

# The Quarterly Journal



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## Finances, Fraud and False Teaching The Troubled History of Don Stewart

by G. Richard Fisher

"An overseer must be blameless, the husband of one wife. ... of good behavior ... not greedy for money" (1 Timothy 3:2-3).

"Through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you" (2 Peter 2:3).

It is happening! Though Christians may say, "Make merchandise of me, exploit me, make profit from me? — No way," it is happening all over. The multimillion-dollar lifestyle and blatant materialism of many televangelists screams the point as a reality. It is in our face. "Miracles," mesmerism, and magic sell, and sell big.

Because of its dependence on emotions, and with little regard for the Scripture, the Charismatic movement has a long history of spawning false doctrines and strange personalities. J. Stephen Lang writes:

"Charles F. Parham, one of the 'founding fathers' of the Pentecostal revival in the twentieth century, claimed that annihilationism was 'the most important doctrine in the world today.'"<sup>1</sup>

In an amazing turnaround, Parham denounced the Azusa Street move-



ment he helped to create.<sup>2</sup> Parham also was an avid supporter of the Ku Klux Klan.<sup>3</sup>

Things have not changed, and strange personalities and strange teachings keep cropping up on the Charismatic circuit. Don Stewart has a

long history in televangelism and a long history with the long arm of the law. He also has a long history of an extravagant lifestyle on par with any Hollywood mogul or movie star, though he is not very photogenic. His broadcasts are a smaller, slower version of Benny Hinn's. His claims are as excessive as is his lifestyle. Little has been written about him (even by countercult ministries). He has managed until now to "fly beneath the radar."

During his services, Stewart sings off key to people just before they are "slain in the Spirit" by his touch. He warbles and croons songs (partially Scripture and partially positive affirmations) that sound like he is just making them up as he goes along. His broadcasts feature highlights of past meetings interspersed with dialogues with his current wife, Brenda, who is so emotionless and monotone she

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# Editorials

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## QUICK FIXES AND SPIRITUAL BAGGAGE

The Church today is inundated with teachers fixated on spiritual quick fixes and fads. It is not only the followers of Charismatic gurus such as Rod Parsley (with his "breakthrough" messages) or Benny Hinn (with any one of his "double-portion," "fresh," or "fire" anointings) who pursue the effortless route to sanctification. Remember, the Church laughed with Rodney Howard-Browne, barked and clucked in Toronto Vineyard meetings, and shaken, rattled, and rolled at the Pensacola Outpouring, but none is the wiser or better.

Then the Church at large took another turn down another road with the remarkable popularity of Bruce Wilkinson's *The Prayer of Jabez*. This all demonstrates how *far too many* Christians are all too eager to beat a path to instant solutions, spiritual panaceas, and transcendental spirituality.

For those unfamiliar with Wilkinson's book, it is a small, hardback volume which, during the past several months, has sold millions of copies as it topped the best-seller charts. The book's back cover promises that the reader will "Join Bruce Wilkinson to discover how the remarkable prayer of a little-known Bible hero [Jabez] can release God's favor, power, and protection. You'll see how one daily prayer can help you leave the past behind — and break through to the life you were meant to live" (emphasis added).

We are certainly grateful for any teacher or any publication that can get people to pray more or establish a discipline of daily prayer. However, prayer can never be seen as an exercise in getting. The Lord's Prayer tends to be a more comprehensive model for prayer. In it we learn that prayer is first of all a relationship. We also learn that prayer is to change us as we confess our sins and bow before His glory. We also find that it is not done to get our will done but to submit to His will. There are certainly great mysteries in prayer. These mysteries are both theological and philosophical. Prayer is our way as believers to express our total dependence on God. We also remember that we pray because we are commanded to pray. Unfortunately, *The Prayer of Jabez* book oversells and over-promises.

Excluding the Psalms, there are 650 prayers recorded in Scripture. Why would we think any one of these is more efficacious than the other? They are all worthy to be used as prayer prompters, remembering that prayer is a personal matter of the heart.

One organization we know prayed "the prayer of Jabez" for more Bible studies. There was great fanfare made and letters announced the endeavor. Interestingly enough, those in the organization worked all the harder to get the extra studies. The rub was that they went thousands of dollars into debt and had to plead with congregants to bail them out of their over-expenditures for more Bible studies. Is it that they forgot to pray the prayer of Jabez for the money?

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### PERSONAL FREEDOM OUTREACH

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## LEFT HIGH AND DRY IN A CORNFIELD

In 1999, Pastor Steve Gray informed his congregation at the Smithton Community Church in rural Missouri that “the cloud has moved.” Apparently for Gray and those who would follow him, the cloud was moving 100 miles west and would settle in Kansas City. Beginning in 1996, Gray’s small country church hosted what was called “The Cornfield Revival,” worship services punctuated with twirling and jumping manifestations. In the years that followed, the church recorded an attendance of 250,000 people.

When Gray opened the new World Revival Church in Kansas City in January 2001, two-thirds of the Smithton congregation had moved west with the pastor. But for the 32 families who stayed behind — including four of the church’s five deacons — feelings of betrayal and frustration are paramount. One of those deacons, Douglas Galey, told *Christianity Today* magazine, “We were deceived. We were all told that a building would be built close by. I didn’t give money to build Steve Gray’s kingdom.”

Galey said he contributed \$8,300 to the building fund. Another family, who also did not follow the “cloud,” claims to have donated \$43,788 to the church’s building fund. Jerry Spencer wrote to Gray charging, “Many members of the congregation, including ourselves, paid for construction of a new Smithton church and had no idea you would take our money elsewhere.” Galey added that another individual had donated an undeveloped plot of land close to the Smithton church to accommodate its future growth. Gray told *CT* magazine that the Smithton land has been sold and its proceeds are being invested for possible purchase of land in Israel.

Gray’s lawyer, G. Stanton Masters, argued that the Smithton offering envelopes stated that the church leadership “reserves the right to redirect all funds to the area of ministry most needed.” Masters has also threatened countersuits against any former members who may seek legal action against Gray and the WRC. *Charisma* magazine, reporting on the dispute, stated, “Revival Church Compares Detractors to ‘Spiritual Terrorists’” and cited the church’s web site which claimed, “these spiritual terrorists use similar tactics as international terrorists.”

Gray contends that the growing church had surpassed its potential in the tiny community of 532. “We determined that we couldn’t grow in the middle of nowhere,” Gray told *CT* magazine. As the relocation

plans progressed, church leaders spent \$400,000 of the church’s money for land in Kansas City and borrowed another \$500,000 for construction of the new building. The Kansas City facility is a 25,000-square-foot building with capacity for 1,800, seated on 62 acres. Services in the new location draw about 550 people each Sunday.

—MKG

## NO PROPHETIC WORD ABOUT FIRE FROM MEYER

An early-morning hotel fire claimed the lives of 79 people, most of whom were attending the “Destiny Crusade” in the Philippines led by evangelists Joyce Meyer and Don Clowers. The conference was sponsored by Don Clowers Ministries, a Texas-based organization. Initial reports of the blaze listed 70 dead and 54 injured. A representative for Don Clowers Ministries told PFO that of the 79 persons who perished, all but 10 were believed to be attending the “Destiny Crusade.”

The Manor Hotel, a six-story budget hotel in Quezon City, had 236 registered guests, 172 of whom were attending the conference. Authorities said the hotel “looked more like a prison than a resort” because of barred windows used to deter thefts. Feliciano Belmonte, the city’s mayor, said that the hotel had been warned about its inadequate fire safety.

Eugene Schwebler, a member of a missionary group attending the crusade that was staying at the hotel, told the Associated Press, “There were 160 people in our group. I don’t know how many came out. The lights went out, and we heard people screaming.” Schwebler first attempted to leave the hotel through a hallway but was turned back by the heat. He was able to escape by removing the air conditioning unit in his room, which gave him access to a fire escape. Many of the victims were found in bathrooms, where they had retreated to douse themselves with water before succumbing to the smoke and fire.

According to a report in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, while the Philippines is predominately Roman Catholic, evangelical ministries are often popular among the country’s poor. The Araneta Center, site of the conference, was “a 30- to 60-minute drive from the hotel, which is where many poor people from the rural areas were staying while attending the services,” the newspaper reported.

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# WALKING IN THE SHADOW OF THE WALK



## The Prophetic Ministry and Visions of Francis Frangipane

by G. Richard Fisher

Apologist Robert Bowman argues that “the task of doctrinal discernment is an ongoing necessity in the Christian church.”<sup>1</sup>

“History repeats itself,” we are told. That is never more true than in the realm of heresy and theological error. Old lies and distortions of Scripture are constantly being recycled under new guises and new window dressing. The name of Jesus is used, but the doctrines of Jesus are convoluted and spun to meet utopian agendas.

Francis Frangipane is the senior minister of the River of Life Ministries in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. He also heads up a television and radio ministry called *In Christ's Image*.<sup>2</sup> For nearly two years, Frangipane had a monthly feature in *Charisma* magazine called “Thy Kingdom Come.”<sup>3</sup> The articles were sermonettes, part of which were published as the book, *The Days of His Presence*.

His books’ biographical sections contain no hint of any formal Bible education. This occurs far too often in the modern prophetic movement. PFO sent a letter of inquiry to Frangipane’s organization regarding his educational credentials (such as high school, college, Bible college, or seminary degrees), but received no response. One has to wonder about Frangipane’s biblical training, given his propensity to mispronounce theological words. For example, when he

tries to pronounce “eschatological,” it comes out as “escalatological.”

Frangipane said that in 1980 he dropped out of ministry after a woman that he prayed for died. He attributed it to a “stronghold of unbelief” within himself. Three years later, he joined a “Faith church” and claimed: “During that following year, our church saw people healed of cancers, deaf ears and arthritis! So even though I never officially joined the Faith movement, I am thankful to God for what He gave me through it.”<sup>4</sup> Frangipane does not name the church or document the claims.

In the Charismatic world, perhaps one could say that Frangipane is still in “Triple A” but *rising fast* to the Major League level. He appears with and hosts some of the big guns in the prophetic movement, including the Kansas City Prophets and Manifest Sons of God promoters. Frangipane is hailed and placed in a very elite class by such men. Rick Joyner<sup>5</sup> says of Frangipane:

“Francis is one of those few, like the Apostle John, who leans on the Lord’s breast and listens to His heart...”<sup>6</sup>

The *Apologetics Index* web site also confirms Frangipane’s solidarity with those prominent in today’s prophetic arena: “Teacher/prophet with close connections to Rick Joyner and the Kansas City Prophets. Promotes Tor-

onto Blessing.”<sup>7</sup> Frangipane obviously endorses Joyner in that he sells Joyner’s audiotape, *Into the Glory* (available on Frangipane’s web site), and refers to Joyner as a “prophetic leader.”

Frangipane’s commitment to Joyner is obvious and overt, as well, in his book, *The Power of Covenant Prayer*, where he states: “Several years ago, Rick Joyner’s book *The Harvest* unlocked hope for tens of thousands of discouraged church leaders.”<sup>8</sup>

Frangipane’s cross-pollination with Joyner is both interesting and troubling as is the endorsement by Tommy Tenney of Frangipane’s book, *The Days of His Presence*. Tenney admits to a Oneness Pentecostal background (denying the Trinity) and promotes ongoing divine revelations. However, the endorsements appear to be reciprocal because Frangipane sells an audiotape of Tenney.

One can also find audiotapes on Frangipane’s web site by Kansas City prophet Mike Bickle.<sup>9</sup>

Like someone playing theological Twister, Frangipane has hands and feet in different-colored doctrinal spots. Author Gershom Gorenberg is correct in his observation that: “You can know people best by their contradictions.”<sup>10</sup>

Frangipane has made big blunders in the past, which would make anyone question his abilities and discernment. Teaching at the Hood River Assembly of God in Oregon, Frangipane told his audience that they should “take cities,” and used the unique case of Jonah as a paradigm for the Church.<sup>11</sup>

He then referred to televangelist Larry Lea as an illustration of taking a city. Frangipane cited as an example the report of Lea's alleged Christian conversion of pagan and witch Eric Pryor. However, the illustration in no way fits the point because Pryor was an individual and not a city and, more importantly, Pryor's conversion was bogus. Lea is a sorry example of discernment and spiritual warfare. Lea's is a scandal-ridden ministry. The *San Francisco Chronicle* reported:

"At first, Lea acknowledged that he was paying Pryor \$1,000 a month. Later, he changed the story, saying it was really \$500 a month to help Pryor pay the rent when he moved to San Jose from San Francisco, joined Jubilee Christian Center and enrolled in its Bible school. ... PrimeTime also showed part of a homemade video of a wedding ceremony in which [JCC Pastor Dick] Bernal appears to be marrying Pryor and his girlfriend. Both the pastor and the ex-pagan knew, however, that Pryor was still legally married to another woman. 'It wasn't a civil ceremony. It was just a spiritual covenant,' said Bernal, conceding that he probably made a mistake performing the service. 'They had been living together as common-law man and wife.'"12

Ole Anthony, of the televangelist watchdog Trinity Foundation, said that "Lea was still marketing the phony 'witch that switched' tape in 1997."<sup>13</sup>

Yet, the Pryor saga gets worse. While Pryor was receiving up to \$20,000 per appearance, he was arrested in 1994 for spousal abuse and assault with a deadly weapon. Shortly after, he went back to drugs and the occult.<sup>14</sup> In October 1998, Pryor, the wife beating occultist, was charged with battery, spousal abuse, and being under the influence of narcotics.<sup>15</sup> Pryor is a habitual batterer and criminal.

### DOES THE DEVIL HAVE A ZIP CODE?

Pastor and author Bill Randles discusses the claimed power of Frangi-

pane and others as they make grandiose, but unprovable pronouncements regarding demons. According to Randles, this new breed of demon-busters has the ability to do far more than just cast them out:

"And like everything else our generation approaches, we don't do it in run of the mill fashion, casting one low level demon imp out of one lowly person! We really do it on a big scale, we cast demons out of whole cities! ... Through the teachings of C. Peter Wagner, Dick Bernal, Francis Frangipane, John Dawson and a host of others, a dualistic Spiritual Warfare doctrine has developed. By that I mean, that there is the concept that we are to battle directly with the principalities, to the point where we name them, researching the history of cities and even nations, to learn the characteristics of these 'strongmen' so that we could dislodge them, and 'take the city for God.'"16

Biblically taking cities for God by crippling and disarming the demons of the city is nowhere taught in Scripture. Paul preached the Gospel in each city without dramatics or evasive claims. We do not find Paul doing "prayer walks" and spiritual stake-outs. Logic tells us that for all the time the "demon-busters" have been at it, they should have had these cities all under control by now and demon-free.

In the new theatrics of demon-busting, one word, "stronghold," has been taken out of 2 Corinthians 10 and used to create an entire theology. The context of chapter 10 is confronting false belief. If anyone is tearing down strongholds, it is the counter-cult and apologetic movement. Dualistic demonism is in itself a stronghold of error and false teaching.

An article entitled, "Encountering Territorial Spirits," informs us:

"[George] Otis, [C. Peter] Wagner, and others have more recently associated with their views of demon activity practices like 'spiritual mapping,' identifying and exorcising 'territorial

spirits,' and 'territorial staking.' While they seek to support their approach to such ministries with Scripture, much of what they do is so extreme as to be disturbing to many in the Christian world. A study of their material indicates that far too much of their teaching has human experience and even pagan theology as its base."<sup>17</sup>

The author of this fine article upholds the sufficiency of the Scripture for life and doctrine, and then says:

"In fact, current demonologists use the account in Daniel as a major proof-text on battling territorial spirits. However, [Robert] Priest, [Thomas] Campbell, and [Bradford] Mullen observe, 'Daniel had no knowledge of the details of the battle, such as who is fighting whom, or even knowledge that there is a battle until he is told later. He simply prays and trusts God for the unseen dimension of things'. They then conclude, 'Daniel does not "discern," "map," "bind," or "pray against" a territorial spirit.'"18

### HEALTHY REMINDERS

It is not only spiritually healthy, but also a protection to remind ourselves that there are enemies to the truth in our world. These are false prophets, false apostles, and false teachers (Matthew 24:24, 2 Peter 2:1, 2 Corinthians 11:13, Revelation 2:2, 1 Timothy 1:7, Acts 20:28-30).

Frangipane, like many other hyper-Charismatics, has repackaged old Latter Rain movement heresies and is peddling them to the public.

The modern prophets are an example of history folding back on itself and merging the heresies of the 1940s with those of the 1990s. The Latter Rain movement cemented a foundation of Charismatic mythology that is like the Energizer Bunny. It just keeps going and going.

Apologist Albert Dager reminds us of the extreme teaching of the 1940s' Latter Rain dominion teaching:

"Some two decades before Pentecostalism found its way into the denominations as the Charis-

matic Renewal, it experienced a new surge of experience-oriented theology within its own ranks. It was from this neo-Pentecostal experience — what came to be called the ‘Latter Rain Movement’ — that Charismatic Dominionism sprang. The more prominent leaders of that movement blended Pentecostal fervor with teachings that the Church was on the brink of a worldwide revival. That revival would result in a victorious Church without spot or wrinkle, and the saints (or a number of saints called ‘overcomers’) would attain sinless perfection. Thus perfected, the Church would inherit the earth and rule over the nations with a rod of iron.”<sup>19</sup>

Dager goes on to describe the wild and extreme ideas of Latter Rain leader Franklin Hall:

“Hall’s main point in his immortalization theory is that ‘the sleeping, so called, unfoundationally built church’ must awaken to ‘a real cause and calling, that when God’s word is completely acted upon and complied with, will result in bringing about the real gushers and torrents of the long, past due, RAIN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. A rain of IMMORTALITY UPON THE EARTH that so many prophets have written about and portrayed in their prophecies.’ (Hall’s emphasis) Hall’s premise is not based on God’s promise of immortality after the resurrection, but on the idea that those who apply Hall’s teachings will become immortal while in their present flesh-and-blood bodies.”<sup>20</sup>

Along with the above, Latter Rain teachers insisted on “Impartation,” that is, that somehow the power and blessing of the Holy Spirit could be imparted by laying on of hands, thus creating the foundation for power centers where sign seekers could go to get the blessing and carry it away to impart to others. The idea of impartation was officially condemned by the Assemblies of God in the 1940s.<sup>21</sup> People will travel many miles to “get

it” which is shorthand for spasms, altered states of consciousness, slaying experiences, uncontrollable laughing, hypnotic states, and bodily gyrations. They return again and again, becoming addicted to impartations. Some, like Mike Bickle, even claim that prophecy can be imparted.

The Latter Rain teaching of Kingdom Now is a mirror image of the long forgotten and failed Cargo Cults. Gershom Gorenberg recounts the events around the late 19th century, millennial movements known as “cargo cults.” He says they:

“... appeared among South Pacific islanders. Assaulted by European rule, by the ideas of Christian missionaries, by the sight of material wealth brought from afar, islanders turned to a vision: A new age would dawn with the arrival of great vessels, carrying their dead ancestors and Cargo — the wealth *they* deserved. Islanders built ‘docks’ or ‘landing strips,’ assuming they would thereby bring the Cargo-bearing ships or planes. ... the islanders weren’t irrational: They reached reasonable conclusions from fragmented information.”<sup>22</sup>

The docks and the landing strips for Latter Rain followers and today’s hyper-Charismatics are the books and tapes by their leaders, the hallucinatory expectations, the mythical claims, and the proclaimed ability to know the future. It is all fed furiously by wild claims made on television broadcasts. It all sells, but the “cargo” of dead risings and perfect healing, along with the wealth of the wicked coming to the righteous, is long overdue. That’s because it will all only happen in the Resurrection (Romans 8 and 1 Corinthians 15).

### YOU AIN’T SEEN NOTHING YET

Frangipane may try to distance himself from the Latter Rain by pointing out some of their more wild and extreme doctrines. Yet, in typical Latter Rain fashion, he promises something far greater than we have ever seen or experienced before in the Church:

“As this age ends, God’s promise

to us is that we too shall receive a ‘double portion’ (Isa. 61:7; John 14:12). What can this mean but that the Lord is going to reveal Himself to us in glories we have never known before. Do not despair if you find yourself in a time of desolation. In truth, with God, our desolation is but preparation for a new beginning of power and service.”<sup>23</sup>

Though the heretical Manifest Sons of God doctrine teaches present glorification and escape from death (which Frangipane does not), Frangipane still comes close in many other ways.

Notice, too, the sloppy use of Scripture to try to bolster a premise. Isaiah 61:7 has to do with the Messiah bringing salvation to Israel (vv. 1-3). It then talks of a future rebuilding and restoration of Israel and her land (vv. 4-7). Verse 7 and the possessing of double the land, has to do with God promising Israel permanent increases in the amount of geography it possesses. Just as Job received double the goods and family he had, Isaiah 61:7 has a specific and pointed context. Whether one believes in the restoration of Israel or not is not the point. One still must observe the context and not try to apply these verses to some illusive miracle period for the Church just around the corner. The imminency of Christ’s return is destroyed by this view in that a new “signs and wonders” period has to be ushered in first. This view tries to create a new and unbiblical dispensation.

John 14:12 is another ruse, since the “greater works” mentioned there always have been understood by most Bible scholars as meaning greater in extent. It is a far greater exposure of the Gospel and salvation worldwide (that is, to the uttermost parts of the earth). Neither Frangipane nor any of his colleagues are walking on water, raising the dead, multiplying food, healing lepers, or doing greater miracles (either in extent or quantity) than Christ has done. Their rhetoric does not match the reality.

There is no denying that Frangipane uses the delusionary, overblown hype and terminology of the Latter Rain:

“Any sickness can be healed; any demon can be cast out. Any sinner, friend, or relative can be saved. He said, ‘Whatever you ask.’ Who is to stop our faith from reaching even a greater fulfillment? Not only can any person be healed, but also any city, not merely can any demon be cast out, but any principality be brought down. The ends of the earth await the awakening of our faith to Christ’s promise!”<sup>24</sup>

Frangipane makes astounding claims for himself in boasting of visions and powers. In *The Power of Covenant Prayer*, he confesses to dramatic visions:

“For me, the hope of a national harvest began in 1971. In a night vision, the Lord showed me a city shrouded in terrible darkness, one similar to the blackness that descended upon Egypt. The darkness could be touched. I found myself outside the city. I was with people who had been purified, literally ‘baptized’ in the glory of God. In the vision, I actually felt the power of God’s glory, which was surging like brilliant bolts of lightning through us all. The vision ended with great multitudes leaving the darkness and surrendering their lives to Christ.”<sup>25</sup>

In another of his visions, Frangipane claims to have “gained an understanding of Christ’s expansive Presence.”<sup>26</sup> Frangipane also claims to have seen “His glory,” along with angels and saints in heaven while having a vision of the night.<sup>27</sup>

With all of the Charismatic superstars, authors, and televangelists claiming visions and sojourns to heaven, these phenomenal experiences seem to happen on a regular basis to everyone but the “average Joe” in the pew. God, it seems, is a respecter of persons and only an elite class of superstars gets into the really big show. Only best-selling authors and television stars seem to be granted the privilege. Even more troubling is that the heavenly visions and visitations produce contradictory information in the details of the supernatural.<sup>28</sup> Somebody is pulling

our leg. The Church had best heed Peter’s warning (2 Peter 2:3).

These kinds of “visions” claimed by Frangipane can fit into the category that Peter Worsley labels as “spongy prophecies.” Worsley explains:

“All events are thus held to constitute fractional symbolic confirmations of the wider cosmic beliefs: particular wars, or local murders, as manifestations of the coming (or perhaps already present) ‘Reign of the Beast’; the belief is so vague, so ambiguous, so generalized, that no particular event can possibly constitute a falsification of it. Conversely, given a spongy enough style of prophecy, all events can be interpreted as positive confirmation of the prophecy.”<sup>29</sup>

Frangipane’s vision of the night and subsequent interpretation fit into the “spongy prophecy” category. It is general enough to give it any interpretation one wants.

Frangipane alleges other powers as well:

“It also means that when I pray, there is a power attached to my intercession that demands strongholds of religious and cultural pride to fall before God’s purposes. ... *The door to the realm where all things are possible is swinging open before us!* ... God has prepared blessings for us in the heavenly places. What are these blessings? They represent all we behold in the life of Jesus: the blessing of healing and miracles, of virtue and deliverance. ... Whether it is the Jordan ceasing its flow as our feet touch the water or the sick coming forth for healing, all things are ours because of the covenant of God with Christ.”<sup>30</sup>

### POOR LONELY GOD AND OTHER MISCONCEPTIONS

To listen to Frangipane, one would think that God could hardly get along without him. After Frangipane began cutting back his devotion time, it seems to have left God in a blue funk:

“One day an intercessor called who prayed regularly for me. He told me that during the night the Lord spoke to him in a dream concerning me. I was eager to hear what the Lord had spoken to my friend, thinking perhaps He was going to increase our outreach or maybe supply some needed finances. I asked Him [sic] to tell me the dream. What the Lord said had nothing to do with the things that were consuming my time. He simply said, ‘Tell Francis I miss him.’”<sup>31</sup>

What a wonderful thing to be in an elite class of people and to have God on instant message. This melancholy God/Jesus theme is even carried further by Frangipane as he teaches that our limitations are actually limitations to Christ and that the Lord will change the situation only at a later date:

“Yet if we think about it, is it not equally astonishing that the rule of Christ in His church is, at least in part, subject to our initiatives? He submits Himself to our schedules and to our service times. He works within the confinements of our weaknesses and temperaments. ... However, the fact that Jesus will *accommodate* and submit Himself to the conditions we offer Him does not mean that He has approved of our limitations upon Him. ... we have assumed that Christ will continue to exist in ‘subjection’ to us. He will not. For as Jesus arises in His Lordship, to save us He must first deliver us from our efforts to control Him.”<sup>32</sup>

### RUNNING IN CIRCLES

Frangipane at times seems to have trouble making up his mind, which makes one wonder why anyone should have confidence in him. The *Charisma News Brief* for September 2, 1999, reported Frangipane’s flip-flop on deciding if he would run for mayor of his city:

“A week after the surprise announcement that he intended to run for mayor of his Iowa hometown, author and international speaker Francis Frangipane has

stepped out of the race. He withdrew his nomination Tuesday, less than an hour before the deadline for standing down. The senior pastor at River of Life Ministries in Cedar Rapids made the U-turn after realizing that he would be unable to continue his writing if he was appointed to the two-year office. 'I felt I had reached the boundaries of what God wanted me to surrender,' he explained in a message written for this weekend's church bulletin."<sup>33</sup>

*Charisma* reported that in a convoluted explanation, Frangipane claimed he was initially running but not really running:

"He entered the process 'not of running for mayor, but of surrender,' he writes. 'Outwardly I was going through the motions of one who was running for office; inwardly, however, I was surrendering to Jesus my comforts and being stretched beyond my fears.'<sup>34</sup>

The above rambling on the part of Frangipane makes absolutely no sense. Whatever happened to James' admonition: "Let your yes be yes and your no, no" (5:12) I am running — but I'm not running — I am running — but I am actually surrendering, etc., sounds more like the "swelling words of emptiness" mentioned in 2 Peter 2:18. It smacks more of a public relations ploy or rife indecision than a spiritual exercise. Presenting our bodies in Romans 12 has to do with soberly evaluating our giftedness and serving others in the body of Christ in a loving, thoughtful, self-sacrificing, humble way. Referring to our goofs, gaffes, and inability to decide as "surrender" is a stretch and is an affront to the intelligence of others. Playing around the edges of political office can hardly be morphed, mutated, and hand-shaped into "surrender."

Though some may think that this is much ado about nothing, they should think twice. If there is a discernible pattern of imprecision and misuse of Bible terms it should shake our confidence as to whether a teacher's whole system is on shaky ground. It

ought to at least make us cautious.

## FREAKYLINKS

Frangipane was connected to the Church of The Living Word for about eight years. This movement was informally called "The Walk" and was founded by John Robert Stevens (1919-1983). Stevens was defrocked by both the International Church of the Four-square Gospel and the Assemblies of God. Stevens taught the re-emergence of Apostles and Prophets. He also taught that God limited Himself totally to the prayers of His people who would accomplish things well beyond the Apostles once they put their minds to it.<sup>35</sup> Frangipane, as we have seen, teaches that God is limited in some fashion by our schedules.

Stevens put his new knowledge and prophecies above the Scripture and expected followers to be under both him and his elders for every decision of daily life even to job options, marriage, and so forth.<sup>36</sup>

Another very troubling teaching of Stevens was the view that he and his followers were the manifestation of the Second Coming of Jesus and, in some sense, he was greater than Christ. Stevens taught that Christ's return was a "Presence" among Walk followers for signs and wonders. As well, there were conspicuous occultic practices. Stevens took the teaching of "conformed to the image of Christ" to insane extremes. He viewed it as not just becoming more like Christ but the Church becoming Christ!<sup>37</sup>

Albert Dager refers to Frangipane's connection to Stevens and the Latter Rain delusions:

"Besides John Robert Stevens and Sam Fife, there were many apostles that came out of the Manifest Sons of God, such as George Warnock, Francis Frangipane, Royal Cronquist, and Bill Britton. Some still survive and are working within other churches to spread their doctrines."<sup>38</sup>

To what degree was Frangipane molded and influenced by Stevens and his teaching? How deeply does one get infected or affected by living in a seedbed of extreme Latter Rain

heresies for eight years? Did Frangipane emerge from Stevens' petrie dish unscathed? Are there residual effects?

In fairness, it must be acknowledged that Frangipane left the Living Word organization. An administrative assistant for Frangipane told PFO that "At first, Francis considered John Robert Stevens to simply be an imperfect leader ... However, Stevens eventually became a false prophet and ... spiritual darkness settled upon this entire organization."<sup>39</sup> However, no specifics were given.

Having said that and listening to the disclaimers of Frangipane in trying to distance himself from Stevens, it must be noted that in some areas of teaching, Frangipane may not have moved far enough away. I once knew people who worked in a tobacco factory. When they arrived home every evening they smelled like tobacco because the odor had permeated their clothes, hair and skin. They left the factory, but some of the factory went with them.

## TOO CLOSE FOR COMFORT

Stevens' strange and mystical doctrine of complete identification with Christ, and the extremes of seeing the Church in some sense as a part of the Second Coming may have not completely died in Frangipane's thinking because there is evidence of a finessed version in his writings. In *The Stronghold of God*, Frangipane uses Galatians 4:19 ("That Christ may be formed in you").<sup>40</sup> He, in the earlier pages of this book, had already built up baggage. While most Christians and Christian writers have understood Galatians 4:19 in its simplicity as another way of saying what the hymn says, "Be like Jesus, this my song," Frangipane tries to package in a lot more.

From Revelation 12, Frangipane talks about Christ being "truly birthed in our service to God."<sup>41</sup> Earlier he envisioned an actual incarnation and a merging of the believer into Christ by asserting: "To abide in Him is to live in ceaseless fusion with His passions."<sup>42</sup>

It becomes even more troubling as he blurs the line between the Creator and the created. Frangipane writes:

"...even as He and the Father are One, so we become one with Him. ... Like the Son's relationship with the Father, so we do nothing from our own initiative unless it is something we see Him do."<sup>43</sup>

The words "even as" mean, in exactly the same way or just like. Do we become one with Christ just like He is one with the Father? Are we truly united to Christ in the same way the members of the Godhead are united? To ask the question is to answer it. The members of the Trinity are ontologically one, something that cannot be said of us. Is Frangipane being imprecise or does he really believe that we become one with Christ "even as He and the Father are One"?

Frangipane muddies the water even more in his statement from his book, *The Days of His Presence* when he says:

"In the most profound way I understood that only Christ could live like Christ. God's plan was not to improve me but to remove me so that the Lord Jesus Himself could actually live His life through me (Galatians 2:20)."<sup>44</sup>

Frangipane carries this on:

"For whatever inhibits the fusion of our lives with Christ will be consumed like chaff in the fire of His Presence. ... We will know the fulness of Christ. ... He *must* increase and we *must* decrease until His Presence fills everything, everywhere, with Himself."<sup>45</sup>

Frangipane's use of the word "fusion,"<sup>46</sup> twice cited above, is also troubling. The word means a melting together. When there is a melting together there is also a melding together so that substances are indistinguishable and inseparable. Separate identities are merged by fusion.<sup>47</sup> Scrambled eggs would be an example. Is the believer melted together with Christ to the degree that he or she becomes one with Christ "even as He and the Father are One"? Is the believer "fused" as in two "different things into one"? Such a thought is outrageous and shocking. The Trinity

will ever remain the Trinity and never become a quartet.

Galatians 4:19 says literally "until you have taken the form of Christ."<sup>48</sup> It has to do with changes in our character and conduct so as to reflect Christ. It is a conformity to the ways of Christ. It is to be like Jesus.

Greek scholar and linguist Kenneth Wuest unpacks the phrase:

"These to whom Paul was writing, were truly saved. The Lord Jesus was resident in their hearts. But there was little of His beauty in their lives. The word *again* tells us that at one time He was clearly and abundantly evident in their experience. But now He ceased to be seen in the lives of the Galatian Christians. ... The passive voice of the verb 'be formed,' tells us that the Lord Jesus dwells in the heart of a Christian in a passive way, and thus does not express Himself through the Christian. He has given that ministry over to the Holy Spirit. He said, referring to the Spirit, 'That One shall glorify Me' (John 16:14). The Holy Spirit was not being recognized and depended upon by the Galatians. Consequently He was not able to minister the Lord Jesus to and through the Galatians in a full measure."<sup>49</sup>

Paul is using an obvious metaphor. He is not literally "laboring in birth" as the verse says, nor are the Galatians becoming Christ, nor is Christ literally being formed in the believer. The birthing metaphor is usually used in a negative way of struggle. Note the word "again" in Galatians 4:19. It is as if Paul is saying do I have to go into labor all over again to birth you (bring you to conversion again) and nurse you into growth so that it might be evident that you belong to Christ?

History is repeating itself here, and in the history of heresy the idea of fusion has taken many forms. From the mystical absorption (into the Godhead) ideas of Madam Guyon (and other mystics), to the polytheistic fusion (little gods) of Word-Faith, to the Christological fusion (becoming Christ) of Norman Grubb.<sup>50</sup>

While we can be one in purpose with God, we can never in any sense be one in nature or essence. Isaiah 40-46 assures us that God is wholly other and totally unlike us in every way. We can share the blessings of God and be Christlike, but never say: "even as He and the Father are One so we become one with Him." Such thoughts are absurd and unbiblical.

Anyone familiar with the New Testament knows that Jesus is in His glorified body in heaven. Frangipane takes the New Testament description of the Church as the "body of Christ" and pushes it to an extreme. He insists that it is "more than a metaphor" or figurative and concludes:

"Though He is not on earth in His own glorious, eternal body, He *is* on earth in our bodies. ... we transcend the limitations of our fallen humanity and become His body, His bride, His temple, His branches — *the very extensions of Himself in the earth!*"<sup>51</sup>

Since we are not literally a bride, a temple or literal branches, how are we to understand the biblical figure of being the "body of Christ"? Know it or not, Frangipane takes a straight Roman Catholic line in the way he views and explains the idea of the Church as the body of Christ. *Baker's Dictionary of Theology* expresses the concept quite well and we need to carefully consider its explanation:

"The Church as the Body of Christ. The most prominent theological use of the NT term *soma* is in relation to the doctrine of the church. The church is called 'the body of Christ'... Some interpret the phrase 'body of Christ' literally. On this view, the church is 'the extension of the incarnation,' the 'larger incarnation of Christ.' In the main, this is the view of most Catholic writers. To them the term 'body of Christ' is more than a metaphor. As once Christ manifested Himself through a human body (i.e., in his incarnate life), so now he manifests himself through his body the church, and especially in its sacraments."<sup>52</sup>

The dictionary proceeds to show the difference with evangelical scholars:

"Most evangelical writers tend to interpret the phrase less strictly, in terms of fellowship. As the human body is one but with many members, and as it lives by the co-ordination of all its members, so believers, as members of Christ, are also members of one another. On this view, the church is the body of Christ analogically but not by strict equation. Christ is manifested to the world by the lives and service of his people; under his leadership, and with the power of his indwelling Spirit, they do his work and thus manifest him to the world."<sup>53</sup>

So the figure of the body is used to teach us: first, the unity and fellowship with other believers in service and ministry; and second, that we are to take our orders and direction from our "Head." Christ is the "Head" in the sense of leader and commander.

If the metaphor of the branches shows us that we have the *life* of Christ and the bride metaphor shows us that we have the *love* of Christ, the body metaphor shows us that we have *linkage* to all others joined to the Savior. We are linked to them and so should love them and live for them in service and ministry.

If we were in any way the literal or near-literal body of Christ, Paul could not refer to our bodies as "vile" (Philippians 3:21) and in need of change. The whole Church exists in bodies that are perishable, dishonorable, natural, earthy, and weak (1 Corinthians 15:42-50). There is no comparison to the resurrected, immortal, glorified body of Jesus. This side of eternity, we will never transcend "the limitations of our fallen humanity," as Frangipane asserts.

Pastor and author David Kirkwood warns us about pushing metaphors too far:

"We must not forget, however, that every comparison is imperfect, because the two things compared are not usually identical in every respect. A metaphor is defined as a comparison of things *basically unlike* but having *some* striking similarities. For this reason, we must be cautious that

we do not force a meaning upon a metaphor that God never intended."<sup>54</sup>

Frangipane is right when he says:

"Even a true doctrine with an overly exaggerated emphasis can sidetrack us from Christlikeness. ... Correct and balanced doctrinal understanding is fundamental to our spiritual well-being."<sup>55</sup>

### NOW YOU SEE HIM, NOW YOU DON'T

John Robert Stevens taught that the increasing Presence of Christ and His glory in the Church constituted the Second Coming of Jesus, and that the world would see in the Church, the glorified Christ long before His actual return.<sup>56</sup> Frangipane sounds like a slightly nuanced Stevens when he teaches:

"Yet, *before He appears*, while He is near but still invisible, that same radiance of glory will be poured out on 'all flesh' (Acts 2:17-21). For as He is in power and glory when He appears, so He is beforehand though unseen! And it is this out-raying Presence which will grow ever more resplendent in the church prior to His second coming. ... The church will be beautified with His glory and filled with His radiance *before* He physically comes for her! ... Many promises given to the church, formerly thought impossible, will be fulfilled by the fulness of Christ in us."<sup>57</sup>

This indeed is warmed-over John Robert Stevens and very much his "invisible Christ." It is not only a radical postmillennialism but a post-postmillennialism.

A spiritual Second Coming (or phase of the Second Coming) is not a "coming" at all, but a falsely created concept of Kingdom Now thinkers. This cannot even be equated with the rapture (for the dispensationalists) since in the rapture Christ is visible to the Church and in His glorified body.

The doctrine of a secret presence for a few fortunate Charismatic believers is not scriptural, but more at home with groups like the Jehovah's Wit-

nesses. Frangipane, like Stevens, sees the presence of Christ in the Church intensified in a full, immediate, and dramatic way. What he calls the "Parousia" and a phase of the Second Coming, Frangipane promises is imminent and assures us that the "church of Jesus Christ is about to enter a season of extraordinary manifestations of God's glory."<sup>58</sup> Lest we forget, *The Days of His Presence* was first written in 1995. How many years is "about to"? Perhaps it depends on what "about to" means.

This increased presence of Christ, according to Frangipane, resulting from the Parousia, will issue out in great experiences of glory and dramatic miracles of immense proportions. Stevens would have called his Parousia (secretly in the Church) the Second Coming, where Frangipane hints his Parousia could be "a certain phase of the final days."<sup>59</sup> Frangipane further asserts:

"Indeed, to know the Lord will increasingly manifest Himself in His Presence *before* He physically returns is to hear the whisper of God's truth as He leads us to the fountain of His glory."<sup>60</sup>

### REALLY, REALLY THERE

Frangipane simply cannot sustain his view biblically. While Parousia can be translated "presence" or "coming," it is used of a physical presence in contrast to one's absence as in Philippians 2:12. Christ's glorified actual physical presence on the Mount of Transfiguration is called a Parousia. The word also means a coming alongside.<sup>61</sup>

In his *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Gerhard Kittel assures us that Parousia is a title "for the 'coming' of Christ in Messianic glory."<sup>62</sup> Frangipane offers a lame appeal to Roman Catholic amillennialism to try to bolster this new idea of Parousia.<sup>63</sup> It is a confused attempt at comparing apples with bananas.

In his address to the Hood River Assembly of God church, Frangipane dogmatizes: "I'm not sure who knows — I know I don't know — exactly how Jesus will return." Bible-believing Christians can beg to differ. If we read the Bible, we will know exactly

how Jesus will return. He will return in His body because He is forever the God-man (1 Timothy 2:5). Note that the coming of Jesus will be "Just (or in the same way) as you have seen Him go" (Acts 1:11). His return will be physical and is referred to as "His appearing" (1 Timothy 6:14; 2 Timothy 1:10; 4:1, 8; Titus 2:10). Frangipane mirrors Stevens here more than the clear teachings of the Bible.

On that dramatic visible return of Jesus, Alva McClain offers us this:

"In this final promise of a second coming of the Messianic King (Acts 1:11), the angelic messengers seem almost to exhaust the resources of human language in declaring the reality and visibility of that grand event. The coming One will be 'this same Jesus [*houtos*, this very one], which is taken up.' He will 'so [*houtos*, in this way] come in like manner [*hon tropon*] as ye have seen Him go.' The language grows in impressiveness when we recall that the great purpose of His second advent will be to establish the Kingdom on earth. If the coming of the King will be something fully tangible in the realm of sense experience, as affirmed by the angels, there remains no sound reason for denying the same reality to the Kingdom which He will bring. So the apostles understood, and so they taught."<sup>64</sup>

Dr. John Walvoord, quoted by Dwight Pentecost, supplies this further careful evaluation:

"The word most frequently used in the Scriptures to describe the return of Christ is [*parousia*] ... it occurs twenty-four times in the New Testament in a variety of connections. As its etymology indicates the word means *to be near* or *alongside*. ... It involves all that the English word *presence* connotes. ... It has come to mean not simply *presence* but the act by which the presence is brought about, i.e., by the *coming* of the individual ... That it is used frequently of the rapture of the church is clear in the following references (1 Cor. 15:23; 1 Thess.

2:19; 4:15; 5:23; 2 Thess. 2:1 (?); James 5:7, 8; 2 Pet. 3:4 (?); 1 John 2:29). ... The word is also used, however, of the return of Christ to the earth with the church in a number of passages. ... The conclusion is inevitable that the same word is used in all these passages in a general and not specific sense. Its contribution to the doctrine is to emphasize the bodily presence of Christ."<sup>65</sup>

Scottish Bible scholar F.F. Bruce concludes:

"The *parousia* of Christ is closely associated in the NT with the resurrection of his people (and more generally with the resurrection of mankind) and with the judgment of the world."<sup>66</sup>

Frangipane admits that his feelings and emotions misled him in the past. For all intents and purposes he could be branded a false prophet for his 1975 prediction that the comet *Kohoutek* would bring the end of the world:

"I felt certain that this was a 'sign in the heavens' confirming the end was near. Compelled by my inner convictions, I began to warn every church in Detroit, all 1,200 of them, that the world would end that Christmas. I even managed to become a guest on the most-watched morning talk show in Detroit, where I warned as many as three million people of God's imminent wrath. Christmas came and went and nothing happened. The comet was an overexaggerated astronomical flop. I had been so sure of my insights, so fearfully compelled by the signs of the times, yet so wrongly informed."<sup>67</sup>

The same could be said of Frangipane's *Parousia* doctrine. It is an invention of Stevens, and Frangipane is as certain and sure of Stevens' insights as he was of the failed comet. Stevens is just another "wandering star" (Jude 13).

This contrived "presence" of Jesus without His actual physical return is an illusion, a Latter Rain hoax. Stevens played the end time remnant and *Parousia* theme over and over,

and it stuck in the thinking of Frangipane. Though Frangipane reshapes the idea a bit, he is still living off Stevens' foundation. We cannot have a return of Christ, in any form or fashion, without Christ Himself visible and victorious. Jesus made that crystal clear in Matthew's gospel:

"Then if anyone says to you, 'look here is the Christ!' or 'There!' do not believe it. For false christs and false prophets shall rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible even the elect. See I have told you beforehand. Therefore if they say to you, 'Look, He is in the desert!' do not go out; or 'Look, He is in the inner rooms!' do not believe it. For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be" (Matthew 24:23-27).

Christ is saying clearly: Accept no teaching of a secret presence.

Since necessity is the mother of invention, it would be easy to see Frangipane and followers of the Kingdom Now ideas trying to *create* a *Parousia* or deluding themselves through altered states of consciousness into thinking Christ had arrived spiritually. Any bodily manifestations or new "visions" could certainly "prove" it. It would not be the first time that a spiritual return has been claimed.

Peter Worsley explains why people keep their delusions going:

"The hysterical and paranoid phenomena — mass-possession, trances, fantasies, twitching, and so on — which we have found in so many movements are thus no mere accidental features. They are the product, firstly, of the lack of means to satisfy enormously inflated wants."<sup>68</sup>

Without a shred of exegetical or hermeneutical reasoning, Frangipane (trying to build a secret presence/*Parousia*) alleges that "On the Mount of Transfiguration, Jesus revealed the day of power and glory that *precedes* the rapture."<sup>69</sup> All of Frangipane's convoluted reinterpretations of the Transfiguration in *The Days of His*

*Presence*<sup>70</sup> cannot do away with the one unmistakable fact that Christ was there physically in the Transfiguration. He manifested His glory out of His physical presence with them on the Mount. He did not present Himself in stages or without a body. What is Frangipane talking about? The Transfiguration is a preview of the one dramatic event we call the Second Coming. Christ did not promise a secret presence with signs and wonders but rather, "When the Son of Man comes shall He find faith on earth?" (Luke 18:8).

Alva McClain says of the Transfiguration event:

"In this prevision of 'the Son of man coming in his kingdom,' certain things were made crystal clear. First, when the Kingdom comes at the second advent of Christ, it will be tangibly evident to sense experience: men will see the 'majesty' of the King and 'hear' His voice."<sup>71</sup>

## IMAGINATION

We used to warn people against opening the Bible randomly and taking the first verse that they saw as direction. Such out-of-context verses would mislead more often than not. Frangipane goes a step further and involves himself in speculative nonsense, getting divine direction from license plates. He recalls:

"In December, family matters took me to Davenport in Scott County, Iowa. As I entered the city, I was listening to a teaching on tape and had just heard, 'We need to stand in the gap for President Clinton.' Immediately, a car pulled in front of me from the left lane. Next to the three numbers on its license plate were the letters G-A-P. Below the word 'GAP' was the name of a county north of Scott where the plate was issued: Clinton. If that were not enough, three seconds later, a pickup truck passed me on the right and pulled alongside the car in front. It too was from Clinton County. Unbelievably, next to its numbers were the same three letters. G-A-P. Within no more than 30 seconds, as I

heard the words, 'stand in the gap for President Clinton,' two vehicles appeared with exactly the same words on their plates: GAP-Clinton! ... it is a revealed word from God, confirmed by the Holy Spirit through three witnesses."<sup>72</sup>

When is the last time you got a "revealed word from God" from a license plate? I would not recommend that you try because I have faith in God's Word as our guidance system for life (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Frangipane seems to be a man with an overactive imagination and time on his hands. The interpretation is in the eye of the beholder. My interpretation would be that Bill Clinton has caused a gap between the righteous and the unrighteous — a gap between dignity in his former office and lack of dignity. With Clinton's die-hard stand on abortion, and even partial-birth abortion, he has created a big gap in the moral standard of our nation.

Certainly opinions on Frangipane vary. One who is very familiar with the work and teachings of Frangipane (and for a number of reasons wishes to remain anonymous) shared: "Be advised that Frangipane has been seeking mainstream respectability for years, and has gravitated to more 'acceptable' errors."<sup>73</sup>

With the shadow and fingerprints of John Robert Stevens all over Frangipane's teaching, and because much of what Frangipane teaches and endorses is subjective and imaginative, the reader will have to decide if the "errors" are more acceptable or not.

## Endnotes:

1. Robert M. Bowman Jr., *Orthodoxy and Heresy*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1992, pg. 56.
2. Details on the media ministry of Francis Frangipane may be obtained on his organization's web site: [www.frangipane.org](http://www.frangipane.org).
3. The monthly articles appeared in *Charisma* from October 1993 to July 1995.
4. Francis Frangipane, "It's a Package Deal," *Charisma*, April 1994, pg. 18.
5. See further, G. Richard Fisher, "The Higher Life of Rick Joyner," *The Quarterly Journal*, October-December 2000, pp. 4-15.
6. Francis Frangipane, *The Days of His Presence*. Mansfield, Pa.: Fire Wind, 2000, back cover (endorsement by Rick Joyner).
7. See Apologetics Index web site at: [www.gospelcom.net/apologeticsindex/f00.html](http://www.gospelcom.net/apologeticsindex/f00.html).

8. Francis Frangipane, *The Power of Covenant Prayer*. Lake Mary, Fla.: Creation House, 1998, pg. 136.
9. See further, G. Richard Fisher, "Growing Pains in the Prophetic - Mike Bickle as the 'Don King' of Modern Day Prophets," *The Quarterly Journal*, July-September 2001, pp. 1, 13-20; and Hank Hanegraaff, *Counterfeit Revival*. Dallas: Word Publishers, 1998, pp. 146-151.
10. Gershom Gorenberg, *The End of Days*. New York: Free Press, 2000, pg. 19.
11. Francis Frangipane, Hood River Assembly of God sermon, exact date unknown, c. 1991, tape 2.
12. Don Lattin, "S.F.'s Halloween Preacher in Trouble," *San Francisco Chronicle*, Feb. 10, 1992.
13. Michael Santa Rita, "Lea relocates 'prayer army' to New Life Church," Sherman-Denison, Texas, *Herald Democrat*, April 12, 1998.
14. "The Witch Who Switched Back to SATAN Again," available online at: [www.angelfire.com/biz/epryor/pryor9843.html](http://www.angelfire.com/biz/epryor/pryor9843.html).
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16. Bill Randles, *Beware: The New Prophets*. Marion, Iowa: self-published, 1999, pg. 92.
17. "Encountering Territorial Spirits," available online at: [www.biblical-integrity.com/territorial\\_spirits.htm](http://www.biblical-integrity.com/territorial_spirits.htm), pg. 1.
18. *Ibid.*, pg. 15.
19. Albert James Dager, *Vengeance Is Ours*. Redmond, Wash.: Sword Publishers, 1990, pg. 49.
20. *Ibid.*, pg. 51.
21. See further, M. Kurt Goedelman with G. Richard Fisher, "The Latter Rain Movement: Showering Heresy on the Church for Nearly Fifty Years," *The Quarterly Journal*, April-June 1995, pp. 4, 10-12.
22. *The End of Days*, op. cit., pg. 154, italic in original.
23. Francis Frangipane, *The Stronghold of God*. Lake Mary, Fla.: Creation House, 1998, pg. 16.
24. *Ibid.*, pg. 67.
25. *The Power of Covenant Prayer*, op. cit., pg. 136.
26. *The Days of His Presence*, op. cit., pg. 31.
27. *Ibid.*, pp. 30-32.
28. See further, William Alnor, *Heaven Can't Wait, A Survey of Alleged Trips to Heaven*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1996.
29. Peter Worsley, *The Trumpet Shall Sound*. New York: Schocken Books, 1968, pg. xix.
30. *The Power of Covenant Prayer*, op. cit., pp. 45, 57, 65, 67, italics in original.
31. *The Days of His Presence*, op. cit., pg. 128, italics in original.
32. *Ibid.*, pg. 100, italic in original.
33. "Francis Frangipane Drops Out of Mayoral Race," *Charisma News Service*, Sept. 2, 1999.
34. *Ibid.*
35. See further, J. Gordon Melton, *The Encyclopedia of American Religions*. Tarrytown, N.Y.: Triumph Books, 1991, Vol. 1, pg. 454.
36. See further, "John Robert Stevens and the Church of the Living Word ('The Walk')," *Spiritual Counterfeits Project Newsletter*, September 1976; and Todd Ehrenborg in Walter Martin, *The New Cults*. Santa Ana, Calif.: Vision House, 1980, chapter 8.
37. See further, Eric Pement, "The Walk," *Cornerstone*, Nov.-Dec., 1981, Vol. 10, Issue 57, pp. 30-34.
38. *Vengeance Is Ours*, op. cit., pg. 70.

39. Correspondence to author from Frangipane's organization, 11/21/2000.  
 40. *The Stronghold of God*, op. cit., pg. 115.  
 41. *Ibid.*, pg. 117.  
 42. *Ibid.*, pg. 63.  
 43. *Ibid.*, pg. 64.  
 44. *The Days of His Presence*, op. cit., pg. 31.  
 45. *Ibid.*, pg. 36, italics in original.  
 46. *The Stronghold of God*, op. cit., pg. 63.  
 47. For example, "fusion" is defined as "The act or process of uniting different things into one" in *The Complete Christian Dictionary*. Ventura, Calif.: Gospel Light, 1992, pg. 268.  
 48. Joseph B. Lightfoot, *The Epistle of St. Paul to the Galatians*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing, no date, pg. 178.  
 49. Kenneth S. Wuest, *Wuest's Word Studies From the Greek New Testament*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1973, Vol. 1, Galatians, pp. 129-130, italic in original.  
 50. See further, G. Richard Fisher, "The Mindless Mysticism of Madame Guyon," *The*

*Quarterly Journal*, January-March 1997, pp. 4, 12-15.  
 51. Francis Frangipane, "When Christ Is Formed in Us," *Charisma*, November 1993, pg. 10, italics in original.  
 52. Everett F. Harrison, editor, *Baker's Dictionary of Theology*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1973, pg. 102.  
 53. *Ibid.*  
 54. David Kirkwood, *Modern Myths About Satan and Spiritual Warfare*. Pittsburgh: Ethnos Press, 1994, pp. 81-82, italics in original.  
 55. Francis Frangipane, "Rising to Christ's Stature," *Charisma*, December 1994, pg. 18.  
 56. See further, "The Walk," (*Cornerstone*), op. cit., pg. 32.  
 57. *The Days of His Presence*, op. cit., pg. 35, italics and bold in original.  
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 59. *Ibid.*, pg. 153.  
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 61. See further, W.E. Vine, *Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*. Minneapolis:

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 62. Gerhard Kittel, editor, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1972, Vol. 5, pg. 865.  
 63. *The Days of His Presence*, op. cit., pg. 153.  
 64. Alva McClain, *The Greatness of the Kingdom*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1968, pp. 396-397.  
 65. Dwight Pentecost, *Things To Come*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Dunham Publishers, 1967, pp. 156-157, italics and ellipses in original.  
 66. Frederick F. Bruce in *Baker's Dictionary of Theology*, op. cit., pg. 193.  
 67. *The Days of His Presence*, op. cit., pp. 82-83.  
 68. *The Trumpet Shall Sound*, op. cit., pg. 247.  
 69. *The Days of His Presence*, op. cit., pg. 65, italic in original.  
 70. *Ibid.*, pp. 64-66.  
 71. *The Greatness of the Kingdom*, op. cit., pg. 337.  
 72. *River of Life Newsletter*, Vol. 12, No. 1, February 1999, pg. 5.  
 73. E-mail correspondence on file.

## DON STEWART

(continued from page 1)

almost appears robotic. Together they tout repetitiously the miracle power of prayer cloths, and "the point of contact" and the power of Stewart's intercession when he brings the prayer requests to his Arizona prayer mountain.

The investigative news program, *Inside Edition*, did a drive-by and then a flyover of his million-dollar-plus mansion, and reported on his continuing battle in court over his non-profit religious tax-exempt status.<sup>4</sup> Knowing Stewart's enormous holdings, it is hard to believe him when he claims that he has gone into a closet with only a jug of water for days to get a revelation.<sup>5</sup> Stewart looks like a man who has something to hide as he runs away from the *Inside Edition* crew and refuses interviews.

Stewart offers miracle prayer cloths that he claims will give healings and prosperity, and sends out computer-generated letters created to look hand-written and even claiming to be from his own hand. *Inside Edition* also interviewed a critical former employee as well as Trinity Foundation's president Ole Anthony, who turned up hundreds of prayer requests in a dumpster minus the cash and checks. *Inside Edition*, by means of a hidden camera, recorded brazen undisguised

appeals for money with followers being urged by Stewart to charge donations on their credit cards.

### BEHIND THE CURTAIN

The letter campaign and "blessed" trinkets are the brain child of a little-known Californian named Gene Ewing, who could be called the granddaddy of exploitative mailings. Ewing has created the mother of all appeals. *The Dallas Morning News* reported on Ewing in 1996 and his computer-generated letters constructed around hooks like brown paper prayer sheets, anointed coin wrappers, and faith shower caps. They said of this millionaire recluse:

"...the erstwhile Texas tent preacher is 'God's Ghostwriter' — an oft-used consultant to many of the nation's best-known evangelists. And with the mailing list of more than 1 million names, a computerized demographics system and a penchant for the trinket-driven sales pitch, he presides over a high-tech evangelical empire that has become a model for his better-known colleagues."<sup>6</sup>

Though unknown to the evangelical public, Ewing lives among the "rich and famous" of Hollywood:

"The reclusive **Gene Ewing** is among the least-known millionaire preachers in America. But

neighbors Marlo Thomas and Ed-die Murphy won't find Mr. Ewing preaching in church on Sunday mornings or on national television. Nope. Mr. Ewing is the head of a multi-million dollar marketing empire, an empire that trades on the hopes and dreams of God's people. ... It appears that this wizard of religion via direct mail was the genius behind saving Oral Roberts' *ministry* years ago."<sup>7</sup>

Dallas newspaper reporters Swindle and Wyatt further elaborated:

"The News obtained copies of direct-mail solicitations, all of which contained virtually identical language, but which are 'signed' by different evangelists including Robert Tilton, Rex Humbard, Frederick Eikerenkoetter (better known as 'Rev. Ike'), Don Stewart and W.V. Grant Jr. Based on the dates that they were received, the letters apparently first appeared under Mr. Ewing's signature."<sup>8</sup>

So much for personal letters from televangelists.

### IT'S A BIRD, IT'S A PLANE, IT'S DON!

To hear the accolades on Stewart's web site, one would think he is a walking bundle of miracles somewhat equivalent to Paul or maybe even Jesus:

“The overriding theme of Don’s message is ‘God wants to heal you everywhere you hurt.’ Respectfully called the ‘Evangelist of Compassion’. Don is touched and moved to action by the hurts of people. His preaching is simple, but dynamic, with a prophetic anointing as he flows in the Gifts of the Spirit, and a special anointing for healing, miracles and the Word of Knowledge. Thrilling testimonies of deliverance from all kinds of disease, sickness, and spiritual oppression are experienced in Don Stewart’s international crusade services. The lame walk, the deaf hear, the blind see, and the poor have the gospel preached to them!”<sup>9</sup>

One almost expects to hear: “He’s faster than a speeding bullet, more powerful than a locomotive, and leaps tall buildings in a single bound.” The above outlandish claims and buzz words are music to a Charismatic’s ears and Stewart knows it.

Stewart’s shallowness is all too evident as he uncritically, undiscerningly, and foolishly endorses healing claims from anywhere. He touts the mythical healings of St. Bernard and St. Francis of Assisi and states:

“Healing was also part of the early experience of the Adventists in this country, as well as the Churches of the Brethren. The first Latter Day Saints shared the belief in miracles of healing, and Joseph Smith referred to many stories of such.”<sup>10</sup>

Any thinking Christian would not appeal to medieval and Mormon “healings.”

### SHYSTER AND MENTOR

Who is this “miracle” man with a 40-year-old preaching career and a multimillion-dollar ministry? For that answer we need to go back to a place called Miracle Valley, Ariz., and a man named Asa Alonso Allen. To hear Stewart preach is to hear Allen all over again. Stewart was an evangelist and secretary-treasurer of Allen’s organization.

A.A. Allen was a shameless religious huckster who lived from 1911-1970. He ran a sensationalistic religious sideshow claiming miracles, healings, and risings from the dead. Allen even claimed that weird-looking things preserved in bottles were demons of various diseases that he had expelled from individuals. “Pickled devils” in Mason jars looking like spiders and toads were said to be disease demons.

Allen would chemically treat his forehead so a cross would appear there in the midst of sweaty preaching.<sup>11</sup> This is an old trick used also by Marjoe Gortner, a self-professed Pentecostal charlatan and spoofed by Steve Martin in his film, *Leap of Faith*.

According to apologist Hank Hanegraaff, Allen used many magician’s tricks including claims of changing dollar bills into twenties, fat melting off the overweight as they sat in services, and oil flowing from his hands. Both Benny Hinn and Rodney Howard-Browne have called Allen a great man of God.<sup>12</sup> Allen was called many things, including “the Spike Jones of the pulpit”<sup>13</sup> because of his resemblance to the zany musician.

Upon Allen’s death, Donald Lee Stewart, then 30 years old, claimed his mantle. He changed the name of Allen’s organization, Miracle Valley Fellowship, to the Don Stewart Evangelistic Association.<sup>14</sup>

Allen’s dark and secret side, his love of alcohol, was no secret to the Assemblies of God denomination. His unorthodox ways were no secret, either:

“Allen incorporated himself as an independent faith-healer in 1951, and started his widely circulated *Miracle Magazine* three years later. ... Allen heralded his television appearances with a newspaper ad that had become legendary in the annals of hyperbole: SEE! HEAR! ACTUAL MIRACLES HAPPENING BEFORE YOUR EYES! CANCER, TUMORS, GOITERS DISAPPEAR. CRUTCHES, BRACES, WHEELCHAIRS, STRETCHERS DISCARDED. CROSSED EYES

STRAIGHTENED. CAUGHT BY THE CAMERA AS THEY OCCURRED IN THE HEALING LINE BEFORE THOUSANDS OF WITNESSES. ... His disdain for press coverage resulted in his hiring of ‘goon squads’ to punch out anyone who showed up for Allen’s tent revivals with a notepad or camera.”<sup>15</sup>

Allen launched Miracle Life Fellowship International (aka, A.A. Allen Revivals) during World War II and claimed to have healed and propelled Leroy Jenkins into ministry in 1960. Jenkins was convicted of arson on a state trooper’s home and sentenced to 12 years in prison in 1979.<sup>16</sup>

According to the *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, Jenkins was arrested on more than one occasion on drug- and alcohol-related charges while in the ministry, and divorced his wife.<sup>17</sup> The *Calvary Contender* reports even more disturbing news about the faith healer:

“The thrice-married evangelist is said to combine ‘a little bit of Jesus, and a little bit of Elvis.’ His Las Vegas controversial marriage last Jan. 12 (later annulled), 16 days after his 71-year-old bride’s husband died, drew charges from her family that Jenkins wanted her fortune of about \$4 million (8/4 *Huntsville Times*).”<sup>18</sup>

Jenkins peddles miracle healing water from his Holy Hill Cathedral in Delaware, Ohio. He sells his miracle water in plastic gallon jugs for \$1.40 a bottle and claims it has healed people from various diseases.<sup>19</sup> So much for A.A. Allen’s “trophies.”

Allen divorced his wife Lexie in 1967. The only “miracle” is that Allen lived as long as he did with his severe drinking problem:

“The last straw came for many observers in 1956 when Allen was arrested on a drunk-driving charge in Knoxville, Tennessee. This incident plagued the preacher for the rest of his career, and resulted in his severing all ties to Assemblies of God, which was ever after the target of Allen’s behind-the-pulpit vitriol.

... people offering funds to the Allen ministry were assured that they would have bestowed upon them the 'power to get wealth' and the 'blessing of prosperity.'... A.A. Allen was found dead in a San Francisco hotel room on June 11 [1970]. The official cause of death was acute alcoholism."<sup>20</sup>

The *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements* mentions Allen's "sclerosis [sic] of the liver."<sup>21</sup>

Stewart, when asked about Allen's drunken lifestyle, evasively replied, "This part of his life was deeply, deeply personal."<sup>22</sup> Stewart went on to admit that when Allen was too drunk to preach, he and the staff would cover for him and sometimes whisk him offstage and take him to his room and put him to bed.<sup>23</sup>

Stewart further admitted, though Allen railed against doctors, he and the staff went to great lengths to hide and cover Allen's knee surgeries in San Francisco.<sup>24</sup>

Compounding the lies and deception was Stewart's (upon finding Allen dead in his hotel room) loading all the vodka bottles into a trash bag and putting them into a dumpster, and then trying to tidy up the room.<sup>25</sup> There were many attempts to cover up the cause of Allen's demise until the release of the autopsy report.

Stewart not only survived the reputation of his drunken mentor, but also an embezzlement charge from Allen's Board of Directors. Like his mentor, Stewart would later divorce his wife.

Stewart said Allen taught him that it was necessary to shock an audience, that Scripture could prove almost anything, and "don't forget your own self-interest."<sup>26</sup>

The historical aftermath of Allen's demise is interesting and quite bizarre. In 1987, James Randi noted:

"During the scramble to fill Allen's position, Miracle Valley went through a series of owners, none of them having his organizational genius. In 1975, more than 32,000 letters a month were still coming in when one of

Allen's acolytes, Don Stewart, a former Bible student from Clarkdale, Arizona, began running the operation. Stewart eventually established his own following in Phoenix, and is currently accused of arson and embezzlement by his church."<sup>27</sup>

Then things really heated up in the religious battle zone:

"Things came to a close in Miracle Valley amid bankruptcy proceedings in 1979, shortly after the all-black Christ Miracle Healing Center & Church was founded there by the Reverend Frances Thomas. The parishioners were blacks who went there — mainly from Chicago and parts of Mississippi — 'because God told them to.' There had been immediate conflict with white residents and older residents of the area, who by now wanted to put such phenomena as A.A. Allen behind them. Riots, bombings, and murders followed the deaths of five church members. This was characterized by Reverend Thomas as 'God's will.' Authorities found it more difficult to believe that the agonizing death of 6-year-old Therial Davis from a strangulated hernia was also 'God's will.' Neighbors had heard the child's screams for three days before the child finally succumbed, but they did nothing to interfere with the parents' constitutional right to refuse medical assistance and wait for divine intervention. The spirit, if not the body, of A.A. Allen was still alive in Miracle Valley."<sup>28</sup>

Miracle Valley lay in disuse and disrepair until a costly attempt at cleanup against a resistant Zoning Board in 1999. Since then, Melvin Harter, who claims God spoke to him about a Bible School there, has been trying to launch Miracle Valley Bible College and Seminary as "the only answer to the world and to the general church world."<sup>29</sup>

Harter seems unaware that many other Pentecostal ministries are claim-

ing the exact same thing about their efforts. It is pretty heady to think or claim one is the "only answer to the world."

Harter, claiming to have invested nearly \$100,000, says he wants to train "Holy Ghost anointed preachers" to "turn the world upside down," and is promoting a sanitized version of A.A. Allen's past, not mentioning the cause of Allen's untimely death. Harter has also posted web pages of Allen's past prophecies and sermons. In a strange way Allen's garbled influence does live on.

## MONEY MATTERS

Stewart is no novice when it comes to court battles, legal wrangles, and stonewalling groups such as the National Charities Information Bureau:

"...many church-linked groups decline to submit to that sort of scrutiny. One such: Feed My People International, an arm of the Don Stewart Association (a church). Prospective donors get heart-rending letters on behalf of starving children, with few or no facts about how the money is distributed. Three watchdog groups have asked for details and been turned down. ... Don Stewart's lawyer, J.C. Joyce of Tulsa, Okla., sees it differently. 'The people who are interested in the organizations don't want the financial information,' he says. 'The idiotic [groups] that want to harm the organizations want it.'"<sup>30</sup>

The Apostle Paul had different ideas about honesty, integrity, and fiscal accountability: "avoiding this: that anyone should blame us in this lavish gift which is administered by us — providing honorable things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but in the sight of all men" (2 Corinthians 8:20-21). The context here is that Paul surrounded himself with men so as to be honest and accountable in the handling of Church money. Paul realized that he had to have a good reputation not only before God, but also before men. Charles Ryrie tells us that these verses indicate that three men "acted as trustees of the money

to insure complete propriety in the handling of it."<sup>31</sup> Paul told Timothy that an elder "must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil" (1 Timothy 3:7).

Lack of accountability is a recipe for dishonesty and failure. One fallen pastor reported that all his difficulties and failures happened because he "created an environment where he had to answer to no one."<sup>32</sup>

Internal Revenue Service documents show that Stewart used ministry funds for a lavish vacation in Hawaii for himself and his wife and for travel for non-employees.<sup>33</sup>

Stewart continued to battle on in court through 1997. *The Business Journal* reported that the IRS was investigating his organization for mail fraud.<sup>34</sup> It was reported that of the \$8 million raised annually, less than six percent went to overseas ministries, while a special attorney was being paid a retainer of \$10,000 per month. Stewart and his wife were reported to be "receiving salaries of about \$250,000."<sup>35</sup>

The above is reminiscent of the flamboyant Aimee Semple McPherson Hutton, founder of the Foursquare Gospel Church. In the 1920s and 1930s, she was in court constantly in over 40 lawsuits. Two-thirds of them were settled out of court over time, and at one point she set up through her Angelus Temple the "Aimee Semple McPherson Defense Fund."<sup>36</sup>

In spite of a dwindling following and finances because of the negative publicity, Stewart was able to mount a comeback in 1998, as reported by Hanna Rosin in the *Washington Post*.<sup>37</sup> Rosin described how a number of disgraced televangelists were revived with a new constituency simply by repackaging themselves for an African-American audience via the Black Entertainment Network (BET). Stewart had found a new, very lucrative, circuit.

## BLACK ARTS

Discernment ministries are not only concerned with Stewart's lavish lifestyle, fraudulent money-raising

schemes, IRS problems, obvious lack of integrity, and overblown hype regarding his powers, but more so with his unbiblical teachings while claiming a "divine calling." His published statements are replete with New Age buzzwords and overt occult terminology. He demonstrates either a complete ignorance and naïveté in regard to Scripture, or an outright promotion of metaphysical and occult practices. Perhaps it is just his ad men wanting him to be trendy.

In a garbled message that promotes metaphysics, holistic medicine, and visualization, we have the following from Stewart's organization:

"We here at Don Stewart Association believe in miracle healing which includes Physical healing, mental healing, as well as spiritual healing. We know miracle healing happens in many forms. Metaphysical healing consists of the body, soul and spirit. Metaphysical healing is a direct result of prayer meditation on God. Many don't believe in metaphysical healing or want to believe in miracle healing. However, we circle the world documenting miracle healings both in physical healing and spiritual miracles as they are reported to us."<sup>38</sup>

## HOLISTIC GRAB BAG

The testimony to Don Stewart goes on:

"Don Stewart also strongly believes in preventative holistic medicine which aids in spiritual miracles, physical healing, and mental healing when it comes to herbs and supplements. After all, you are what you eat! Be looking for our pages on vitamin supplements coming soon. Holistic medicine is God's way of providing natural healing for the whole man."<sup>39</sup>

We certainly believe that God can heal in answer to a believer's prayer and that He may choose not to as well. The question is not God's power. We have every right to question modern claims of healers, espe-

cially those with false doctrine and belief. We know that God Himself documented three miracle periods of approximately 70 years each (Moses and Joshua — Elijah and Elisha — Christ and the Apostles). So the Bible does not promise miracles all the time, every moment.

We would not deny that judicious use of vitamins and supplements can be of some help to us. However, one should always be certain of the interactions of vitamins, herbs, and minerals with other medications and there are publications to help determine that.

Dr. James Rybacki and Dr. James Long warn:

"Talk to your doctor or pharmacist BEFORE combining any herbal medicine with any other medicine. REMEMBER, herbal medicines are NOT presently regulated as prescription medicines are. ... I strongly advise you to **share the responsibility** for safe and effective drug treatment. Make sure every prescriber and pharmacist who helps provide your health care is aware of **all** the medicines you are taking."<sup>40</sup>

The problem with Stewart's blanket endorsement of holistic medicine is that holistic medicine (treating the whole person, sometimes called alternative medicine) can be a grab bag of everything from reading the iris, to coffee enemas, to indoctrination into eastern religions. One has to use much discernment in looking at the myriad of alternate medical claims to sort out scripturally the good from the bad. A discerning Christian must also ask about the philosophy and belief system behind every practice.

Some of the theology behind some holistic practices is radically different than that of the New Testament.

The word "holistic" can at times be a New Age catch-all word for use of crystals, dreams, TM, mind therapies, Taoism, Tibetan Reiki, pantheism, and a host of other occultic practices.<sup>41</sup> One will find the term "holistic" used over and over in New Age periodicals. One must be discerning and

selective in following any practice, no matter what the claims or testimonials. Caring for one's body and health must be done in a balanced biblical way and never in violation of scriptural principles. Any system of health care should never violate the biblical world view. Endorsing "holistic" in such a broad and undiscerning way would be akin to endorsing, let's say, "religion." Just what do we mean by that?

For some people holistic pursuits is religion. Since many that follow the holistic way undiscerningly endorse anything that is "spiritual," we must ask what they mean by that term. There are many spiritualities being promoted today, including Native American spirituality and even voodoo. We know that not all spiritualities are good. Some may be demonic (1 John 4).

Consider this description of spirituality:

"... Neale D. Walsch author of *Conversations with God I and II*, tells readers, 'in the name of God,' to follow their feelings, reject biblical moral boundaries, and embrace the UN and its global spirituality."<sup>42</sup>

### SOMEWHERE OVER THE RAINBOW

However, it gets progressively worse:

"Don Stewart believes that you can get direction from God through *his* prophetic gift. Don wants to send you a word from God ... a vision of what God wants you to do. Prayer meditation, visualization and dreaming are key to seeing your vision come to pass. Don teaches how to dream big and visualize your dream."<sup>43</sup>

There are major flaws and errors here that are glaring. We already have "a word from God" in the Scriptures. Worse, Stewart casts himself as our mediator. This displaces Christ who is the *only* Mediator. We don't need direction from God through Stewart; we need and get direction from God

through Christ, the Living Word, and the Bible, the written Word.

Stewart's suggestion is undisguised mysticism with Stewart taking the place of Jesus and the Bible. It is outlandish and heretical, humanistic, and gnostic.

Then we must ask, what is the purpose of our lives: our own dreams, or our maturity in Christ and the glory of God? We must realize that *our* dreams are not a biblical goal. This pursuit of our dreams is self-centered, subjective, and seems to reduce God to a servant who meets our desires and expectations for personal gain or fulfillment. In this view, God is a vending machine waiting for the right coinage. This brazenly says, "to man be the glory" rather than "to God be the glory." This is "positive thinking" without a goal, a direction, a chart, or a compass.

Stewart is simply promoting the old worn-out ideas of New Thought promulgated for years in self-help books. Chris Thurman has explored the history of self-help books in America and writes:

"A different kind of self-help book began to appear in the early twentieth century. Based on a philosophy referred to as 'New Thought' and tied to the writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson, these self-help books stressed the importance of the spiritual over the material while still focusing on worldly success. The thrust of many of these books was that God is some kind of a spiritual power or force and that all we have to do is use our minds to let Him know what our wishes are and He will provide. ... The bottom line here was you just needed the right attitude and a prosperity mind set, and everything else will take care of itself."<sup>44</sup>

John Ankerberg and John Weldon inform us that New Thought is "A general openness to the psychic and occult realm reinterpreted through New Thought metaphysics."<sup>45</sup> It is essentially a religion of the "self."

### I SEE, I SEE, I THINK I SEE

Stewart also promotes "visualization." Dr. David Sneed explains visualization:

"Visualization has its roots in Hinduism, which teaches that all the universe is illusion. Only the spirit has substance. What we see around us and interpret as reality is really nothing but a figment of our imagination. If reality is an illusion, then mental powers can alter it. All we need do to make something different is to visualize it the way we want it to be. Hindus believe you can actually 'create' your own reality, thus putting humans in the driver's seat instead of God. ... In his book on healing visualization, Gerald Epstein, M.D., describes his imagery exercises as a 'form of waking dreams — that can make reality.'"<sup>46</sup>

Dave Hunt and Tom McMahon warn:

"The most powerful way that occultists use thoughts is to visualize some particular 'thought-form' in the mind. This shamanistic methodology has been adopted by Humanistic and Transpersonal psychologies; and under the umbrella of Christian psychology has come into the church. ... Occultists have long held that through visualization, thoughts can thereby be materialized into existence on the physical plane."<sup>47</sup>

Hunt and McMahon warn further that attempts at trying to visualize God and Jesus may set up a situation where "the definite possibility exists of opening the door to demonic contact or even of acquiring a 'spirit guide' that we think is the real Jesus."<sup>48</sup>

As we are seeing, what Stewart advocates is frightening for the thinking Christian. The world of our fallen imagination is unpredictable and can be a doorway to altered consciousness or the demonic realm. Imaging techniques are well known in the world of ritual magic and other forms of witchcraft. Donald Tyson in his handbook,

*Ritual Magic, What It Is And How To Do It*, instructs on magical and occultic techniques:

“One is ritual visualization. To change yourself, it is only necessary to repeatedly visualize in your mind that you have become the type of person you long to be, and before many weeks or months you will outwardly begin to resemble that person. ... there are many other magical techniques that are equally effective.”<sup>49</sup>

Believers are to long to be and work to be all that God wants them to be. This is done not through imagination but by daily study and practical application of God’s Word. Doers of the Word are blessed (James 1:25). Our dreams and visualizations are always suspect.

Lakota Indians practice a form of visualization called *hanbleceya* which means “crying for a vision.” As they fast, call on the spirits, and move into altered states of consciousness, it is all done “for healing; to acquire the relationships with the spirits necessary to become a SHAMAN; or to receive guidance about difficult personal decisions.”<sup>50</sup> Why would any Christian want to identify with a pagan or occult world view?

Christian physicians Donald O’Mathuna and Walt Larimore say:

“Clearly, using visualization to call up spirits is prohibited in the Bible. Going deeper into one’s own psyche can have adverse effects, just as occur sometimes with meditation. ... However, there is no evidence to show that visualization itself helps cure any illness or bring about faster healing. Use of visualization to contact our ‘inner selves’ or the spiritual realm is prohibited biblically — and dangerous.”<sup>51</sup>

Alan Morrison traces the “Christianized” versions of visualization starting with the mystical goals of Ignatius Loyola (1495-1556). It is hard to believe, as Morrison shows, that this strain of error is selling in “Christian” bookstores through the writings of Quaker Richard Foster, Episcopalian Morton Kelsey, Agnes Sanford,

David Yonggi Cho, Kenneth Copeland, and many others. Morrison concludes rightly that visualization leads to idolatry, illusion, and ultimately can be the doorway to spiritism. His entire section, with all its extensive documentation, should be read and digested by every Christian.<sup>52</sup>

So-called visualization can be no more than wishful thinking or human imagination. During the time of Noah, God destroyed the world because the thoughts and imaginations of man were continually evil (Genesis 6:5, 8:21). Graven images, forbidden by God, are the product of man’s fallen imagination. Jeremiah indicted the people of his day for their evil imaginations (3:17, 7:24, 9:14, 11:8, 13:10, 16:12, 18:12, 23:17). Paul talked of those who “became vain in their imaginations” (Romans 1:21). This root sin seems to play out in every generation; now it is playing out in the Church with a fury.

Listen to where Carl Jung’s imagination took him:

“In December 1913, Jung deliberately and repeatedly induced trance states using methods he had learned from his experience with spiritualism. This technique, which he would later call ‘active imagination,’ sparked a series of intense visionary experiences that Jung interpreted as his direct mystical initiation into one of the most ancient of the pagan mystery cults of the Hellenistic world.”<sup>53</sup>

## DESCENT INTO DARKNESS

How far can the human imagination go? Look around you. The *Christian News* reports that body piercing is now evolving into mutilations, branding, scarification, and steel balls and other metal shapes being planted under the skin to create, for instance, devil’s horns protruding from the forehead. One case is cited regarding Eric Sprague who filed his teeth to a sharp point, split his tongue and put implants over his eyes for a horned effect so as to resemble a lizard. He said this was the fulfillment of his childhood daydreams and fantasies.

CN concluded: “Beware of evil imaginations. We can’t always control what flits through [our] minds, but we can control, by the grace of God, what dwells there.”<sup>54</sup>

Even the old secular song recognized the fickleness of imagination as the crooners used to sing, “imagination is silly, it makes the world willy nilly.” Without the parameters of Scripture and the restraint of the indwelling Holy Spirit and grace, our tainted and sinful imaginations can go anywhere and justify anything.

To see the length and depth to which Satan can motivate the fallen human imagination, one only needs to look at the Holocaust. David Rausch called Auschwitz, “Every Evil the Mind Can Conceive,” and then quoted Otto Friedrich:

“The evidence of Auschwitz has demonstrated many things about humanity. ... It has demonstrated that men (and women) are capable of committing every evil the mind can conceive, that there is no natural or unwritten law that says of any atrocity whatsoever: This shall not be done.”<sup>55</sup>

The sad thing is that sometimes we try to sanctify imaginative guesswork by calling it a conviction from God. Calvary Chapel pastor Chuck Smith in 1978 said he was “convinced that the Lord was coming for His Church before the end of 1981. I could be wrong, but it’s a deep conviction in my heart, and all my plans are predicated upon that belief.”<sup>56</sup> To Smith’s credit (though not strongly admitting he was wrong), he retracted in 1997 and said that though he had been convinced then, he realized it was not the case. We must be very tentative about our predictions, “convinced” or not, since they may be our imaginations working overtime.

Paul Coughlin is absolutely right when he speaks of the “frail and frayed line separating prophetic revelation from human speculation.”<sup>57</sup> The Apostle Paul urged that we “give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine” (1 Timothy 4:13), and not give attention to *feelings* and *imagination*s.

Jonathan Edwards affirmed at least five positive signs by which experiences should be judged. Stewart and the new Charismatics fail on most, if not all, of these points. Edwards said that experiences of “awakenings or rapture” were only genuine when: “they raise the esteem of Jesus ... they impel people away from sin and lust. ... people are led back to the teachings of the Bible ... people are led to truth instead of error ... [and] they promote love among people.”<sup>58</sup>

Stewart’s troubled history and obviously false teaching show him to be hopelessly confused or a practitioner of deception, or perhaps both. His battles with the law and unethical practices are more than red flags to any thinking Christian. Loud warnings should be sounded about the one who is obviously more profit than prophet. He is indeed a clone of his mentor A.A. Allen.

### SHAMELESS SALES PITCH

It is obvious from watching Stewart’s meetings that he uses cold readings and pre-interviews. Pre-interviews are a time-honored trick among many of “healer” evangelists. A staff member of the faith healer will circulate among those entering the service, get acquainted (learn personal background), and further learn of their sicknesses, burdens, and heartaches. This is then passed on to the “healer” in various ways (sometimes on note cards) to be used as a “word of knowledge.”

When the evangelist says, “I have not ever spoken to you or met you, have I?” — he is telling the truth and the effect is electrifying. The real truth though is that someone close to him has met them. Often people unsteady on their feet are placed in wheelchairs provided at the meeting and later wheeled to the front and pulled out. The drama is mesmerizing. It is hard for people to believe they are being manipulated and conned in this way. It is hard to believe that anyone would do it in the name of God.

All of these kinds of manipulations and circus tricks are fully explained by James Randi in his book, *The Faith*

*Healers*.<sup>59</sup> After reading about the ins and outs of these techniques, one wonders how they could have so easily been taken in by and believed in Stewart’s “supernatural” powers. We do not always see what we think we see. Many so-called faith healers who are obviously without conscience have been using these shameless scams for years.

Stewart openly admits that these tricks are used. In his own words:

“...sometimes an evangelist might misunderstand the problem. He might have someone demonstrate a healing by bending over to touch their toes when they didn’t have a problem bending over in the first place. The audience wouldn’t catch that and might believe that they had seen a miracle. Well, what was an honest mistake by the evangelist soon became a formula to resort to again and again if things weren’t happening. Eventually, most of the evangelists had wheelchairs available for people who had bad backs and couldn’t stand in a healing line for hours. But when the evangelist got to them and pulled them up out of the wheelchair, some in the audience thought they were walking for the first time or that they had come to the revival in that wheelchair.”<sup>60</sup>

Later he says, “Kathryn Kuhlman rented hundreds of wheelchairs for her big crusades ... she didn’t stop the service to explain that the person being wheeled to the front in a wheelchair was only someone with back trouble. ... It happens in my own ministry.”<sup>61</sup>

During recent broadcasts, Stewart offered a “red anointed miracle handkerchief” that he promises will bring healing and blessing. He also extends “a prophetic word from Don Stewart,” with his wife Brenda assuring the audience there is a miracle just for them. She nods approval in mechanical fashion at every word Stewart says. Along with the above he also offers a booklet, *How to Use a Point of Contact to Receive Your Miracle*, in

which he claims to show “how to release your faith for healing and prosperity.”<sup>62</sup>

Stewart intones a litany regarding “a point of contact.” The point of contact teaching is described by Robert Liichow of Inner City Discernment Ministry as “fraud perpetuated on many of God’s most vulnerable people, the poor and the biblically ignorant. ... [it] is a form of witchcraft known as sympathetic magic” along with other “shameful gimmicks used by unscrupulous ministers for the sole purpose of increasing their personal wealth.”<sup>63</sup>

The Apostle Paul wrote, “Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content. I know how to be abased and how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:11-13). Was he faithless? Was Paul faithless when he offered Timothy other means for his stomach problems and infirmities? Paul did not suggest that Timothy use him as a point of contact. None of the Apostles went around offering scrolls for prosperity or promising us something if we got on their mail list.

Last summer, the Missouri Attorney General filed a lawsuit alleging 94 violations and consumer fraud against psychic Miss Cleo who appears in national television commercials, speaking with a Caribbean accent and claiming psychic abilities through Tarot cards.<sup>64</sup> It would be wonderful if such laws existed for religious charlatans and religious hucksters who sell cures, healings, and prophecies, and over-promise to needy people with the peddling of false hope and the use of cheap gimmicks. They then retire to their luxury mansions, ensconced in opulence, unconcerned with the fallout, hurt, disappointment and despair left behind. In the light of Stewart’s questionable financial dealings, his lavish lifestyle, his gimmickry, and his blatant false teaching — *there ought to be a law!*

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## EDITORIALS

(continued from page 2)

Wilkinson himself pledges in the book's Preface that this brief, and heretofore uncelebrated, prayer found in Scripture "contains the key to a life of extraordinary favor with God" and that those who regularly "pray [this] daring prayer that God always answers" are "seeing miracles happen on a regular basis" (emphasis added). Can anyone promise miracles on a regular basis? Would miracles "on a regular basis" be miracles anymore, or would they just be ordinary occurrences?

Jabez's prayer, found in 1 Chronicles 4:10, apparently has become the Church's first mantra of the new

millennium that claims to impart the right formula for "extraordinary favor with God," "miracles," and "significant changes in your life" (preface and pg. 86). The first chapter of Ephesians already tells us that if we are in Christ, we already have extraordinary favor with God. That truth needs to be restudied.

The whole concept sounds more in the line of the theology of the Word-Faith movement, and Wilkinson has tried to defend his teaching that "one daily prayer" will allow the Christian to "break through to the life you were meant to live." All of us wish it were that simple. No doubt Word-Faith followers will use this book.

Popular Bible teacher Bill Gothard is a strong example of one who imposes a plethora of unbiblical interpreta-

tions and strange ideas upon his devotees to get them on the pathway to godly conformity and spiritual maturity. Gothard has guidelines to spirituality for everyone. No Cabbage Patch Kids dolls for children, no contemporary Christian music for adolescents, restricted periods of sexuality between married adults, a detailed circumcision ritual complete with a wall certificate, and ritual prayers to cast off consequences of a father's sins are but a few of Gothard's many mandates.

But alluring "breakthroughs" to living the victorious Christian life need not come by way of best-selling authors, noted Bible teachers, or those prominent on the religious airwaves. They *can* come from the pulpits of local churches.

Consider one method of a local pastor who informed his congregation how to obtain "God's cleansing, God's sweeping power of purity." This pastor and his wife, as they would move into a new house, would always go room to room praying over each room, to remove the consequences of any sinfulness which may have occurred there. (When they would check into a motel room, they would also pray over the room to inhibit the curse left in the wake of previous sinful activity.) If they moved into a newly built home, their prayers would be against any ungodly contractor who worked on the premise. Why? "Because God wants us to be pure," the pastor told his flock.

His system is tragically unbiblical. No amount of praying over motel rooms or rooms in our home will ever bring us to a place of purity in our lives. We must deal with our own heart issues. The heart is the seedbed of sinfulness — not the environment around us (such as a motel room). Scripture commands, "Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life" (Proverbs 4:23). Can our Lord's words be any more penetrating? "Are you still so dull? ... But the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart, and these make a man 'unclean.' For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander" (Matthew 15:16, 18-19).

This whole concept is a mutation of employing spiritual warfare against the likes of generational and territorial spirits and to remove the demonic strongholds they possess. While Christians may wish to use such "spiritual warfare" techniques, they do so apart from the authority of Scripture. The criteria for those employing this type of procedure rests solely upon subjective experience, for nowhere in the New Testament writings did Paul (or the other New Testament writers) ever engage in or command such a practice.

When one employs a doctrine or practice apart from the prescription of Scripture, it can have disastrous effects. Consider, for example, the methodology of the local pastor. How far does one take such activity? Does it stop with the purchase of a home, or should it include

the purchase of an automobile? (It shouldn't matter if the car is new or used. Remember, like a new home, a new car may have had an ungodly auto worker who helped build the car, or all sorts of sinful activity may have occurred within a previously owned automobile.)

And then just how much further do we take such theology? Should we also employ a cleansing ritual prayer next time we start to push a shopping cart at our local grocery store? Who knows what demons may linger there if we don't? A previous customer (who used the very cart you are now pushing) may have been an adulterer or an alcoholic or a homosexual or a thief — or any combination of the above. Perhaps even the cart itself was used to haul cases of beer and other types of alcohol.

Taxi cabs, airplanes, pay telephones, and even mailboxes — where does the madness end?

When one stops and takes a sobering and biblical view of such activity, they will see it not as a pathway to breaking and overcoming spiritual strongholds, but as having the very opposite effect — an effect which places one under excessive and unnecessary spiritual baggage and a stronghold of fear. Moreover, it moves the believer into a life of paranoia and to an unhealthy and unbiblical preoccupation with the demonic; having to bind and destroy demonic entities and strongholds. It causes one to become more focused on evil spiritual forces, than upon the author and finisher of our faith (Hebrews 12:2). Such obsessions are not too far removed from the bizarre and twisted "curse" theology taught by self-proclaimed occult expert Rebecca Brown.

Scripture is clear as to the impotency of Satan and his host of demons. Consider the following:

- Satan cannot harm believers — "...and the evil one cannot harm him" (1 John 5:18).
- Satan must flee when resisted — "Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you" (James 4:7).
- Satan has no authority over Christians — "For He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son He loves" (Colossians 1:13).
- Satan has been disarmed and defeated — "And having disarmed the powers and authorities, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross" (Colossians 2:15).
- Satan and his works are destroyed — "...so that by His death He might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil" (Hebrews 2:14), and "The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work" (1 John 3:8).
- God protects His own against Satan's attack — "Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has?" (Job 1:10).

Christians allow themselves to be burdened with spiritual baggage at the hands of self-assuming teachers because they fail to realize the importance of knowing God's Word. These techniques, with their claim of divine intervention and triumph, offer no hope or help to the soul weary with sin and striving for a life pleasing to God. Pastor and author David Kirkwood says, "The first step in preparing to win in our struggle against Satan and evil spirits is to know what God has said. If we don't know what God has said, we won't recognize Satan's lies. If we don't know what God has said, we won't be able to believe what He has said or do what He said" (*Modern Myths About Satan and Spiritual Warfare*, pg. 153).

We must remember, too, that the ruts of sin can run deep and, in some cases, may entail a lifelong process of working through to sanctification on specific issues. Instant means of blessing (such as 30-day prayer formulas) or bizarre spiritual warfare to crush the effects of sin (by throwing in the trash a child's doll or praying over motel rooms) are not part of God's plan for us to be transformed into the image of His Son (see Ephesians 4:17-6:18).

Such unorthodox and unbiblical solutions only do more harm than good for the believer. God's Word is sufficient to equip the believer for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16-17) and His grace is sufficient to work perseverance so that we will be mature and complete, not lacking anything (James 1:2-4).

—MKG

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## NEWS UPDATES

(continued from page 3)

Meyer refused to speak to the *Post-Dispatch*, her hometown newspaper, about the tragedy. When Repps Hudson phoned Manila, a woman told the reporter that "Meyer was unavailable to come to the phone."

Meyer claims to receive "words" from God for protection and the protection of others. She tells the story of walking through an airport corridor when God told her to pray in the Spirit. She prayed and spoke in tongues as she walked to the gate. As she arrived at the gate, she noticed a family of Satanists sitting, waiting to board the airplane. However, in her Philippine crusade appearance, no apparent word of knowledge for the protection of attendees came from the evangelist.

Meyer has stated, "Yes, I do hear from God because I spend a lot of time with God." She also has claimed, "I'm not a prophet of God. I'm a woman of God that's preaching the gospel. I operate with a prophetic flare. And God gives me words and things."

The disaster was the deadliest hotel fire in the Philippines and the worst such catastrophe in the

country since a fire at a discotheque killed 160 people in 1996.

—MKG

## RANDY CLARK RESIGNS FROM VINEYARD

Randy Clark, the man who was pivotal within the Vineyard Christian Fellowship during the past decade, has resigned from the movement. For most Christians, Clark is an unfamiliar name and face. Yet, despite his lack of fame, his direct influence upon the movement placed an indelible impression which is known to many familiar with modern-day revivals and impartation services.

In the summer of 1993, Clark was pastor of the Vineyard Christian Fellowship in south St. Louis. He claims to have been emotionally, spiritually, and physically on the brink of burnout, but was invigorated after speaking to a colleague who had just returned from a conference led by self-proclaimed "Holy Ghost bartender" Rodney Howard-Browne.

Clark then personally attended a Howard-Browne meeting in Tulsa, Okla., at Kenneth Hagin, Jr.'s Rhema Bible Church. He went in spite of his theological differences with Hagin because Clark claims, "The Lord spoke to me immediately, and said, 'You have a denominational spirit. How badly do you want to be touched afresh?'"

At a Vineyard regional meeting in Lake Geneva, Wis., Clark told of the Tulsa meeting. This forum allowed news of the phenomenon to reach a large and influential constituency within the movement. A short time later, John Arnott, pastor of the Airport Vineyard in Toronto, invited Clark to Toronto to transplant the new message. And, as they say, the rest is history.

Clark's sudden and unexpected resignation from the Vineyard came by way of an August 4 letter directed to his fellow Vineyard pastors. In the letter, Clark wrote, "It is what God has been doing and is continuing to do in my life that has brought about this process and decision to leave the Vineyard." He further said that he "was feeling a growing discomfort fitting in the Vineyard." Clark denied that his resignation was the result of past actions by Vineyard leaders which caused him grief. "My hurt occurred nearly five years ago. No, I am not leaving over the past," he stated.

Clark did acknowledge that some of his theological views caused estrangement from fellow movement members.

"I was told that my Arminian leanings were alienating me from about 70% of the Vineyards. ... More particularly my open view of God was alienating me from many Vineyards," he wrote in his letter. Clark revealed his

association with open theist Greg Boyd, stating that he had invited Boyd to speak with him at two of his conferences over the past few years. But, Clark maintains, it has only been recently that he read Boyd's volume on the subject, so "I guess I was a case of guilt by association."

In his letter, Clark continued to stress experience over doctrine. In addressing the theological issues that were causing alienation, he wrote, "I thought those types of things were not big in the Vineyard, that what really mattered was whether or not we were ministering to the sick, the poor, the lost, the demonized, in the power of the Spirit and with the love of God; and that we were committed to planting churches; churches, which moved naturally in the supernatural without hype and/or manipulation."

Clark wrote his resignation was effective September 2001 and says his departure from the Vineyard has "been clearly called by God." He will be moving his recently established ministry, Global Awakening Apostolic Missions Network, to Harrisburg, Pa., where he plans to team up to form an Apostolic Center with Pastor Charles Stock. "There are supernatural reasons for going to Harrisburg. Suffice to say that there were many words to leave St. Louis and go to Harrisburg," Clark contends. These prophetic words are said to have come "through [his] own two oldest children" and "from other prophetic people," one of whom "had a divine visitation."

Clark first became a part of the Vineyard in September 1984. The movement grew under the direction and leadership of the late "power evangelism" guru John Wimber.

—MKG

## CROSSING OVER TOO FAR?

Psychic John Edward purports to communicate with the dead. His necromancy has gained popularity through *Crossing Over With John Edward*, a television show which airs on WCBS-TV in New York, on the Sci-Fi cable network, and on other outlets nationwide. On the broadcast, Edward professes to deliver messages to audience members from their dead relatives. This past fall, his program gained even more success when it was launched into syndication.

In October, the show announced that Edward would attempt to communicate with victims of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon. Steve Rosenberg, Studios USA domestic syndication president, claimed that relatives of the victims approached Edward to do the programs. Rosenberg also said the shows "would be done tastefully" and that "it seemed wrong not to do it." Some considered the planned broadcasts as an attempt to increase ratings during the "November sweeps."

However, within hours of the initial announcement, Studios USA stated that it was canceling its plans to air the programs. Rosenberg said the decision came as the result of "a reaction that none of us expected." Segments with Edward and family members of the terrorist attacks had already been recorded, but will not be broadcast. Studio executives feared that the programs would offend many people and, in the long run, harm — not help — ratings.

Critics of Edward claim the accuracy rate of his communications from the dead is about 20 or 30 percent. That rate is likened to the principles of slot machines: just enough to keep people interested and involved. Others conclude that Edward uses the classic technique of "cold reading," which employs assumptions, generalizations, and subtle manipulations.

For the Christian, Scripture is clear about avoiding all forms of necromancy.

—MKG

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## BOOKS IN REVIEW

(continued from page 24)

of God. It is a book of both history and theology — yet one that is within the comprehension of any lay person.

Even in the few sections which specifically address "authority" problems within the Southern Baptist denomination, a non-Southern Baptist can greatly learn from their error and the action taken to correct the error. For example, the recently modified *Baptist Faith and Message* (revised in June 2000) eliminated what was referred to as the "criterion loophole" which, in essence, allows one to adopt a theology on the basis of what he (or she) believes Jesus would have taught. During my years as a Sunday school teacher in Southern Baptist churches, this reviewer has repeatedly come up against such mindsets. It was a problem not borne out of a flawed Southern Baptist statement of faith, but out of a lack of devotion to the authority of the Bible. Ultimately, it is a matter of what one wants Scripture to say, not what it actually says. It is a hermeneutical fallacy which unquestionably transcends denominational boundaries.

As Draper and Keathley draw their book to a close, they stated that "the next big issue for Christians" is "the sufficiency of Scripture." Private revelation, the introduction of psychological and social theories, and the supplanting of the preaching of the Word are some of the more common practices. While such undermining of the sufficiency of Scripture is quite recognizable within Charismatics and the modern-day revival movements, these toxic seeds have taken root in conservative churches as well.

*Biblical Authority* is a much needed book for our day and time.

—MKG



# Books in Review

## "I JUST WANTED MORE LAND" - JABEZ

by Gary E. Gilley

Xulon Press, 107 pages, \$7.99

Pastor Gary E. Gilley's exposé of *The Prayer of Jabez* is a pithy and perceptive analysis. Bruce Wilkinson's megabestseller has taken Christendom by storm and has developed from a small, single, 92-page volume to a deluge of editions marketed for various age groups (from pre-schoolers to adults). There are also Jabez Bible covers, Jabez desk calendars (with 1 Chronicles 4:10 on every page), Jabez music CDs, Jabez ballpoint pens, and beyond.

Gilley observes, "For some inexplicable reason, this newest fad is flying under the radar of otherwise discerning Christians" (pg. 14). His warning is not unwarranted. He examines the appeal of Jabez, arguing, "Obviously, this prayer is chosen because it is the type of prayer that relates well to our current generation of Christians" (pg. 35).

Gilley carefully demonstrates how "Wilkinson's theology is much closer to the prosperity gospel than to biblical Christianity." Gilley sees a real danger emerging in that "Wilkinson has borrowed a page from the prosperity gospel's handbook and is offering it to Christians, some of whom perhaps have never been exposed to such teaching before. And he is doing so with great success" (pg. 37).

Gilley's evaluation shows that "Wilkinson delivers a number of anecdotal, superficial, and unsubstantiated illustrations to strengthen his case" (pg. 40). After reviewing Gilley's many citations of the unbiblical and faulty notions promoted in the Wilkinson volume, the discerning Christian will, without doubt, have to ask just how this theologically unhealthy book has sold more than 6 million copies in the first year alone. It speaks to the sad condition of the Church today.

However, "*I Just Wanted More Land*" - *Jabez* is not solely a critique of *The Prayer of Jabez*. It is much more. It doesn't just tell you what Wilkinson does wrong in respect to proper biblical interpretations, but it tells you

how to do it right. The second section of the book establishes for the reader precise methods of how to study and understand the Bible. Had Wilkinson (a Dallas Theological Seminary graduate) employed the basic laws of hermeneutics (which Gilley surveys), he would not have resorted to "story-theology," "testimonies," and the "abstruse experiences of men and women" to buttress his approach to prayer. Wilkinson's concept is, as Gilley notes, a prayer of selfishness without a scriptural base.

"*I Just Wanted More Land*" - *Jabez* is a significant book, not only for sounding a warning against the danger of poor Bible interpretation, but for training its readers how to do it right.

—MKG

## BIBLICAL AUTHORITY

by James T. Draper & Kenneth Keathley

Broadman & Holman, 147 pages, \$12.99

In a technical sense, *Biblical Authority*, is a book written by Southern Baptists to Southern Baptists. However, the breadth of this volume goes well beyond any one particular denomination. The book's subtitle, "The Critical Issue for the Body of Christ," more accurately suggests the substance and scope of biblical authority.

Just how crucial is biblical authority? Draper and Keathley maintain that "many in the church have shifted from divine revelation to rationalism as their ultimate base of authority. This tragic shift had led us into religious experience without theological foundation, situational ethics without absolutes, and evangelism without an adequate biblical concept of our lost condition or God's revealed response" (pg. xi).

The pair explain how "Christians have slowly moved away from the historic position on the nature of the Bible" to "reliance upon mystical personal experience instead of revealed truth" and to an "unjustified attachment to human reasoning" (pp. 1-2). When considering such comments by the authors, one can easily see how the problem is just not confined to Southern Baptists.

The challenges to scriptural authority and each specific response presented in the volume will greatly aid any Christian's understanding and appreciation for the Word

(continues on page 23)

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