

# The Quarterly Journal



THE NEWSLETTER PUBLICATION OF PERSONAL FREEDOM OUTREACH

VOL. 21, NO. 3

JULY-SEPTEMBER 2001

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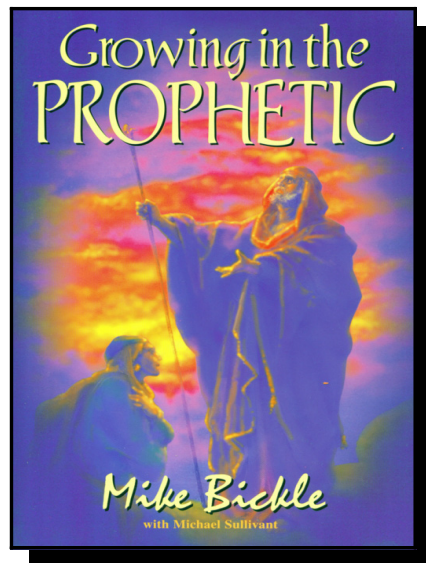
## Growing Pains in the Prophetic

### Mike Bickle as the “Don King” of Modern Day Prophets

by G. Richard Fisher

“Most pastors I know will let unusual, unprogrammed and even strange-looking things happen as long as they know it is not hype or fake. Pastors are afraid of things happening beyond what is of the Holy Spirit. They would rather cut things off a little before the danger zone,” writes Mike Bickle. However, he then confesses, “Prophets are almost always willing to go a little bit farther than the danger zone to make sure that we do everything that might be of the Lord.”<sup>1</sup>

Bickle is senior pastor of what now is called the Metro Christian Fellowship in Kansas City. In 1988, John Wimber and the Vineyard movement began a close association with Bickle and his church, known then as Kansas City Fellowship.<sup>2</sup> In 1990, Kansas City Fellowship became linked to the Association of Vineyard Churches and was renamed Metro Vineyard Fellowship. On Aug. 8, 1996, it broke ties with the Vineyard and is now called Metro Christian Fellowship, although early printings of Bickle’s 1996 book, *Growing in the Prophetic*, identify the church by the Metro Vineyard Fellowship name.



Bickle is reported as having been a Catholic who became a Presbyterian with a conversion to Christ in 1971. His “calling” began with a man

named Augustine, reportedly a prophet but who sounds more like a psychic or fortune-teller.<sup>3</sup>

Don King, though not a boxer himself, is a raucous promoter, manager, and overseer of professional boxing events. In the Charismatic world, Mike Bickle could easily be identified as the “Don King” of modern prophets. Bickle has written a book, *Growing in the Prophetic*, to oversee, regulate, and direct the prophetic movement. He states that one of the reasons for the book “was to fulfill the need for a unified, systematic teaching on the prophetic that could be available to our church body.”<sup>4</sup>

Yet Bickle himself denies prophetic powers:

“Some people are surprised that I can be the pastor and overseer

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# Editorials

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## TIME WOUNDS ALL HEELS

The word "heel" is a colloquialism for an unscrupulous person. Modern day false prophets certainly fit this description with their shameless predictions that rarely come true. Their success rate is not as high as the cheap guesswork of the supermarket tabloids, but it does not seem to deter their hard-core believers and sycophants.

Harold Camping is a major example with his 1994 prediction of the coming of Christ and the end of the world. In a 1994 telephone interview with PFO, Camping blatantly and brazenly said if he missed on the date, he would just go on like all the other predictors do and it would not hurt him a bit. He was right!

It is interesting to observe the posture of the followers of a false prophet when they are confronted with the facts. Anger, apathy, denial, and evasive responses are just a few of the reactions most frequently encountered. It does not matter toward which "holy icon" the loyalty of the devotee is directed. From Latter-day Saints (Mormons) to Jehovah's Witnesses to followers of Charismatic gurus such as Benny Hinn, Rick Joyner, Paul Cain, or Mike Bickel; the pattern of response is near mirror images of one another.

One all-too-common reaction is the charge of using "old materials" in an effort to avoid being confronted with irrefutable false prophecies and false doctrine. Latter-day Saints avoid the contradiction by asserting

their "living prophet" can override any of their dead prophets, including founder Joseph Smith Jr., the man Mormons credit with restoring true Christianity to the earth. It is truly amazing that the prophets don't have to be right, and even if they happen to hit it by chance they can be overruled either way later. Talk about a rigged game.

Mormon missionaries have been known to take on the assignment of visiting libraries to replace older LDS church works with new, updated and revised versions — or even remove incriminating volumes altogether. No one would suggest or admit that this is unethical and dishonest. Mormons are faced with the unenviable task of trying to eliminate their old revelations. God must really be confused or has a change of mind quite often. God is shown by this activity to not be omniscient.

Jehovah's Witnesses, too, have long tried to use such evasiveness. Whether confronted with theological deviations regarding the "Second Presence" of Jesus Christ, organizational medical prohibitions, the worship of Christ, or other important issues, the hue and cry is to discount their earlier writings. "The light gets brighter," they say in their effort to replace their "old light" with "new light." The logic in this is that the present followers don't know what light they will be in 10-20 years from now. Unfortunately, they are just deer in the headlights. Isaiah warned that if we kindle our own light or a false kind of light it would only lead to disaster and torment (Isaiah 50:11).

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### PERSONAL FREEDOM OUTREACH

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# News Updates

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## HINN, BONNKE FOCUS OF HBO SPECIAL

For “two high-profile leaders of Charismatic Christianity,” Easter Sunday 2001 will be a day they will long remember. They will remember it, not for the significance of celebrating the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, but for an investigative report entitled, “A Question of Miracles,” which premiered on the premium cable network, HBO. The 75-minute documentary examined the claims of healing evangelists Benny Hinn and Reinhard Bonnke.

“Production Notes” for the HBO special demonstrated Hinn’s continued blatant inability when it comes to providing evidence for his many “healing miracles”:

“Preaching in Portland, Ore., Benny Hinn performs 76 ‘miracles’ on stage before an adoring, ecstatic crowd. In order to make an independent assessment of the results, the filmmakers ask for the names of the healed. Thirteen weeks later, the ministry produces five. None of these turn out have experienced lasting healing. Among the devotees who sought a miracle from Hinn that evening was 10-year-old immigrant Ashnil Prakash, afflicted with two brain tumors. Although his impoverished parents pledge thousands of dollars to Hinn, Prakash dies seven weeks after the Portland event.”

An interview with Prakash’s mother and father following his death shows the parents continued an undeterred allegiance to the faith healer. As the couple discuss their child’s succumbing to the tumors, no allusion of any measure is expressed of Hinn being culpable of perpetuating false hope. The couple sees themselves, not Hinn, as a possible cause that their son did not receive a healing. The father suggests his son’s death may be a result of generational curses or sin of either himself or his father. When the HBO interviewer asked where he arrived at such a notion, the father responded, “Pastor Benny.”

Germany-born Bonnke fared no better — actually worse — in the report. At a healing service in Nigeria, Bonnke claims to perform 78 miracles. However, the supernatural is offset with tragic results. The HBO report disclosed that at the outdoor crusade Bonnke “invokes the fear of witchcraft and evil spells while proclaiming the healing power of Jesus Christ. The frenzied crowd eventually goes out of control, and 15 people are crushed to death that evening as they try to leave the field.” At a subsequent service, the parents of one who was killed at the crusade attempted to bring their child’s body to

Bonnke in the hope he would raise her from the dead. The parents and dead child were intercepted and kept from the stage where Bonnke was performing.

The program was written and directed by Antony Thomas and produced by Thomas and Carleen Ling-An Hsu. Its impact will be greater than the similar special produced and aired on the CNN network in 1997. Harry Guetzlaff, of the Trinity Foundation, a televangelist watchdog group, said of the HBO documentary, “It is extremely powerful. It demonstrates just how evil these men really are.”

—MKG

## NEW WIND TO FUEL A DYING FIRE?

Dwindling attendance numbers, the departure of its full-time evangelist, and a major rift caused when its theologian was ousted as head of its revival ministry school have plagued the Brownsville Revival in recent months. Despite these setbacks for the Pensacola, Fla.-based church, *The Remnant*, a web site devoted to “revival” information, stated, “For those who thought that the fire had gone out — THINK AGAIN...”

The web site also reported that the alleged resurgence was a fulfillment of “The Second Wind Prophecy” that was given to the Brownsville Revival in 1995. This revelation “told of a unique move of God that would come and open the door to the supernatural.” Last fall, “Prophet Judy Jacobs spoke about the glory re-entering the sanctuary. It was this testimony that was a forerunner to what is happening right now. ... It is apparent that something is going on and the promise of the Second Wind spoken of in 1995 is happening at this moment right now,” the Internet magazine stated.

In the first few months of this year, noted revival leaders and prophets such as John Arnott, Claudio Freidzon, and Cindy Jacobs have made appearances at Brownsville. Stephen Hill, the former evangelist at the Brownsville Revival also returned for its “Mission Week” in March. However, Hill’s reappearance came at a price; the cost for the event was “\$10 per person per day.”

Some see the appearance of these revival icons and the “Second Wind” prophecy as yet another effort to inject new blood into the dying revival efforts. Previous efforts, such as Awake America! campaigns, have failed and were eliminated.

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# Catching God: Old Practices in New Packages

## The Further God-Pursuits of Tommy Tenney

by G. Richard Fisher

Tommy Tenney has pulled off a creative switch. What was being called “anointing” and “impartation” for the last sixty years<sup>1</sup> is being renamed and repackaged by him under the name “God chasers.” While it appears to be the latest Charismatic *fad*, in reality it is the same old, same old: an old, worn practice in a new package.

Dr. Harry Ironside observed, “The times are solemn. Old errors are being paraded in new terms, on all sides. ...Satan has nothing new to offer. Old heresies are re-dressed and brought forward as new conceptions of truth from age to age, but in this respect, ‘there is nothing new under the sun.’”<sup>2</sup>

Tenney gives a big thumbs up and a glowing endorsement of the Brownsville Revival (a.k.a., Pensacola Outpouring) and its pastor, John Kilpatrick.<sup>3</sup> In a taped message Tenney delivered at Pensacola, Tenney, with wild and overblown exaggerated rhetoric, said that Kilpatrick’s and revival evangelist Stephen Hill’s preaching was flowing out into the city and into the nation. In reality, the Pensacola Revival had little effect on the city (except for the heightened motel and restaurant business), let alone our nation. Two key players of the revival, Hill and the revival’s theologian Michael Brown, are gone and the revival’s ministry school has

split under Brown. We must not forget what Tenney is endorsing and see the direct tie-in and dependence on Pensacola phenomenon.

Kilpatrick teaches:

“As God’s manifest presence comes over these individuals, they respond in a variety of ways. It is similar, I believe, to what happens when a human body might hit an electronically charged power — the body often cannot withstand the brilliant force. So it is when a supernatural God manifests Himself on a natural human being: people are sometimes knocked over limp (or slain in the Spirit), some shake uncontrollably, others are rigid and tense. Sometimes people break out into tears or laughter, they dance or sing, they sit or stand.”<sup>4</sup>

Tenney endorses this overtly as we have noted. His “God chasing” and “God catching” are what used to be called the river of revival. Same claims — new name.

In the last issue of *The Quarterly Journal*, several of Tenney’s previous works were examined. The critique documented Tenney’s low view of Scripture, his endorsement of bizarre physical phenomenon, and his mystical trends. While these blatant errors

should alarm every believer, Tenney gets prominent space in many Christian bookstores.

The aim of this article is to further evaluate his teachings located in his new book, *The God Catchers*. Tenney subtitles the book, “Experiencing the Manifest Presence of God.” The book is mostly a rewrite of *The God Chasers*,<sup>5</sup> but with a different title and a change of illustrations. The core content, however, is not really different.

As in *The God Chasers*, Tenney offers in his new book a tantalizing taste of what he seems to think is on the horizon:

“At times when I am in prayer or when I meditate on God’s Word, I have some wild dreams. They are coming to me more and more: I see scenes of major sporting events attended by tens of thousands of people. When they begin the game with a token prayer or song as usual, God suddenly shows up and breaks out in the middle of that crowd without warning.”<sup>6</sup>

Tenney doesn’t say this is wishful thinking and imaginative, nor does he provide scriptural basis.

Tenney again allows a bit of pantheism to peek through when he says, “His presence is literally the air your spirit-man breathes.”<sup>7</sup>

Every so often, a newspaper or magazine will run a cartoon without a caption and invite readers to submit creative lines for the cartoon. Some submissions are very fertile and imaginative. It is funny to read various ideas as to a meaning.

Some today must think that reading the Bible is like the above. They take a verse and make up a meaning or application. They make the Bible say things that are creative, sometimes funny, but subjective and off the mark. Like the old blacksmith used to advertise: "Fancy twistings and turnings done here," many twist and bend the Scriptures all out of recognition as Peter predicted they would (2 Peter 3:16).

The Church at large desperately needs to get back to good, sound, solid hermeneutical principles.

Some of the basic principles and rules (and there are many others) are: 1. context, 2. continuity, 3. culture, and 4. proper word definitions.

When observing context, we read around the verse in question and tie in verses before and after to get a fuller understanding. Many Bible words can only be understood in their context. When you hear the word "flat," you could not properly understand its meaning unless you knew whether it was in the context of a car, a living quarter, a musical note, a glass of soda pop, a piece of land, or any number of other "flat" objects. Our everyday speech is only understood in context, so why not the Scripture? We cannot treat the Bible like we are trying to read shapes in clouds or creating captions for cartoons.

C.W. Slemming's words are timely and appropriate:

"To understand a text we must know the context, otherwise our interpretation may be a pretext. We must ask ourselves such questions as: 'Who is speaking — God or man? Is it the Old Testament or the New Testament? Is it a historical statement or is it of doctrinal intent?' By doing this we shall be better able

to 'correctly handle the word of truth.'"<sup>8</sup>

Continuity has been called the analogy of faith and simply means comparing Scripture with Scripture. Proof-texting with one verse or obscure verses is dangerous. Many Scriptures on the topic at hand must be consulted. We are to interpret the obscure and difficult with the plain — not the other way around.

The cultural setting of the Bible should be investigated, as *Baker's Dictionary of Theology* reminds us:

"The books of the Bible are ancient books, reflecting social and cultural environments different from ours. In this respect they need to be explained for modern readers like other ancient writings. ... What kind of people were those whom we meet in the Bible? The effort to get under their skin and see life through their eyes is difficult, but it is necessary if we are to understand their actions and words, their loves and hates, their motives and aspirations."<sup>9</sup>

Some awareness of Jewish culture and Jewish customs is absolutely necessary. This is not to in any way displace the work of the Holy Spirit in illumination and interpretation, but is to understand that the Spirit works best in a context of order and with seeking and searching minds. The Spirit who is truth does not work through lies, distortions, and false meanings. One cannot row a boat straight ahead with one oar. The Holy Spirit working with and through good interpretive principles keeps the boat on a steady course not heading for the rocks. Cult leaders too often deceive and manipulate in the ignoring of proper interpretation. Charismatic gurus, with their claim of supernatural anointing, often resort to the same practice.

Word definitions are important to scriptural understanding. Words have meanings and we cannot ascribe meaning to words in a willy-nilly fashion. If the words are clearly metaphorical or allegorical, we

need to look for the literal meaning behind the metaphor or allegory. However, words should be seen in a normal way and not given any definition that we want.

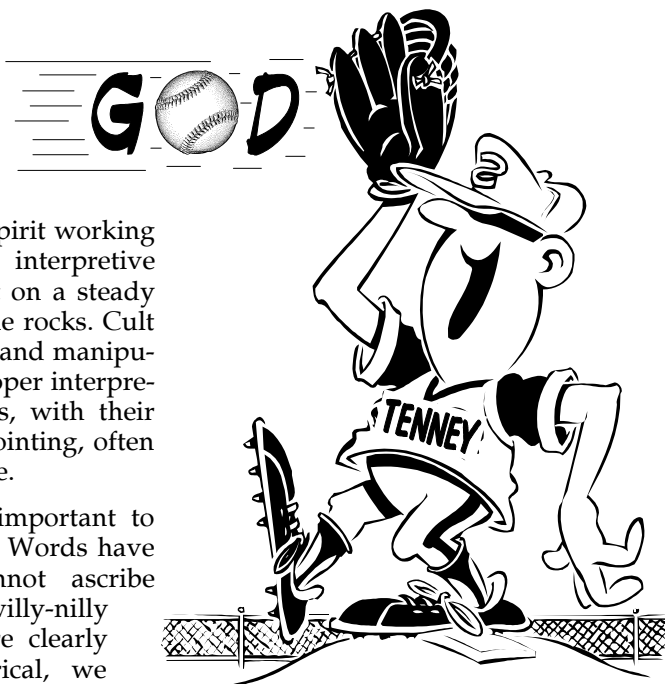
We can get into to serious error when we forget that many Hebrew words can only be properly understood in context. The words have to have a context to precisely define them. Word meanings must be developed in their setting. The Hebrew word for "forever," which is *olam*, can mean in some contexts a long undisclosed amount of time or age long. It can also mean hidden or concealed. When used of God it means strictly and absolutely eternal.<sup>10</sup>

We must know the context.

## PUTTING GOD ON THE SCALE

Tenney, for instance, regurgitates the view also taught by Kilpatrick that God's glory has to do with the "weight" of God, that is literal weight as in heaviness. Kilpatrick has said:

"So when I hit that floor and it felt like I weighed 10,000 pounds, I knew something supernatural was happening. ... The Hebrew word for glory, *Chabod*, translates *weightiness*. It is like a security blanket. ... The heaviness I felt that day, and for the next two



weeks, was God's glory visiting us at last."<sup>11</sup>

Does God have weight? Is God's presence really to be equated by poundage and a scale? Is God heavier, let's say, than a car? Does He gain or lose weight? Is this just a dishonest way to try to justify altered states of consciousness, fleshly manifestations, and emotionalism by Kilpatrick? Or are Kilpatrick's notions really biblical?

Tenney's rendition sounds like this:

"The thick blanket of His tangible presence was so heavy that I received an 'up close and personal' understanding of what is meant by God's Word when it says: ... *So that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud.*"<sup>12</sup>

Tenney further calls it, "the weighty manifest presence,"<sup>13</sup> and "kabod, the weightiness of God."<sup>14</sup>

Respected linguist Joseph Thayer translates *chabod* as "splendor" and "brightness" and parallels it to the Greek word, *doxa*, which means, magnificent, excellent, preeminence, and expresses dignity.<sup>15</sup>

The root of the word *chabod* may in some few instances carry the idea of weight but not in the way described by Kilpatrick and Tenney. They are off the mark, using a pretext and pretending it is a text. The error of Kilpatrick and Tenney has to do with an exegetical fallacy described by D.A. Carson as a "word study fallacy."

Carson describes how this occurs:

"One of the most enduring of errors, the root fallacy presupposes that every word actually *has* a meaning bound up with its shape or its components. In this view, meaning is determined by etymology; that is, by the root or roots of a word. ... Normally we observe that any individual word has a certain limited semantic range, and the context may therefore modify or shape the meaning of a word only within certain boundaries. ...the specification of the meaning of a word

on the sole basis of etymology can never be more than an educated guess. ...as important as word studies are, it is very doubtful if profound understanding of any text or of any theme is really possible by word studies alone."<sup>16</sup>

Glory generally has to do with light and brightness but try Kilpatrick and Tenney's proposal on the following verses:

- "And in the morning you shall see the weight of the Lord" (Exodus 16:7).
- "They looked toward the wilderness and behold the weight of the Lord appeared in the cloud" (Exodus 16:10).
- "Surely the Lord our God has shown His weight" (Deuteronomy 24:17).
- "Declare His weight among the nations" (1 Chronicles 16:24).
- "Give the Lord the weight due His name" (1 Chronicles 16:29).
- "But you, O Lord are ... my weight" (Psalm 3:3).
- "The heavens declare the weight of God" (Psalm 19:1).
- "He is the King of weight" (Psalm 24:10).
- "He will give me grace and weight" (Psalm 84:11).

We will not go on with the obvious silliness.

Both Kilpatrick and Tenney miss the nuances of the biblical concept of the heaviness root of *chabod*. The question must be: In which direction is God's glory weighted? God possesses glory which lends itself to the idea that the one possessing glory (God) is weighted down with power, splendor, riches and position. The weight is on God, not literally, but in an anthropomorphic (using human figures and images so we can understand) sense. Of Jesus it is said:

"Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing. ... Blessing and honor and glory and power be to Him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb,

forever and ever" (Revelation 5:12-13).

The "weight" is all on Him not us. Obviously the weight is not literal but descriptive. *Baker's Dictionary of Theology* explains *chabod* further stating, "it carried the notion of reputation or honor which was present in the use of *kabod*. But *kabod* also denoted the manifestation of light by which God revealed himself, whether in the lightning flash or in the blinding splendor which often accompanied theophanies."<sup>17</sup>

## BACK TO DUSTY LOVE LETTERS

Tenney had previously said that early Jewish believers "walked and talked with *Him* in such a rich level of intimacy that it wasn't necessary for them to pore over dusty love letters that were written long ago. They had God's love notes freshly written on their hearts."<sup>18</sup>

It is a curious thing to see Tenney, in this new book, appeal to Scripture the way that he does. In his quote above he undercut confidence in the Word by referring to it as God's dusty love letters (also as the tracks where God had been). It was as if we really did not need it as much as we needed mystical experiences — "love notes freshly written" on our hearts, whatever that means.

Yet, in *The God Catchers*, Tenney appeals to Scripture and biblical characters to try to make his points or as illustrations. It is a bit disingenuous, self-serving, and inconsistent to rehearse the Bible stories and violate his own principle of the Scripture being a kind of old love letter lacking the freshness and relevance that we really need. Why go where God has been? However, without the biblical filler Tenney's book would have very few pages in it.

## "HOLY HYPERBOLE"

But even in appealing to the Bible, Tenney does not properly exegete it, but deviates into fantasy with strange embellishments and imaginary filler. Tenney spins a tale of how God planted the seed of the sycamore tree before the birth of Zacchaeus and

then sent two angels to guard it. He develops dialogue between God and the angels over the tree.<sup>19</sup>

In describing Zacchaeus it sounds like Tenney is just making up captions for a cartoon story as he adds his own narration to the biblical event:

“While Zacchaeus stood in the shadow of the sycamore tree debating over his dignity, the angels were cheering, ‘Go on; climb the tree, man! Get up there. We didn’t guard this tree for fifty years for nothing. Deity over dignity!’ After all the sovereign preparations for this blind date with destiny, it was no time for Zacchaeus to wrestle with his fear of public disapproval by a public that already disapproved of him.”<sup>20</sup>

Tenney is not interpreting and applying the Scripture but rather creating an apocryphal gospel story.

In his address to a Brownsville Revival audience,<sup>21</sup> Tenney goes into all kinds of elaborations on the tabernacle of David and talks of a “blue flame” on the Ark of the Covenant and how David sought the “blue flame.” One could look long and hard in the Bible to find a blue flame. It is nonexistent except in Tenney’s imagination. People object to the addition of the Old Testament Apocrypha, but for some reason give Tenney a pass on his imaginary additions to the Scripture. Are we up in arms over *The Book of Mormon*, but want to embrace other kinds of fanciful additions?

Tenney even goes so far to say that God left His celestial throne to visit the prison cell of Paul and Silas and sing to them.<sup>22</sup> What an amazing imagination Tenney has. If God ever left His throne or Christ abdicated His place of mediatorship, this whole universe would be in very deep trouble. And besides, the text just *does not say that*. Can we read anything we want into the Bible? He adds that if we sing through “pain and midnight desperation” we can set prostitutes and drug addicts free.<sup>23</sup>

We also find other extrabiblical narration from Tenney, this time regarding the day of Pentecost:

“He immediately notices that there are thousands of people laughing, babbling in foreign languages, and staggering drunkenly around the streets of Jerusalem. When he sees his old buddy Peter, he hustles over and asks him, ‘What happened here?’ Peter says, ‘Man, our hair is on fire! You *missed* it ... you left one day too soon.”<sup>24</sup>

Where in the Bible does it say thousands staggered drunkenly around Jerusalem and where does Peter say his hair is on fire? Tenney also informs us that the Apostle Paul was a “God Chaser,” who “lived with divine discontent.”<sup>25</sup> Paul said he was always content (Philippians 4:11-12), but Tenney tries to convince us that that was not what Paul really meant and reiterates that Paul was a “chronic God Chaser.”<sup>26</sup> What Tenney does to a biblical text is criminal.

When Tenney just makes up stories around biblical events and puts words in peoples’ mouths, how can anything he says be trusted? To fill the text with imaginary things makes all of Tenney’s teaching and stories suspect. Some may say these are just small items around a few small happenings, but how do we know on the larger items whether Tenney is being honest or has gone into flights of imagination? But what part of the Scripture is unimportant?

To make it even more incriminating Tenney says we must lay down our “holy hyperbole” if we expect God to pour out His fullness.<sup>27</sup> Why doesn’t Tenney do it? His holy hyperbole is downright fictions and lies.

### HOLY CRITICISM

Tenney is very critical of worship as conducted in most churches. This is not to say that there cannot be mindless worship or worship without heart. But Tenney’s indictment overreaches and is scathing and judgmental:

“*Perhaps the church suffers from the Uzziah Syndrome today. We insist on approaching God our way, and we say that everything is fine. Our way will be the acceptable way because we are sure we know what God likes. We think*

we can continue to ‘feed Him’ like a trained pet on a chain with our crafted sermons, serial liturgies, and orchestrated prostrations in religious pride and arrogance.”<sup>28</sup>

Why, so often, are discerning countercult and apologetic ministries charged with being judgmental, but comments such as Tenney’s cited above are just passed over — or hailed as spiritually discerning? God ultimately will be the judge of how sincere or insincere a person’s worship is, not Tenney.

Tenney’s example of Uzziah and what he calls the “Uzziah Syndrome,” likewise misses the meaning of the text altogether. Again he is creating apocryphal accounts. Uzziah’s experiences have nothing to do with a church service. This is where context is totally ignored by Tenney. Uzziah was overly proud and as a result of his heart “being lifted up” he attempted to intrude on the priest’s office (and assume the priest’s office) and in disobedience to God offer the priestly incense in the Temple (2 Chronicles 26:16).

Adam Clarke comments that Uzziah’s “heart being elated, he went into the temple to burn incense upon the altar, assuming to himself the functions of the high priest.”<sup>29</sup> This was a daily ritual only to be done by Sons of Aaron. It was a clear act of prideful disobedience and a violation of God’s Word on Uzziah’s part which earned the judgment of God by way of leprosy. It has nothing to do with a believer coming in sincerity and faith to a church service. There is no one-to-one correspondence or parallel except in the overt disobedience of a believer. The context is not worship at all, but the abandonment of one’s calling and the intrusion into a calling that God has not given. Tenney indicts many believers by misapplying a passage of God’s Word which is clearly manipulative and unacceptable. He is adding subjective captions out of his imagination.

Jesus is our High Priest. He mediates the presence of God to us. Tenney, in insisting on an unmediated experience of the “manifest

presence of God," may be getting perilously close to where Uzziah was. We cannot bypass God's Word and God's High Priest and seek an unmediated presence lest we fall prey to the demonic spirit realm or human delusion.

Tenney has no time or patience for the average church meeting either:

"If you've ever had encounters with Him, then 'man meetings' will drive you crazy because you will be interested only in 'God encounters' after that. That is the exact name and address of my God addiction."<sup>30</sup>

Tenney is also disdainful of the average churchgoer and gives them an oblique homiletical flogging:

"If you ever have an encounter with the manifest presence of God, it will ruin church for you. From then on, you put up with church. What you really want is, 'Come on, God.' Man-centered sermons and songs will make you sick. Going through the motions will just drive you nuts. 'What are you trying to do?' People can't even see what you're looking at. They think you're looking out the window, but you are looking for the pattern to appear on the window-pane. You're not even looking at the same things."<sup>31</sup>

### EXPLANATIONS THAT DON'T EXPLAIN

Just what Tenney means by "the manifest presence of God" and "Come on, God" is not clear. But it is some kind of experience, that's for sure. Tenney refers to it as "encounters that *I have had*," and says "even if you have personally experienced it at levels that are neck high."<sup>32</sup> He also says, "If you ever see Him, it changes everything."<sup>33</sup> Tenney further promises, "Wait until you've glimpsed Him in His glory!"<sup>34</sup>

Tenney is clear that God chasing and God catching is an experience and seems to say it is a visual experience. Up to this point it is not real clear, but Tenney adds that there

are conditions and levels of finding God:

"1. You can pursue Him like a toddler. If you find His feet, you find His face. 2. At other times, desperation pulls Him from His dimension into yours. *He finds you!*"<sup>35</sup>

Just when you think you've got it, Tenney says that, "There really is no formula."<sup>36</sup> The reader must begin to feel like he is in a mystical netherland when he hears Tenney say, "Passion knows no logic."<sup>37</sup> Tenney exhibits no logic when after having told us "there really is no formula," he informs us, "God wants to display His glory to you; He's simply waiting for you to get the conditions just right."<sup>38</sup> Conditions sound like a formula, so if there is no formula, why offer one? This echoes Werner Erhard's number one rule of life. Erhard said the number one rule was, "there are no rules." If there are no rules, how could he have a number one rule?

A formula is defined as a "law, rule, fact ... list of ingredients or instructions" and a condition is defined as "required as part of an agreement."<sup>39</sup> So both contain the idea of certain requirements and stipulated procedures. This illustrates Tenney's imprecision and confusion.

Tenney fits the category of mysticism as defined by Norman Geisler:

"*The Nature of a Mystical Experience*. Religious experiences are notoriously difficult to define. ... Mystical experiences of God are noncognitive. They are not mediated through concepts or ideas. Rather, they are unmediated and intuitive. They are direct contacts with God. As such, they are not discursive. They involve no reasoning processes."<sup>40</sup>

Geisler goes on to explain that mystical experiences are not objective and are not testable. They are self-canceling and can be misrepresented. They also can lead to agnosticism. Geisler explains further:

"When a mystical experience is used to support the truth claim of the belief system of the one

having it, it is without value for the simple reason that people with conflicting belief systems have mystical experiences. But if the same kind of evidence is used to support opposing beliefs it is self-cancelling."<sup>41</sup>

Mysticism is the host organism upon which the virus of God chasing and God catching find their home.

### IT'S NEVER ENOUGH

Whatever this chase involves, Tenney makes it clear that it is never over. We never quite get all the way there and even if we do we must keep doing it. There never seems to be an arrival point: "we must be continually desperate for more of His manifest presence."<sup>42</sup> The chasing and catching must go on and on in a never-ending cycle. But we must remember that is what was said of anointings and impartations. Fresh anointings were always being dispensed and one could keep returning to the vending machine. One can get hooked on getting high and it may not always be dispensed in pill form, but rather from a platform.

Even if you get frustrated with the constant searching, Tenney has an answer for that. He writes, "Will it help if I tell you that all the spiritual luminaries of ages past have lived at frustration's address?"<sup>43</sup> Tenney even puts a twist on how to interpret the inevitable depression that will come seeking highs as he bends reality:

"Do you feel as if you can't stand the weight of your hunger anymore? Does your frustration make you feel as if you are on the verge of depression at times? It may feel that way, but the problem is that you are disillusioned with man (probably not any man in particular) and you are sick of what we call church (although you love your local body). ... Frustration is the address to which God sends the anointing. ... God births a frustration in your heart that compels you to pursue Him for *more and more of His presence*, which in turn makes you want Him even more!"<sup>44</sup>

Tenney labels the breathless moving from being a chaser to a catcher and then back to a chaser again as the "Holy Frustration Zone."<sup>45</sup>

The above is a deadly brew for mental instability. Your depression from anointing withdrawal is not Tenney's fault (or problem) and it is not your fault, but it is the fault of the Church and God. His answer is: Just go back to the cause of the depression in the first place. It is like an alcoholic going back to the bottle to get relief from the symptoms the bottle created! Tenney locks his avid followers into a box called emotion addiction. Any feeling, good or bad, is not a symptom of something being wrong, but is a trigger to go back to the drug.

It is clearly one thing to continue to grow in the Christian life. It is quite proper to continue to search the Word and find new and exciting things out about God and His character and works. It is the goal of every believer to obey God and be consistent in church attendance and serving others as Hebrews 10 declares. Christian growth is a process. It is quite another thing to chase elusive, mystical experiences or connections to the manifest presence of God. The Holy Spirit makes Christ real to us, while the chasing of mysticism is a sure route to spiritual burnout. An old Baptist brother said there is such a thing as "reviving a church to death." Seeking the means of grace given by God will never depress or frustrate.

Though Tenney refers to Bible characters and tries to establish present day mystical encounters based on their experiences,<sup>46</sup> there is really not a direct correlation. Who could sit with Jesus in His physical body and have a Passover meal in an upper room but the twelve? We would not insist on everyone having to have the exact conversion that Paul had. We would not insist that every jailed missionary have an angel unlock the prison like Peter. Some things clearly are unique and not reproducible. We would not insist that every believer be given a new book of Revelation like John.

God's direct revelation to David, Isaiah, Joel, Malachi, the apostles John

and Paul, and others was objective content for then and now. It had the purpose of preserving God's Word for future generations as they penned it through divine revelation and divine inspiration. These are not reproducible nor can they be repeated. There are no Scripture writers today because we don't need them. Praise God, His Word is complete and sufficient (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Just as we do not have to have Calvary repeated because "It is finished," we do not have to have a new re-inspired Bible written.

As Tenney goes on, he just keeps adding more qualifiers and more conditions to the chasing experience:

"God has to break through our programs before He can break out and manifest His presence among us. He has to demolish our artificial intelligence (our dim and sometimes haughty imitation of His omniscience) and artificial spirituality (our programs) to bring in the real thing and take a city or nation. ... That means we have to face a 'garden of Gethsemane' experience *before* we can see His face."<sup>47</sup>

The Gethsemane experience is not explained. However, even if Tenney would define it, it would be trite and shallow to compare our problems with Christ's Gethsemane experience.

Tenney seems to be upset with preachers and preaching as well:

"At some point our churches have to get tired of preachers sticking plastic pacifiers in their mouths by talking about the *promise* of His presence. They need to set up a juvenile howl of the hungry that declares in no uncertain terms, 'No, we don't want you to *talk* about Him anymore. Keep the empty promises and give us the real thing. We want to meet Him! Where do we go and what do we do?'"<sup>48</sup>

Christians should be offended by Tenney's cynicism, sarcasm and put-down of what faithful ministers of God's Word do faithfully week-in and week-out. The Apostle Paul certainly did not think that "talking about the

promise" was "sticking plastic pacifiers in their mouths." The Apostle Paul declared:

"For since in the wisdom of God the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. For Jews require a sign, and Greeks request wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness" (1 Corinthians 1:21-23).

The context of Tenney's statement indicates that his reference to promises are the promises of the Bible. It should outrage the reader to hear them addressed as "empty." The Apostle Peter contends (under divine inspiration) just the opposite:

"As His divine power has given us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which we have been given *exceedingly great and precious promises*, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (2 Peter 1:3-4, emphasis added).

Joni Eareckson Tada reminds us:

"'We have his promises!' Jesus and his promises. They are virtually one and the same. ... 'no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ.' To believe in Christ is to believe in God's promises."<sup>49</sup>

The down-playing of preaching is heard quite often in Tenney's statements. People do not go to impartation meetings to *hear* and *think*, but only to *feel*. It reminds one of the warning of the Prophet Amos as he thundered:

"Behold the days are coming, says the Lord God, that I will send a famine on the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of the hearing of the words of the Lord. They shall wander from sea to sea, and from north to east; They shall

run to and fro, seeking the word of the Lord, but shall not find it" (Amos 8:11-12).

The normal pattern would be north to south or east to west. Running "north to east" seems to indicate no plan, pattern, purpose, design, or order — just a racing from one revival center to another wherever there is a claimed breakout of "God" so one can be "anointed," "slain," "electrocuted," or convulsed; all with no promises of Scripture or comfort from the Word. They claim to have a fullness and be filled, but are empty, dry, and thirsty.

### WRONG ABOUT REVIVAL

Is Tenney correct when he states, "I have never yet seen, heard, or read about any preaching meeting that triggered a major outbreak of God. Preaching may have occurred in the process, but the fire broke out first at prayer meetings"?<sup>50</sup> Liberals reject the Bible and say it is not true. Modern mystics relegate the Bible to second place and say it is not all that important. The Bible is peripheral and incidental, not central in their view. Whether Latter Rain, Toronto, or Pensacola, it is thrills, spills, and chills that take center stage and are what people seem to be seeking.

It is wrong for Tenney to rival preaching against praying as if the two are mutually exclusive. Preaching and praying have both played a large part in all the major revivals in the past. Preaching did not just occur in the process, but was central to the process. The Gospel and the preached Word are still the power of God unto salvation (see Romans chapters 1 and 10). Prayer and preaching are like two train tracks. Without both, the train of God's work can get derailed.

Not only did the Bible and Bible preaching trigger revivals, but during and after major revivals the Bible was loved and revered, never downplayed. An outgrowth of true past revivals has not been books on how to catch God, but rather Bible and tract societies and universities to teach the Word and train men for the ministry of the Word.<sup>51</sup>

Iain Murray, an expert on the history of revival, sounds this solemn warning:

"The older generation, while prizing the work of the Spirit of God in history, never gave their interest in that work priority over the work of the same Spirit in indicting the truth in Scripture. For God works in accordance with his Word. Without Scripture there is no 'sword of the Spirit'. The test whether experience is of the Spirit of God or of 'another spirit' is whether or not it brings greater understanding of the Bible and a closer obedience to it. So the foremost role of the church is always to teach and preach the Word and the work of evangelism and the ingathering of souls is never to be considered as in tension with the maintenance of true doctrine. Another way of stating this would be to say that the ultimate end of all things is the glory of God, and that glory is not given to him other than by men and women being brought to comprehend the truth."<sup>52</sup>

It may surprise some to learn that the word revival is not found in the Bible, even though it is a mantra for many. The word *revive* is used only 12 times. In at least five instances it has to do with physical bodily restoration, in two instances it refers to inanimate objects (stones and the work), and in one instance, sin (Romans 7:9). There are two instances of *revive* in regard to the nation of Israel and two as to revival of our spirits. These last two are found in Psalm 85:6 and 138:7. Neither denigrate the Word or catapult experiences over Scripture. Both are in a context of listening to God's Word (Psalm 85:8, 10-11). David, in Psalm 138:7, says, "you will revive me." He has this confidence based on God's Word for he declared in verse 2, "You have magnified your word above your name."<sup>53</sup>

In commenting on Psalm 138:2, Al Dager offers:

"...God tells us that He has exalted His Word above His own

name (Psalm 138:2); the integrity of His name is linked inextricably to the integrity of His Word. To incorporate unbiblical practices as a means to spiritual growth is to say that God's Word is insufficient in its instructions for our relationship to the Father. This is contrary to Scripture. ... When Jesus established the New Covenant He established all the terms of that covenant, as contained in the New Testament Scriptures. I am not aware that He has established yet another covenant with new terms, new revelations or new methodologies to achieve spiritual maturity."<sup>53</sup>

### "YOU ARE IN HERESY NOW, TENNEY"

Tenney seems to enjoy shocking his readers with extreme and wild suggestions. Having already minimized the necessity and importance of Scripture, Tenney now suggests that God may use occult means to act and speak:

"I have a wild idea that at some point some New Age guru will consult his crystal ball and read his tarot cards hoping to conjure up anything to confirm the reality of the spirit realm. All of a sudden, the God of eternity will appear right there in front of him. 'Oh, you are in heresy now, Tenney,' you may say. Well, I beg your pardon, but could you tell me the difference between a New Ager and a murderer? (I know that neither one would have much of a chance to meet God in some of the programmed church performances we call worship.)"<sup>54</sup>

Tenney leaves the reader with his head spinning and then delivers another jolt by comparing the above to Paul's conversion on the Damascus road. Fortunately, Tenney has the New Ager instructed by Jesus to throw away the crystal ball and tarot cards.<sup>55</sup> However, these things are simply displaced by Jesus in Tenney's scenario and never called evil, occult, or demonic. One gets the idea that these are almost evangelistic tools, or

at least not all that bad since, “the God of eternity will appear right there in front of him.”<sup>56</sup> Occult paraphernalia deceives people and take them deeper and deeper into bondage and darkness. God is not making regular appearances in the way Tenney suggests.

Again, the heart of Tenney’s problem is the Scripture. Over and over again, God forbade Israel to practice magic and occult arts. The only way God promised to “show up” was in judgment. God never suggested He would “show up” in the middle of a seance, but instructed His people to destroy all the articles of the black arts. God did “show up” at a seance conducted by King Saul and the witch of Endor (1 Samuel 28), to bring a pronouncement of final judgment on the wicked king. The writer of 1 Chronicles informs us, “So Saul died for his unfaithfulness which he had committed against the Lord, because he consulted a medium for guidance” (10:13).

Certainly God can save an occult practitioner, a spiritist, or a New Ager, but not in the way Tenney suggests. Those saved out of those lifestyles are the first to strongly condemn the use of the accouterments of darkness and attest to the power of the Word of God and the Gospel to set them free. They are saved in spite of their dark tools, not through them.

The Apostle James would also disagree with Tenney on how a person is converted. He said that if we neglect to hear and do the Word that we are deceiving ourselves (James 1:22). James also said, “receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls” (1:21). Experience over truth is a sure route to confusion. At the very least, Tenney is not viewing the occult world and conversion from a biblical framework and is opening people up to encounters from the other side which may be exposing them to deep deception (2 Corinthians 11:3-4, 13-15).

### “PEOPLE LIKE ME PAY YOUR SALARY”

It is surprising to read Tenney trying to illustrate one of his points

through his own impatience, pride, and insensitivity. He relates his experience in a restaurant when he was receiving poor service from a waitress. Tenney resorted to getting into a spitting match with the waitress. In a boasting way, he describes the incident:

“The service, and I am being very kind to call it that, was so bad that I finally asked my waitress, ‘Ma’am, do you know who pays your salary?’ She sneered and rolled her eyes before she said, ‘My boss.’ I said, ‘No, people like me pay your salary. I’ve even been known to tip more than the cost of the whole bill — *when the service warrants it.*’ I waited until she finally looked me in the eye and then said, ‘Ma’am, you have no idea of my ability to change your future. I could make your day.’”<sup>57</sup>

Are we being too hard on Tenney? Most Christians would be — or at least should be — ashamed of their lack of love and compassion in reacting so carnally and with so much pride and impatience. Tenney is supposed to be a man who has stood in the manifest presence of God and “caught” God. He claims to be able to teach us how to do it. Tenney boasts:

“...once the Lord helped me get hungry enough to wait on Him and experience His manifest presence, I just couldn’t get enough of Him. Now I am determined to wait as long as necessary to welcome His presence.”<sup>58</sup>

Maybe the waitress was having a bad day or maybe had some tragedy she was dealing with. For love’s sake (1 Corinthians 13) and in the name of loving one’s neighbor and love covering a multitude of sins, her transgression could have been passed over for the sake of Tenney’s witness. I wonder what that waitress would think if she picked up and read *The God Catchers* book? She may remember that this famous author could have made her day with a huge tip. How that can illustrate anything about God is beyond me and I think will be beyond most readers.

### IT’S ALMOST HERE, WELL ALMOST

We must realize that Tenney fits into a broad category called Charismatic Restorationism. This movement (also called the *Counterfeit Revival* by apologist Hank Hanegraaff and others) relies on the following:

1. Convincing people that the Church at large has failed and is failing. The gates of hell have prevailed, in so many words. Tenney frames it this way: “I’m going to say it again: if sermons and songs were going to save our cities and nation, then they would have been saved a long time ago.”<sup>59</sup> We have no guarantee from Scripture of a saved nation, and the same thing could be said of the restoration message.

2. Causing Christians to be discontented by convincing them that their Christian experience is lacking and inferior and that they need something more. This is illustrated by Tenney’s remarks that, “Something happened to me after decades of serving God and preaching what I thought was revival. Something was missing, and I had an idea it was God’s presence. That was when I decided that I was tired of standing on the sidewalk watching the ‘Jesus parade’ pass by. I became too hungry to be satisfied with church as usual.”<sup>60</sup>

3. Creating the illusion that there is a new age or new era of miracles ready to break out. It can happen at any moment if we just all believe in the miracle age restoration message and get in gear. God is going to “show up” and there will be an outbreak of creative miracles, cancers falling off bodies, the dead will be raised, stadiums will be filled with tens of thousands of worshiping people and the glory of God (or maybe Jesus) will actually appear. All we have to do is create a “landing zone” or a “throne zone” for God.<sup>61</sup> The exact details differ with each teacher, but Tenney sums it up saying: “We haven’t seen anything yet.”<sup>62</sup> Tenney spins the restorationist line:

“Again, I have a strong conviction that another wave of God’s

manifested presence is about to hit the shore of the human race. It has happened before in measure, but I am convinced that this new wave of glory has the potential to be different. God wants to break outside our centuries-old religious box."<sup>63</sup>

4. The elitist message that there is an upper echelon of spiritual apostles and prophets who have heard from the mouth of God regarding this golden age. If you follow obediently and go through the prescribed paces (sometimes called hunger, or emptiness, or thirst, or labor pains), you may become one of the spiritual elite. It is not exactly the message of the 144,000, but it is close.

The restorationists sell books, but not reality. They sell dreams, but not discernment. They offer hype, but not hope. They sell illusions, but not facts. They have crowds, but no real goods. For the last century we've heard the claims — over and over and over.

What Tenney and the other restorationists need to admit is the truth that *the restorationists have failed*. They have been promising, promising, promising for almost 100 years now. *They have not delivered!*

It is truly amazing that instead of rethinking their message and admitting their failed history and blaming themselves, they keep blaming the people, the preachers, and the churches. *They are the failures* and their message is a colossal failure because it is a fantasy and not based on proper biblical understanding. The failure of the unrealistic hype is a scapegoat on everyone but themselves. They have packaged a lie and then blame the consumer that the lie does not work. When the followers finally catch on, there is often a malaise and cynicism that sets in that is deadly.

Tenney is absolutely right when he says, "Some people automatically assume that 'this God Chaser stuff' is all about the selfish pursuit of just another 'religious buzz.'"<sup>64</sup>

Catching God may be catching on, but all the person will really be

catching is a deadly spiritual "virus" that will deaden them to the Word, open them up to a disrespect and disregard for preachers (and preaching), and cause them to despise the Church and the means of grace. Call it by any name you want but both the Bible and history show us that it will have no long term staying power, but will only make way for another new fad or new craze that will sell books and divide the Church. Anoint, impart, catch God, or whatever label you give it — it is the same old tired mysticism.

### Endnotes:

1. For example, beginning in the 1940s with the Latter Rain Movement and continuing to the present day under the auspices of the Toronto Blessing and the Pensacola Outpouring.
2. Harry Ironside, *Lectures on the Epistle to the Colossians*. New York: Loizeaux Brothers, 1960, Preface and pg. 15.
3. Tommy Tenney, *The God Catchers*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2000, pp. 197-198, endnote 6.
4. John Kilpatrick, *Feast of Fire*. Pensacola, Fla.: privately published, 1995, pp. 84-85.
5. Tommy Tenney, *The God Chasers*. Shippensburg, Pa.: Destiny Image Publishers, 1998.
6. *The God Catchers*, op. cit., pg. 55.
7. *Ibid.*, pg. 37.
8. C.W. Slemming, *These Are the Garments*. Fort Washington, Pa.: Christian Literature Crusade, 1998, pg. 22.
9. Everett F. Harrison, editor, *Baker's Dictionary of Theology*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1973, pp. 291-292.
10. See further, Adam Clarke, *The Holy Bible Containing the Old and New Testaments*. New York: Abingdon Press, no date, Vol. 1, pp. 136-137.
11. *Feast of Fire*, op. cit., pg. 77.
12. *The God Chasers*, op. cit., pg. 84, italics and bold in original.
13. *Ibid.*
14. Tommy Tenney, *God's Favorite House*. Shippensburg, Pa.: Fresh Bread, Destiny Image Publishers, 1999, pg. 49. Also cited in *The God Catchers*, op. cit., pg. 120.
15. See further, Joseph Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing 1966, pg. 156.
16. D.A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1985, pp. 26, 30-31, 32, 66.
17. *Baker's Dictionary of Theology*, op. cit., pg. 236.
18. *The God Chasers*, op. cit., pg. 74.
19. *The God Catchers*, op. cit., pp. 64-65.
20. *Ibid.*, pg. 66.

21. Tommy Tenney, "God's Favorite House," Pensacola: Brownsville Assembly of God, 4/1/99, tape #990401, cassette tape on file.
22. *The God Catchers*, op. cit., pg. 172.
23. *Ibid.*, pg. 173.
24. *Ibid.*, pg. 93.
25. *Ibid.*, pg. 170.
26. *Ibid.*, pg. 171.
27. *Ibid.*, pg. 100.
28. *Ibid.*, pp. 20-21, italics in original.
29. *The Holy Bible Containing the Old and New Testaments*, op. cit., Vol. 2, pg. 529.
30. *The God Catchers*, op. cit., pg. 52.
31. *Ibid.*, pg. 24. The reference to the pattern on the windowpane refers to Tenney's earlier analogy of frost as it is unseen in the air crystallizing on a window or bridge, "proving" that the unseen world can become visible (pp. 17-18).
32. *Ibid.*, pg. 22, italics in original. Later printings of the book by Thomas Nelson have changed Tenney's statement from "the encounters that I have had" to "the encounters that I have heard of."
33. *Ibid.*, pg. 23, italics in original.
34. *Ibid.*, pg. 26.
35. *Ibid.*, pg. 27, italics in original.
36. *Ibid.*, pg. 28.
37. *Ibid.*, pg. 29.
38. *Ibid.*
39. *The Complete Christian Dictionary for Home and School*. Ventura, Calif.: Gospel Light, 1992, pp. 259, 127.
40. Norman Geisler, *The Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1999, pg. 516.
41. *Ibid.*, pg. 517.
42. *The God Catchers*, op. cit., pg. 36.
43. *Ibid.*, pg. 164.
44. *Ibid.*, pp. 165-166, italics in original.
45. *Ibid.*, pg. 167.
46. *Ibid.*, pp. 38-39.
47. *Ibid.*, pg. 48, italic in original.
48. *Ibid.*, pg. 50, italics in original.
49. Joni Eareckson Tada, *More Precious Than Silver*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing Company, 1998, entry for February 3.
50. *The God Catchers*, op. cit., pg. 53.
51. See, for example, Iain Murray, *Revival and Revivalism*. Carlisle, Pa.: Banner of Truth Trust, 1994, pp. 131-132.
52. *Ibid.*, pg. 359.
53. Albert James Dager, "Renovaré, Taking Leave of One's Senses," Special Report, *Media Spotlight*, 1992, pg. 4.
54. *The God Catchers*, op. cit., pg. 56.
55. *Ibid.*, pg. 57.
56. *Ibid.*, pg. 56.
57. *Ibid.*, pg. 76, italics in original.
58. *Ibid.*, pp. 88-89.
59. *Ibid.*, pg. 107.
60. *Ibid.*, pg. 67.
61. *Ibid.*, pg. 110.
62. *Ibid.*, pg. 111.
63. *Ibid.*, pg. 105.
64. *Ibid.*, pg. 119.

of prophetic people without being prophetically gifted myself. ... Some pastors are surprised by this, and some are disappointed. They were hoping to see a spectacular manifestation of God's power when I preached at their churches. ... I seldom prophesy, and even then there is no 'thus saith the Lord' tagged on for emphasis. ... I am a pastor/teacher with very limited prophetic giftings."<sup>5</sup>

Bickle is a bit unclear here and suggests he does a little prophecy — sometimes — in a limited way, though he does not make a big deal of it. While writing as an overseer of prophecy and interested in regulating the prophetic for churches and minimizing his own abilities, he still does boast of incredible spiritual exploits.

Bickle claims that a "voice" spoke to him in September 1982, directing him to a ministry to touch the ends of the earth.<sup>6</sup> Bickle's account is as follows:

"The Lord simply said, 'I will change the understanding and expression of Christianity in the earth in one generation.'"<sup>7</sup>

Bickle is among a growing number of hyper-Charismatics who are involved in a form of supercessionism. The idea behind the word is that of replacement. The new prophets teach that their new movement is the real end-times body and is now the way to conduct church. They promote an imminent age of miracles. The manifestations that are about to break out are going to be so great that they will improve upon the prophets and apostles of the Bible. The past ways of doing things are now outmoded, outdated and ineffective. The prophetic supercessionists are where God is really at work today. They deserve your ear and especially your money, and you can "seed" prosperity and miracles as you give to them.

The main concern in this article is with Mike Bickle's book, *Growing in*

*the Prophetic*. Though his name appears on the cover of the book, he indicates in the acknowledgement that it is his secretary, along with Walter Walker, who actually wrote the book, giving thanks for "a prophetic secretary" and a "prophetic ghostwriter." Indeed, these are new offices introduced, but since Bickle's name appears as the author, along "with Michael Sullivant," it is safe to proceed with the assurance and assumption that Bickle gave the interviews and that he endorses every thought. The book speaks for him.

### CHARISMANIA'S MYTHOLOGY

Bickle follows the old party line of the Latter Rain movement and the Charismatic mythology of an imminent miracle age (supercessionism) and lays out what he thinks is ahead for the Church:

"When God sends the wind of the Spirit, we can expect to see great signs and wonders such as the sound of rushing wind and the shaking of buildings as well as extraordinary healings — raising the dead and the recovery of paralytics. A great harvest of souls will come as a result of this. ... He will send the wind of the Spirit, which includes a manifestation of the ministry of angels. ... all believers not just prophets — will have dreams and see visions. The greatest and fullest manifestation of the kingdom of God — the Day of the Lord, the restoration of all things and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit — is reserved for the consummation of all things at the end of the age. I believe there will be an unprecedented revival in which all believers will experience dreams, visions and everything Joel prophesied just before the second coming of Christ."<sup>8</sup>

Bickle does not believe that the people in this movement will gain immortality in this life, but he is on track with most of the Manifest Sons of God and Joel's Army teaching.

If Bickle would read Scripture carefully, he might not be calling for the

"Day of the Lord." Joel says of that day:

"Alas, for the day of the Lord is at hand; It shall come as destruction from the Almighty. ... Blow the trumpet in Zion, And sound an alarm in my holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble; For the day of the Lord is coming, for it is at hand: A day of darkness and gloominess, A day of clouds and thick darkness" (Joel 1:15, 2:1-2).

Yet Bickle goes on with his incredible fantasy:

"The increase of prophetic ministry in the local church involves more than verbal, inspirational prophecy. In my understanding, it includes angelic visitations, dreams, visions and signs and wonders in the sky, as well as the increase in prophetic revelation, even the kind given through the subtle impressions of the Holy Spirit."<sup>9</sup>

### "HERE AN OMEN, THERE AN OMEN ..."

Bickle is so hard-pressed to make some of these things happen or seem to happen that he is even into omens in nature. Omens are the stock in trade for occultist and fortune-tellers as they look to something to foretell a future event, either good or evil. Bickle calls his omen a "prophetic revelation" and declares:

"God gave a prophetic revelation that we were to pray and fast for twenty-one days with the expectancy of revival in His timing, and then He sent a confirmation of the revelation with a natural sign in the heavens: an unexpected comet sighting on the day that we were to begin the fast. The prophecy by Bob Jones about the comet was reported by the newspaper on the exact day that the fast began."<sup>10</sup>

Another confirming omen was a snowstorm predicted by prophet Bob Jones.<sup>11</sup> Omen detection and interpretation is much like reading tea leaves or coffee grounds!

Earthquakes also have special meaning to Bickle.<sup>12</sup> A seven-week period of “almost no rain” meant a confirmation of prophetic truth somehow.<sup>13</sup> Of course, with any natural phenomenon one can ascribe whatever meaning one wishes and no one is the wiser. In the Old Testament, God may have used natural phenomena to lead His nation or even to judge them, but there were no secret meanings to discern. If natural phenomena were used, the people were told exactly what God was up to. They knew the Egyptian plagues were God’s judgment and His direct intervention for their deliverance.

## ROOT AND ENTANGLEMENTS

Bickle carries on the tradition of his former colleague, the late faith healer John Wimber. Wimber died of cancer in spite of all his “power evangelism” and purported powers.

Bickle, as noted above, endorses the false prophet Bob Jones.<sup>14</sup> He also claims to have “about 250 people” at his church in a prophetic network “who regularly receive dreams, visions and prophetic words from the Lord.”<sup>15</sup>

Bickle boasts connections with other prophets as well:

“At Metro Christian in Kansas City we are associated with several prophetic people of international stature. Some have lived in Kansas City, and others have been related by friendship. We also relate to about a dozen people who have full-time traveling prophetic ministries and many people who regularly have prophetic dreams and visions.”<sup>16</sup>

One of the more prominent names is “Paul Cain, whom we regard very highly, speaks to our church about two to three times a year. However, he gives most of what he receives for us to our main leadership group either in person or by telephone.”<sup>17</sup> Alexander Graham Bell would be amazed to hear of “dial-a-prophet.”

This “Prophets Club” consists of a group of men who affirm and self-authenticate one another, even making excuses for failed prophecies,

occultic tendencies, and lack of healing power. It is a good ol’ boys club or mutual-admiration society more formally referred to as Joel’s Army, Manifest Sons, End Time Prophets, Kansas City Prophets, or several other names. The prophets pitch their books and make wild claims in a scramble for a constituency that naively wants to believe the fantasies.

## BLUNDERING PROPHETS

Bickle gives another purpose for his book as “someone suggested that I write a follow-up book that revealed all our mistakes in the prophetic ministry. He suggested I call it *Some Said We Blundered*. I almost agreed. Indeed, we’ve made many mistakes on our journey in the prophetic ministry.”<sup>18</sup>

Bickle correctly argues that prophets may not get absolutely everything in their life right. Even Paul the Apostle was not perfect (Philippians 3:12), though his revelations, prophecies, inspiration and commands were. And one can agree with Bickle when he says, “Confirmation of a man as a valid prophetic person is not a universal endorsement of all he says and does.”<sup>19</sup> We know from the testimony of Scripture that time and again Peter blundered (Matthew 16:22-23; Galatians 2:11-14). Yet, Peter never blundered in his prophecies or inspiration.

Here, Bickle is doing a little bait and switch and arguing from the general to the specific, which is subtle. If a man says he has a supernatural gift, at least that should be right and function as if it is supernatural. In Bickle’s view, not only does the prophet get a pass on parts of his life, but he does not even have to prophesy correctly. He even gets a pass for false prophecy. Even if the professing prophets are wrong on their predictions, they are still supposed to be seen as prophets. So the new prophets only have to get it right some of the time.

Bickle cannot be talking about biblical prophecy or anything like it. He is, in fact, talking about human guesswork and human speculation. He is talking about hunches and hoping to

be right at least part of the time. The modern prophets duck behind their humanness to cover their repeated failures. This is not Scriptural prophecy at all, but percentages. This is a guessing game called prophecy. This is simply playing the odds and trying to be right on guesstimates. This is tabloid sensationalism. Tying a prayer meeting into a sunspot or meteor is just wishful thinking and human delusion. Bickle was right in his first impressions of the claims of prophets to “technicolor visions” and audible voices when he concluded:

“At first these men’s claims seemed to me to be the stuff of vivid but misguided imaginations and not genuine revelations from God.”<sup>20</sup>

## BETTER RIGHT THAN DEAD

The true prophet of God, we are told in the Bible, could not make blunders or mistakes in his predictions. Mistakes would render him a false prophet and a liar. In Deuteronomy, Moses begins to instruct the people regarding witchcraft, soothsaying, and spiritism, calling these an abomination and evil. In that context Moses tells God’s people their only stance toward false prophets and then establishes God’s test:

“But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak or who speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die. And if you say in your heart, ‘How shall we know the word which the Lord has not spoken?’ When a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the thing does not happen or come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him” (Deuteronomy 18:20-22).

Hebrew scholars Keil and Delitzsch give us the import of the Deuteronomy passages:

“On the other hand, the prophet who spoke in the name of the Lord what the Lord had not

commanded him, *i.e.* proclaimed the thoughts of his own heart as divine revelations (cf. Num. xvi. 28), should die, like the prophet who spoke in the name of other gods. ... The false prophet was to be discovered by the fact, that the word proclaimed by him did not follow or come to pass, *i.e.* that his prophecy was not fulfilled."<sup>21</sup>

Bickle is being dishonest and misleading by claiming the following:

"For years I had read Jonathan Edwards, David Brainerd, Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, and some of the Puritan writers, and had adopted their theology of an unprecedented ingathering of souls at the end of the age."<sup>22</sup>

What he does not say is what he added to their theology. By no stretch of the imagination is Bickle's theology anything like theirs.

First, the above were strongly Calvinistic. Second, they were cessationists who believed the sign gifts were for the first century before the completion of the Bible and as confirmation to the early Church. Third, they were postmillennial, believing that through the spread of the Gospel (not sign gifts) the world would be slowly Christianized before the return of Christ. They offered no hope of perfect healings or people rising from the dead short of the return of Jesus. They would classify men like Bickle as "enthusiasts," misguided, or even worse.

God is still the same. He has not changed His mind to accommodate Himself to the new fallible prophets. Bickle seems to denigrate the character of God, suggesting that God has changed His mind on the need for 100% accuracy.

### CHARISMATIC TRADITIONS AND PHARISEES

Dominant among the modern prophetic movement is its obvious departure from the doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture. Bickle is no exception as he would have us subtly bypass the Bible when he says, "There

is, I have discovered, a great longing throughout the body of Christ to hear from God in a personal way."<sup>23</sup> By that he means personal prophetic revelations and what he calls "now-words."

What Bickle calls the "now-word" or the "aspect of now-ness" are the prophecies and revelations of the new prophets. These, he says, are a complement to Scripture: "Our desire is for God, not just knowledge about Him."<sup>24</sup> But how do we know which "now-word" is correct? In reality, this is no better or different than papal traditions or Roman Catholic additions to Scripture. For example, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches:

"Both Scripture and Tradition must be accepted and honored with equal sentiments of devotion and reverence. ...these traditions can be retained, modified or even abandoned under the guidance of the Church's magisterium."<sup>25</sup>

Nineteenth century Princeton theologian Charles Hodge speaks against tradition and how it destroys the authority of Scripture. His argument can well be ascribed to Bickle and the modern prophets:

"Making tradition a part of the rule of faith subverts the authority of the Scriptures. This follows as a natural and unavoidable consequence. If there be two standards of doctrine of equal authority, the one the explanatory, and infallible interpreter of the other, it is of necessity the interpretation which determines the faith of the people. Instead, therefore, of our faith resting on the testimony of God as recorded in his Word, it rests on what poor, fallible, often fanciful, prejudiced, benighted men, tell us is the meaning of that word. Man and his authority take the place of God."<sup>26</sup>

Bickle links the Pharisees to "conservative intellectuals"<sup>27</sup> but, in fact, the very opposite is true. The Pharisees have more in keeping with

people like Bickle, who add their own fallible thoughts and errant "traditions" and "prophecies," thinking they are complementing the Bible.

In fact, Bickle admits:

"This personal and contemporary application of an end-times, dramatic, worldwide visitation of God is without doubt based partially on *my* subjective experience. But it is also based on the Scriptures."<sup>28</sup>

Any God-fearing pastor should be unwilling to base anything being taught to his people on a subjective experience — whether his own or someone else's. It is the substance of cults. It is a frightening thought. And it gives us a clue where some of Bickle's ideas come from.

This author can readily understand the Preterist view of the Book of Revelation and its attempt to see Revelation as being fulfilled in the first century, more or less in the time of Nero. While not totally agreeing, one can comprehend how this view is established. One also can readily understand the Futurist view of the Book of Revelation and its attempt to slot the worldwide catastrophes and devastation in a future Tribulation period during the rise of the Antichrist.

However, what this writer cannot understand is Bickle's attempt to tie the Book of Revelation to the current Church Age and see all the universal bloodshed, warfare, catastrophe, death and destruction as having anything to do with his movement.<sup>29</sup> The Adventists also tried and failed to fulfill Revelation in the 1800s with their historic approach, as did the Methodists before them. The wrath of God is all over the pages of Revelation from chapters 6 to 19. Who wants that?

It seems that all the promises of the return of Christ scattered all through the Bible are not enough. Bickle says that "awesome signs and wonders in the heavens" will be "undeniable confirmations of His coming!"<sup>30</sup> Once again, apparently God's Word and His promises repeated over and over

are just not sufficient. Bickle is doing exactly what the Apostle Paul commands us not to do: "That you may learn in us not to think beyond what is written, that none of you be puffed up one against another" (1 Corinthians 4:6). When we go beyond the Scripture it does cause a pride and an elitism among those who think they have superior knowledge and the ability to divine omens.

### WARMING THE LEFTOVERS

Bickle's views are simply a rehash of the fallible prophetic views of Wayne Grudem and Jack Deere. However, Bickle tries to improve on Grudem since Grudem does not equate prophecy today with "God's very words." Bickle argues:

"I do not believe he convincingly eliminates the possibility of a person speaking a prophetic word or words that are 100 percent accurate in every detail and, as such, are God's words. ... Again, I find Grudem helpful, but not adequate."<sup>31</sup>

Bickle also affirms:

"I believe we should acknowledge that mature and gifted people can speak 'God's words.'"<sup>32</sup>

However these "words" can have mistakes and range in accuracy from "51 percent" to "99 percent."<sup>33</sup> The question is who is making the mistake, the prophet or God? While Bickle would protest that others put God in a box, he creates a God who is not powerful enough to give accurate words through people when He wants to. Could it be that God is not giving those words at all but is already satisfied with His complete and inspired Word? *We must never forget that claiming new revelations is the error that will support all errors.*

Dr. Thomas R. Edgar is a professor of New Testament and proficient in the Greek New Testament. In his book, *Satisfied by the Promise of the Spirit*, he spends over 260 pages thoroughly refuting these views by a careful study of all the pertinent texts. In a summary following many pages of exhaustive exegesis he concludes:

"None of the arguments for the New Testament prophet as an inferior or 'fallible' prophet, such as those within the charismatic movement, have stood up to inspection. Therefore, after an examination of the evidence, we conclude that biblical apostles and prophets are not present in the church today."<sup>34</sup>

We might say that while a prophet could be fallible, his prophecies could not or he would not be a prophet for long. In the end, nothing by way of mistake seems to matter. Bickle even mentions what he calls "'hamburger-helper' prophecy."<sup>35</sup> This has to do, Bickle says, with people who just add filler and give a word "even when God is silent." Bickle says even though this can cause significant problems "it is not what I consider false prophecy or a false prophet."<sup>36</sup>

So, according to Bickle, to speak a lie, fake a prophecy, or pretend to have a word is all right as long as you are sincere and trying to help someone. He writes that Isaiah 50:11 is "a warning not to manufacture prophetic words!"<sup>37</sup> However, later in the book, he instructs that manufactured prophetic words simply be treated "as a less serious problem" and that they should be merely overlooked the first and second time.<sup>38</sup> The contradictions are blatant when on one page we can do it but not on another. Again we remember that teaching new revelation is the error that will support all errors.

Professor Thomas rationally addresses the terrible consequences for one accepting this point of view:

"We are also left with a whole order of deficient gifts. ... The New Testament prophets are fallible, cannot be trusted, and are no more than any teacher or counselor, even when speaking by revelation. The miracle workers and healings can often fail but still originate from God. We are confronted with healings of 'personality meltdown' as well as 'demons' of depression and allergies. Finally, we are left with a 'gift' of making unintelligible

sounds rather than a miraculous and marvelous ability from the Holy Spirit to speak actual languages for the benefit of others. The unique nature of the apostolic age is abandoned, and we are informed that the church of that time had all of these weak and inefficient gifts. The gifts rather than being given for a specific ministry for the benefit of others now center in miracles, signs, and other evidences to bolster flagging saints. Ultimately, if we accept all of this, we have paid a terrible price only to justify someone's personal experiences. ... Their experiences have solved no theological issue, produced no advance in biblical knowledge, nor produced more spiritual Christians. We maintain that we are asked to surrender too much that is important, if not essential. The price we must pay for this experience is entirely too high."<sup>39</sup>

### CHARISMATIC MANTRA

Bickle repeats the old mantra of John Wimber and John Arnott, "God offends the mind to reveal the heart."<sup>40</sup> He alleges that the Holy Spirit "*intentionally offends people.*"<sup>41</sup> Bickle knows better but tries to use John 6 and the discourse on eating Christ's flesh as a proof text for offending people.<sup>42</sup> Certainly the people were offended at Christ's message, but not at his manner. The offense of the cross is the rejection of the Gospel, not the message bearers' silliness. We may offend people with the message of the truth (since they reject truth), but we are not to be offensive by our manner and lack of control. We ought to reject those who act like crystal ball readers. Paul warned the Corinthians that bizarre behavior would cause others to reject them and their message. They would be written off as insane (1 Corinthians 14:23, 33).

Bickle really does understand what he is doing here, but barrels ahead anyway:

"I understand that the context of this principle (God's intentional

offense) relates to issues much broader than strange prophets and bizarre manifestations. But in these instances, the principle can be clearly applied."<sup>43</sup>

So though it does not apply — apply it anyway. Bickle then stacks the deck and says that if one is offended with all that he (Bickle) is saying, it reveals a "lack of hunger for God and a lack of humility."<sup>44</sup>

The idea of "offending the mind to reveal the heart" is a manipulative tactic of eastern enlightenment and dynamic meditation.<sup>45</sup> It is a gross violation of the command of Christ, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind" (Matthew 22:37).

Heart and mind are not always that distinct in Scripture and the word "heart" can mean the inner man, including the mind. In the Old Testament, man was a totality and the heart was seen as the center of his thought processes and the spring of conscience. David meditated in his heart (Psalm 19:14). The heart is the seat of knowledge in Proverbs 15:14. In the New Testament, evil thoughts proceed out of the heart (Matthew 15:19). In both Testaments, "it is in the heart, in the innermost recesses of his being, that man is illumined, cleansed, renewed, by attention to the word of God."<sup>46</sup> Bickle's false dichotomy between heart and mind does not hold up biblically. It creates mystical double-speak.

In just making up "four levels of prophetic ministry," Bickle admits, "These are not biblical distinctions."<sup>47</sup> So, clearly, we are being led to involve ourselves in unbiblical practice.

Even more frightening is Bickle's Appendix on "God's Manifest Presence."<sup>48</sup> In this section, Bickle presents a list of phenomena from contemporary experience such as:

"Shaking, jerking, loss of bodily strength, heavy breathing, eyes fluttering, lips trembling, oil on the body, changes in skin color,

weeping, laughing, 'drunkenness,' staggering, travailing, dancing, falling, visions, hearing audibly into the spirit realm, inspired utterances (that is, prophecy), tongues, interpretation; angelic visitations and manifestations; jumping, violent rolling, screaming, wind, heat, electricity, coldness, nausea as discernment of evil, smelling or tasting good or evil presences, tingling, pain in the body as discernment of illnesses, feeling heavy weight or lightness, trances (altered physical state while seeing and hearing into the spirit world), inability to speak normally and disruption of the natural realm (for example, electrical circuits blown)."<sup>49</sup>

Much of the above can be found in a cultic Ashram or a mental institution, or could be caused by sickness, drugs, sleep loss, brain damage, altered states of consciousness, or worst of all, demons. Who ever imagined there would be a day when we would be discussing the horrible mess above as viable for church worship? There certainly is a strong delusion on the Charismatic church today.

Bickle does admit to three possible origins for manifestations other than the Spirit of God. He allows for: 1) "human responses," 2) "demonic powers," and 3) "revival phenomena."<sup>50</sup> He does not mention combinations of the three. Why would we think if humans and demons are cutting loose there would be anything of God involved?

Paul assures us that light and darkness have no fellowship together and since there is no concord between Christ and Belial, we are to separate ourselves from the unclean works of darkness and the flesh (2 Corinthians 6:14-18). Bickle's attempt to set up rules and expose the dangers of manifestations<sup>51</sup> is a day late and a dollar short, especially when he follows it with a section on posturing ourselves for manifestations.<sup>52</sup> In this contradictory see-saw, Bickle opens the floodgates for these kinds of things and naively thinks he can regulate the

torrent by some subjective guidelines or pretense that God may be in it somewhere. Don King does a better and more consistent job than Bickle.

## DON'T BLAME ME

Bickle tells the story of how he had to step in between "dueling prophets," who were trying to out-prophesy one another in his church. Bickle took on such a "get tough" attitude he was ready to just shut down the miraculous and the supernatural with one fell swoop:

"I was tempted to get rid of all the prophetic ministry — the miracles, the supernatural confirmations — everything. We would just no longer have prophetic ministry in our church. ... I was no longer afraid to confront prophetic ministers, even if they previously had authority to call fire down from heaven."<sup>53</sup>

How in the world does one just shut down "miracles" and the "supernatural" and control God in this way? If it were all that easy to do just with the issue of a decree, wouldn't it be questionable as to whether it was of God or just of man? Who could control the supernatural? Perhaps only a Don King of the supernatural. This certainly sounds more orchestrated than sovereign, more human than divine. If these "prophets" were just playing manipulative games, why does Bickle call them "prophets" at all?

Bickle then details how he took charge:

"After Dueling Prophets Sunday a few months earlier, we had begun to work out a system for administrating the flow of prophetic words in our worship services."<sup>54</sup>

The last third of *Growing in the Prophetic* is an attempt to control and regulate behavior that is unbiblical in the first place.

Bickle believes he can somehow subjectively discern whether a prophecy is unanointed, false, or mistaken. The offending "prophet" is gently corrected.<sup>55</sup> It is unfortunate that

rather than exalt, glorify and hold up the Word of God, Bickle alleges that "God wants to speak to and through the body of Christ. The power of revelation can flow through even the youngest believer in the church."<sup>56</sup>

Frankly, no Christian should look for revelation from fallible humans. We have the greatest revelation of all in the person of Christ (John 1). We need to concentrate on Him and God's revelation of Him in the Scripture. He is "the author and perfecter of our faith" (Hebrews 12:2).

Just as Don King has had trouble with some unruly boxers in the past and had his share of difficulties in trying to keep them in line, so Bickle admits to having many unruly prophets. It is absolutely incredible to hear Bickle describe the "prophets" he knows. None of them sounds like a "thus saith the Lord" man paralleling the likes of Isaiah, Elijah, or Elisha. Bickle's description of dysfunctional, insecure, manipulative, carnal, immature "prophets" would be laughable if it were not so sad:

"...they may appear arrogant or pushy ... their pushiness usually comes from fear, hurt and rejection. Most prophetic people who have been around for a few years have had their hands slapped many times. ... John Paul Jackson, another prophetic minister at Metro Christian, was so shell-shocked by negative experiences with previous churches that he was expecting to be totally rejected by us at any time. ... by the time this person reaches forty or fifty, he or she is often very guarded and suspicious of authority figures. Those coming into prophetic ministry later in life may also have problems with rejection. ... They feel if they get enough clout, they don't have to worry so much about being rejected. ... building clout is so important to them, ... the temptation is to whisper to the influential people in the church in an attempt to get recognized."<sup>57</sup>

Bickle explains that the "prophets" can run afoul of pastors who see them

as ambitious and manipulative. These "prophets" can get their "prophetic groupies," he says, to pray against the pastor. "All of this and more is usually the result of wounded and rejected prophets giving in to former hurts and present temptations," he writes.<sup>58</sup> Bickle also suggests that the pastoral leadership needs to "discern the fears and hurts that drive him."<sup>59</sup>

Bickle needs to think more seriously about a counseling center to help the people he has led down the illusive road of the prophetic. He needs to be held accountable for (and help pick up) some of the wreckage he is creating. He also needs to give attention to the Matthew 18 discipline process for false prophets. And he needs to think seriously about the fact that teaching ongoing revelation and "now-words" of prophecy might just be the seedbed to produce the rotten fruit he is describing. He cannot just write people off as disturbed if he has helped to feed that disturbance with false teaching. He must share some of the blame.

Bickle's use of 1 Thessalonians 5:19-20 also needs to be addressed. Bickle writes that, "Paul exhorted us not to quench the Spirit or despise prophetic utterances (1 Thess. 5:19)."<sup>60</sup> The New King James Version renders the 1 Thessalonians 5:20 passage as "Do not despise prophecies."

W.E. Vine tells us that the word for prophecies is the Greek word *prophet-eia*.<sup>61</sup> Vine explains that the word "signifies the speaking forth of the mind and counsel of God ... It is the declaration of that which cannot be known by natural means, Matt. 26:68, it is the forth-telling of the will of God, whether with reference to the past, the present, or the future."<sup>62</sup>

Vine, in his exposition, then cites from his and Hogg's *Notes on Thessalonians*:

"With the completion of the canon of Scripture prophecy apparently passed away, 1 Cor. 13:8,9. In his measure the teacher has taken the place of the prophet, cp. the significant change in 2 Pet. 2:1. The difference is that, whereas the message

of the prophet was a direct revelation of the mind of God for the occasion, the message of the teacher is gathered from the completed revelation contained in the Scriptures."<sup>63</sup>

Herein is the beauty and the safety of the Scriptures. We must understand the thrust of the New Testament by affirming the following:

1. Prophecies were still being given by Paul in the Apostolic Age while there was no completed New Testament. These are the legitimate prophecies that we cannot despise or devalue.

2. All the prophecy that we need has now been delivered and is contained in the completed Bible — Revelation 22:18-19. We cannot add to that.

3. In the undervaluing of the Word of God (true prophecy), the new prophets with the "now-words" may be doing what Paul is forbidding in 1 Thessalonians 5:20. There are so many rules, guidelines, and instructions for understanding and regulating prophecies and divinely inspired prophetic music,<sup>64</sup> it is easy to see how a person could get caught up in these (and even seeing Bickle's book as another Testament) to the neglect of the Bible.

4. Understanding the above keeps us out of the dangerous waters of man's speculative and subjective utterances.

Bickle admits that he does not believe that all we need to know about God is in the Bible. In speaking of what he calls prophetic music he proposes that "This implies that the Holy Spirit gives the church a deeper revelation of the nature and personality of God in prophetic messages through song."<sup>65</sup>

Bickle is despising the biblical prophecies here. If we really want the deep stuff, the really supernatural and spiritual stuff, he says, the route of the prophetic is all we need. What of Christ's disclosure of the Father (John 1:18; 10:30; 14:6-11; Hebrews 1:1-3)? What about the hundreds and hundreds of Bible passages that help us construct a systematic theology in

terms of the person, nature, attributes, and ways of God? Such questions are rhetorical.

Bickle would have us believe that he has heard choirs of angels performing Handel's Messiah and claims:

"Many people who have had heavenly encounters and returned to tell about them have spoken of the marvelous music they heard in heaven. People who have had experiences of having their ears open to the spirit realm have testified of hearing the angelic choirs and music. In fact, I had an experience like this myself."<sup>66</sup>

### O COME LET HIM ADORE US

Bickle also buys into and promotes the self-esteem message. His friend and colleague Stephen Strang writes:

"Bickle says he realized what we all need to understand: that our God is a God who loves us so much He can't keep from embracing us. A God who loves our friendship and wants us to be with Him. A God who enjoys us even in our failure and immaturity because He sees the intentions of our hearts."<sup>67</sup>

Jeremiah described the intentions of man's heart in quite a different fashion (Jeremiah 17:9). Bickle's message is moving the focus from God to man by diminishing His incomparable mercies and creating man's worthiness. Any advancement of man's worth lessens God's grace and mercy.

Strang's publishing firm, Creation House, has published Bickle's latest book. Strang's magazine, *Charisma*, ran a full-color advertisement for the book. The ad's description reveals a self-esteem message gone insane:

"You are invited to discover the pure joy and beauty of an exciting, intimate relationship with an awesome God who loves you unconditionally, likes your company and adores you."<sup>68</sup>

Bickle leaves his people with so many dilemmas that it is amazing that they just don't see through it all or give up in frustration. Angelic

encounters with heavenly music, a theology where God adores man, and modern day revelations all place Bickle in an elite class. In actuality, such claims really just incite spiritual confusion. Moreover, even if one considers his prophecies real, another problem then arises: their interpretation is up for grabs. Bickle writes:

"The problems we have to deal with have not been the result of incorrect prophetic revelation. In most cases, the divine information was right, but the problems began when someone went on to interpret incorrectly what the prophetic revelation meant. This misinterpretation can begin either with the person receiving the prophetic revelation or with the person to whom it is directed."<sup>69</sup>

So Bickle says there is "raw data (divine information) and the interpretation of its content." But wait, it gets worse. There can also be confusion and false hope with false expectations of fulfillment. Bickle writes, "The problem was that they allowed revelation and interpretation to run together in their minds until they could no longer distinguish between what God had actually said and the expectation they created by their interpretation."<sup>70</sup> Somehow, Bible study seems a lot more appealing and a lot less confusing.

Bickle sets up so many prophetic hoops that it would drive any thinking person to distraction. All kinds of confirmations must be sought.<sup>71</sup> There is a process of interpretation and application.<sup>72</sup> There are questions of who should be told and when.<sup>73</sup> Still there can be presumption, misunderstandings, pride, division, and self-serving.<sup>74</sup> This sounds nothing like the "wisdom from above that is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy" (James 3:17). Bickle offers us one big nightmare. Yet he says that "the consequences of shutting it out are too severe."<sup>75</sup>

Just what are those consequences? After all, all that we would be left

with are the grace of God, God's Spirit, God's precious and unchangeable Word, the Church, and the prayers, help and counsel of God's people. Sounds far better to me.

Don King may eventually regulate the new and coming world of woman boxers. Bickle, in his *Growing in the Prophetic*, lays down the guidelines and rules for woman as prophetic ministers.<sup>76</sup> The underlying error and fallacy is the same, apart from gender. Anne Graham Lotz, in her comments on Revelation 22:18-19, cuts to the heart of it all:

"While we think of cults today as groups who add to God's Word, I wonder if there are others who do so less obviously. When people say they have 'a word of knowledge,' or a 'prophecy,' and what they say is held in the same regard as Scripture, does God view that as adding to His Word? ... We are not to add to God's Word as though it is insufficient in itself, and we are not to take one word away from it as though it is irrelevant or unreliable or unimportant or untrue!"<sup>77</sup>


### A NON-PROPHET WARNING

Dr. Henry Morris sends out a clarion call warning us to stay alert:

"If there ever was 'an evil and adulterous generation,' it is surely this present one and, once again, there is a wide-spread seeking after signs (same word in the Greek as 'miracles'). The almost explosive rise of the so-called New Age movement has produced an amazing interest in all forms of occultism and supernatural phenomena: astrology, channeling, ESP, near-death experiences, UFO's, meditation, and mysticism of many strange varieties. Even in Christian circles, there is an unhealthy interest in new revelations and other supernatural signs. ... Unlike the first generation of Christians, we now have the complete written word of God, both Old and New Testaments, and it is

sufficient for every need of every believer until Christ returns, 'whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts' (II Peter 1:19)."<sup>78</sup>

### Endnotes:

1. Mike Bickle, *Growing in the Prophetic*. Lake Mary, Fla.: Creation House, 1996, pg. 145.
2. See also, PFO's earlier critiques of Bickle and the Kansas City Fellowship in *The Quarterly Journal*, Vol. 10, No. 4 and Vol. 11, No. 1.
3. See further, David Pytches, *Some Said It Thundered*. Nashville: Nelson Publishers, 1991, pp. 57-65.
4. *Growing in the Prophetic*, op. cit., pg. 134.
5. *Ibid.*, pg. 135.
6. See further, Albert James Dager, *Vengeance is Ours*. Redmond, Wash.: Sword Publishers, 1990, pg. 127.
7. *Growing in the Prophetic*, op. cit., pg. 30.
8. *Ibid.*, pp. 25-28.
9. *Ibid.*, pg. 31.
10. *Ibid.*, pg. 39.
11. *Ibid.*, pg. 37.
12. *Ibid.*, pg. 40.
13. *Ibid.*, pg. 44.
14. See further, Hank Hanegraaff, *Counterfeit Revival*. Dallas: Word Publishers, 1997, pp. 145-150.
15. *Growing in the Prophetic*, op. cit., pg. 182.
16. *Ibid.*, pg. 139.
17. *Ibid.*, pg. 182.
18. *Ibid.*, pg. 11.
19. *Ibid.*, pg. 48.
20. *Ibid.*, pg. 21.
21. Johann Keil and Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: William Eerdmans Publishing, 1985, Vol. 1, Deuteronomy, pg. 397.
22. *Growing in the Prophetic*, op. cit., pg. 29.
23. *Ibid.*, pg. 13.
24. *Ibid.*, pg. 74, italic in original.
25. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. New York: Doubleday, 1994, pp. 31-32.
26. Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1999, Vol. 1, pg. 128.
27. *Growing in the Prophetic*, op. cit., pg. 76.
28. *Ibid.*, pg. 31, italic in original.
29. *Ibid.*, pp. 42-43.
30. *Ibid.*, pg. 46.
31. *Ibid.*, pp. 117-118, 119.
32. *Ibid.*, pg. 121.
33. *Ibid.*, pg. 97.
34. Thomas R. Edgar, *Satisfied by the Promise of the Spirit*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Kregal Resources, 1996, pg. 85.
35. *Growing in the Prophetic*, op. cit., pg. 106.
36. *Ibid.*
37. *Ibid.*, pg. 109.
38. *Ibid.*, pp. 155-156.
39. *Satisfied by the Promise of the Spirit*, op. cit., pg. 259.
40. *Growing in the Prophetic*, op. cit., pg. 66.
41. *Ibid.*, pg. 67, italics in original.
42. *Ibid.*, pg. 68.
43. *Ibid.*, pg. 70.
44. *Ibid.*, pg. 77.
45. See further, *Counterfeit Revival*, op. cit., pp. 223-227.
46. Everett F. Harrison, editor, *Baker's Dictionary of Theology*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1973, pg. 263.
47. *Growing in the Prophetic*, op. cit., pg. 121.
48. *Ibid.*, pp. 196-227.
49. *Ibid.*, pg. 209.
50. *Ibid.*
51. *Ibid.*, pp. 215-217.
52. *Ibid.*, pp. 217-219.
53. *Ibid.*, pg. 141.
54. *Ibid.*, pg. 149.
55. *Ibid.*, pp. 155-156.
56. *Ibid.*, pg. 158.
57. *Ibid.*, pp. 142-143.
58. *Ibid.*, pg. 143.
59. *Ibid.*, pg. 144.
60. *Ibid.*, pg. 159.
61. W.E. Vine, *The Expanded Vines - Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*. Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1984, pg. 893.
62. *Ibid.*
63. *Ibid.*
64. *Growing in the Prophetic*, op. cit., pp. 160-234.
65. *Ibid.*, pg. 163.
66. *Ibid.*, pg. 162.
67. Stephen Strang, "Are You a Sinner or a Lover?", *Charisma*, February 2001, pg. 98.
68. Advertisement for Mike Bickle, *The Pleasures of Loving God* in *Charisma*, February 2001, pg. 24, emphasis added.
69. *Growing in the Prophetic*, op. cit., pg. 171.
70. *Ibid.*
71. *Ibid.*, pg. 174.
72. *Ibid.*, pg. 176.
73. *Ibid.*
74. *Ibid.*, pg. 177.
75. *Ibid.*
76. *Ibid.*, pp. 178-185.
77. Anne Graham Lotz, *The Vision of His Glory*. Dallas: Word Publishing, 1997, pp. 262-263.
78. Henry Morris, *Days of Praise*, December-January-February, 2000-2001, entry for Monday, December 18. 

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## EDITORIALS

(continued from page 2)

The comfort to the seeker of truth is that God's Word is fixed and sure and will not change. God will not change nor will He change His mind (Malachi 3:6).

The late Bill Cetnar, a former Jehovah's Witness, said that because of their older publications, the cults are really their own worst enemy. Cetnar knew all too well and would repeatedly declare: "*Time is the enemy of a false prophet!*"

Indeed, time is the enemy of every false teacher and false prophet, not just those from Brooklyn, Salt Lake City, or Orlando.

A letter recently came to our office from a gentleman in the northwestern United States. He wrote regarding the doctrine and practice of Benny Hinn. He objected that

some of the criticisms of the controversial faith healer were from Hinn's materials that were a decade old or older. He did not grasp the pertinent issues.

Yes, there is no denying the fact that we use numerous citations from Hinn that date to the 1980s and even earlier. We also report current issues with Hinn.

However, the age of the material in no way invalidates the material itself. In fact, Hinn's older materials (testimony and teaching tapes, books, television broadcasts, etc.) often contradict his newer material. They are the very things that expose his ingrained propensity to lie and con. These older materials are invaluable in documenting and exposing the false teachings, testimony, and prophetic utterances of Hinn. His false prophecies are becoming legendary. The constant correcting, excusing, denying, then every so often facing up to the facts are the very things which make the strongest case against Hinn and show him to be no better than the

main line cult revisionists. He often resorts to: "I will try to do better next time." How can one do better when it was supposedly God, through Hinn, revealing, directing, and speaking in the first place? It is ludicrous.

As has been documented in the pages of numerous past PFO *Journals* (and in our book, *The Confusing World of Benny Hinn*), in the early 1980s Hinn reported different conversion stories as to time, place, and numerous other details than what he was reporting in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Then there's Hinn's ridiculous statement that within the Godhead, "...there are nine of them." Hinn's declaration, made during a Sunday morning sermon at his Orlando Christian Center, was broadcast by the Trinity Broadcasting Network on October 13, 1990. It, too, is over 10 years old.

But, here again, Hinn should not and cannot be exonerated because of the "age" of the statement. Hinn claimed "revelation knowledge" at the time and the source of his declaration as directly from the Divine. Since when does God's Word or His revelations become outdated? Hinn moved from preacher to prophet with his pronouncement. If it was God's truth given by divine revelation as Hinn stated, it should stand forever.

Hinn needs to be held accountable for the deceptive control he exercised over his congregation and for such a flagrant disrespect for the Word of God, and distortion of the Triune God. Two years, 10 years, 20 years or 100 years from when the statement was made does not absolve him. Error will always remain error. James offers a sober warning that the followers of false teachers wish to ignore: "My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that you shall receive a stricter judgment" (James 3:1). Hinn is a poster boy for false prophets, false teachers, and those that evade by appealing to time gone by.

On Dec. 31, 1989, Hinn gave a series of prophecies (somewhat like a spirit medium) that he said had come directly from the Holy Spirit. All of the prophesied events were to occur during the 1990s. *None have come to pass*. Although this sermon is more than 10 years old, it is *even more current* because it *confirms* — beyond any doubt — that Hinn is a false prophet. The 1990s have passed and there is absolutely no hope of his predictions ever being fulfilled. In the school of prophets, Hinn flunked out. For a number of years, Hinn has been promising creative miracles and raisings from the dead. His followers should hold his feet to the fire rather than letting him hold his hand to their wallets.

The old adage "Don't confuse me with the facts; my mind is already made up," continues to be applicable to many of the followers of these false prophets. We also need to repeat the poem: "Old or new, old or new, false is false and true is true!" The very ones you would expect to be true and even demand be true — those who claim a direct pipeline to God — are given passes

constantly, while those who call for accountability are vilified and cursed.

In 1955, sociologists Leon Festinger, Henry W. Riecken, and Stanley Schachter studied a movement mired in failed prophecy and miscalculated dates. Nearly a half century after they published their research, their observations are remarkably descriptive of today's followers of spurious revelators.

"A man with a conviction is a hard man to change. Tell him you disagree and he turns away. Show him facts or figures and he questions your sources. Appeal to logic and he fails to see your point. We have all experienced the futility of trying to change a strong conviction, especially if the convinced person has some investment in his belief. We are familiar with the variety of ingenious defenses with which people protect their convictions, managing to keep them unscathed through the most devastating attacks. But man's resourcefulness goes beyond simply protecting a belief" (*When Prophecy Fails*, pg. 3).

Time will always bear the faithfulness of men who labor hard to "rightly divide the Word of Truth" (2 Timothy 2:15) and, as Cetnar so wisely said, will continue to be "the enemy of a false prophet." The writing and preaching of men and exegetes like John Calvin, Charles Spurgeon, Dwight Moody, H.A. Ironside, Benjamin Warfield and others have stood the test of time. They were workers who did not need to be ashamed of their statements. Nor did they leave in the wake of their doctrine and practice, shipwrecked faith and disappointed followers. They did not devastate the lives of the men and women who sat under their teaching. What a stark contrast from the cults and heretical teachers who ignore, deny, or reinvent previous declarations. Christian doctrine is fixed (Jude 3) and a solid rock on which we can stand. It is not silly putty to be twisted into new shapes at the drop of a hat or the failure of a prediction.

Are men like Calvin, Spurgeon, and these others infallible in their teaching? No, they are not. But we must remember they do not — unlike cultic and charismatic counterparts — claim to be the source of "revelation knowledge" or God's chosen mouthpiece on earth. There is that unmistakable difference. It is unfair to attempt to make such a comparison because of this critical distinction. The comparison to fallible teachers is often made by false teachers to escape responsibility for their false declarations.

The false prophets and teachers are indeed actors and good ones. When they can, they play the anointed of God, hear from heaven, are personally instructed by the Holy Spirit, give words of knowledge, and operate as "Thus saith the Lord" men. They do that until they get caught, then they slip into the costume of the humble Spurgeon, Ironside, or Calvin — just doing the best they can. The tragic thing is few notice or care. The followers serve both personas and both contradictions. Most of

these prophets are untrained, untaught, and unschooled and should not even be compared to the likes of a Spurgeon, an Ironside, or a Calvin.

The false prophets serve their own chutzpah until caught and challenged, and then, in chameleon-like fashion, they become the humble and fallible expositor. They are quick-change artists who are only spotted by the discerning.

Time confirms truth. Scripture in its prophetic pronouncements is always confirmed by time, never the opposite. Those who claim to speak for God in direct revelation must be held to the same standard, for time is *never* the enemy of true prophets.

—MKG/GRF

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## NEWS UPDATES

(continued from page 3)

Perhaps the Second Wind Prophecy is merely an after-the-fact or self-fulfilling “prophecy,” as few details are divulged about it. When the Brownsville church was questioned as to when it was given, by whom, and why it took so many years to bring the revelation to light, Assistant Pastor Carey Robertson said, “I have no information about a ‘second wind’ prophecy.”

Robertson himself asked, “Did it happen here?” and offered as an explanation, “many people came here to speak and in the process give us words. We simply accept them and if what is said occurs, [then] we judge it to be of God. If it doesn’t happen [then] we just ignore it.”

—MKG

## NO LONGER MORMON?

During the past few decades, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has labored hard and invested millions of dollars in media campaigns to establish itself as a “Christian” church. Years ago its members and missionaries, when asked if they were Christian, would respond, “No! We are Mormon.” However, in recent years, such a reply is no longer heard.

In March, the sect announced a further and more restricted designation for its church. “In a statement to news organizations and to their own members, church leaders urged using the church’s ‘revealed ... full name wherever possible’ and avoiding such contractions as Mormon Church, ‘Latter-day Saints Church,’ or ‘LDS Church.’ If a shortened version of the name must be used, they said, ‘the Church of Jesus Christ’ or simply ‘the Church’ is considered acceptable,” an article in *U.S. News & World Report* disclosed.

As the Salt Lake City-based church continues its effort to further shed the “Mormon” alias, remnants of the once-used and desired title will remain — such as the Mormon Tabernacle Choir and its scripture, *The Book of Mormon*. According to *U.S. News & World Report*, church officials insist the emphasis on and restricted use of the church’s full name is not intended to entirely erase the word *Mormon*.

At the same time as the Utah church’s announcement, another of the Mormon sects put into application a new name. On April 7, 2000, members of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints voted at its world conference to go by a new name: Community of Christ. One full year later, the new name for the RLDS church, which is headquartered in Independence, Mo., finally took effect on April 6, 2001.

—MKG

## LAWSUITS PLAGUE CERULLO MINISTRY

In recent months, faith healer Morris Cerullo has found himself and his San Diego-based ministry targeted with various lawsuits and allegations of wrongdoing.

Last year, John Paul Warren, a former executive for the Morris Cerullo World Evangelism (MCWE) ministry, filed a suit in San Diego Superior Court. Warren charges Cerullo with “fraud, violation of the California Labor Code and misuse of Warren’s confidential 5,000-name mailing list,” according to a lengthy news report in the May issue of *Charisma*. While officials at Cerullo’s ministry refuse to address the particulars of the lawsuit, they did state that Warren’s accusations are “100 percent without merit.” They also allege that prior to filing the suit, Warren demanded \$2.2 million from the organization to avoid his litigation and that he has refused to enter into binding Christian arbitration with his grievances.

Warren’s suit indicts Cerullo, saying that at a January 1997 meeting the evangelist solicited \$1,500 gifts from donors to MCWE. According to the news report, “In return [for the donation], Warren said MCWE promised to provide them with a satellite dish allowing access to its global prayer satellite network as well as other organizational events.” Warren said that donors were never given the satellite dishes they were promised. Cerullo’s attorney responded to the charge, saying “the ministry made it clear to donors that the satellite dish offer was contingent on negotiations with system providers,” the magazine reported.

Warren, who worked for the Cerullo ministry from March 1998 until being fired in October 1999, also alleges that he was lured to the ministry with promises of becoming Cerullo’s “partner” and eventual “successor.”

The attraction of those promises, he says, convinced him to abandon his own ministry and hand over his own list of donors to MCWE. He further maintains that his name was removed from being considered as a possible candidate for pastor of an Assemblies of God congregation in Oregon after the church called Cerullo's ministry for a personal reference.

A previous lawsuit filed against Cerullo has been settled out of court. Another former MCWE employee, Harry Turner, reached an undisclosed settlement with the ministry. Turner, a former vice-president who resigned in November 1999, also charged the evangelist with "lies and fraud ... to his donors." Turner, like Warren, also requested money to settle the complaints short of litigation. Turner had demanded \$800,000 to prevent the lawsuit.

During depositions for the Turner lawsuit, "Robert Killion, Cerullo's chief financial officer, admitted that the federal government was investigating allegations of mail fraud at Cerullo's ministry," *Charisma* reported. Also revealed was that "Davis Frast, a public information officer and inspector with the Postal Inspection Service, said that his agency has received complaints about Cerullo's ministry and the agency is in the first stages of an investigation."

Officials at MCWE contend that both lawsuits are attempts to extort money and energy from the ministry.

—MKG

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## BOOKS IN REVIEW

(continued from page 24)

the Christian faith. Perhaps, the most important section of the work is the chapters which examine the nature and claims of Jesus Christ — the very One who said He was Truth incarnate. While one can be ignorant of or confused by logic, science, and law, an understanding of the person and work of Christ is not only fundamental to truth, but essential.

The volume further examines God and suffering, ethics and morals, and heaven and hell. An appendix also tackles the questions of abortion, euthanasia, biomedical issues, and cloning.

The book is saturated with practical illustrations and analogies which help bring what some regard as heavy, difficult, or academic arguments down to a "layman's understanding." Scripture and general indexes make for easy search and retrieval of topics and subjects.

Truly, the Christian faith can withstand and answer the assaults of postmodernism, higher criticism, and the cults. The writings of Norman Geisler (and his many coauthors) have, for years, proved that Christians need not cower without answers, but can (and should) be

ready to make a defense as the Apostle Peter commands. *Unshakable Foundations* is yet another valuable resource from Geisler to equip believers.

—MKG

## REASONING FROM THE SCRIPTURES WITH MASONS

by Ron Rhodes

Harvest House Publishers, 308 pages, \$11.95

Apologist Ron Rhodes delivers another volume in his "Reasoning from the Scriptures" series. While his three earlier campaigns were directed at Jehovah's Witnesses, Latter-day Saints, and Roman Catholics respectively, his latest offering will target some who claim to hold to an orthodox, evangelical Christian faith.

For many years, Freemasonry has presented itself as being quite compatible with Christianity (and/or any other religion). Rhodes looks beyond the many good works (like providing free hospital care for children) and the admirable moral standards of Masons. These characteristics alone have given the centuries-old fraternal order acceptability within some Christian churches. He reveals the true religious nature of Freemasonry, delving into its occultic symbols, secret oaths, and clandestine rituals.

Rhodes first lays a fundamental groundwork to help the reader who may be completely unacquainted with the Masonic Lodge. He succinctly covers such basics as its history, organizational structure (the various types or degrees of Masons), and the indoctrination process of becoming a Mason.

Rhodes next questions as to whether Freemasonry can or should be correctly identified as a religion. He also tackles other theological issues of importance, including the Masonic view of Scripture and the nature of God, its degrading of Jesus, and its redefining of sin and salvation. The book also contains a chapter asking, "Should Christians Be Masons?" and another which provides brief, but helpful, suggestions for evangelizing Masons.

As with his previous volumes in the series, Rhodes again interjects thought-provoking questions throughout the book to spark discussion with Masons. Subject and Scripture indexes are also furnished and are helpful when using the volume as a reference tool.

While Masons may not be as prolific in recruiting members as Jehovah's Witnesses or Latter-day Saints, or as numerous as Roman Catholics, *Reasoning from the Scriptures with Masons* is a vital work to help combat Masonry's acceptance within the Church and to expose its inconsistency with the Christian faith.

—MKG



# Books in Review

## MESSAGES FROM HEAVEN

Eternal Productions, 87-minute video, \$19.95

The supernatural is in vogue — both within the Church and outside in the secular realm. The paranormal definitely draws crowds and is a lucrative enterprise. From UFOs and extraterrestrials, to angels and spirit guides, to the mother of Jesus, Hollywood, Madison Avenue and the Church have all cashed in on selling celestial phenomena. *Messages from Heaven* points up that 72% of the American population believe in extraterrestrials and 69% believe in angels.

However, for the Church, an even more serious threat appears to be looming: The millions who flock to apparition sites around the world hoping to encounter the Virgin Mary. According to the video, an estimated 15-20 million people per year make a pilgrimage to Guadalupe, Mexico, to the spot where Mary is said to have first appeared in 1581. Combine the Guadalupe figures to the tens of millions who make pilgrimages to other locations where Mary is also believed to appear, including Medjugorje, Lourdes, Poland, Fatima, and Conners, Ga., and the annual total becomes astronomical.

The video presentation is superior quality, with good photography and excellent visual and sound effects. It also draws from the expertise of some of the well-known apologetic and prophetic authors including Dave Hunt, Chuck Smith, Roger Oakland, and Chuck Missler. As well, footage of the various apparition sites and interviews with Marian devotees — both lay and clergy — are featured.

In contrast to the message and visions of the current wave of paranormal, the presentation argues for the sole and final authority of Scripture and delivers a powerful examination of fulfilled messianic biblical prophecy and the validity of the resurrection of Jesus.

While the New Age message of extraterrestrials and the universalism message of angels clearly contradict the message of Scripture, many of the messages from the Marian apparitions appear not so unbiblical. Mary's statements include calls to prayer, to Bible reading, and to being united in Jesus. However, the danger of other messages being heralded by Mary is the cancer to her

other benign proclamations. The video examines the real message for her followers, which includes "the new dogma will be the dogma of the co-redemptrix." In other declarations, Mary claims for herself additional attributes of deity, including sinlessness. The video's producers use only citations that have received Roman Catholic Church approval, the imprimatur of the church's bishops, or from the Medjugorje visitations.

The video also demonstrates just how ecumenical the movement has become. While the current pope strongly advocates devotion to the Virgin Mary, this adoration is no longer just confined within Catholicism. The alluring power of these visions is displayed. Interviews with two devotees reveal conversions from Protestantism — one a former Assemblies of God member who became a Catholic priest, the other a United Methodist minister who converted to Catholicism, both as a result of the visions.

*Messages from Heaven* presents solid evidence as to how "shamelessly unbiblical" are the Marian apparitions. The video suggests that the apparitions fulfill biblical prophecy in Revelation 18. The presentation concludes with a solid evangelical message for faith alone in Jesus Christ.

With the widespread prominence of Marian visions — and Charismatic icons like Benny Hinn sanctioning Lourdes and Fatima — this informative and well-made video is a great resource.

—MKG

## UNSHAKABLE FOUNDATIONS

by Norman Geisler and Peter Bocchino

Bethany House, 413 pages, \$16.95

As the postmodern age continues its deadly assault against the biblical worldview, books such as *Unshakable Foundations* are crucial for the defense of the faith. Norman Geisler and Peter Bocchino have teamed up to provide Christians with a volume packed with clear and definitive responses to the attacks against the very foundation of truth.

The book covers a lot of territory in its 413 pages. From logic to worldviews to science to law and justice, the reader is furnished with sound and rational evidence for

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