty intuition.

The discussion of whether or not the Bible has been tampered with (added to or subtracted from) or whether or not the canon has been closed will have to be discussed in another venue. Suffice to say, that if God is the omnipotent being that He claims to be, He is well able to preserve a body of written revelations against which all supernatural experi-

ences are to be measured.

YOU, TOO, CAN HAVE A TESTIMONY

Just exactly what is this testimony? We'll let the LDS authorities define it:

"Testimony is a generic term among Latter-day Saints for the assurance of the reality, truth, and goodness of God, of the teachings and Atonement of Jesus Christ, and of the divine calling of latter-day prophets. It is the core of LDS religious experience. It reaches beyond secondhand assent, notional conviction, or strong belief. It is knowledge buttressed by divine personal confirmation by the Holy Ghost and is interrelated with authentic faith and trust in God as demonstrated by dedication and discipleship. Fundamental in the Church is the doctrine that 'no man can be a minister of Jesus Christ except he has the testimony of Jesus; and this is the spirit of prophecy. Whenever salvation has been administered, it has been by testimony.'"⁴

"You can be one, as well as I can be one, who declares the generation of Jesus Christ, who gives his genealogy, who comes to know in his heart by a power that is beyond intellectuality, by a power that comes from revelation and revelation only."⁵

"A testimony is a statement of certainty of belief in the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is the highest type of knowledge. It comes as a revelation when truth is known and obeyed."⁶

"Everyone of you who has a testimony and bears it is telling about a personal revelation from God. It is nothing less, or it isn't a testimony, because the Holy Ghost revealed it to you. If you have a testimony, it is a revelation."⁷

So we see that a testimony is an "assurance of reality," it goes beyond second hand assent, notional conviction, strong belief or intellectuality, and it is in fact "knowledge," but not

just of the everyday variety. It is the "highest type of knowledge" and it comes from "revelation and revelation only."

It is revealed to each "by the Holy Ghost."

Well, then, how does one gain this revelation of the Holy Ghost? According to one LDS church leader, one must be in the proper frame of mind:

"Like the people in the world, you, the youth of the church, must put forth a similar effort to receive a witness from the Holy Ghost of the reality of the restoration of the gospel. For you, the testimony is not an automatic process; it comes only after you have 'hungered and thirsted' for it. This means you must have a desire much more intense than just a passive wanting."⁸

To recap, the Mormon testimony then is a revelation of the Holy Ghost. It goes beyond the intellect, reason or logic and is the highest form of knowledge. It is the only way to know for certain the truth of the Mormon gospel and all that it entails. One can have a working knowledge of gospel principles, but cannot know of their truth without this higher knowledge. In order for one to obtain this sure knowledge, one must desire it above all else, pray, and then receive the revelation.

How then, does one know when he has received this revelation? Is there an audible voice from God? Handwriting on the wall? A burning bush? No, there is a burning in the bosom.

In the spring of 1829, Oliver Cowdery was taking dictation as Joseph Smith was "translating" *The Book of Mormon*. Cowdery wanted to do some translating on his own, but God had other plans. In a "revelation" given to Smith in April of that year, God tells Cowdery that there would be no translating for him, for that was Smith's calling. During this communication a rule for establishing truth was given:

"But, behold, I say unto you, that you must study it out in your mind; then you must ask me if it be right, and if it is right I will

cause that your bosom shall burn within you; therefore, you shall feel that it is right. But if it be not right you shall have no such feelings, but you shall have a stupor of thought that shall cause you to forget the thing which is wrong; therefore, you cannot write that which is sacred save it be given you from me" (D&C 9:8-9).

In a glossary from *The Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, we read:

"Burning in the bosom — A metaphorical description of the feeling that sometimes attends the enveloping Spirit of the Lord, particularly when one understands God's words through the influence of the Holy Ghost (Luke 24:32; D&C 9:3-8)."

Notice that the biblical proof text given is Luke 24:32 which says: "And they said one to another, 'Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?'" Of course, without the additional new revelations, the Luke passage can in no way be construed to teach an inner "testimony" of a burning feeling being a yardstick for truth.

One commentary on the *Doctrine and Covenants* expands on the above passage and says:

"Now, I tell you that you can make every decision in your life correctly if you can learn to follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit. This you can do if you will discipline yourself to yield your own feelings to the promptings of the Spirit. Study your problems and prayerfully make a decision. Then take that decision and say to him, in a simple, honest supplication, 'Father, I want to make the right decision. I want to do the right thing. This is what I think I should do; let me know if it is the right course.' Doing this, you can get the burning in your bosom, if your decision is right. If you do not get the burning, then change your decision and submit a new one. When you learn to walk by the Spirit, you

never need to make a mistake. I know what it is to have this burning witness. (CR, October 1961, pp. 60-61)."⁹

Notice that this "revealing feeling" goes far beyond the scope of spiritual truths to encompass every decision in your life. Lest we mistake the intention of these writers:

"You do not know what to do today to solve your financial problems, what to plant, whether to buy or sell cattle, sheep or other things. It is your privilege to study it out: counsel together with the best wisdom and judgment the Lord shall give you, reach your conclusions, and then go to the Lord with it, tell him what you have planned to do. If the thing you have planned to do is for your good and your blessing, and you are determined to serve the Lord, pay your tithes and your offerings and keep his commandments, I promise you that he will fulfill that promise upon your head, and your bosom shall burn within you if the thing you have planned to do is right, and you shall know by the whisperings of the Spirit that it is right. But if it is not right you shall have no such feelings, but you shall have a stupor of thought, and your hearts will be turned away from that thing."¹⁰

So the faithful Mormon who has gained a testimony can have this feeling of a burning in the bosom to guide him into not only religious truth, but also the mundane things in life as to what to plant, or how to make investments. The implications of this philosophy are enormous.

FEELINGS, NOTHING MORE THAN FEELINGS...

Who among us have not (as an adolescent or a teenager) felt the overwhelming feelings of puppy love generated almost instantaneously when one of our friends told us so-and-so really likes you a lot! That one who had perhaps been a nodding acquaintance had suddenly become the love of our lives; complete with elevated pulse, frequent sighs, and warm tinglings.

Or who hasn't (at one time or another) wanted to believe a politician's promise so much that we *just know* that this is the one that will make our lives and country better.

The point is, that if we want something fervently enough, all sorts of feelings can be generated. This seems to hold true especially with religious fervor. Because we are dealing with things non-corporeal, religious people (Mormon and non-Mormon), unfortunately, make their personal feelings the final arbiter of truth.

One example of this is the chorus of a popular evangelical hymn entitled "He Lives" which demonstrates fine music, but bad theology:

"He lives, He lives,
Christ Jesus lives today!
He walks with me and talks with me,
along life's narrow way...
You ask me how I know He lives:
He lives within my heart."

Now, He very well may live within one's heart. And if He does there are bound to be emotions. But whether anyone feels Him does not alter the fact that He lives! We know He lives because there are good and sufficient reasons for believing that He does. Reasons that can be corroborated in space-time history. There are historical reasons, there are archaeological reasons, there are textual reasons for faith and one's feelings (emotions) are valid only when corroborated by these real-time events, just as doctrine is valid only if corroborated by the Bible.

To say that one *knows* something, just because one has a feeling relegates knowledge to the absurd. Arthur L. Johnson astutely observes:

"A quick look at what is implied by the term knowledge may help us here. Two aspects are important. First, to say that I know something is to say not only that I am aware of that something, but also that it is true. If, for example, I say that I know that the earth is flat, I am also saying (falsely) that it is true that the

earth is flat, and that I am aware that this is so."¹¹

Using Johnson's example, but adding a few words pertinent to our discussion, we could say, for example, that we know that *The Book of Mormon* is Scripture. We are saying that it is true that *The Book of Mormon* is Scripture, and that we are aware that this is so.

If we say the above, and there is no archaeological, historical, or textual evidence to corroborate the assertion of knowledge (there is, in fact, strong evidence to the contrary), then on what basis do we make the assertion? We make it based on a feeling, a "burning in the bosom" which is defined as a personal revelation that goes beyond strong belief, or intellectuality.

Once we make this move, then we have taken the search for truth into the irrational. Reason, logic, and the laws of evidence can be dispensed with if it is expedient to do so. If we choose to adopt this philosophy, we are able to compartmentalize our thought processes into two opposing categories: one having to do with spiritual, the other with the secular.

This is particularly evident in the lives of Mormon professionals. There are numerous LDS lawyers, doctors, and scientists. When they perform their daily tasks as professionals, they do so operating under the established codes of their professions. This writer has never heard of a defense attorney pleading his client innocent on the basis that he had a "burning in the bosom" that the person didn't commit the alleged crime. Nor, has this writer ever heard of a doctor getting a "testimony," that despite medical tests to the contrary, it should be this treatment rather than another performed. Yet, this writer has discussed religious matters with both LDS doctors and lawyers and had them testify that despite evidence to the contrary, they *know* that Joseph was a prophet, and so forth, based on that aforementioned feeling.

We have already observed that feelings can be generated. If someone wants something strongly enough, all

sorts of internal emotional justification can be summoned. Also, it is evident that if one is in this yearning frame of mind, then one can be more easily manipulated by persons in authority. A perfect example of this (as it relates to Mormonism) can be seen in the story of Lucy Walker, one of Joseph Smith's plural wives.

In the early 1840s, Smith was busy building his "theocratic kingdom" in Nauvoo, Ill. While publicly denouncing the practice of polygamy, he began to add privately a number of plural wives. In January 1843, 17-year-old Lucy Walker had come to live in the Smith household after the death of her mother. In the spring of that year, while Joseph's first wife Emma was in Saint Louis on a shopping trip, Smith "proposed" to Lucy. Fawn Brodie records the details of the event:

'Joseph asked Lucy to become his wife. 'I have no flattering words to offer,' he told her after the usual preliminaries. 'It is a command of God to you. I will give you until tomorrow to decide this matter. If you reject this message the gate will be closed forever against you.' ... 'Although you are a Prophet of God,' she told him, 'you could not induce me to take a step of so great importance, unless I *knew* that God approved my course. I would rather die.' He walked across the room, returned, and stood before her with what she described as 'the most beautiful expression of countenance,' and said: 'God Almighty bless you. You shall have a manifestation of the will of God concerning you; a testimony that you can never deny. I will tell you what it shall be. It shall be that joy and peace that you never knew.' *'Oh how earnestly I prayed for these words to be fulfilled.'* ... My soul was filled with a calm, sweet peace that 'I never knew.' Supreme happiness took possession of me, and I received a powerful and irresistible testimony of the truth of plural marriage."¹²

The above account is a classic example of psychological manipulation. Cult watchers have seen this used many times by "religious" leaders. A vulnerable young girl is confronted by one whom they hold in spiritual awe. A "command" from God is issued to do something she normally would abhor. If there are initial negative reactions, then dire spiritual or physical consequences are predicted. An inner turmoil results. After all, this man speaks for God. Would he give me commandments that are not true? The leader pleads for the follower to "earnestly pray about it and if it is from God, you will get peace about it." The veiled threat is, get peace about it or you will be cut off! More often than not, the follower falls into line and gets the justifying feelings. Just like Lucy Walker.

The problem is that feelings can be wrong. One can fervently feel that the liquid in the bottle on the table can cure a headache, but if the liquid is poison the results will be far different than the feelings indicate.

One can desire something so strongly that many psychological (and even sometimes physical) manifestations can be generated. This does not, however, "prove" the rightness or wrongness of a position. It only demonstrates the position-holder's fervency.

FAITH FOUNDED ON FEELINGS

The foundation of the LDS church has been built on this "burning feeling." It has been the church authorities, from Joseph Smith until the present prophet, who have encouraged, defined, and interpreted this feeling. There is no doubt that the "testimony" is regarded as the backbone of the church.

The current Mormon prophet, Gordon B. Hinckley, stated:

'I would like to say to you, that is the strength of this cause, the individual testimony that lies in the hearts of the people. The strength of this church is not in its buildings, in its chapels, in its

offices, in its schools; it is not in its programs or its publications. They are important, but they are only a means to an end, and that the end is the building of the testimony — a conviction that will weather every storm and stand up to every crisis in the hearts and lives of the membership."¹³

Former LDS Apostle Stephen L. Richards taught:

'The restored Church of our Lord is built upon ... the individual testimonies of its members. Indeed no one is asked to come into the Church until he has personal assurance of the divine truth it teaches. At times it is something of a shock to applicants for admission into the Church to be advised that the evidences of their real conversion are not adequate. Such persons are not infrequently urged to further investigation and more supplication that they may know of a surety that it is the truth which they embrace. A young lawyer once told me that he would like to join our Church. ... I told him also that it was necessary to do something more than merely to indicate his desire for membership. I advised him that he should make careful study of the gospel, that the principles taught by the Church would seem reasonable and desirable to him *but that that was not enough*. I then told him that in his studies *he would be expected to supplicate the Lord for a divine impression of the truth and divinity of the work, which we call a testimony.*"¹⁴

And the late Mormon prophet Spencer W. Kimball said:

'I mention this so you do not think that testimony bearing is some little thing that is incidental to the mission only. This is the church program. It is powerful and mighty. Can you see how important the testimony is? It is the lifeblood of the organization of the Church."¹⁵

So, we see that even by the authorities' own teaching, the testimony is the true foundation of the LDS church.

And, this must be so!

It must be so because there is no independent objective evidence that corroborates the truth claims of that body. Not historical, not archaeological, not textual. When you examine the claims of Mormonism according to these three criteria, those claims begin quickly to unravel. This has been true from the beginning of the movement. This is why it has been necessary to concoct a test that is subjective, experience-oriented, and can be psychologically generated.

This fact has given momentum to the general authorities' strategy of suppressing historical documentation, revising recorded history and early revelations, and attempting to intimidate honest LDS historians into silence.

An example can be found in portions of an address given by current acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Boyd K. Packer. This chilling talk was given to the Fifth Annual Church Educational System Religious Educators' Symposium at Brigham Young University on Aug. 22, 1981. Titled "The Mantle Is Far, Far Greater Than The Intellect," the address was in reaction to Mormon historians who tell the unvarnished truth about the history of their movement.

"I have come to believe that it is the tendency for many members of the Church who spend a great deal of time in academic research to begin to judge the Church, its doctrine, organization, and leadership, present and past, by the principles of their own profession. Oftentimes this is done unwittingly, and some of it, perhaps, is not harmful. A member of the Church ought always, particularly if he is pursuing extensive academic studies, to judge the professions of man against the revealed word of the Lord."¹⁶

Boyd then issued these suppressive intimidations:

"Church history can be so interesting and so inspiring as to be a very powerful tool indeed for building faith. If not properly written or properly taught, it may be a faith destroyer."¹⁷

"Some things that are true are not very useful."¹⁸

"The writer or the teacher who has an exaggerated loyalty to the theory that everything must be told is laying a foundation for his own judgment."¹⁹

"The Lord made it very clear that some things are to be taught selectively and some things are to be given only to those who are worthy. It matters very much not only what we are told but when we are told it. Be careful that you build faith rather than destroy it."²⁰

"That historian or scholar who delights in pointing out the weaknesses and frailties of present or past leaders destroys faith. A destroyer of faith — particularly one within the Church, and more particularly one who is employed specifically to build faith — places himself in great spiritual jeopardy. He is serving the wrong master, and unless he repents, he will not be among the faithful in the eternities. One who chooses to follow the tenets of his profession, regardless of how they may injure the Church or destroy the faith of those not ready for 'advanced history,' is himself in spiritual jeopardy. If that one is a member of the Church, he has broken his covenants and will be accountable. After all of the tomorrows of mortality have been finished, he will not stand where he might have stood."²¹

"I think you can see the point I am making. Those of you who are employed by the Church have a special responsibility to build faith, not destroy it. If you do not do that, but in fact

accommodate the enemy, who is the destroyer of faith, you become in that sense a traitor to the cause you have made covenants to protect. Those who have carefully purged their work of any religious faith in the name of academic freedom or so-called honesty ought not expect to be accommodated in their researches or to be paid by the Church to do it."²²

Elder Packer is driving the notion that it is permissible to keep negative historical truths hidden in order to "promote the faith." When someone does uncover the negatives, such as the one mentioned in the dialogue earlier in this article, then the testimony card can be played. The burning in the bosom can be appealed to, and the conflicting negative can be whisked off into the nether regions of psychological compartmentalization.

Thus the claim: "I know it's true despite what you've shown me, because I have a confirming feeling that it's true" in effect becomes the notary for truth.

CLIMBING THE WALL

So, people ask me, when you run head first into the brick wall of the Mormon testimony, what do you do? Just as you would with any impediment to progress, you recognize it for what it is, then you climb over it and go forward.

As has been demonstrated, the "testimony" is a complex set of feelings and emotions psychologically generated and defined by LDS Authorities as final spiritual confirmation of the truth of their religious beliefs. These feelings are generated by individuals who want to believe in the validity of that body so fervently, that they are willing to suspend rationality when it comes to religious matters.

The Mormon testimony, the burning in the bosom, is the final refuge for individuals bludgeoned by the lack of positive, objective historical evidence for the truth claims of their movement. It is the quintessential example of the old saw, "Don't

confuse me with the facts, I have my mind made up."

Endnotes:

1. See this author's article, "Challenging The Book of Mormon," *The Quarterly Journal*, July-September 1997, pg. 4.
2. Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, Inc., 1976, pg. 331.
3. David O. McKay, *Ancient Apostles*. Salt Lake City: The Deseret Sunday School Union, 1918, pg. 190.
4. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (pg. 160) as cited in Daniel Ludlow, editor, *The Encyclopedia of Mormonism*. New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1992. Vol. 4. "Testimony", (emphasis added).
5. Elder Bruce R. McConkie, *BYU Studies*, Vol. 16, No. 4, pg. 559, (emphasis added).
6. John A. Widtsoe, *Improvement Era*, (May 1945, pg. 273) as cited in *Testimony* compiled by H. Stephen Stoker & Joseph C. Muren, Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, Inc.,

1980, (emphasis added).

7. Spencer W. Kimball, Unpublished address, Church Historical Department, as cited in *Testimony*, op. cit., pg. 4, (emphasis added).
8. John H. Vandenberg, *Improvement Era*, (Dec. 1968, pg. 110) as cited in *Testimony*, op. cit., pg. 19, (emphasis added).
9. L.G. Otten and C.M. Caldwell, *Sacred Truths of the Doctrine and Covenants*. Springville, Utah: LEMB, 1982, Vol. 1, pg. 52, (emphasis added).
10. Conference Reports 1931, Apr.:37. As quoted in Rulon T. Burton, *We Believe: Doctrines and Principles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*. Salt Lake City: Tabernacle Books, 1994. Section: Revelation, Subsection 4, Topic: No. 680.
11. Arthur L. Johnson, *Faith Misguided: Exposing the Dangers of Mysticism*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1988, pp. 26-27.
12. Fawn M. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History*. New York: Borzoi Books, Alfred A. Knopf Publisher, First Edition, 1945,

pp. 337-338, (emphasis added).

13. Gordon B. Hinckley, "Area Conference Report," August 1971, Manchester, England, pp. 160-161. As quoted in *Testimony*, op. cit., pp. 8-9.
14. Stephen L. Richards, *Church News*, Jan. 16, 1943, pg. 7. As quoted in *Testimony*, op. cit., pp. 11-12, (emphasis added).
15. Spencer W. Kimball, Unpublished address, Church Historical Department, Jan. 15, 1962, Berlin, Germany, pg. 3. As quoted in *Testimony* op. cit., pg. 145.
16. Boyd K. Packer, *BYU Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 3, pg. 259.
17. *Ibid.*, pg. 262.
18. *Ibid.*, pg. 263.
19. *Ibid.*, pg. 264.
20. *Ibid.*, pg. 265.
21. *Ibid.*, pg. 266.
22. *Ibid.*, pg. 269. See also this author's article, "Behind the Deseret Veil," *The Quarterly Journal*, October-December 1994, pp. 5-9.

EDITORIALS

(continued from page 2)

Offerings from the Friday night revival services are given directly to evangelist Stephen Hill. According to tax records secured by the newspaper, the weekly Friday evening offering averaged in excess of \$20,000, and in 1996 (the first full year of the revival) these donations gave Hill's ministry, "Together in the Harvest," nearly \$1 million. Some pastors do not receive \$20,000 a year, let alone \$20,000 a week! A representative for the church estimated that the average collection during each of the week's other three services is \$12,500 nightly.

Indeed, revival has been very, very profitable for the men overseeing this purported move of the Holy Spirit. Three of the revival's principal leaders have all acquired large tracts of land by way of their independent ministries and have built or are currently building opulent homes.

The newspaper disclosed that "Feast of Fire," the ministry of church pastor John Kilpatrick, bought "16 acres in Seminole, Ala., and constructed a combination bus barn, guest house and office." The barn was built to accommodate the \$310,000 deluxe motor coach (literally an apartment on wheels) to chauffeur the pastor on his revival-related travels. Also on the property, Kilpatrick has built a \$340,000 luxury home. All of this comes despite the pastor's hollow declaration that: "I have always strived to set an example by not living above the means of my people." Kilpatrick's salary from his ministry in 1996 was \$100,000 (for which the newspaper claimed he worked 20 hours a week) and he received a \$73,600 annual salary from the church.

Evangelist Hill's ministry has also flourished since the revival's inception. "Together in the Harvest" reported an increase in its land assets from no property in 1994 to over a half million dollars' worth two years later. In 1996, it bought 40 acres of land in Lillian, Ala., and, according to the newspaper's account, has subsequently paid to "refurbish a house for Hill and his family, remodel an existing barn into living quarters and build a distribution center, duplex house and an office building" on the property just across the Florida state line. The cost of the Alabama parcel was listed at \$887,931.

While Hill's ministry did use nearly 10 percent of its 1996 income for "specific assistance to individuals," a sizable percentage went to those directly connected with the revival or with Hill, including Kilpatrick, theologian Michael Brown, singer Charity James and others.

Hill has also told revival attendees about an orphanage in rural Argentina that "Together in the Harvest" has supported. Following assistance from the U.S. Embassy in Buenos Aires, the Pensacola newspaper located the orphanage. The paper stated, "A spokesperson at the orphanage said Hill had been in a mission group that helped build the orphanage in the 1980s. But she also said the orphanage had not heard from Hill for about 10 years, and she asked the *News Journal* for Hill's address so the director could write Hill and ask for a donation."

Michael Brown, theologian for the revival and president of the Brownsville Revival School Ministry, has followed the lead of Kilpatrick and Hill and is also moving west. Brown's organization, "ICN Ministries Inc.," recently purchased an 11-acre tract in Alabama. The paper reported that "Brown and his wife are building a house, which their building permit estimates

at \$727,360 construction cost, on a portion of the land that his ministry ICN purchased." Brown was quick to point out that "ICN is not paying for construction of any house anywhere," the newspaper said. Brown, in a letter to the editor, challenged the paper's report and said that "My wife and I are not building a home valued at \$727,000. ... Actually, the official appraisal sets the value of the house and its three surrounding acres of property at less than \$425,000, equal to the value of our home in Pace [Fla.]."

Brown's home in Pace was purchased in 1996 for \$419,000 and is located at a gated subdivision on a golf course. Reporters from the newspaper told PFO that they stand by their original figures for Brown's new home.

Despite the *News Journal's* exposure of the dramatic upsurge of the revival leadership's lifestyles, a lack of financial accountability remains. After three full years, the revival leaders still have not gained certification from the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability (ECFA), although two of the three, Kilpatrick and Hill, have formally applied, Brown has not.

The vigorous pleas for donations continue unabated. "Let us give joyfully, for the need is so great" is an anthem heard as revival leaders sometimes spend as much as 20 minutes of the services asking for donations. The appeal for funds has also gone beyond the church walls. Hill's "Together in the Harvest" ministry made a recent solicitation by way of a mass mailing from names acquired at the revival. The newspaper said that "Hill tells his letter recipients that Jesus has informed him that He is coming back in the near future, and He won't tolerate sinners."

Hill even pretends to have God speaking: "Let them know My warm season of grace and mercy will soon turn to a chilling winter of judgment and wrath. ... The warm days of My wooing will be exchanged for the fiery days of My vengeance," he wrote in his funds appeal letter. To encourage the need for donations and their urgency, his accompanying newsletter said that the cost of saving souls was mounting. Evidently, so is property and its upkeep in Alabama.

As the fiscal fortunes realized in the past few months set the future standard for these men and their ministries, more time and energy will be devoted to the raising of funds. They will soon find, if they have not done so already, the ministry, its needs, and their lifestyle will take on an existence of its own. Expenses will be the machine that relentlessly drives them. During dialogue about the large sums of money being invested into the personal fortunes of these men, one Brownsville staff member recently asked PFO director G. Richard Fisher, "Does that offend you?" You bet it does, and it does because of the following.

The mounting greed has perhaps caused these men to be blinded to what they are doing to people — and if it is not their desire for fortune, then it may well be born out of an appetite for fame and power. Reports are now

being heard that people have come to the revival services with dead babies — hoping and praying for the resurrection of the deceased children. The men responsible for the revival have long contended that the day is coming when raisings from the dead will be commonplace within the Church. And they have even claimed reports of resurrections. How appropriate Peter's words apply here: "In their greed these [false] teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up" (2 Peter 2:3).

Peter also advised that elders not be in ministry for gain (1 Peter 5:2-3). Brownsville leaders are setting their faithful, gullible and desperate followers up for even bigger disappointments and horrendous grief.

Perhaps the money lust has inured the Brownsville leaders to the bizarre and pathetic. In July, they were featuring David Hogan, who claimed 300 raisings from the dead in Mexico. Of course, no evidence was offered and details were sketchy. An e-mail message to Brownsville from PFO produced no documentation, just a fax number for David Hogan. Brownsville leaders did not seem to want to stand by what goes out from their pulpit. They would offer no documentation or names and places for Hogan's claims.

Two requests were sent to Hogan's fax number asking for his credentials for ministry and the names and locations for the raisings. PFO's request for the specifics have also gone unanswered by Hogan or his ministry.

Even more regrettable is how all of this has taken the revival even further away from the moorings of Scripture. The apostle Paul, in establishing the qualifications for Church elders and overseers, states that he should not be "a lover of money" and "not pursuing dishonest gain" (1 Timothy 3:3, 8). Temperance must be held by the Church leader in many areas of life, including his finances and material possessions. The *Evangelical Commentary on the Bible* notes: "The overseer must be respected for his behavior. He must open his life to others and be able to communicate God's truth" (pg. 1105). No doubt the communication spoke of by the *Commentary* addresses not only oral expressions, but also a lifestyle which testifies to the Gospel.

Paul further writes to Timothy that an elder "must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap" (1 Timothy 3:7). According to statements from the *Pensacola News Journal's* writers to PFO, the reputation of the Brownsville leadership regretfully lacks the good standing in the community that Paul insisted on. They are viewed as money changers in the temple.

The revival leaders charged the newspaper's reports contain "factual errors and distortions." In spite of their reaction (laced with measures of intimidation), the *News Journal* cannot be so easily dismissed. A good degree of responsibility and a desire for change must be demonstrated by the Brownsville leaders. Certainly they cannot give an unequivocal "silver and gold have I none."

If there is not serious change and repentance, the revival and its leadership will drift into even greater perversion. They may have fat bank accounts and fat wallets but in the end that does not impress God. The leadership in Brownsville has forgotten the words of the Savior: "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth. ... but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven" (Matthew 6:19-20). When a river turns green, it means it's polluted and in the end the green river of Brownsville may well be its downfall. Christ came to make us right, not rich.

—MKG

NEWS UPDATES

(continued from page 3)

take pictures and then began yelling obscenities at him. He went to his office, took his shotgun, and "fired it into the air at least 200 feet from them."

Police said that both sides had exceeded legal limits. The Scientologists by trespassing after they had been instructed to leave the premises and Minton by discharging a firearm. However, no criminal charges on either side were expected.

Following the incident, members of the church located Minton's wife in England where she was visiting family and hand-delivered a letter to her which said that they had documented evidence of a sexual relationship between Minton and Young. Minton says no such relationship exists and his involvement with Young is merely to help her in her exodus from the church.

Scientologists have accused Minton of belonging to organizations such as the Ku Klux Klan. One Scientology official said on a nationally broadcast news program that "he believes Minton is a criminal and compared him to Oklahoma City bomber Timothy McVeigh," the *Times* reported.

Minton has given more than \$1.7 million to anti-Scientology causes. He said, "I'm totally qualified to be a Scientologist. I've got money and they are willing to change that."

—MKG

THE DEEP POCKETS OF REV. MOON

The political disposition and substantial financial reserves of Unification Church leader, the Rev. Sun Myung Moon, have bought him a number of associations with noteworthy people. Former presidents George Bush and Gerald Ford, comedian Bill Cosby and singer Whitney Houston have appeared at Moon-sponsored events. Even some within the "Christian" camp, such as Beverly

LaHaye, Ralph Reed, Pat Boone, Robert Schuller, and Jerry Falwell have been guest speakers at gatherings hosted by Moon or one of his front groups.

Recently, it was revealed that the Moon-Falwell relationship had deepened when the Korean church leader's charity was accepted in a sizable way by Falwell. According to *Cornerstone* magazine, "In 1994, Jerry Falwell quietly accepted a \$3.5 million donation from a Unification Church front group, the Women's Federation for World Peace, to help bail out Falwell's then-insolvent Liberty University." The magazine also reported that Robert Parry, a journalist for *I.F. Magazine* and the *Los Angeles Times*, revealed that Moon had funneled the donation through the Christian Heritage Foundation (CHF), a nonprofit group that had bought the school's debt, which at the time amounted to \$73 million. The reporter had used an IRS tax form to track the donation's source.

Rumors about the Unification Church-Liberty University relationship had circulated for months. Falwell's group labeled the reports as "smoke and mirrors" and claimed that a wire service report in November 1997 contained "an unfounded statement that reported Liberty University had also accepted funds from the Unificationists."

Falwell's newspaper, *National Liberty Journal*, said it "wishes to set the record straight by assuring readers that Liberty University has *never* solicited or received funds, directly or indirectly, from the Unification Church." Falwell himself, added: "If the Unificationists, the American Atheist Society, or Bill Clinton himself ever send an unrestricted gift to any of my ministries, be assured I will operate on evangelist Billy Sunday's philosophy of: 'The Devil's had it long enough' ... and quickly cash the check!"

—MKG

BOOKS IN REVIEW

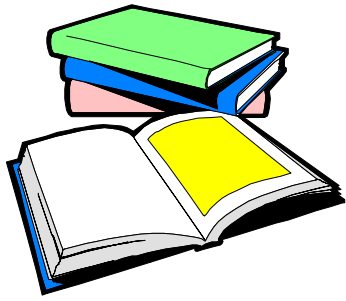
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false prophecy claims of 1874, 1914, 1918, 1925 and 1975; medical prohibitions such as blood, vaccinations and organ transplants; independent thinking and disfellowshipping; the deity and resurrection of Jesus Christ; and many, many more.

The library utilizes the Adobe Acrobat Reader program (which is provided on the CD) enabling one to view and print the documents just as they appeared in the original magazine or book.

This reference tool is a great addition for those who are serious about witnessing to Jehovah's Witnesses using their own resources — and who do not have the money or space to acquire more than a century of Watchtower publications.

—MKG



Books in Review

THE STONES CRY OUT

by Randall Price

Harvest House Publishers, 437 pages, \$11.99

This reviewer has led over 20 trips to Israel and teaches archaeology at an evening adult Bible Institute. The broad content of Randall Price's new book is a great asset to me in these roles. Yet, it is for the beginner as well as the advanced student. It is a great book to add to the apologetics arsenal. It is up-to-date and includes many of the latest discoveries. It is saturated with information that will illumine and clarify large portions of the Bible.

What makes this even more helpful are the photographs throughout, the time lines, the list of museums in Israel, Europe and the United States, the glossary of terms, the index, the descriptive bibliography and even a list of Internet sites for further research. It is a practical, handy reference book and a fascinating read.

Price progresses through the Bible chronologically, opening up the Bible world in terms of manners, customs and background. The book helps give tangible reality and immediacy to biblical events and even suggests possibilities as to the location of the Holy of Holies on the Temple Mount.

Price also gives answers to such questions as: Where were Sodom and Gomorrah and what proof is there of a fiery end? How can we answer those who say King David was mythical? Is there archaeological evidence for Jesus? He shares the proof for such figures as Caiaphas and Pontius Pilate.

The author invites the reader to share his excitement in these words: "With a sense of adventure, then, I invite you to join me on a trek through time, digging in soil and Scripture to discover what amazing things the stones will cry out!" (pg. 29).

There is a lot of information for a small price tag and no one will be disappointed with this cutting-edge book. Readers will be amazed at all they learn and that what they thought was a dry, dusty subject, turns out to be an exciting venture into biblical "time travel."

—GRF

SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISM AND THE WRITINGS OF ELLEN G. WHITE

by Mark Martin

Calvary Community Church, 72 pages, \$3.00

This is a fascinating and interesting book. It demonstrates how Seventh-day Adventist founder Ellen G. White, who claimed to be inspired, contradicted the Bible, made false predictions and often contradicted herself. What makes this book unique is that the damaging quotes are direct from White herself. It would take huge amounts of time to research first-hand from many sources the statements of White. Mark Martin has done the work for us and compiled first source quotes in one place.

I was fascinated by a number of the headings: "She will be alive when Jesus returns," "In the 1850s she said Jesus was about to return," "Adventists living in 1856 will be alive to see Jesus return," "She saw Enoch on Jupiter or Saturn," "The Atonement was not finished at the Cross," "Satan offered a pardon in heaven" and "Some races are a mixture of man and beast." This goes on and on with about 60 or more other shocking quotes and false teachings from the pen of White.

Seventh-day Adventism is a reflection of its prophetess, Ellen White. Adventists are dependent on her and stand or fall on the truthfulness of her teaching. Books like this are needed not only to wake up Adventists but to inform a non-discerning Church.

—GRF

DICTIONARY OF WATCH- TOWER DOCUMENTS

Gospel Defense Publications, CD-ROM, \$29.95

Over the years, the Watchtower has tried to suppress accessibility of its older publications. It's an effort that, through modern technology, is a losing battle.

The *Dictionary of Watchtower Documents* gives computer users a virtual library of the Jehovah's Witnesses' most self-incriminating statements. Hundreds of the most useful and critical Watchtower documents are available at your fingertips with this CD-ROM. A few of the topics include:

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Editor's Note: The publications featured in PFO's *Books in Review* section are available from **Personal Freedom Outreach** (P.O. Box 26062, Saint Louis, Missouri 63136). Please add \$1.75 to the price listed for shipping and handling. Due to occasional price changes by the publishers, the retail amounts listed are subject to change without notice. These publications are also available to those who help to financially support the work of PFO. Please see our funds appeal flyer for details.