

# The Quarterly Journal



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## Being Saved After Death is Still Alive in the Worldwide Church of God

by Peter Ditzel

"There is no need to worry that our departed loved ones, nor any of the rest of the masses of humans who have died," writes Worldwide Church of God (WCG) official, J. Michael Feazell, "are consigned to the eternal flames simply because no missionary reached them with the Gospel message before they died."<sup>1</sup> Those might be comforting words if they accurately reflect the teaching of the Bible. But do they? Or do they more closely resemble the heretical beliefs of the WCG's founder, Herbert W. Armstrong?

A look at the WCG's statement of beliefs reveals that Feazell's two-part article, "No Other Name," which appeared in the WCG's *Worldwide News* and on its web site, follows official WCG teaching: "God will gather all the living and the dead before the heavenly throne of Christ for judgment. The righteous will receive eternal glory, and the wicked will be condemned. It is the belief of the Worldwide Church of God that the Lord has made righteous provision in the Judgment for the unevangelized dead, and that many will respond to their risen and glorified Savior in faith and be saved, while the rest will be condemned. (Matthew



25:31-32; Acts 24:15; John 5:28-29; Revelation 20:11-15; 1 Timothy 2:4-6;

2 Peter 3:9; Acts 10:43; John 12:32; 1 Corinthians 15:22-28)."<sup>2</sup>

This teaching — often called post-mortem evangelization — is certainly not the teaching of historic, orthodox Christianity. Feazell himself verifies this by labeling the orthodox doctrine, "the strange but common belief among many Christians that all people who do not accept the Gospel before they die are eternally lost and without hope."<sup>3</sup> This labeling of orthodox teaching as "strange" is sadly reminiscent of Herbert W. Armstrong's invectives against the Christian Church. It is also paradoxical at best for the WCG, which has claimed for several years that it is completely orthodox in its teachings.

### ROOTS IN HERESY

Of course, the WCG has been known for its unorthodox beliefs ever since its founding by Herbert W. (continues on page 11)

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# Editorials

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## CHARISMA'S ANNUAL CRISIS OF CONSCIENCE

*Charisma* magazine editor, J. Lee Grady, informed readers in a recent editorial of the stark contrast between Christianity in China and in the United States. Grady's comments followed his trip to China last January and were featured in the magazine's June 2001 issue. In making the comparison, he wrote that the Gospel message in the United States is "so self-absorbed" and "nauseating at times."

"In China," he wrote, "serving the Lord is a daily sacrifice."

While his criticisms more accurately targeted Charismatic and Pentecostal camps, a clear distinction between these groups and non-Pentecostals and Evangelicals was not made. Grady's rebukes included:

- Criticizing a prominent evangelist who booked simultaneous speaking engagements and eventually canceled the church that offered the smaller financial return.
- Indicting celebrity speakers who demand luxury accommodations and five-figure fees for their performances and then fake the anointing by pushing people to the ground.
- Objecting to the "self-centered drive" of Charis-

matic preachers who use God to get "my breakthrough," "my blessing," and "my anointing."

Grady went further to declare that, "There's no brokenness in the preacher's voice, no surrender in his tone and no cross in his message."

While Grady's comments may be praiseworthy and right on target, they are just more of the double-speak that has become fashionable for the magazine which claims to be "About Spirit-Led Living." Last year, in an issue which celebrated the magazine's 25 years of publishing, Grady wrote: "What began as sincere Christian faith became infected with nauseating selfishness. At that point, I believe the Lord withdrew His blessing and moved on." The magazine's founder and publisher, Stephen Strang, has issued similar thoughts in such editorial pieces as "Practicing What We Preach" (June 1993), "Thoughts About Advertising" (July 1995), and "The Vital Gift of Prophecy" (March 1999).

The fact is, despite *Charisma's* periodic bouts of conscience, the magazine still is one of the largest promoters of Charismatic and Pentecostal icons who challenge the very authority and sufficiency of God's Word with their man-made proclamations and anointings. The magazine also continues to advance the careers and ministries of men and women who bring reproach upon the Gospel with their undisciplined and exuberant lives, and their self-serving and heretical theologies.

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### PERSONAL FREEDOM OUTREACH

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# News Updates

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## BOOKSTORES PULL TENNEY BOOKS

LifeWay, the Southern Baptist Convention-owned bookstore chain, will no longer sell Tommy Tenney's *The God Chasers* or *The God Catchers*. The bookstore chain offered no official statement about the decision to drop the best-selling books, but *Charisma* magazine reported obtaining "a copy of a message sent by a LifeWay store manager to a customer who asked about the removal of *The God Chasers*." The manager's statement specified Tenney's "unbiblical theology," including the author's disparaging of Scripture and an emphasis on subjective experience.

Tenney alleges that "a misinterpretation of his beliefs" is the cause for the bookstores removing his publications. In two major articles appearing in this newsletter, PFO detailed Tenney's unbiblical theology noted in the LifeWay manager's observation, in addition to a bent toward pantheism.

Tenney's roots in the United Pentecostal Church has also cost him book sales within the Assemblies of God. The Radiant Book and Music Store in Springfield, Mo., has also pulled Tenney's works from its shelves. The store maintained that the books are not in doctrinal harmony with the Assemblies denomination. However, not all bookstores with AG ties have followed the lead of the Springfield store.

Tenney says he withdrew direct association with the UPC during the 1980s and claims to no longer hold the group's "views." His father still is a UPC superintendent. Tenney was quoted by *Charisma* as telling AG General Superintendent Thomas Trask, "I can't turn my back on my heritage," and that he has "friends on both sides, and I'm sticking with my friends."

—MKG

## SCHULLER'S CHURCH CUTS STAFF

The current ebb in the nation's economy seemingly has had a negative impact on "possibility thinker," the Rev. Robert Schuller and his Southern California church. The Crystal Cathedral announced in July that it cut the jobs of 37 of its staff in an effort to offset substantial financial deficits in recent months.

The layoffs represent six percent of the church's entire 600-member work force and affects both church staff and

employees at its popular television broadcast, "Hour of Power." The cutbacks have forced the closing of the church's infant care nursery and terminated 12 positions within its executive pastor's staff.

The mega-church, located in Garden Grove, averages 8,000 in attendance each Sunday, having grown from humble beginnings in the 1950s when the "self-esteem" minister began preaching from the roof of a drive-in theater's snack bar. The *Dictionary of Christianity in America* says Schuller "attempts to recast the gospel in a positive form that appeals to the human quest for a positive self-image."

—MKG

## SWAGGART ACCUSED OF PLAGIARISM

Evangelist Jimmy Swaggart, who once wrote that he owes his "Bible education" to Finis Jennings Dake, is now being accused of more than just gleaned teaching from the heretical Bible commentator. The evangelist and author, who was disgraced by a sex scandal in the late 1980s, has been sued by the heirs of Dake and their publishing company, Dake Publishing, Inc.

The lawsuit, filed in late May, charges Swaggart with copyright infringement and plagiarizing the late minister's writings and publishing them as his own. Also named in the lawsuit is Jimmy Swaggart Ministries, Wolgemuth & Hyatt Publishers, and religious groups associated with Swaggart in his hometown of Baton Rouge, La.

The suit charges that Swaggart and his publisher had "taken and used plaintiff's proprietary works for their own benefit and profit." Swaggart is said to have taken large portions of Dake's writings and, while at times he gave Dake credit, he neglected to receive permission to cite the extended passages. The Dake family seeks damages from Swaggart, including a share of the profits he made from the sales of his works containing the citations, along with an order to stop further use of Dake's writings. The lawsuit was filed in the U.S. District Court in Nashville.

In 1987, following Dake's death, Swaggart wrote a tribute to Dake in his monthly magazine, *The Evangelist*. Swaggart described Dake as "a scholar unparalleled" and stated he "will forever be indebted to Finis Jennings Dake." He also wrote that to say "Dake was the greatest Bible scholar who ever lived" was not an exaggeration.

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# "REMEMBER THE ALAMO!"

## The Second Coming of Tony Alamo

by G. Richard Fisher  
with M. Kurt Goedelman

"Having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin, enticing unstable souls. They have a heart trained in covetous practices, and are accursed children" (2 Peter 2:14).

Short memories are not necessarily the product of dementia. Many Christians have short memories when it comes to old cult leaders. These aberrant teachers reinvent themselves even after major failures, prophetic misses, glaring exposés, and even jail time.

One such leader is Tony Alamo, (it is correctly pronounced A-lam'-o). Alamo was highly influential from the 1960s into the 1980s, in spite of his checkered past, weird propensities, and documented abuse. In his early beginnings, Alamo formed the Music Square Church, also known as the Holy Alamo Christian Church Consecrated (nowadays they have dropped the word "Consecrated").

Alamo gained even more attention from the national media when he kept the embalmed body of his wife Susan on display for a number of months. She died April 8, 1982, of cancer, despite the claim that she would be healed through prayer. Alamo had his followers kneeling by her coffin in shifts around the clock praying and expecting her to rise from the dead.

This eventually led to spiritism and necromancy. One newspaper reported that "people in and out of the foundation have seen [Susan] in visions."<sup>1</sup>

Susan's body was temporarily laid to rest in a mausoleum on the grounds of the foundation in rural Arkansas. She is available now only through cassette tape.

### INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHER

A macabre tale over Susan's remains unfolded in 1997 while Alamo was in a federal prison (for income tax evasion) and her body was reported missing. A news item headline read: "Evangelist's appeal of body ruling denied." The report coming out of Little Rock was strange indeed:

"When Mr. Alamo is released from the federal prison, he is subject to arrest in Crawford County, where a chancery court judge has ordered him jailed until he reveals the location of his wife's body. Susan Alamo's body has been missing since February 1991 and her daughter, Christiaon Coie of Los Angeles, wants to know where it is so she can bury her mother in a family cemetery in Crawford County."<sup>2</sup>

The battle for the body finally ended, but not before raging for another year and a half. A headline from an Associated Press story revealed: "Susan Alamo entombed in Tulsa," and went on to report:

"[Tony] Alamo was ordered in 1995 to return the body. The chancery court judge stipulated

that if Alamo did not produce the body, he would be sent to the local jail upon his release from federal custody. Last month [July 1998], Alamo's followers brought the body in a sealed casket to a Van Buren funeral home. The court order to deliver the body came when Christiaon [sic] Coie of Los Angeles, Mrs. Alamo's daughter, went to court because she wanted to bury her mother near relatives in Van Buren."<sup>3</sup>

### THE REAL TONY

Alamo was born Sept. 20, 1934 in Joplin, Mo., as Bernie Lazar Hoffman. After moving West, adopting the name Marcus Abad, serving jail time for a weapons charge, he met Susan Lipowitz, "a platinum blonde who was married to a small-time Los Angeles hood."<sup>4</sup> (Susan was born Edith Opal Horn.) According to *People Weekly* magazine, "In 1966 she and Tony were wed once in Tijuana and twice in Las Vegas to be 'triple sure,' Tony said."<sup>5</sup>

After changing their names to Tony and Susan Alamo, the pair grew a Hollywood street ministry into an established church. They would frequent Hollywood Boulevard, passing out tracts and witnessing all day, then transport people to their church for a service at night. They would target young street people, drug addicts, alcoholics, prostitutes, and criminals. They were part of the original "Jesus People movement" popular in the 1960s and 1970s. In 1975, their foun-

dation purchased land in Alma and Dyer, Ark. and relocated their Music Square Church. They established a few churches elsewhere.

*The Encyclopedia of American Religions* summarizes the Alamos and their church:

“Music Square Church is a Pentecostal church with doctrine similar to the Assemblies of God. It accepts the authority of the Bible (using only the King James Version) and places its emphasis upon the preaching of Jesus Christ as the son of the Living God who died for humanity. The church adheres to a strict moral code, and members condemn drugs, homosexuality, adultery, and abortions. Both Susan and Tony Alamo were Jewish and they developed a special interest in evangelism of Jews.”<sup>6</sup>

Tony, like many of today’s Charismatic superstars, also claims for himself many “visions, wonders, and signs.” For example, he describes for his followers one of his mystical experiences:

“...the Lord appeared to me in an oval, gold-framed mirror. I saw this vision when I was fully awake, with my eyes wide open. I could hear His voice, but it was like a radio being turned on and off. The words that He was saying were clipped. I couldn’t understand Him. After seeking what He meant, I learned from Him that I was not reading or praying enough, and therefore was not hearing His precious instructions.”<sup>7</sup>

Alma was a small town, with fewer than 3,000 people living there. At one time, Alamo owned as many as 29 of the city’s businesses. He staffed them with free help from followers.<sup>8</sup> Negative court rulings have helped to shut down many of Alamo’s businesses. Currently, the church continues to solicit the volunteer labor of its members and potential members by inviting them to Alma. “The Alamo Christian Church provides room and board to all those who truly want to serve the Lord with all their heart, soul,

mind, and strength,” its *World Newsletters* declare.<sup>9</sup>

However, the description by one former member of the work and living conditions at the church should cause most to have serious reservations. The ex-follower who was with Alamo’s group during its days in the Los Angeles area reveals:

“The living conditions were disgusting. We slept body to body in sleeping bags on the floor. When I was there, I never saw a real bed. At the time I left though, I was sleeping on a cot. We loved it when the weather warmed up, so we could sleep outside where it wasn’t so crowded. The bathroom conditions were worse. The toilets were always full because we were told that if we flushed them, the leaching field wouldn’t hold it all. So about every two or three days they were flushed. There also wasn’t no more than three toilets per 50, 60 men [sic]. I do not know how it was for the women or the children. Showers were very seldom. We either never had time or the water was always cold. I took a shower about once a week.”<sup>10</sup>

All of the deplorable living conditions were apparently tolerated as service unto the Lord and because, as the ex-member stated: “We were taught that Tony and Susan were our spiritual parents. We were taught that our real parents were of the devil and that all people outside the foundation (except those who were for the foundation) were of the devil.”<sup>11</sup>

During the 1980s Alamo stayed busy by remarrying and with court battles. Alamo’s new bride, Birgitta Gyllenhammar, was a 42-year-old Swedish native who owned a Western-style clothing firm in Southern California. They were married on June 23, 1984, in Las Vegas and because “they did not like the ceremony,” repeated the ceremony in a Santa Monica church on June 30.<sup>12</sup> Alamo also found himself encountering lawsuits from ex-members of his church and from the U.S. Labor Department.<sup>13</sup>

## JAILHOUSE BLUES

Alamo was sentenced to prison for six years in September 1994 by the Federal District Court for the Western District of Tennessee. Court records provide details of the whys and where of Alamo’s imprisonment:



*Alamo Christian Ministries World Newsletters are being widely distributed across the U.S.*



"...one count of filing a false income tax return and three counts of failing to file. He is incarcerated in a federal correctional institution in Texarkana, Texas."<sup>14</sup>

In 1995, *The Virginian-Pilot & Ledger-Star* published an article entitled, "IRS Auctions Alamo Property." By selling off Alamo's designer clothes and associated items seized from his businesses the IRS hoped "to recoup some of the \$2.2 million Alamo owes in taxes," the article reported.<sup>15</sup>

In addition, the U.S. Parole Commission declined Alamo's appeal for March 1996 parole announcing that "its decision was warranted 'because of [Tony Alamo's] corrupt conduct in the exploitation (financial, personal, and sexual) of [his] religious followers, and [his] sophisticated effort to use this religious organization as a cover to defraud the IRS.'"<sup>16</sup>

A 1997 parole appeal was also declined because of late filing, however Alamo was scheduled for release on Dec. 8, 1998, some five months after being transferred to a Texarkana halfway house in July 1998.<sup>17</sup>

### HE'S BACK!

Following Alamo's release, a tract claiming "NEW IRREFUTABLE EVIDENCE PROVES ALAMO WAS NOT GUILTY," was published and circulated under the auspices of the "International Coalition for Religious Freedom" in Washington, D.C. The pamphlet offers a series of convoluted denials and charges that his arrest and conviction were the result of a plot and that the federal government bribed witnesses.

"Old soldiers never die, they just fade away," goes the old adage. Not so with cult leaders and failed evangelists. They just keep reinventing themselves and making comebacks. Robert Tilton, Peter Popoff, Jim Bakker, and Jimmy Swaggart are prime examples. No amount of money-mongering, sexual scandals, protracted court fights, or negative press can keep them down for long and they always find an audience.

With Alamo's re-emergence in the last few years has come a resurgence of his printed materials — his full-color eight-page *Alamo Christian Ministries World Newsletters* are being widely distributed across the U.S. These newsletters are left on car windshields by faithful followers in various cities. These new materials present glowing reports of the worldwide impact of Alamo's ministries and present a kinder, gentler Alamo. Gone are his earlier diatribes.

### PARANOIA AND HERESY

In bygone days, it was not uncommon to find materials by Alamo which launched angry attacks on the Vatican, even claiming that the Pope and his agents controlled the White House, Congress, the armed forces, the United Nations, and the media. And, according to Alamo, the Pope was positioning himself to take over the world. More details and evidence supporting such claims could be found in books offered by Alamo's organization, including, *The Vatican Moscow Washington Alliance* and *The Secret History of the Jesuits*.<sup>18</sup> There is no doubt that Alamo led his followers into the weird paranoid world of conspiracy theories.<sup>19</sup>

*People Weekly* magazine called the literature written and distributed by Alamo "paranoid screeds" and disclosed the multimillion-dollar holdings he owned, including homes in Nashville and California, while his followers ate "supermarket-rejected spoiled food."<sup>20</sup> The way that Alamo ran his compound with mind control sounds like Jim Jones without the cyanide-laced drinks.

Ex-cult member Greg Wilson testified to the extreme brainwashing, manipulation and auto-suggestion. He informed the public about the tactic of shunning parents and being indoctrinated into believing that the Alamo Foundation was the only true church.

Wilson's story was told in Ron Enroth's *Youth, Brainwashing, and the Extremist Cults*. Enroth describes the strange mix of legalism and sinless perfection that Alamo taught in the 1970s:

"Despite their incredible legalism, members of the Foundation believe it is possible to live without sin. Greg notes, 'They say that you *can* sin, that there are people who *maybe* sin once in a while at the Alamo Foundation. But that's where grace comes in. God will cover those little teeny bloopers that you make — their term is "blowing it." But God has given you the power of the Holy Ghost, and if you are in the Spirit, He isn't going to allow you to sin. If you do sin, you are out of the Spirit and you better really watch out: the devil might gobble you up and you might end up in an institution someplace.' Anyone not part of the Foundation is considered to be outside the body of Christ."<sup>21</sup>

Some say that Tony and Susan Alamo's original street work in the 1960s on Sunset Strip had some validity and helped some young people. Twenty years later he ran his lucrative organization in Alma in a very shad-owy way — bodyguards and all.

### THE TEACHINGS

Alamo teaches that believers can "unite yourself to the entire Godhead by simply uniting yourself to Christ's death, His resurrection, and to the keeping of all of His commandments."<sup>22</sup> Apparently, part of keeping the commandments, according to Alamo, is for the followers to "take a vow of poverty agreeing to turn over all their real property to the church."<sup>23</sup> Keeping the commandments is shorthand for keeping all the Alamo rules.

Alamo's system is definitely a salvation by works system contrary to what is taught in Galatians 3:11 ("That no one is justified by the works of the law") and Romans 3:28 ("Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law").<sup>24</sup>

Dave Breese deals with the issue of a false basis of salvation:

"Scripture teaches that all other forms of supposed salvation, based on human efforts, are cursed by God. ... How wonder-

ful is the message of the Gospel of the grace of God that is presented to us in Holy Scripture! A person is able to come to Jesus Christ without money, without human works, without vast promises concerning the future and accept salvation which was entirely purchased for him on the cross. When he comes in humble faith, he receives the *gift* of God, which is eternal life. And it is exactly this, a free gift. When he believes the Gospel, he receives eternal life and is justified in the sight of God."<sup>25</sup>

Breese further affirms:

"No false religion in the world can possibly survive unless it is able to destroy the Gospel of the grace of God and introduce or encourage a system of human works as a basis of salvation. There is not room in the same world for the Pauline message of 'justification by faith without the deeds of the law' and the cultic religionist with his perverted gospel. Every cult in the world preaches 'another gospel' and is therefore cursed of God."<sup>26</sup>

### FROM KING JAMES TO ARAMAIC

Originally Alamo settled within the "King James Only" camp — that is he was committed to and used only the King James Version.<sup>27</sup> It appears that has changed. In his July 2000 *World Newsletter*, Alamo promotes the theories of occult metaphysician George M. Lamsa.<sup>28</sup>

In the newsletter's front-page article, Alamo's headline announces: "According to Expert Aramaic Translators, Jesus Never Said, 'My God, My God, Why Hast Thou Forsaken Me?'" He then references the "*Holy Bible from the Ancient Eastern Text*, George M. Lamsa's translation." And further asserts: "Here are the true Words Christ spoke on the cross: Jesus really cried out, 'My God, My God for this I was kept' (Matt. 27:46, Orig. Text)." Later in the article, Alamo comments:

"The King James Version of the Bible is the Bible I use most of

the time, but this statement, taken from the original Aramaic text, of Christ dying on the cross, is incorrect in the KJV, probably because of the Greek translators."<sup>29</sup>

Given the warning in Revelation 22 about altering God's Word, Alamo is on very shaky ground. Commenting on Psalm 119:21 ("You have rebuked the proud who are cursed, Who wander from your commandments"), Dr. Jay Adams' warning is very applicable to Alamo's interpretative gymnastics:

"**Pride** goes before a fall (Proverbs 16:18). God will **rebuke** all those who tamper with His Word. It is the essence of pride for any counselor — or anyone else — to think he is *above* the Bible. There are various ways in which one may assume that unenviable position. He may criticize the Bible. He may act as if he has every aspect of Scripture in hand. He may meddle with various passages, conjecturing what the original might have said, etc. But if he does any of these things, or anything similar, he may be sure that in one way or another God will severely rebuke him. He even speaks of such persons being **cursed**. That is serious; indeed, it is very heavy language."<sup>30</sup>

Is it really true that Jesus never uttered the words: "My God, My God, Why have you forsaken Me?" Then what about many of His other words? Which ones can we trust? Which ones are right? Which ones wrong? How can we know for sure what He really uttered? Maybe the Jesus Seminar and their colored beads can tell us, or do we just trust Alamo for the answer? It begins to sound like a subjective guessing game. Here, Alamo claims academic knowledge and information about Aramaic and Aramaic translations. However, it is a sure bet that Alamo never studied Aramaic (unless he did it in jail) and as we'll see, he is deficient on Bible history, geography, and sociology.

The premise of Alamo (imparted via Lamsa) is that "The four first Gospels were written in Aramaic, not Greek."<sup>31</sup> So there are supposed to be Aramaic originals. It is a strange claim since none have ever been discovered. No credible textual scholars make such a claim. There are only hypothetical Aramaic originals. The attempts of Charles F. Burney (1922), Charles C. Torrey (1933) and Matthew Black (1946) to reconstruct a fictional Aramaic original have been discredited with the finds at Qumran (1947) and more recent archaeological and textual discoveries.

This idea of Aramaic originals was first promoted by George Lamsa with the founding of the Aramaic Bible Society. It is a claim without textual proof. The late George Lamsa was of Iranian descent and came out of a Nestorian background. Lamsa's followers believed others were misunderstanding God's Word, spiritually blind, and that the Greek text of the Gospels was corrupted and unclear. Under historical scrutiny, the idea that the Gospels were written first in Aramaic just does not hold up. The simple and undeniable fact is that there are no Aramaic translations of the New Testament that can be produced before the fifth century A.D.

Lamsa's followers also learned from him the New Age idea of a spiritual Christ, as Lamsa spiritualized the Resurrection. His system is largely Gnostic, Nestorian, and modalistic.<sup>32</sup> Lamsa denied many of the major tenets of Christianity, including hell, Satan, demons, and the deity of Christ. He was clearly out of the mainstream of orthodoxy.

Akin to this, but not directly related, is the teaching that the original Gospels were written in Hebrew, though Hebrew originals have never been turned up, either. This school of thought, The Jerusalem School of Synoptic Research, tells us that great and more precise insights can be gained if we would just jump aboard this train.<sup>33</sup>

In some instances, this school relies on liberal Jewish teaching but ignores other Rabbis who dismiss their teach-

ing as erroneous. Since this school cannot prove its foundational premise with textual evidence and since our Systematic Theology is not based on the Gospels alone (but rather the whole of Scripture), the teachings of this "Jerusalem School" are wasted conjecture.

### MORE UNFOUNDED CLAIMS

Alamo also claims that "Jesus and His disciples spoke Aramaic and Hebrew, not Greek."<sup>34</sup> Jesus and His disciples, like all the people of first century Israel spoke Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek, and possibly bits of Latin.<sup>35</sup> The superscription on our Lord's cross in three languages testifies to that. Old Testament quotes of Christ and the Apostles along with their recorded words and sayings indicate their familiarity with Aramaic, Hebrew, and Septuagint Greek.

Edwin Yamauchi agrees:

"Recent discoveries of inscriptions in Palestine, especially from Qumran and Murabbaat, have shed some valuable light on the use of Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic in Palestine in the first and early second century A.D. (Latin was used by the Romans in Palestine.) ... Of the inscriptions found on ossuaries discovered on Mount Olivet and dated before A.D. 70, seven are in Hebrew, eleven in Aramaic, and eleven in Greek. From this evidence of a trilingual 'language milieu,' [Robert H.] Gundry suggests that some of the sayings of Jesus may have been uttered by Him in Greek."<sup>36</sup>

What is the Aramaic language? Aramaic is a Semitic language that had its roots in an ancient near-eastern people called Aramaeans, whose origins date to around 2000 B.C. As well, fifth-century A.D. Aramaic is vastly different than first century A.D. Palestinian Aramaic — a fact lost to Alamo. The people were assimilated into Muslim culture in the seventh century A.D. and the language disappeared from common use.<sup>37</sup>

The Hebrew language is a near cousin to Aramaic. When the Jewish nation was taken into captivity, both in Assyria and Babylon, they acquired the Aramaic language. This is how Aramaic sayings found their way into Palestine and the New Testament. We know that the people of Israel were multilingual.

We know also that some Aramaic documents were found with the Dead Sea Scrolls and that early forms of the Talmud were in Aramaic.<sup>38</sup>

Bible scholar F.F. Bruce has done extensive studies on the translation history of the Bible and informs us regarding Aramaic:

"As for the influence of Palestinian Aramaic on the Greek of the New Testament, this is found particularly in the conversations and discourses recorded in the Gospels and the earlier chapters of Acts, and in the book of Revelation. Some scholars have argued that our Gospels were actually written in Aramaic and then turned into Greek. The evidence, however, is against this. There were no doubt Aramaic summaries of the story of Jesus and collections of His sayings in circulation in the primitive Palestinian Church, but while our Gospels may have drawn upon these, they are not in themselves translations. ... The study of the Aramaic background of the language of the Gospels and some other parts of the New Testament is an interesting and illuminating one, though it has its limitations and is not, as some imagine, the key to unlock all mysteries."<sup>39</sup>

### PESHITTA

The Aramaic New Testament is clearly a later translation from Greek with misty and obscure roots. It is also called the Syriac version from the Syrian Church in India and is labeled the Peshitta (or simple) Text. Aramaic translations of the New Testament of necessity originated when Christianity finally reached into that section of the world.

When it comes to textual and translation history, Alamo is really out of his element. There is no historical evidence to propose an Aramaic version before A.D. 400. The Syriac/Peshitta dates to Bishop Rabbula of Edessa between A.D. 411 and 435.<sup>40</sup> Bruce points up other deficiencies in the Peshitta:

"The original Peshitta version of the New Testament did not include 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, Jude and Revelation. It was not until 508 that these five books appeared in a Syriac version. ... Because the Syriac Bible is written in a variant dialect of the language that Jesus spoke, extreme views are sometimes expressed about the forms in which His sayings appear in the Syriac Gospels, as though His actual words in the language in which they were uttered might be found there. The ordinary reader, for example, may readily infer from the writings of Mr. George Lamsa that the Peshitta Gospels preserve the very words of our Lord better than the Greek Gospels do. This, of course, is quite wrong; the Peshitta New Testament is simply a translation of the Greek."<sup>41</sup>

Confirmation of the later production of the Aramaic/Peshitta can be found in other sources as well.<sup>42</sup> Apologists and researchers John Ankerberg and John Weldon point up the deficiencies and discrepancies with Lamsa's Aramaic premise:

"1. Scholars reject the basic premise of Lamsa's Aramaic originals. 2. The evidence declares that the Aramaic texts were derived from Greek texts, *not* vice versa, and therefore the Peshitta is the one with translation errors. 3. Lamsa was not the objective scholar he is made out to be; he ended his life in close agreement to many New Thought heresies (for example, he denied the deity of Christ and the atonement). 4. Aramaic is used by more than a dozen cults to *reject* biblical doctrines, rather



than to elucidate the meaning of the text."<sup>43</sup>

The simple logic is that if the Gospels were originally written in Aramaic, they would have been available to only a select few in a select part of the world. It would make the Bible virtually unavailable to us today. Paul could not have taken the Gospel out to the ancient world as it would have been locked and hidden in an obscure language.

Alamo then continues and makes a baffling statement:

"This term, even at present, is only used by the Aramaic-speaking people in Assyria, who speak the same language the Galileans spoke at the time of our Lord."<sup>44</sup>

Aramaic is, for all intents and purposes, a dead language. It has long been displaced in the Middle East by Arabic. There are a few dialects derived from Aramaic that are reported to be spoken "by only a few thousand persons, mostly in Kurdistan and Syria."<sup>45</sup>

Then there is the issue of "Aramaic-speaking people in Assyria." Perhaps Alamo is ignorant to the fact that Assyria does not exist. Ancient Assyria lay in what is today northern Iraq. The population of Iraq is almost entirely Moslem and the people speak Arabic. It has a 3% remnant of largely Roman Catholic people who also speak Arabic.

Alamo may intend to mean the Assyrian Church of Iraq, which is virtually obsolete because of slaughter and suppression by the Iraqis since 1920.

The ancient Assyrians were defeated and swallowed up in the empire of the Babylonians in the 600s B.C. The Babylonians, in turn, were conquered by the Persians, and the Persians by the Greeks until the time of Roman domination of the world. Assyria forever ceased to exist and is only available to us in its archaeological ruins and ancient monuments.<sup>46</sup> As noted above, the seventh century A.D. brought the Muslim hordes. They rolled through the Middle East

and North Africa, bringing their religion and language.

Alamo takes the text from Matthew 27:46 and says the writer was wrong in his interpretation of "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" as "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?" By extension, Mark must be wrong as well because he says the same thing in Mark 15:34. Alamo denies that it is a prophecy of Messiah from Psalm 22:

"David was foolishly saying that God had forsaken him. This part of Psalm 22 was not a prophecy of Christ's death. Jesus did not quote this Psalm."<sup>47</sup>

If one accepts Alamo's statement, it seems that the Church was wrong until the Peshitta text was constructed and then continued to be wrong for 1600 years because it read only Greek or a translation from Greek.

Alamo says that the words, "Eli Eli Lama Shabakthani" [sic] actually means "My God, My God, for this I was kept [this was My destiny — I was born for this]."<sup>48</sup>

No reliable translation contains the reading Alamo imposes or anything like it. They all translate it with the idea of being forsaken or abandoned. Linguist Adam Clarke dissects these words and comes up with roughly the same gist as both Matthew and Mark: Abandonment — being forsaken or left — is Clarke's conclusion. Clarke writes:

"The Deity, however, might restrain so much of its consolatory support as to leave the human nature fully sensible of all its sufferings, so that the consolations might not take off any part of the keen edge of his passion; and this was necessary to make his sufferings meritorious. And it is probable that this is all that is intended by our Lord's quotation from the twenty-second Psalm. Taken in this view, the words convey an unexceptionable sense, even in the common translation."<sup>49</sup>

The translators of the *New Geneva Study Bible* offer these comments:

"Jesus' desolate cry is a fulfillment of Ps. 22:1 showing the depth of His distress as He suffers separation from His Father. Later the apostles realized that Jesus was enduring the dreadful wrath of God's judgment on sin. This was all the more agonizing to One whose relationship with the Father was perfect in love. The cry is Aramaic, except the Hebrew 'Eli.' Mark gives the Aramaic 'Eloi.'"<sup>50</sup>

Likewise, Cambridge scholar J.R. Dummelow expounds:

"It is not certain whether Jesus spoke in Hebrew or Aramaic, for most MSS contain a mixture of both. These words are a cry of the human nature of Jesus, which alone could suffer desertion, when He experienced the bitterness of death."<sup>51</sup>

Alamo has put all his eggs in the Lamsa basket. Noted researcher and historian Dr. Edwin Yamauchi has been quick to point up that Lamsa mishandled and manhandled Aramaic and was reckless in his use of it. Yamauchi advised that we lend no "credence to the fantastic claims of Lamsa."<sup>52</sup>

There are substratums and differences between early Aramaic and later Aramaic and nuances in eastern Syriac and western Aramaic that make it a language that only a careful and very knowledgeable scholar can handle. Apparently Lamsa was not that, according to the experts. Besides Lamsa's claim, this is all Alamo has to offer us.

## LOST IN SPACE

Alamo, in his new incarnation, says he is now disclosing "other visions, signs, wonders, and messages God has given me that I've never written about."<sup>53</sup> Of course, Alamo states that it is God who is behind making these revelations known:

"I never thought I'd write an article regarding this particular experience that Susie and I had with UFOs, but the Lord has

commanded me strongly to tell it now. That is why I'm informing the world of it at this time."<sup>54</sup>

In the article, Alamo reveals:

"[Susan] also told me that God had revealed to her that the flying saucers some people were seeing were supernatural beings, angels from Heaven, surveying the earth just before Christ's return to earth. ... 'Come on Tony, let's hold hands and pray that God will show us flying saucers.' I said, 'All right.' She was driving and I took her hand. She prayed, 'Oh Lord, God Almighty, if there are such things as flying saucers, show them to us, Father, in the name of Jesus.' I said, 'Amen, Lord.' No sooner had she said this prayer, and I said, 'Amen, Lord,' than a squadron of flying saucers began approaching us very quickly from far in the distance. They descended from way up high, down within a fraction of an inch of the windshield of the car with a speed as fast as lightning. ... There were at least one hundred of them. ... At the same time I was praying, 'God, please turn it off! Stop them. We've seen it. I got the message. That's it. I know that they exist now.' ... I don't play games, and I don't tell lies or stories. ... Flying saucers from the Lord do exist."<sup>55</sup>

Apologist and pastor William Alnor, in his book, *UFO Cults and the New Millennium*, addresses the fallacy and danger of an angelic-UFO connection:

"Yes, I believe in angels, but the image Hollywood and the New Agers have given us of them does not reflect their reality and purpose. It doesn't take long for one reading UFO literature, for example, to find out that in addition to having contact with aliens, many claim contact with angels as well. This is the same type of deception UFO contactees are involved in, and the Bible calls trafficking with any type of

entity or familiar spirit, witchcraft, sorcery, and spiritism. The Bible also tells us that Satan can sometimes appear as an 'angel of light' (2 Cor. 11:14)."<sup>56</sup>

Alamo again takes dangerous liberty with the Word of God when he asserts that:

"The Lord told me to write and release this for the month of May, 1999. He has been warning the world 'at sundry times and in divers manners' that He is coming back to earth soon (Heb. 1:1)."<sup>57</sup>

Alamo's employment of Hebrews 1:1 to his own self-aggrandizing UFO delusion (along with his blatant misapplication of the verse as a warning of the Second Coming) is the height of spiritual deception. Time and again, Alamo has demonstrated his inability to rightly divide the Word of Truth.

When one thinks of Tony Alamo, one can remember his last name and think of five areas of concern:

- Aggressive manipulation,
- Loose living,
- Aramaic errors,
- Monetary focus, and
- Occupancy in prison.

The second coming of Alamo is nothing but more of the same. Unless we learn from the past, history will be doomed to repeat itself in the life and ministry of Tony Alamo. In the 1980s, it was a fixation on his dead wife. After six years in prison, it is now a fixation on dead theories and deadly New Age delusions. Christians have a living Book and a living Savior. It is the return of the Savior which should have our attention.

#### Endnotes:

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15. "IRS Auctions Alamo Property," *The Virginian-Pilot/The Ledger-Star*, Norfolk, Va., July 18, 1995.
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21. Ronald Enroth, *Youth, Brainwashing, and the Extremist Cults*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing, 1977, pg. 71, italics in original.
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23. *The Encyclopedia of American Religions*, op. cit., Vol. 1, pg. 251.
24. See also Romans 4:5; Galatians 2:16; and Ephesians 2:8-9.
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27. *The Encyclopedia of American Religions*, op. cit., Vol. 1, pg. 251.
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*World Newsletter*, July 2000, Volume 02800, pg. 2.

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40. *Ibid.*, pg. 194.

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43. *Encyclopedia of Cults and New Religions*, op. cit., pg. 358, italics in original.

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45. *Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, op. cit., Vol. 1, pg. 249. Also, given the date of the encyclopedia's report (1970s), there may not even be a few thousand at this point in time who are familiar with Aramaic.

46. *Ibid.*, pp. 372-391.

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55. *Ibid.*, pp. 2, 4.

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57. *Flying Saucers are End-Time Prophecy*, op. cit., pg. 5.



## BEING SAVED AFTER DEATH

(continued from page 1)

Armstrong in the early 1930s.<sup>4</sup> But after Armstrong died in 1986, the group began changing its doctrines, and by the mid-1990s, many churches, Christian organizations, and prominent Christian personalities had accepted the WCG as an orthodox, evangelical church. The WCG even boasts that it has, since 1997, been a member of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE). But the NAE has recently informed this writer concerning the WCG's teaching of post-mortem evangelization that it is now in dialogue with WCG leadership "in order to further understand the issues involved."<sup>5</sup>

### **AMBIGUITY TOWARD ARMSTRONG**

Of significance is the fact that the organization has never acknowledged that its founder distinguished himself by being one of the most notorious heretics of the twentieth century who was proud of his unorthodox beliefs and his attacks against Christian doc-

trine. This lack of forthrightness about Armstrong can be seen on the WCG's web site, where Armstrong is said to have had "many unusual doctrines,"<sup>6</sup> but where Armstrong is also said to have emphasized that "Christianity is a total way of life," and it is implied that his ministry came from God: "[Armstrong] certainly didn't envision a career as a minister. But by the spring of 1931, God began to direct him and his wife Loma to exactly that."<sup>7</sup>

Also, as part of the supporting evidence it presents to show that Armstrong "accepted Jesus Christ as his Savior," the WCG quotes Armstrong as writing,

"When I read and studied the Bible, God was talking to me, and now I loved to listen! I began to pray, and knew that in prayer I was talking with God. I was not yet very well acquainted with God. But one gets to be better acquainted with another by constant contact and continuous conversation. So I continued in the study of the Bible. I began

to write, in article form, the things I was learning."<sup>8</sup>

Then, in the next sentence, the WCG says, "As Herbert Armstrong studied the Bible, he came to a number of unusual conclusions."<sup>9</sup> The WCG makes no attempt to explain how, if Armstrong was a Christian whom God was preparing for the ministry and to whom God was talking through his Bible study, Armstrong could in his Bible study have been coming to such "unusual conclusions." And earlier, this same article admits, "many of his [Armstrong's] doctrines were not biblical."<sup>10</sup>

We all make mistakes, but not to the point of establishing a heretical system of belief as did Armstrong. Yet the WCG continues to paint a picture of Armstrong as merely someone who made some mistakes, as "Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Wesley, Augustine, and many others made mistakes in their personal lives and in their practical theology. This generally does not detract from the positive things they contributed to the church."<sup>11</sup> But Armstrong did more

than merely make some mistakes. He was notorious among Christian churches for his damnable heresies.

Those who have been carefully watching the WCG know that it still holds a dangerously high opinion of Armstrong and some of his unorthodox beliefs, and has made eyebrow-raising statements of its own that even Armstrong never thought of.<sup>12</sup> So it comes as no surprise to some observers, but perhaps cause for others to reconsider their hasty embrace of the WCG, that the WCG is now openly emphasizing and even embellishing one of Armstrong's pet doctrines — the teaching that confessing Jesus Christ as Savior in this life is not necessary to salvation.

### LAZARUS AND THE RICH MAN

Michael Feazell, in attempting to support his position, first turns to the account of Lazarus and the rich man, found in Luke 16:19-31. After giving the context and circumstances for Jesus telling the account, Feazell lists the characters:

“There are three characters in the story, the rich man (representing the Pharisees who love money), the miserable beggar Lazarus (representing a class of people despised by the Pharisees), and Abraham (whose bosom or lap was a Jewish figure of comfort and peace in the afterlife).”<sup>13</sup>

And, if I may summarize Feazell's explanation of the point of the story, one should not, as the Pharisees did, judge someone's standing with God by the abundance or lack of earthly blessings; the Pharisees would wrongly assume someone like Lazarus to be cursed and someone like the rich man to be blessed. So far, so good.

It is over verse 26 that Feazell becomes confused. Verse 26 states, “Besides all this, between you and us a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who might want to pass from here to you cannot do so, and no one can cross from there to us” (The New Revised Standard Version is used because this is what Feazell uses.)

Feazell takes several rather colloquially worded paragraphs to give his interpretation. But it can be summed up this way: The chasm between where Lazarus is and where the rich man is exists only because the rich man remains unrepentant. In other words, Feazell implies that there would be no chasm if the rich man, even if he remained unrepentant in his earthly life, were to express true repentance in his after-death state. But to arrive at this, Feazell has put a burden on the Scripture that will not stand. Nothing in the text supports his fanciful idea.

Instead of supporting the WCG's contention, the fact that the chasm is two-way — “those who might want to pass from here to you cannot do so, and no one can cross from there to us” — is evidence against it. Abraham does not say that the chasm would disappear or could be bridged if the rich man would only repent. Instead, he expresses the reality and permanency of the chasm by saying that no one can pass through it in either direction. Abraham never evangelizes the dead rich man. Instead, he points out to the rich man what he did *in his lifetime* (v. 25), and then tells him that now a great chasm has been *fixed*. Clearly, he is saying, “It is too late for you, rich man; you should have thought about these things while you were alive.”

### ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES

The second major Scripture Feazell brings up is Hebrews 9:27-28: “And just as it is appointed for mortals to die once, and after that the judgment, so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin, but to save those who are eagerly waiting for Him.” Feazell says he mentions this passage because it is “often used to prove that those who die without knowing the Gospel are automatically damned.”<sup>14</sup>

He cites no reference to support this statement, and tries to discredit the statement by saying the “passage proves nothing one way or the other about whether the dead are given the Gospel.”<sup>15</sup> Perhaps it is true that this single Scripture, taken alone, does not

prove that the unsaved dead are not given a chance to be saved. But it certainly does not support the WCG's teaching, and it is one of many Scriptures that, taken together, show that the WCG's view is not biblical. The passage says that when Christ appears the second time, it will be to “save those who are eagerly waiting for Him” (v. 28). The unevangelized, whether dead or alive, are not eagerly waiting for the return of Jesus Christ.

Feazell then moves on to the book of Acts.<sup>16</sup> He cites chapter 17, verses 30-31: “While God has overlooked the times of human ignorance, now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will have the world judged in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all by raising Him from the dead.”

One can only surmise that Feazell can think this supports the WCG's position because he has failed to examine both the textual and the historical context and misses an important word. Paul is addressing the Athenians. He has just quoted one of their own poets as saying, “For we too are his offspring.” He tells them that in the past, God overlooked the ignorance of those — the Athenians, and, in fact, all the Gentiles — who worshiped idols. But now — not in the future after they are dead — now he commands them to repent. Feazell has missed the word “now.”

When Paul said this, the opening of salvation to the Gentiles was only relatively recently begun. Paul, speaking from the perspective of a Jew about a God who was considered a God of the Jews, merely meant that, now that the Gospel was being preached outside the nation of the Jews, God was now commanding through that Gospel even non-Jewish people — “all people everywhere” — to repent. There is no hint here of a chance to repent after death.

### THE JUDGMENT OF REVELATION 20

Another of Feazell's key Scriptures is Revelation 20,<sup>17</sup> especially verses

11-15:

“Then I saw a great white throne and the one who sat on it; and the earth and the heaven fled from his presence, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Also another book was opened, the book of life. And the dead were judged according to their works, as recorded in the books. And the sea gave up the dead that were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and all were judged according to what they had done. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire; and anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.”

An examination of these verses discloses that they do not even remotely suggest that God will offer salvation to people who were unrepentant in this life. Jesus Christ is the judge of the living and the dead (Acts 10:42; 2 Timothy 4:1; 1 Peter 4:5). He is the judge of the great white throne judgment in which the dead stand before Him and are judged according to their works. Because all are sinners, their works only convict them as guilty (Romans 1:18-21, 32; Galatians 2:16). It is not by works that we are saved, but by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8-9). Notice that this scene shows no names being added to the Book of Life. This book already contains the names of those who have in this life confessed Jesus Christ as Savior. Those whose names are not found already written in the Book of Life are thrown into the lake of fire. No one receives a chance for salvation during this judgment. The only chance for salvation is in this life.

Read the words of Jesus:

“Very truly, I tell you, anyone who hears my word and believes Him who sent me has eternal life, and does not come under judgment, but has passed from death to life. Very truly, I tell

you, the hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. For just as the Father has life in himself, so He has granted the Son also to have life in himself; and He has given Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man. Do not be astonished at this; for the hour is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and will come out — those who have done good [as Jesus has just explained, having “done good” is hearing His word and believing Him who sent Him], to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation” (John 5:24-29).

Notice that Jesus is saying that by the time of the resurrection, the separation has already occurred. Some rise to eternal life; others rise to condemnation.

Now contrast this with what Feazell says: “When all the people of the world, the great and the small (Revelation 20:12), including all the dead (verses 12-13), stand before the judgment seat, they are facing none other than Jesus Christ.”<sup>18</sup> Next, he asks us to:

“Imagine you are sitting in the Court of the Universe, waiting with pounding heart for the Judge of All Things to walk in and pass judgment on you. ... Then the Judge walks in and takes his throne. His presence overwhelms you. He is like nothing you could have expected. The whole courtroom seems to come alive in response to him. He is the definition of power and of authority, yet he radiates peace, serenity and love. He is so compelling that your thoughts are no longer on yourself and your dread. Your body relaxes, an unexplainable joy bubbles up from the center of your being. As awesome as he appears, you suddenly feel you would rather be smothered in his embrace

than live another moment without him. You know that whatever his verdict, it will be good, and you are no longer afraid of anything. ‘How do you plead?’ the Judge asks. His voice seems to draw the truth from your lips. ‘Guilty,’ you respond, and as you do, you realize two things at once, that you are deeply ashamed of your sinful life, and that the Judge has already dropped all charges against you. Your shame melts into grateful tears of joy and peace of heart as you receive his life-giving gaze into the depths of your soul. ‘Guilty of what?’ the Judge asks, with a playful smile. ‘There doesn’t seem to be any record against you. Are you ready to join the celebration? Good. Let’s go eat.’ And he holds open the Exit for Perfectly Sinless and Righteous Saints and beckons you to enter with him.”<sup>19</sup>

Although Feazell would agree the little scene he has painted is fiction, he obviously intends it to illustrate what he considers the truths of the judgment of Revelation 20. But, in fact, this scenario cannot be derived from Revelation 20 or, for that matter, any of Scripture. It is purely out of Feazell’s apparently overactive imagination.

Besides the obvious aspect that someone receives salvation after death, notice these additional unscriptural — even anti-scriptural and other-Gospel — elements in this WCG fairy tale:

1. The Gospel is never stated. We see here someone saved without ever hearing a word of the Gospel. In its place is internal, subjective emotion: “an unexplainable joy” bubbling up from the center of the sinner’s being. But why should a sinner who has not heard the Gospel have such joy? The Bible tells us how sinners react in the presence of God (Revelation 6:15-17).

2. A confession of guilt replaces a confession of Jesus Christ as Savior. The sinner in this story states only one word, “Guilty.” The Bible tells us what we must confess, and it is far

more than a mere admission of guilt (Matthew 10:32-33; Romans 10:9-10; 1 John 4:2-3, 15; 2 John 7).

3. The sinner is saved apart from faith. Feazell's tale mentions peace, serenity, love, and "unexplainable joy," but it has no mention of faith. The Bible tells us, "For by grace you have been saved through faith." But this story leaves this precious gift of grace out of the picture. Of course, with the Gospel left out of the picture, this is only to be expected. Saving faith must have Jesus Christ and His completed, saving work on the cross as its object. Instead of saving faith, the sinner in this story seems to have some sort of confidence that he will be let off scot-free.

4. The atonement is completely missing. Not only is the Gospel not stated, but the work of Jesus Christ that the Gospel announces appears to have no necessary part in this sinner's salvation. The Judge merely declares that the sinner has no guilt. He never says that the sinner has committed sins deserving of eternal damnation and the wrath of God. He says nothing of the fact that it is only because of Jesus Christ's atoning death on the cross, expiating our sins, that believing sinners can be declared "not guilty," and that it is only through Jesus Christ's propitiation that believers are freed from God's wrath and reconciled to Him. This scene makes one wonder if Feazell thinks that God will remove a sinner's guilt merely if the sinner feels guilty, and whether Feazell understands that God does not pardon guilt-confessing sinners by saying, "Oh, that's okay; forget it." God's righteous demands must be met; justice must be satisfied. God has made provision for this through the work of Jesus Christ. Sins are not just forgiven; they are forgiven because Jesus has paid for them.

Feazell elsewhere mentions the Gospel and faith. But after reading this scenario, this question must be asked: How can someone who takes the position of being a Christian teacher (by writing for a church) write a fictional account of someone being

saved in which so many essential elements of salvation are completely missing?

Anticipating that his story might not be well-received, Feazell writes,

"Even if you don't like my little tale of the heavenly courtroom, the point is that there is no need to worry that our departed loved ones, nor any of the rest of the masses of humans who have died, are consigned to the eternal flames simply because no missionary reached them with the Gospel message before they died. Jesus knows the Gospel too, and yes, ladies and gentlemen, he can present it even better than we can."<sup>20</sup>

But if this is the case, why should we evangelize? If Jesus Christ intends to personally evangelize those who have died unsaved, why should we try to evangelize people in this life? Since we flawed humans might possibly unintentionally offend and turn some against Christ in our attempt to turn them to Him, why should we not let people live and die in ignorance so Christ himself can then evangelize them? Wouldn't this result in more people being saved? The logical conclusion of the WCG's teaching on postmortem evangelization is at odds with the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-18).

Continuing with his explanation of Revelation 20, Feazell correctly explains that the books that are opened contain the record of the works of those being judged. Because all are sinners, what is recorded in these books condemns. He also points out that another book is mentioned, the Book of Life. Then Feazell contradicts not only Scripture, but even himself. He writes,

"There is another book, the Book of Life, and the only ones who wind up in the lake with Death and Hades are those whose names don't appear in this Book (verse 15)!"<sup>21</sup>

Those whose names are not found in the Book of Life are cast into the lake of fire. Feazell then expounds,

"It was sitting there all along. Everybody whose name is in it gets a full pardon. And how do names get in it? By the atoning blood of Christ. The great mystery is that through Christ's Atonement, everybody's name is in it. Believers simply receive what was there for them all along."<sup>22</sup>

Notice that Feazell admits that "those whose names don't appear in this Book" are thrown into the lake of fire. Yet, apparently willing to ignore all rules of logic and grammar, he also states, "everybody's name is in it." The Bible clearly tells us in Revelation 20:15 and 21:8 that people are thrown into the lake of fire. It also tells us that these are the people "whose name was not found written in the book of life." Feazell appears to agree with this. But then he says that everybody's name is in the Book of Life. Does Feazell then believe in universal salvation? No, he admits that unbelievers (that is, those who don't believe even upon being evangelized after death) will not be saved.

Apparently, Feazell does not see the impossibility of the following: All in the Book of Life are saved. All are in the Book of Life. Some are not saved. Feazell's teaching clearly contradicts itself. Also, as we have already seen, no new names are added to the Book of Life at the time of the judgment, so Feazell's entire argument based on Revelation 20 is pointless.

## GIVING HEED TO FABLES

Apparently desiring to introduce even more fiction to support his assertions, Feazell uses a character in C.S. Lewis' *The Last Battle* (part of the *Chronicles of Narnia* series): "When Emeth, the Calormen soldier, came face to face in the final judgment with Aslan, the Christ figure in the story, he immediately loved Aslan, knowing Aslan was the true longing of his soul."<sup>23</sup> Of course, Feazell is trying to gain credibility for postmortem evangelization by pointing out that C.S. Lewis apparently believed it.

In fact, through Emeth and Aslan, Lewis is teaching children even more



unorthodox beliefs than that. He is also teaching what is called inclusivism; that is, the belief that the followers of religions other than Christianity can, in fact, be serving the true God even though they don't know Him. In Lewis' story, soon after meeting Aslan, Emeth tells him, "Alas, Lord, I am no servant of thine but the servant of Tash." Tash is the name of the false god in the story. But Aslan responds, "Child, all the service thou hast done to Tash, I account as service done to me."<sup>24</sup>

Does Feazell, in fact, also believe in inclusivism? He writes, "Perhaps Lewis' depiction is not far off. In Matthew 25:31-46 we learn that Jesus lives in those who are his and that his works are accomplished in them even though they are not entirely aware of it. Is it too much to say that by God's grace such people might know and love the glorious risen Lord as the deepest longing of their souls?"<sup>25</sup> Apparently he considers it at least a possibility.

But Matthew 25:31-46 must not be so wrested from the context of the entire Bible. When seen in the light of all of Scripture, these verses cannot possibly mean that these inheritors of the kingdom are people who lived their entire lives and died as worshipers of other gods. Numerous other Scriptures speak of the need to repent of such darkness and turn to the true God (Romans 13:12; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; 10:7, 14; 2 Corinthians 6:16-7:1; Galatians 5:19-21).

We sincerely hope the WCG is not on the verge of teaching another heresy. The fact that C.S. Lewis was apparently an inclusivist does not make the belief any more orthodox. The Bible must be our standard, and it is unfortunate that Lewis is still too often fawned over and not enough exposed for his frequent departures from biblical Christianity. Citing Lewis and not the Bible does not lend credibility to Feazell's teaching on postmortem evangelization and suggestions of inclusivism.

### VANITY FAIRNESS

Feazell makes the following interesting statement:

"Human expectations of justice and fairness are knocked on their ear when God's Son starts shelling out the fabulous grace of his Father. Witness the parable of the workers in the field (Matthew 20:13-15)."<sup>26</sup>

This parable illustrates Jesus' oft-repeated maxim, "The last will be first, and the first will be last" (Matthew 20:16), and this does tend to confound human ideas of fairness. Nevertheless, in using this parable to support postmortem evangelism and even possibly inclusivism, Feazell stretches the parable too far. He does not seem to notice that all of the workers, from the first to the last, are laborers for the landowner. No one is paid who was not chosen by the landowner and worked for him. One must always bend the Scriptures out of shape to try to make them teach that anyone will be saved who does not in this life have saving faith in Jesus Christ.

What's more, it is the doctrines of postmortem evangelization and inclusivism that more closely conform to human expectations of fairness. It would be unfair, it is argued, for God to condemn to eternal hellfire those who never in this life had an opportunity to believe the Gospel. But this denies God His sovereignty to do as He will with his creatures. God does not have to abide by human standards of fairness.

The apostle Paul addresses this issue in Romans 9: "For he says to Moses, 'I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.' So it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God who shows mercy" (vv. 15-16). Is Paul saying that God must be "fair" and have mercy on everyone? No. "For the scripture says to Pharaoh, 'I have raised you up for the very purpose of showing My power in you, so that My name may be proclaimed in all the earth.' So then He has mercy on whomever He chooses, and He hardens the heart of whomever he chooses" (vv. 17-18).

Pharaoh never had a chance. But isn't this unfair? Paul anticipates the argument:

"You will say to me then, 'Why then does He still find fault? For who can resist His will?' But who indeed are you, a human being, to argue with God? Will what is molded say to the one who molds it, 'Why have you made me like this?' Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one object for special use and another for ordinary use? What if God, desiring to show His wrath and to make known His power, has endured with much patience the objects of wrath that are made for destruction; and what if He has done so in order to make known the riches of his glory for the objects of mercy, which He has prepared beforehand for glory — including us whom He has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles?" (vv. 19-24).

Notice that the objects of mercy, whether Jews or Gentiles, are called. They are not those who never hear the Gospel. While many people would like to deny it, Paul clearly teaches that some are "made for destruction ... in order to make known the riches of [God's] glory for the objects of mercy." We must not try to deny or limit God's sovereignty and glory by imposing our ideas of fairness on his plan of salvation. Of course, the Church must preach the Gospel indiscriminately.

God calls his people from among both the Jews and the Gentiles (vv. 25-29), but those saved are always described as believing the Gospel as it is preached to them by the Church sent forth; not by Jesus Christ after their death: "But what does it say? 'The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart' (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim)" (Romans 10:8). Note that what Paul says is in the heart is not some inexpressible desire of the heart or true longing of the soul as teachers of unorthodox means of salvation often speak of, but it is the proclaimed word of faith.

Paul continues, "because if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For one believes with

the heart and so is justified, and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved. ... For, 'Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved'" (vv. 9-10, 13). How? By merely having a longing in one's soul or by being evangelized after death by Jesus?

Paul never even entertains the possibility of such notions: "But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim Him? And how are they to proclaim Him unless they are sent? As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!'" (vv. 9-10, 13-15). Salvation comes through believing the Gospel, and the Gospel is brought to the world, although not to every single individual, by the Church, and it is all under God's control and for His glory.

## DEADLINE

Fezell has apparently already received flack for his teachings. He writes,

"I have received letters from some readers who strongly disagree with what I have written on this topic. But it is interesting that nearly every letter that disagrees also grants in essence that the Scriptures lead us to trust that God will indeed deal righteously with those who die without knowing the name of Jesus. I offer that He will deal with them in no other way than in accord with his eternal faithfulness and mercy as demonstrated supremely in Jesus Christ, the great Judge."<sup>27</sup>

Yes, all Christians would certainly agree that God will deal righteously. But, of course, Fezell's idea of how God will deal righteously and the orthodox idea based on sound exegesis of the Bible are at wide variance. Only those who wish to ignore the natural meaning of many, many passages in the Bible can maintain post-mortem evangelism.

For example, Fezell misrepresents Jesus Christ by first quoting Jesus and

then drawing an invalid conclusion from Jesus' words. But, in a twist of irony, he makes a typo that brings out evidence against him. Fezell writes,

"Jesus says simply, 'Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest' (Matthew 11:20). He doesn't say when. He doesn't say, 'Oh, by the way, beat the deadline or you're burnt toast.'"<sup>28</sup>

But just because Jesus in this one sentence doesn't mention a deadline, does not mean there isn't one. By forcing his preconceptions into this Scripture, Fezell draws an invalid conclusion from Jesus' words and misrepresents Him. As we will see, other Scriptures show that there is a deadline.

Now for the irony: Fezell has accidentally referenced the verse he quoted to Matthew 11:20. In fact, it is Matthew 11:28. Matthew 11:20, and the verses immediately following it, is one of the passages that shows that there is a deadline for repentance. Matthew 11:20-24 states:

"Then He [Jesus] began to reproach the cities in which most of his deeds of power had been done, because they did not repent. 'Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! for if the deeds of power done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I tell you, on the day of judgment it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon than for you. And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? No, you will be brought down to Hades. For if the deeds of power done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I tell you that on the day of judgment it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom than for you.'"

Jesus pronounced woes on Chorazin and Bethsaida because they did not repent (Matthew 11:20-21). He told them that on the day of judgment, it will be more tolerable for

Tyre and Sidon than for them. He would not have said this if their time for receiving salvation were yet future. But what about Tyre and Sidon? They had not had the Gospel preached to them. Jesus said they would have repented had they had such miracles performed in their cities. But they did not have such deeds done in their cities. Did Jesus, therefore, hold out hope for their repentance in the judgment? He did not. He only said it will be more tolerable for them in the judgment.

"More tolerable" is not salvation. It merely suggests a lesser suffering according to the principles in Luke 12:47-48: "That slave who knew what his master wanted, but did not prepare himself or do what was wanted, will receive a severe beating. But the one who did not know and did what deserved a beating will receive a light beating." (These verses in Luke 12, by the way, are stated in the context of Jesus explaining that He, like a thief or like the unanticipated return of a master, will come at an unexpected time, and that once He returns it will be too late. He will deal out the rewards and punishments — punishments, albeit lighter, even for those who did not know). A light beating is still a punishment, and is not salvation.

Jesus did not say that the people of Capernaum will have a chance to be saved in the judgment. He said they "will be brought down to Hades" (Matthew 11:23). Does Jesus say that the people of Sodom will be saved? No. He said that if the same deeds had been performed in it, the city — because the inhabitants would apparently have repented — would have been spared destruction. He also said that it will be more tolerable for Sodom on the day of judgment than it will be for Capernaum.

Again, "more tolerable" is not salvation. It only suggests a lighter punishment. Note well that Jesus, even though He is speaking specifically about the day of judgment in these verses, never so much as hints that any of these people, whether they had had the Gospel preached to them

or not, will have a chance to repent and be saved at the judgment. Their fate was already sealed.

Jesus again implies a deadline for repentance in his parable found in Luke 12:16-21. He tells of a man who has such abundance that he plans to pull down his barns and build bigger ones to store all of his grain and goods. That night, God says to him, "You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?" Jesus goes on to explain that this is the way "it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich toward God." He makes no distinction for those who have heard the Gospel or not. The implication is clear: after your death, it is too late.

### NOW IS THE DAY OF SALVATION!

Interestingly, neither Feazell nor the WCG's statement of faith mentions the most obvious Scripture concerning this subject. This is 2 Corinthians 6:2. In this verse, after appealing to his readers to "be reconciled to God" (2 Corinthians 5:20), Paul writes, "For he says, 'At an acceptable time I have listened to you, and on a day of salvation I have helped you.' See, now is the acceptable time; see, now is the day of salvation!" Clearly, Paul's teaching is that now — in this Church age, not in the future time of judgment — is the day of salvation.

The WCG has historically tried to cast doubt on this understanding of the verse by pointing out that the original Greek of this verse and the Hebrew of Isaiah 49:8 (the Old Testament Scripture that Paul quotes in this verse) do not contain the definite article "the," and, therefore, Paul was saying, Now is a day of salvation. While working for the WCG nearly 12 years ago, this writer wrongly concluded: "Certainly, this is a day of salvation for some... But the vast majority have not had their minds opened. This is not their day of salvation."<sup>29</sup>

The WCG teaching at that time was that the lack of a definite article is

equivalent to an indefinite article. This is incorrect. Bible translators are perfectly right to insert the definite article "the" in the appropriate places in this verse. The context reveals that Paul was stressing urgency because now — the time between Christ's first and second comings — is the time of salvation. Paul is here conveying a sense of urgency concerning "now is the acceptable time ... now is the day of salvation!" But apparently Feazell would rather ignore this important verse.

### ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES

And what of the verses that the WCG lists to supposedly support its teaching on eternal judgment as found in its statement of beliefs? Matthew 25:31-32 pictures Christ as judge over the nations, separating "people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats." There is no indication here of a chance to repent and be saved during the judgment. Neither these verses nor those that follow show any goats repenting and becoming sheep!

The WCG in its "Statement of Beliefs"<sup>30</sup> also cites Acts 24:15: "I have a hope in God — a hope that they themselves [the Pharisees] also accept — that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the unrighteous." The Bible here and elsewhere plainly teaches that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and unrighteous. But it never says that in that resurrection the unrighteous will have a chance to become righteous.

In fact, the next verses the WCG cites are John 5:28-29, in which, as we have already seen, Jesus so clearly distinguishes between the righteous and unrighteous as to give no hope for the unrighteous to repent after the resurrection. One wonders how the WCG can reference such Scriptures to support its doctrine of postmortem evangelization when they so unequivocally teaches the opposite!

The next passage on the WCG list is Revelation 20:11-15, which we have already discussed at length. After that, they cite 1 Timothy 2:4-6: "who [God] desires everyone to be saved

and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God; there is also one mediator between God and humankind, Christ Jesus, himself human, who gave himself a ransom for all — this was attested at the right time."

We can only assume that the WCG includes these verses to try to support a line of reasoning like this: God desires everyone to be saved. Not everyone is saved in this life. Therefore, God must give them a chance to be saved after death. But since Feazell denies that the WCG teaches universalism,<sup>31</sup> then it must be that the WCG believes that some people will not be saved, even after being given a chance in the judgment. And if some people are not saved, what is the difference between some people not being saved because they are not saved in this life, and some people not being saved because they are not saved in a supposed chance to be saved in the judgment?

Whatever way you look at it, some people are not saved. But the verse says that God "desires everyone [Greek: "*pantas anthropous*" — "all men"] to be saved" and that Jesus "gave himself a ransom for all." Commentators differ as to how this text should be understood. This writer agrees with some (those who say that "all men" is a reference to salvation being opened to the Gentiles — salvation to all kinds of men without discrimination based on race or nationality) and disagrees with others (especially those that rob God of his omnipotence or create a paradox). But however the text is to be understood, if it is to be consistent with the rest of Scripture, it cannot mean that God so desires to get as many people as possible saved that He will even give them a chance after death. Such an idea is foreign to the text, must be forced into it, and, as we have seen, contradicts other Scriptures.

The WCG lists 2 Peter 3:9 apparently because this verse could sound as if it is saying that God is so unwilling that anyone should perish that He will give people a chance to be saved after death. But, of course, it

doesn't really say anything about a chance to receive salvation after death. Looking at this passage in context, the surrounding verses reveal that Peter is writing about the second coming of Jesus Christ. Specifically, Peter is refuting those who were spreading the false teaching that things will always continue as they have (uniformitarianism) and Christ won't return (see especially verse 4).

In verse 9, Peter is saying that Christ promised to return, and He will fulfill His promise. Some people may consider that He is taking a long time. But what Christ is doing is showing His patience because He doesn't want "any" to perish, but "all" to come to repentance. Now, if this verse indicates a chance for receiving salvation after Christ's return, it would not show the Lord's patience at this time. It would, in fact, be in conflict with its context. If there is a chance for being saved after Christ's return, then why would there be a need for His patience now? So once again, we see that one of the verses the WCG uses to try to support its position on postmortem evangelism really does not support it at all.

Next, the WCG turns to Acts 10:43: "All the prophets testify about Him [Jesus] that everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins through his name." This is spoken by Peter as part of his presentation of the Gospel to the Gentiles at Caesarea in Cornelius' house. The WCG must have thrown this one in for good measure. It says nothing and hints nothing of an after-death chance to believe in Jesus and receive forgiveness.

The next WCG proof text is John 12:32: "And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." Jesus spoke this of Himself. The first thing to note about this verse is that the New Revised Standard Version inserts the word "people." This word is not in the Greek. Jesus simply says, "I will draw all to myself." As verse 33 explains, He is speaking of his crucifixion. The fact that He did not mean He would draw every individual to Himself is seen in

the fact that not every individual is drawn to Him and saved. Even the WCG admits to this in saying that it does not believe in universalism. That He would not draw every individual to Himself is also seen in the context.

This verse appears in a setting begun in verse 12 when Jesus rides into Jerusalem on a donkey as crowds with palm branches shout, "Hosanna!" This causes a great stir and attracts crowds and the troubled attention of the Pharisees, who say, "Look, the world has gone after Him!" (v. 19).

Of course, the entire world was not going after Jesus, but only large crowds in Jerusalem. But then, in the next verses, as if in further, deeper fulfillment of the Pharisees words, we read that some Greeks came to Jesus' disciples and asked to see Jesus. When told of this, Jesus' answer is, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified." Jesus knew that the coming of these Gentiles signaled that the time of His death was near. During the following discourse about His crucifixion and glorification, He prays and is answered with a voice from heaven and this eventually leads to the verse in question.

Judging from this context, it is evident that what Jesus was saying He would draw to Himself was not all people as meaning every single human, but rather all manner of people, not just Jews. Based upon this and upon the fact that the WCG says it does not teach universalism, it is difficult to fathom how the WCG imagines that this verse supports postmortem evangelism.

### ROOTS IN ARMSTRONGISM

The last Scripture the WCG lists is 1 Corinthians 15:22-28:

"For as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. Then comes the end, when He hands over the kingdom to God the Father, after He has destroyed every ruler and every authority

and power. For He must reign until He has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. For 'God has put all things in subjection under his feet.' But when it says, 'All things are put in subjection,' it is plain that this does not include the one who put all things in subjection under Him. When all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subjected to the one who put all things in subjection under Him, so that God may be all in all."

The WCG's use of this Scripture is interesting as it helps to reveal how its doctrine of postmortem evangelism is founded in the church's roots in Armstrongism. These verses in 1 Corinthians 15, along with Revelation 20, were Herbert W. Armstrong's favorite proof texts for his teaching that there will be three resurrections. Armstrong wrote:

"In I Cor. 15:22-23, you will read: 'For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive [after death]. But every man in his own order.... The fifteenth chapter of I Corinthians is the 'resurrection chapter' of the Bible. Its subject is the resurrection to LIFE, *after death!* But there is, in God's Master Plan an *order* — or succession — of resurrections. Continue: 'Christ the first-fruits' — this occurred more than 1900 years ago — 'afterwards they that are Christ's at his coming. Then cometh the end...' (verses 23-24). Later in this chapter a great deal will be said about the resurrection of those 'that are Christ's' — Spirit-begotten Christians. But what of the *others*? The same ALL who die in Adam, it says, 'in Christ shall ... they be made alive' — by a resurrection from the dead. Verse 23 says, '...they that are Christ's [shall be resurrected] at his [second] coming' — now imminent — in our present generation. 'Then cometh the end' (verse 24) — but the details of the resurrection of others — the overwhelming majority

of all who ever lived — are recorded elsewhere. In Rev. 20 we find described two more resurrections.”<sup>32</sup>

The first resurrection, according to Armstrong, is the resurrection of those who are Christians in this life. It occurs at the return of Jesus Christ. The second resurrection takes place after Jesus’ thousand-year reign on the earth. This is, wrote Armstrong, the resurrection of:

“the Great White Throne Judgment (Rev. 20:11-12). They will be resurrected mortal, once again in a flesh and blood physical body, just as before. In this judgment they will be ‘called’ — their eyes opened to God’s truth.”<sup>33</sup>

This, of course, is what the WCG now teaches as the time of postmortem evangelism in the judgment. Armstrong continues,

“Then, finally, there will be a last resurrection (Rev. 20:13-15) of those who had been called by God in their mortal human life, but had rejected or turned from the truth. They, with those who reject it in the Great White Throne Judgment, will be in the lake of fire (II Pet. 3:10-11), which is the second death.”<sup>34</sup>

The WCG’s postmortem evangelization teaching, with its emphasis of Revelation 20 and 1 Corinthians 15:22-28, springs directly from the teachings of Herbert W. Armstrong, the late WCG founder and self-proclaimed apostle. This was the man who, by the WCG’s own admissions cited earlier, came in his Bible studies “to a number of unusual conclusions” and many of whose “doctrines were not biblical.” But the WCG, while it no longer specifically teaches that there is a gap of time after Revelation 20:11-12 followed by another distinct resurrection in Revelation 20:13-15, as did Armstrong, still adheres to Armstrong’s primary assertion in this regard that it is a “false teaching,” as Armstrong termed it, “that ALL are automatically ‘lost’ unless they profess

Jesus Christ as Savior — and that now is the *only* day of ‘salvation.’”<sup>35</sup>

In an earlier article on the same subject, Feazell states, “The fact that our church holds a distinctive belief on a nonessential subject (in terms of salvation) does not mean that all members must hold the same position.”<sup>36</sup> But this is small consolation when we consider that the WCG continues to promote this unbiblical doctrine in its publications.

We would also have to question Feazell’s labeling this a “nonessential subject (in terms of salvation).” In doing this, he would appear to be downplaying its importance. But he cannot really believe this to be true, because it is Feazell and the WCG that continue to press their aberrant understanding on this topic despite the biblical facts and the witness of the Christian Church.

If Feazell doesn’t consider this an important topic, why have at least three articles and a booklet on this subject appeared on the WCG web site in the space of about one year? If the WCG doesn’t consider it important, why is it a part of their statement of beliefs? Why is the subject again brought up in even another booklet (*When a Loved One Dies*) on the WCG web site?<sup>37</sup> It is obvious that the WCG considers this an important topic. And it is important.

To say that people have a chance for salvation after death strikes directly at the Gospel, the very heart of the Christian message. It is a belief that can be maintained only by twisting Scripture and ignoring the many calls to repent and believe as well as the warning of what will happen to those who do not. It is a dangerous message of false hope that destroys the urgent call of the Gospel, a lie that is no doubt as well-loved by Satan as it was by Herbert W. Armstrong, and a heresy that a WCG that lays claim to orthodoxy should have renounced a long time ago.

#### Endnotes:

1. J. Michael Feazell, “No Other Name” (part two), *Worldwide News*, January 2001. Also published on the Worldwide Church

of God web site, [http://www.wcg.org/wn/01january/no\\_other\\_name.htm](http://www.wcg.org/wn/01january/no_other_name.htm).

2. “Worldwide Church of God statement of belief on Eternal Judgment,” available on the church’s web site at: <http://www.wcg.org/lit/AboutUs/beliefs/judgment.htm>. On the web site’s summary, “Statement of Beliefs of the Worldwide Church of God,” the entry similarly reads: “At the end of the age, God will gather all the living and the dead before the heavenly throne of Christ for judgment. The righteous will receive eternal glory, and the wicked will be condemned to the lake of fire. In Christ the Lord makes gracious and just provision for all, even for those who at death appear not to have believed the Gospel. (Matthew 25:31-32; Acts 24:15; John 5:28-29; Revelation 20:11-15; 1 Timothy 2:3-6; 2 Peter 3:9; Acts 10:43; John 12:32; 1 Corinthians 15:22-28).” (See: <http://www.wcg.org/lit/AboutUs/beliefs/default.htm>.)

3. “No Other Name” (part two), op. cit.

4. For readers unfamiliar with the early history and doctrines of Armstrong and the Worldwide Church of God, and the organization’s recent move toward orthodoxy, see the PFO tract, “The Plain Truth of Herbert W. Armstrong.” For a free copy, send your request along with a self-addressed stamped envelope to: PFO, P.O. Box 26062, Saint Louis, MO 63136-0062.

5. E-mail correspondence to author from Carmen Hosea of the National Association of Evangelicals, May 9, 2001.

6. Worldwide Church of God document, “Transformed by Christ, A Brief History of the Worldwide Church of God.” Available at: <http://www.wcg.org/lit/AboutUs/history.htm>.

7. Worldwide Church of God document, “About Our Founder.” Available at: <http://www.wcg.org/lit/booklets/welcome/welcome8.htm>.

8. “Transformed by Christ,” op. cit.

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid.

11. Worldwide Church of God document, “Comments on Our History.” Available at: <http://www.wcg.org/lit/AboutUs/comments.htm>.

12. For example, in 1997, the WCG’s statement of beliefs as they appeared in Joseph Tkach’s *Transformed by Truth* stated “that the Holy Scriptures, comprised of the Old and New Testaments, are the foundation of truth and the accurate and infallible record of God’s revelation to humanity.” By saying nothing about the Bible being divinely inspired, by saying nothing about the Bible being the inerrant Word of God, by labeling the Bible merely “the foundation of truth” instead of calling it in its entirety the sole authority for all Christian belief and practice, and by calling it “the accurate and infallible

record of God's revelation" instead of the revelation itself, the WCG was using the language of neo-orthodoxy, not orthodoxy (see Peter Ditzel, "Transforming the Truth," *The Quarterly Journal*, July-September 1998, pg. 11). But the WCG's statement of beliefs as it now appears on its web site does not improve anything. While it has added that the Scriptures "are the inspired Word of God," it continues to describe them as merely the "foundation of truth" and has removed the word "infallible" from its previous statement about the Scriptures being a record of God's revelation. So now, according to the WCG, even as a "record," they are not infallible. But the WCG now adds a new sentence in which "infallible" does appear: "The Holy Scriptures constitute ultimate authority in all matters of doctrine, and embody the infallible principles that govern all facets of Christian living." Notice in this sentence that it is the *principles* embodied in the Scriptures, not the *Scriptures*, that are infallible. These two concepts are far from equivalent. The WCG's stance on the Holy Scriptures leaves them open to believe much of the Bible is an accurate record of inspired myth given as a foundation of truth that embodies infallible principles by which

we should live. In other words, this leaves one to interpret the Creation, the Flood, the crossing of the Red Sea, the giving of the Law at Sinai, and even the Incarnation and the Atonement as not historical facts, but stories that teach us "infallible principles."

13. J. Michael Feazell, "No Other Name" (part one), *Worldwide News*, December 2000. Also published on the Worldwide Church of God web site, [http://www.wcg.org/wn/00december/no\\_other\\_name.htm](http://www.wcg.org/wn/00december/no_other_name.htm).

14. *Ibid.*, italics in original.

15. *Ibid.*

16. *Ibid.*

17. *Ibid.*

18. "No Other Name" (part two), op. cit.

19. *Ibid.*

20. *Ibid.*

21. *Ibid.*

22. *Ibid.*

23. *Ibid.*

24. C.S. Lewis, *The Last Battle*. New York: Harper Trophy, 1956, pg. 205.

25. "No Other Name" (part two), op. cit.

26. *Ibid.*

27. *Ibid.*

28. *Ibid.*

29. Peter Ditzel, "Are They Condemned

Because They Never Heard the Name of Christ?", *The Plain Truth*, October 1989, pg. 21.

30. Cited under the subheading, "Eternal Judgment" from the "Statement of Beliefs of the Worldwide Church of God," op. cit.

31. "No Other Name" (part two), op. cit.

32. Herbert W. Armstrong, *The Incredible Human Potential*. Pasadena, Calif.: Worldwide Church of God, 1978, pg. 162, italics, caps, ellipses, and brackets in original.

33. *Ibid.*, pg. 88.

34. *Ibid.*

35. Herbert W. Armstrong, *Mystery of the Ages*. Pasadena, Calif.: Worldwide Church of God, 1985, pg. 105, caps and italics in original.

36. J. Michael Feazell, "Only One Name," *Worldwide News*, February 2000. Also published on the Worldwide Church of God web site, [http://www.wcg.org/wn/00february/only\\_one\\_name.htm](http://www.wcg.org/wn/00february/only_one_name.htm).

37. See *When a Loved One Dies — Articles About Grief and Hope*, published on the Worldwide Church of God web site, <http://www.wcg.org/lit/booklets/loved/default.htm>. (Esp., Keith Stump, "Beyond Death," <http://www.wcg.org/lit/booklets/loved/loved7.htm>.)



## EDITORIALS

(continued from page 2)

The sincerity of Grady's remarks may well be disputed by the fact that sprinkled throughout the same issue in which he offered his criticisms, one can find numerous advertisements for conferences, conventions, and revivals featuring Ken and Gloria Copeland, Tommy Tenney, Creflo Dollar, Mike Bickle, Joyce Meyer, Oral Roberts, and other questionable and controversial speakers.

For example, on page 36, "Prophet" Kim Clement is pitched as the keynote speaker at the "Apostolic & Prophetic Worship Training Conference." This gathering promised that attendees would "Learn how to Activate your Prophetic Anointing or give it an oil change and lube." It would also include "Prophetic Worship that will kick the devil's butt." A few pages earlier, the magazine advertised *Our God Is One*, a 283-page, \$24.95, hardcover book that promised to change "the way you view the Oneness Pentecostal movement."

Grady and the magazine he edits can continue to have their annual or periodic crisis of conscience, but until they stop promoting and advertising the very ones they criticize, their judgments — no matter how accurate — mean nothing.

—MKG

## SUPERNATURAL MESSAGES FROM THE MUNDANE?

Modern-day prophets are an ingenious lot. When mundane circumstances are combined with their fertile imaginations, they come up with all sorts of supernatural interpretations and messages from the Divine. Few realize that what has invaded the Church are very old pagan practices in a new, more acceptable, outfit. There really is nothing new under the sun.

And if anyone surveys a current inventory of prophetic omens, he will be driven to the unmistakable conclusion that God is a big sports fan. Professional, collegiate, it doesn't matter, this new wave of prophets would have us believe that God is sending revelation through them all. Sporting events are not just "big business" for the Las Vegas oddsmakers, but for the Almighty and His Church.

Take for instance, Vineyard pastor James Ryle. Ryle claims revelation knowledge from a purported dream he said he had in 1989. He said the dream revealed to him that coach Bill McCartney and his Colorado University football team would be empowered by God's Spirit and would have a "golden season." And they did. However, when it came to their last game, played for the national championship, Ryle's dream no longer held significance. Ryle said he received a new and different omen from the Lord by way of the team's mascot and the Holy Spirit's prompting him to Isaiah 21:6.



Ryle says the Colorado mascot, Ralphie the buffalo, had a broken horn, which symbolized the Holy Spirit's departure from the team. The interpretation was that it would lead to the team's downfall in the national championship game. And the team did in fact lose to the University of Notre Dame by a score of 21-6. (See further, Hank Hanegraaff, *Counterfeit Revival*, pp. 70-71.)

And then there's the absurd and frivolous "visions" of Bob Jones of Kansas City Prophets fame. Jones apparently sees his omens and recognizes "prophetic" truth from post-season ballgames. Fellow prophet Rick Joyner describes the Jones revelation, adding to it some of his own observations:

"In the spring of 1995, Bob Jones, a prophetic friend, told a number of us that the Atlanta Braves baseball team was going to win the World Series that year as a message for the church in America. This prophecy was fulfilled, and there indeed was a message in it. ... I think it was also significant that it was David Justice who hit that home run. He is a black man, and I do expect young, black 'Davids' to arise and slay the spiritual Goliaths who have been intimidating and holding back the armies of God in America. ... In the spring of 1996, Bob Jones received a word that the Braves would not win the World Series again that year and that this would be a message. When I was offered tickets to go to Game Five of the 1996 World Series in Atlanta, I knew that the Lord was going to show me something important. I was not disappointed" (Rick Joyner, *A Prophetic Vision for the 21st Century*, pp. 34-36).

Apparently, Joyner loves to use Jones' prophetic glimpses as a springboard for his own impressions. In an article entitled, "Shepherds Astray," Joyner wrote:

"Bob [Jones] was also given a vision of a bridge collapsing in North Carolina. A few days later it happened. As people were walking over a bridge to the Charlotte Motor Speedway, it collapsed, injuring over one hundred people. When the Lord reveals something like this prophetically it is because there is a message in it. In dreams and visions cars often represent ministries because they are 'vehicles' for carrying people. NASCAR is now called the number one spectator sport in America; but there is one bigger — the church in America where millions go each week to watch a few people 'minister.' Like a NASCAR race, these ministries are consuming a lot of energy going nowhere fast. They do not really have a destination, but are just going in circles, competing with each other trying to stay in front, banging into each other and running into walls. As the saying goes, 'the only way you can win a rat race is to be a rat,' and that is what the modern form of ministry does to people."

Well, being faced with the obvious that Ryle, Jones, Joyner, and their prophetic friends can all decipher great

spiritual messages from sports events, this author just keeps wondering what great spiritual significance was meant by, that at the close of the millennium, the New Jersey Devils won the Stanley Cup in hockey. Then, in an effort to repeat in the new millennium, they tried to win hockey's top prize for a second straight year, before losing to the Colorado Avalanche in seven games in the 2001 playoff finals.

For weeks I petitioned God for the answer — what does it mean? I struggled and prayed for answers. It had to have some meaning of great spiritual significance. It just had to!

Was it to be interpreted as a revelation of increased activity among the "devils" which would close out the millennium — so that it appears they're coming out on top? Were the teams that lost to the Devils on their way to the 2000 Stanley Cup symbolic of the Church's failure to overcome or stop the devils? Was the Colorado team symbolic of an "avalanche" of God's purity and holiness defeating the "devils" in this new millennium? What does it all mean?

Well, I finally got the answer. Here's what it means: It means that the New Jersey Devils won the Stanley Cup in 2000 and were the best team in the National Hockey League that year. This year, it means that the Colorado Avalanche played harder and with more spirit and came out on top. That's it. Nothing more. No esoteric meaning of demonic activity; no clandestine promise of God's power to overcome evil. There is humor and sadness in the above as we realize that this is the way some try to arrive at truth.

Deciphering supernatural wisdom and predictions from the mundane may be intriguing and entertaining, but it is really nothing more than subjective guesswork and forced interpretation. As shown above, anybody can do it and make it sound quite plausible. Consider yet another creative example; this one gleaned from a Hollywood major motion picture.

In 1992, Paramount Pictures released *Leap of Faith* starring Steve Martin in the leading role as faith healer Jonas Nightengale. Nightengale is described as "a slick-as-oil flimflam man who'll trade salvation for a donation to his touring ministry." Martin's character portrayal in the film was strongly based on the stage practices and dubious strategies of Benny Hinn, Peter Popoff and other popular spurious faith healers and evangelists.

As the film draws to a close, Nightengale, having been challenged and exposed for the con man he is by the local sheriff, hitches a ride with the driver of a tractor trailer rig. As the truck heads down the road taking Nightengale to new adventures, he asks the truck's driver, "Where you headed?" The driver responds, "Pensacola, Florida."

Pensacola, Florida?! Rewind the videotape and let me hear that again.

Based on the film's climactic concluding dialogue, could we not draw from this Hollywood motion picture a supernatural forecast? Why couldn't one suppose this a prophetic word and that the exaggerated claims of divine impartation, spurious signs and wonders, and financially motivated and humanly orchestrated revival aptly demonstrated by the Nightengale character would literally and actually locate in Pensacola? After all, less than three years after Martin's role hit the big screen, the so-called "Pensacola Outpouring" began at the Brownsville Assembly of God with, like Nightengale, grandiose claims of God's miracles and wonders. It all fits so well — nearly perfectly.

You see, like the quatrains of Nostradamus, we can see whatever we want in interpreting a personal dream, a major sporting event, or a dramatic scene from a feature motion picture. However, we have a Bible that lays such teaching and insight all out clearly and perfectly for us. We have no need to look for truth in such ambiguous places as a College Bowl game, World Series games, NASCAR, Stanley Cup playoffs, or Hollywood. Peter's second epistle assures us that all we need for life and godliness is found in Scripture. Some biblical writers may have gotten good illustrations from first century sports, but never omens and prophecies. Theater and Greek sports were ignored, if not condemned, by the early Jews as well as Hebrew Christians.

Subjectively creating after-the-fact prophecies and meanings — all just derived from an overactive imagination — is not much different than the ancient pagan societies' obsession with divination from arrows and entrails of animals. When the Word of God is ignored, people become crazed with their own imaginations and imaginary meanings in things. Any guessed meaning could have any other number of unlimited possibilities or interpretations.

In his classic, *Biblical Demonology*, Merrill F. Unger discusses occult practices that began in Babylon, passed into Greece and Rome, and are still fashionable today in parts of Africa, Burma (Myanmar), and Borneo among pagan tribes. Meaning is imagined and interpreted from looking into various parts of an animal's liver for divine revelation and the will of the gods.

Unger says further: "Belomancy, or divination by arrows is represented by Ezekiel as being practiced in Babylon. ... (Ezek. 21:21). ...augury was deduced by the way they fell to the earth" (pg. 132).

A neater, cleaner, more sanitized version of augury is practiced by today's "prophets." It is not as disgusting as poking around in the bloody entrails of a dead animal and certainly sports themes sell well with the sports crazed American public. But what is the real difference? It is still fallen subjective imagination hard at work. On what basis could we be sure that the imaginings and interpretations are not given by demonic suggestion? After all, they are never brought to the Word of God for verification. Certainly our minds could be better used in a study of God's Word.

Christians need to retreat from the foolishness of such mysticism, paganism, Gnosticism, and subjectivism and get back to the objective Word of God. It has been said many times before, but bears repeating: "The Bible: Nothing more, nothing less, nothing else."

"And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts" (2 Peter 1:19).

The Bible is sufficient. We need not look for supernatural messages from the mundane or the bizarre.

—MKG

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## NEWS UPDATES

(continued from page 3)

Dake first published his *Dake Annotated Reference Bible* in 1963. The Bible contains the authorized King James text with extensive notes and commentary written by Dake. It has been hailed as "The Pentecostal Study Bible," but critics, including PFO, have labeled the work dangerous. The volume's explanatory notes are seedbeds for all types of heretical teaching, including an unscriptural view of God, open theism (or finite theism), a distorted Christology, corrupt views of salvation and faith, racism, and foundations for Word-Faith teaching. Some of faith healer Benny Hinn's most provocative theological declarations have been derived from Dake's writings.

Other prominent Charismatic and Word-Faith proponents have likewise expressed praise for the Dake Bible. Joyce Meyer said the Dake Bible "has made it easier for [her] to teach God's Word," and Pastor Rod Parsley calls the work "one of the greatest literary works ever made for Pentecostal and Charismatic believers." Similar acclaim for the Dake Bible comes from Creflo Dollar, Marilyn Hickey, and Ralph Wilkerson.

Following several significant criticisms of the Dake Bible in the 1990s, the publishing firm began quietly changing the Bible's commentary thereby modifying the very notes which were cited in the critiques as unorthodox, but claimed by Dake Publishing as within the realm of orthodoxy.

—MKG

## CATHOLICS DISAVOW LDS BAPTISM

The Vatican has announced that Roman Catholics will no longer accept as valid, baptisms performed by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. According to a news report posted on the Eternal Word Television

Network (EWTN) web site, "the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith determined that the faith of Mormons is sufficiently different from Christian doctrine so that the baptism conferred by that sect has a different significance."

Catholicism teaches that the legitimacy of the sacrament of baptism does not rely upon the virtue of the person administering the ordinance. The Council of Trent, held in the 16th century, determined that anyone, even a heretic, could bestow a valid baptism if it was executed "in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit," and with the intention of baptizing the individual into the Christian faith.

Father Luis Ladaria, a Jesuit theologian, indicates the judgment of the church is "a change from the past practice" wherein Catholics consider Mormon baptism as acceptable. The committee cited the LDS belief that God the Father is an exalted man with a celestial wife who procreated Jesus Christ. "The Vatican concluded, therefore, that 'this is not the Baptism that Christ instituted,'" the EWTN report stated.

Members of the Mormon faith have also been proxy baptized for Roman Catholic saints, including Saint Francis of Assisi and Joan of Arc. However, the church's decision made no direct verdict concerning the LDS baptisms for the dead. In April 1995, the LDS church agreed to remove from its baptismal records the names

of 380,000 Jews who died in the Nazi Holocaust and who had been baptized by proxy in Mormon temples.

—MKG

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## BOOKS IN REVIEW

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(continued from page 24)

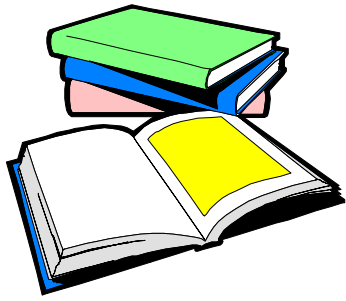
The NOI's holy book is the Qur'an. Although the Bible is considered to be a book of poison, "both can teach truth if interpreted by Elijah Muhammad, who in turn received proper interpretation from Allah (Fard)" (pg. 111). The white race is looked upon as being the devil. The NOI teaches the white race was "made (grafted) from the original black race by the will of Allah, who desired to test his people and then destroy the wicked whites" (pg. 118). It claims that "Christianity is the religion of whites and not the true religion of Allah" (pg. 124).

The last chapter, "A Christian Answer to the Nation of Islam," gives helpful, practical advice on how to knowledgably respond with understanding and truth. This work is a must read for those seeking to reveal God's Word effectively to people involved with or interested in the Nation of Islam.

—AMG

## PERSONAL FREEDOM OUTREACH — STATEMENT OF BELIEF

- I. THE BIBLE AS THE DIVINELY INSPIRED, INERRANT WORD OF GOD: IT IS IN ITS ENTIRETY THE SOLE AUTHORITY FOR ALL MATTERS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF AND PRACTICE.
- II. THE ONE TRUE GOD. IN THE ONE TRUE GOD THERE EXIST THREE PERSONS, BEING: THE FATHER, THE SON JESUS CHRIST, AND THE HOLY SPIRIT.
- III. JESUS CHRIST: HIS DEITY, HUMANITY, VIRGIN BIRTH, SINLESSNESS, DEATH AND BODILY RESURRECTION; WHO WILL PERSONALLY AND VISIBLY RETURN AGAIN TO EARTH.
- IV. THE PERSONALITY AND DEITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.
- V. THE EXISTENCE AND PERSONALITY OF SATAN, HIS TOTAL OPPOSITION TO GOD, AND HIS POWER OVER THE UNREGENERATE.
- VI. THE COMPLETE AND TOTAL DEPRAVITY OF ALL MEN WHICH MAKES THEM HOPELESSLY LOST WITHOUT THE NEW BIRTH OBTAINABLE THROUGH FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST.
- VII. THE FINAL ESTATE OF MAN: FOR THE SAVED, EVERLASTING LIFE IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD AND FOR THE UNSAVED, EVERLASTING PUNISHMENT BECAUSE OF THEIR UNBELIEF.
- VIII. THE GOSPEL BY WHICH WE ARE SAVED BEING SUMMED IN THE DEATH, BURIAL, AND RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.
- IX. THE CHURCH BEING THE BODY OF CHRIST, UNITED IN THE HOLY SPIRIT, CONSISTING OF THOSE WHO HAVE RECEIVED JESUS CHRIST AS SAVIOR. A LOCAL CHURCH IS AN ORGANIZED ASSEMBLY OF BELIEVERS UNITED FOR THE PURPOSE OF CARRYING OUT THE GREAT COMMISSION OF CHRIST.
- X. THE GREAT COMMISSION OF CHRIST BEING TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO ALL MEN, BAPTIZING AND DISCIPLING THOSE WHO HAVE BELIEVED.



# Books in Review

## OUR SUFFICIENCY IN CHRIST

by John F. MacArthur

Crossway Books, 282 pages, \$12.99

John MacArthur's volume, *Our Sufficiency in Christ*, is another of those books which has not received the distinction and wide reading audience it deserves. In a time when fictional and apocalyptic writings, or 30-day-wonder prayer formula books top the Christian best-seller lists, a book such as MacArthur's, which presents a sane and biblical understanding of a believer's position in Christ, all too often goes unnoticed and unread.

Sadly, Christians go looking for truth in all the wrong places. They dig through the garbage cans of psychology, mysticism, spiritual gimmicks, and supernatural quick fixes. "As a result," the book says, "they wallow in a watered-down, pseudo-Christianity that has been drained of its vitality, effectiveness, and security."

MacArthur tackles a wide range of issues in the book. And he clearly shows the complete sufficiency of Scripture. The Word of God need not be supplemented with psychology or other man-made therapies. He writes, "The Bible is like a lion. You don't need to defend it. Just open the door and let it out. It'll take care of itself" (pg. 141). Scripture, he stresses, provides reliable answers for life's hardest questions. And he's right on target. If more Christians were taught and believed this basic truth, they would not be so easily deceived by Satan or search in vain for spiritual truth. "Scripture hasn't failed them — they've failed Scripture," MacArthur writes (pg. 89).

MacArthur also surveys the issue of spiritual warfare and presents a solid case for the sufficiency of God's grace. The biblical principles and understanding he sets forth in both these chapters are extremely helpful in combating the current wave of deliverance ministries and health and wealth theologies.

The book has Scripture and Topical indexes. The latter

is expanded to include entries for several of the illustrative stories MacArthur uses.

This book was first published under the same title by Word Publishers in 1991. Crossway Books (beginning in 1998) is now publishing the volume. They should be commended for keeping this important work in print.

—MKG

## THE NATION OF ISLAM Understanding the 'Black Muslims'

by Steven Tsoukalas

P&R Publishing, 211 pages, \$14.99

As the Nation of Islam continues to grow rapidly, it is imperative for Christians to know and understand the workings of this group. Steve Tsoukalas has definitely done his homework to bring to believers a clear picture of the movement of new-found identity and pride from three perspectives; political, social, and religious.

This explicit study is meticulously documented. The first chapter alone has 102 endnotes. The seven-page index is also helpful in retrieving information. A summary at the end of each chapter is an added enhancement to the publication.

The first six chapters deal with the history of the movement, which makes a fascinating read. The fathers of black nationalism, Marcus Garvey and Noble Drew Ali affected the life of W.D. Fard, who "started a massive black nationalist movement from humble beginnings of a silk peddler." His successor, Elijah Muhammad, believed "that Fard was and is God in the flesh" and led the movement until his death in 1975. The two other more recent — and highly visible — leaders are Malcolm X and Louis Farrakhan, both of whom "were groomed to succeed Elijah Muhammad."

The Nation of Islam is not to be confused with traditional Islam. Tsoukalas explains, "There are significant differences between the doctrines of the NOI [Nation of Islam] and those of traditional Islam ... First and foremost is that Islam considers it blasphemy to call any man Allah in the flesh" (pg. 70).

(continues on page 23)

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