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The Leaven of Lakewood Joel Osteen's Appealing But Aberrant Message

by Robert S. Liichow
with G. Richard Fisher

Many would look at Houston's Lakewood Church, with its 30,000 people attending services each Sunday in a 16,000-seat arena that once was the home of the Houston Rockets basketball team, as the epitome of church success. But that success was achieved at a cost to sound doctrine and spiritual integrity.

Lakewood, a Charismatic, Word Faith powerhouse in the 21st century, was founded by the late John Osteen, who started his pastoral career as a Southern Baptist. After receiving "the baptism in the Holy Ghost in 1958,"¹ he became enamored with the Charismatic renewal movement. In 1959, he left the Southern Baptist Convention and described his exodus in these terms:

"One day I was sailing through life in my little Baptist boat. I began to study the Bible in my search for deeper things. As I read Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, I saw the Son of the Living God. He was healing the sick. He was casting out demons. He was setting the captives free. He was bringing men to God through the power of the Holy Spirit. Oh,



how it thrilled me! I cried, 'Jesus, I want to do what I see You doing.' He said, 'Come!' Thank God, I marched out of my little

Baptist boat and walked out to do what Jesus was doing. Others have stayed in the boat where it is safe. They are not in danger of sinking, but they are not out where the miracles are. Oh, for men and women who will risk all for Jesus. Oh, for people who will rise up and walk out, trusting only in the power of Jesus!"²

Osteen eventually became associated with the Word Faith movement. "A Tribute to Pastor John Osteen," found on the church's web site, offers further details of the church's genesis, mission, and history:

"John Osteen began Lakewood Church in a dusty, abandoned feed store on Mother's Day 1959. ... John Osteen was driven by an amazing love for people of all ages, races, nationalities and walks of life. ... The late John

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Editorials

REMEMBER THE PUZZLE

Some people love to do jigsaw puzzles and will spend hours — even days — on intricate ones. Everyone knows when they do a puzzle that they must have patience and persistence, and it will not be complete until the last piece is in place.

The Bible indicates that Christian growth is just like that and the last pieces will not be put into place until God Himself places them and we are given new glorified bodies (Romans 8:22-23). Resurrection with perfect bodies in a perfect environment is the very last piece of the puzzle. However, we are adding the other pieces all through life.

In Charles Spurgeon's *Morning by Morning*, the devotional for January 27 spoke of heaven in this way: "Then shall we know, and taste, and feel the happiness of this vast but short sentence, 'Complete in Christ.' Not till then shall we fully comprehend the heights and depths of the salvation of Jesus." In our dark times it is good to remember, "not till then."

Life is certainly more akin to the conventional method of photography than that of digital photography with its quick-snap results. Life's picture and its final outcome takes a long time to complete. Growth is life-long. No one thinks of an elaborate puzzle made up of only a handful of pieces. Neither should anyone think the Christian life can be developed by one fad, one program, one conference, or one revival.

Yes, life is like a puzzle — only more complex. There is no box lid with its final picture — except the sure knowledge of resurrection when death will be reversed and there will be some affinity to the resurrected body of Jesus (1 Corinthians 15, 1 John 3:1-3). From here to resurrection is the complicated part. Just how and where life's puzzle pieces all fit is worked out over time. We know one piece is only one piece and not the whole puzzle. How often we have heard from the extremists on the Charismatic fringe, "This is the year of the Lord, the year of Jubilee." Life's puzzle takes more than one year or even one decade. Claims there will always be, but those making the claims have yet to demonstrate the goods.

Some utopians and triumphalists throw pieces of the puzzle in where they don't belong, creating distorted pictures, and even rush to make the puzzle appear finished when it is really botched up. In reality, the last few pieces can only be placed in at resurrection.

One of the favorite con games of Charismatic extremists is "Name the Year." Shortly before his death, Kenneth Hagin got the ball rolling for 2004 with a "prophecy" delivered during his Winter Bible Seminar in February 2003: "But 2004 - what about 2004? Two thousand four will be a year for more." More what? According to Hagin, "more power, more glory, more manifestation, more saved, more filled with the Spirit, more healed!" (e-mail advertisement for Winter Bible

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KABBALAH KINDERGARTEN

Singer and actress Madonna has spent over \$21 million of her own money to establish the New York Kabbalah Grammar School for Children. The school, which is being called "The K School," will instruct primary-age children about the beliefs of Jewish mysticism. In addition, the pre-elementary school pupils will receive normal instruction in reading, writing, and arithmetic — but, according to Madonna, "spirituality" will be at the center of every lesson.

The school is located a few blocks away from Madonna's Manhattan apartment and will begin classes in December.

Strict enrollment requirements face parents who want to enroll their 5-year-olds. First, parents must be practicing Kabbalists before even submitting an application. Next comes a formidable academic test for the child along with an investigation of the family. Tuition will be \$3,600 per term.

Kabbalah, which means "received tradition," is a blend of Jewish mysticism, magic, speculation, and superstition. It unites the elements of numerology and astrology to offer a theology for the nature of God, the origin of the universe, and the destiny of man.

Madonna became devoted to the mystical derivative of Judaism after becoming pregnant with her first child in 1997. Others from America's entertainment aristocracy, including Britney Spears, Demi Moore, Barbra Streisand, Roseanne Barr, Elizabeth Taylor, and Courtney Love have expressed interest in this form of mystical spirituality.

—MKG

EMMERICH HEADED FOR SAINTHOOD

The 19th-century passion mystic and visionary Anne Catherine Emmerich was beatified during a ceremony on Oct. 3. Last summer, Pope John Paul II sanctioned the official order for her beatification. According to Roman Catholic belief, beatification is the near-final step in the process that eventually leads to canonization. Canonization is the official declaration by the Roman Catholic Church that a person is a saint in heaven.

The renewed interest in Emmerich can be largely attributed to actor/director Mel Gibson and his motion picture *The Passion of the Christ*. Gibson used Emmerich's visions, found in her book *The Dolorous Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ*, as a source for his film. During the wave of publicity before the release of Gibson's film last spring, sale of the Emmerich volume increased from 3,000 copies in 2002 to 17,000 copies last February alone.

In Catholicism, the road to sainthood is a long and difficult process. First, a person must die. Then the deceased's virtues and reputation, writings and public declarations are examined by the diocese in which the candidate died. Upon favorable review, along with the Pope's approval, the candidate receives the title of "Venerable." Emmerich received the title of "Venerable" in April 2001, thereby attaining a degree of heroic virtue and paving the way for her beatification. Following her beatification, confirmation of a miracle attributed to Emmerich will be the final requirement for her to achieve sainthood.

For more information on Emmerich and her passion mysticism, see the July-September 2004 issue of *The Quarterly Journal*.

—MKG

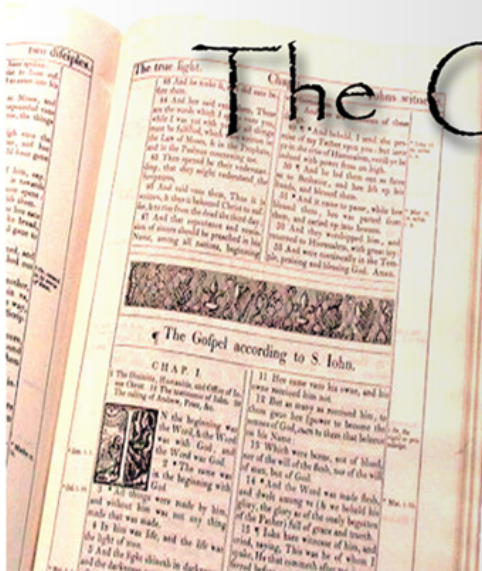
MORMONS CONTINUE TO BAPTIZE DECEASED JEWS

Nearly a decade ago, Jewish officials objected when the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was posthumously proxy baptizing Jews. In 1995, the Mormon church said it was removing thousands of names from its International Genealogical Index and pledged that it would no longer baptize deceased Jews.

However, Mormons continued to submit names of deceased Jews — many of whom were Holocaust victims — to be baptized in the LDS temple ceremony. In December 2002, after seven years of continued proxy baptisms, the LDS renewed its promise at a meeting with Holocaust survivor Ernest Michel. Michel, current chairman of the World Gathering of (Jewish) Holocaust Survivors, said LDS church officials issued a memorandum pledging that Jewish names would be eliminated from the Mormon data base.

While this agreement was developed, LDS church Elder D. Todd Christofferson hinted at the difficulty of the

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The Cultic Root System of David Otis Fuller & King James Onlyism

by G. Richard Fisher

King James Version? New King James Version? New International Version? New American Standard Bible? The use of a specific English translation of the Scriptures is a matter of personal preference, as the following survey of senior pastors reveals:

“The poll, conducted by Ellison Research, found the NIV was chosen as the personal favorite by 31 percent of the ministers, followed by the King James Version (23 percent), the New Revised Standard (14 percent), the New King James (13 percent) and the New American Standard (10 percent).”¹

Based upon the survey, 77% of American ministers apparently do not favor the King James Bible. A tiny minority of those who prefer the KJV would, if they had their way, burn all other versions. However, few of them probably are familiar with the origins of their position.

One of the best-kept secrets of the religious world is the cultic roots of the modern King James Version Only (KJVO) camp. To speak of “King James Only” or “King James Onlyism” is to refer to those who believe the King James Version is superior to all other versions. Its supporters run the gamut from those who simply prefer it and think it is superior because of its style and longevity, to

those who castigate anyone using another translation. Not all within this camp are militant, but the militant voices receive the most attention.

LAY OF THE LAND

King James Onlyism is not a unified camp. There are at least six basic positions:

1. The reinspiration position. This view says that the 1611 edition of the King James Bible is superior to the Greek and Hebrew texts. They wrongly believe that the translators were almost, if not actually, inspired to write this version in English. The primary proponent of this position is Peter Ruckman.² The biggest hurdle of all for those aligning with Ruckman is: “Which King James Version?” because it has come through major revisions since 1611. The original 1611 King James Version contained the Apocrypha, as well as listings of Church feasts including the Virgin Mary’s feast days. We presently use an 18th-century revision, minus the Apocrypha. The simple facts are:

“The 1762 revision, undertaken by Dr. Thomas Paris of Trinity College, Cambridge and the 1769 edition, revised by Dr. Benjamin Blayney of Hertford College in Oxford, brought us to the text of our present day beloved KJV.”³

We may firmly conclude from the reinspiration position that no one had

the preserved, perfect, and pure Word of God until 1611. Those holding this point of view confuse inspiration and translation. Another serious drawback for Ruckman is his use of inappropriate and foul language when referring to his opposition.⁴

2. The Received Text position. This position argues that the best and almost — if not completely — infallible text is the 1624 Greek revision of Roman Catholic priest Erasmus. After a number of revisions, this text was dubbed the *Textus Receptus*. Why it is so esteemed is difficult to fathom. Though earlier editions of the Erasmus text (and other sources as well) were used to compile the KJV, the so-called Received Text was not born until 13 years after the KJV was completed and contains numerous differences from the one used by the KJV translators.⁵

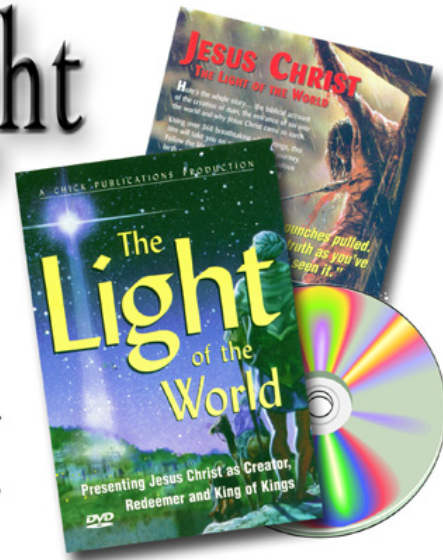
Names associated with this position are David Otis Fuller, Edward Hills, and Donald Waite. The so-called *Textus Receptus*, though different in places from the KJV, is still held to be the superior text. A.T. Robertson refers to this view as “a fictitious worship of the letter of Erasmus’s last edition.”⁶ Those holding this position can, at times, be very strident and in fact obnoxiously militant as they confuse inspiration and preservation.

3. The rigid tradition position. This (continues on page 10)

The Not So Guiding Light of Jack T. Chick

“The Light of the World” Video Continues Chick Publications’ Legacy of Ambiguous Evangelistic Resources

by G. Richard Fisher with M. Kurt Goedelman



One novelty available in magic stores is a light bulb that appears to be illuminated with no apparent connection to electricity. The bulb, of course, is not an ordinary bulb, but one rigged with a small battery. When the base of the bulb touches a tiny piece of metallic fabric or foil in the performer’s hand, “*Abracadabra — let there be light!*”

There are real bulbs and there are trick ones. Aberrational doctrine is like the trick bulb: it only appears to be legitimate.

Apologist Robert Bowman issued an alert over a decade ago:

“The church today is plagued, not only by heresies and aberrations, but by doctrines which I would characterize as ‘junk-food doctrine.’ Junk food won’t kill you, unless that’s all you eat — in which case poor nutrition will eventually catch up with you. Junk-food doctrine is not good, nor is it really bad. One might call it ‘flaky’ doctrine.”¹

Last year a radio news item told of a food vendor on the streets of New York City who sold a bagel and cream cheese sandwich with a cockroach in it. No one in his right mind would argue, “It’s not that grave a concern. Just think of all the good cream cheese in that sandwich. Can’t you sort the bagel from the cockroach and

concentrate on the good? Don’t you think you are being a tad bit critical here?” Most people would trash the bagel and never go near the vendor again.

Some Bible teachers are like the New York bagel vendor. Error can creep into a person’s teaching even if the teacher says some good things.

When it comes to the contemporary Church’s “Hall of Shame” of flaky and tainted teachings, one man’s bust looms large: Jack T. Chick. Chick, now in his 80s, is probably best known for his small comic book format evangelistic tracts or booklets.

Chick was converted to Christ in 1948 after listening to Charles E. Fuller’s *Old Fashion Revival Hour* radio broadcast. During the 1950s, he worked as an aerospace illustrator. In 1958, with the help of his wife, Chick created an evangelistic flip chart spin-off of the radio program, *This Is Your Life*. Chick’s version, which later became known as “This Was Your Life,” portrayed an unconverted soul who dies and faces judgment. His life is then replayed to him on a heavenly movie screen. His flip chart was initially used to evangelize prisoners, and later became his most popular and enduring witnessing tract.

One Chick critic notes:

“TWYL was converted to tract form after missionary broad-

caster Bob Hammond told Chick that China was won to Communism through cartoon booklets. Chick decided to use the same method for Christ. In other words, Chick tracts are a Com-mie plot.”²

Most of Chick’s tracts, in and of themselves, are not too bad. However, his work cannot be endorsed for a variety of significant reasons.

GRAND “FLAKES”

Over the past three decades, Chick has gained notoriety for endorsing, promoting, and selling resources for heretics, charlatans, and known cons and criminals. Over the years, Chick’s message has been unchanged — a secret cabal plotting to undermine the Church and kill Christians. And while the plot line never changes, the faction behind this plot has. Since the 1970s, the Illuminati, the Roman Catholic Church, Satanists and witches have all, at times, been the principal characters of Chick’s conspiracy theories.

Chick first paved the way for John Todd, who claimed to be an ex-Grand Druid and a former high-ranking member of the Illuminati.³ Todd gained prominence through Chick’s full-length comic books, *Angel of Light* and *Spellbound*. He said he was privy to the identity of the Antichrist. A thorough investigation of Todd and

his claims revealed a history of diverse conversion stories, multiple marriages, deception, and other un-Christian behavior.⁴ Todd was not the conspiratorial whistle-blower Chick made him out to be, but rather a psychotic con man who, in 1988, received a 30-year prison sentence for raping a graduate student in South Carolina.⁵

Chick then moved to promoting a bogus Roman Catholic priest named Alberto Rivera. Rivera described himself as a former Jesuit who was a secret agent of the Catholic Church with a mission to infiltrate and destroy Protestant denominations. Rivera, like Todd, was publicized in a pair of Chick comic books, *Alberto* and *Double Cross*. Rivera claimed he was not alone in his mission. He alleged other Vatican-ordained colleagues whose mission was to wreak havoc and destruction within Protestantism included Kathryn Kuhlman and Jim Jones. Both Catholics and Protestants discounted and refuted Alberto's allegations.⁶

One Australian-based ministry provided details of Rivera's personal history. Concerned Christians Growth Ministries published statements from several people who knew Rivera as a young man. Their testimony included details of his membership in an evangelical church in the Canary Islands, his study at an evangelical seminary in Costa Rica, and the average social status of his family. The magazine even printed a 1953 photograph taken in Las Palmas, Canary Islands, showing Rivera as part of a young men's church group.⁷ These particulars all undermined the claim by Rivera (in the *Alberto* comic book) that during his youth, "In Spain alone, I helped destroy at least 19 churches,"⁸ and the depiction that his family was of prominent position.⁹

Chick, who never openly repudiated the slanderous hoaxes of Todd and Rivera, and who apparently never learned from his mistakes, went on to endorse former drug-addicted physician Ruth Bailey, who went under the alias of Rebecca Brown, M.D. Along with her sidekick, Elaine, who

claimed to have literally married Satan and jetted around the world as his international agent, Brown pretended to know all the secrets of the satanic organization.¹⁰ As Todd's and Alberto's stories succumbed to apathy and the critic's pen, Brown became the darling of Chick Publications.

Chick gave even greater distinction to the message and testimony of Rebecca and Elaine. Rather than confining their tales to comic book format, Chick published two full-length books, *He Came to Set the Captives Free* and *Prepare for War*.¹¹

Chick regarded the evidence of all of Brown's past drug forays and legal troubles with disdain, indifference, and denial. As he did when responding to refutations of Todd and Rivera, he said the evidence had been set forth by a vast satanic conspiracy established to destroy their divine missions.

Today, even apart from Chick, Brown continues in a far-out state of paranoia. She says PFO wields great control over churches and Christian publishing. The members of PFO are, according to Brown, "agents of Satan" and she calls for Christians to pray and ask God to expunge the ministry of PFO.¹²

Chick also is enamored with a Peter Ruckman-style King James Version Only teaching. This belief contends that only the King James Version of the Bible contains the unadulterated Word of God. As such, he brands all other versions or translations of Scripture — including the New King James Version — as perversions.

It also appears that Chick is unaware that the King James Version Only teaching was born out of heresy, having its recent roots in a Seventh-day Adventist teacher, Benjamin G. Wilkinson.¹³ Wilkinson loved the King James Version for one reason alone. He believed that it taught and defended the false doctrine of soul sleep, a key tenet within Adventist — and Jehovah's Witness — theology.

When one surveys the landscape of all KJVO exponents, it is obvious that they are merely regurgitating the

ideas of Wilkinson. As such, they are 50 or more years behind the times as far as current Bible manuscript studies. For example, the "P" fragments (many dating virtually to the Apostles) have recently acquired great distinction within the Bible translation arena and have nothing to do with Wescott and Hort, who are classified by those in the KJVO camp as the perpetrators ultimately responsible for the modern day evil versions.¹⁴

So Chick's track record is indeed appalling. That in itself makes us leery of anything he produces. Chick seems to lack discernment. The regrettable aspect of all this is that he wields influence over many young and untaught believers.

Chick's latest promotion is a 78-minute audio-visual production (available on either DVD or VHS video) called *The Light of the World*. It is advertised as giving the whole story from creation to Christ's resurrection with narration and more than 360 images of oil paintings. A brochure touts:

"In a day when many Christians are producing watered-down, politically-correct films, *The Light of the World* provides exactly what you would expect from Jack Chick — a straightforward, biblically accurate, no-punches-pulled presentation of the gospel with a compelling salvation appeal."

How much light is in *The Light of the World*, and how much is an illusion is the question. Obviously there are some things that are correct in Chick's presentation, but it also contains issues not clearly explained and points described very poorly. Those ambiguous statements can tend toward heresy. Perhaps the Chick pamphlet unwittingly admits the unmistakable when it pitched that the production "provides exactly what you would expect from Jack Chick."

QUICK-CHANGE GOD?

Chick's production lacks precision. For example, the presentation commences with Creation, and God is described:

“There are three parts to God: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. And these three are one. The true and living God. All three are separate, yet all three are one.”

This, at first, could sound orthodox to the untrained ear, but the statement could well be embraced by Oneness Pentecostals. It definitely sounds within the confines of a modalistic (or non-Trinitarian) view of God, which is a grave theological anomaly of Oneness Pentecostals. This view is known as the heresy of Sabellianism.

It is not being captious to insist that a pilot make sure the plane’s instruments are working. We do not want to end up in Mexico when we were heading for Michigan. Definition and precision are equally — if not more — important when it comes to spiritual matters.

Christian History magazine says of the term “Trinity”:

“We owe the word ‘Trinity’ to the African theologian and apologist Quintus Septimius Florens Tertullian (ca. 160 - ca. 225). Tertullian used the word for the concept that appears everywhere in the Bible but is never explicitly named. He coined it in an argument with a teacher who promoted modalism — the view that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are not distinct persons but mere appearances (modes) or roles played by a single God.”¹⁵

The Trinity was not invented by the early Church because it was “everywhere in the Bible.” It was recognized, not originated, by Tertullian. Tertullian and other early Church Fathers are no more responsible for “inventing” the doctrine of the Trinity than Isaac Newton is responsible for “inventing” the law of gravity.

Down through history, the Church has held to the Athanasian Creed, which is a synopsis of the biblical material on the Godhead. As with Tertullian, this creed did not invent the doctrine, but codified, clarified, and explained that God is one in essence and nature, but three in per-

son. This was being taught from the times of the Apostles. God is not just one, which is modalism. Neither is He just three, which is tritheism. Chick’s view seems to be an interbred version of both. Chick confuses the concepts of nature and person.

Athanasius declared:

“... we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity; Neither confounding the Persons; nor dividing the Substance. For there is one Person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is all one: the Glory Equal, the Majesty Coeternal. Such as the Father is, such is the Son: and such is the Holy Ghost. The Father uncreate, the Son uncreate: and the Holy Ghost uncreate. ... The Father eternal, the Son eternal: and the Holy Ghost eternal. And yet they are not three Eternals: but one Eternal. ... So likewise the Father is Almighty, the Son Almighty: and the Holy Ghost Almighty. And yet there are not three Almighties but one Almighty. So the Father is God, the Son is God: and the Holy Ghost is God. And yet they are not three Gods: but one God.”¹⁶

Chick truly lacks precision in defining this fundamental truth of the Christian faith. Although the production is promoted as “the whole story,” the viewer will have to fill in some blanks. One can only wonder how an unbeliever (the primary target of the presentation) will do so. One also might wonder if this lack of definition is a lack of discernment, or a move to more widely market the product.

SOVEREIGN SATAN?

As the program continues, the narration states:

“God threw Lucifer and all the rebellious angels out of heaven. These fallen angels became devils and Lucifer became Satan. They settled around planet Earth, which became Satan’s domain.”

This is a dangerous pronouncement on two fronts: first because it is false and unbiblical, and second because it aids the theology of the Word Faith camp. Many prominent Word Faith leaders teach that Adam surrendered the legal rights of the world to Satan.¹⁷ Chick teaches the same concept, but places Satan’s takeover earlier. Chick offers no Scripture because there is none. No man knows when the fall of Lucifer and angels occurred. We do know, however, that Satan never owned the earth.

This belief robs God of His omnipotence and flies in the face of verses such as Psalm 24:1, “The earth is the LORD’s, and all its fullness,” and Psalm 50:12 where the Lord says, “For the world is Mine.” The world is either God’s or Satan’s. It makes a world of difference.

Chick further suggests that Adam intruded into Satan’s domain, stating Satan’s “territory had been invaded by a new creation called man.” Scripture, however, speaks of no such invasion. Genesis is clear that Adam was placed on God’s earth — an earth He had just created. God did not give His earth away, and Adam could not. Therefore earth never was Satan’s domain. A domain is defined as a “region under a single sovereign.”¹⁸ God is the only Sovereign. Later, the narrator will say that, “Before the devil moves against someone, he must first get permission from God the Father in heaven.” So here we have mixed signals at the very least.

SATAN NEVER LOOKED SO SILLY

Throughout the presentation we see not only simplistic portrayals of things, but renderings and images that, for far too long, the Church has tried to abandon. Satan is shown in typical Chick tract fashion with horns, fangs, a red suit, tail, and long daggers for nails. At times, Satan is pictured as half-animal with cloven hooves. These are really nothing more than caricatures. Scripture makes clear that Satan is *not* like this. Even the world mocks this representation. The inspired Apostle Paul stated, “Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great

thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness" (2 Corinthians 11:14-15). It may not have occurred to Chick, but Satan may well be pleased at this portrayal.

Chick seems to be preoccupied with Satan and gives him far too much credit. In a scene depicting Satan with clawed hands upon Caesar's shoulders, Chick says, "Satan moved Caesar Augustus in Rome to tax the whole world." Here he is guilty of eisegesis at worst or an overactive imagination at best. Luke simply wrote, "And it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered" (Luke 2:1).

Additionally, Chick, who condemns contemporary Bible translations, creates his own "revised Chick paraphrase," adding Satan to the birth narrative of Jesus. One could far better argue that a Sovereign God moved things in this direction. Proverbs 21:1 reminds us, "The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, Like rivers of water; He turns it wherever He wishes." Similarly, Proverbs 16:4 instructs, "The LORD has made all for Himself, Yes, even the wicked for the day of doom." Perhaps unaware, Chick ultimately denies the true sovereignty of God in that he continues to ascribe to Satan the sovereign prerogatives which belong only to God. It was not too difficult for God to move the heart of the pagan King Cyrus to help the Jews return to Jerusalem from Persia.

Chick compounds the strangeness and satanic obsession by saying that the crucifixion was "the devil's moment for revenge." Scripture describes the crucifixion in many ways, but never as Satan's revenge.

The crucifixion is described as an "offering" throughout the book of Hebrews. Paul describes it as a "righteous act" in Romans 5:18. This was not Satan's handiwork, but rather Jesus being "delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God," as Acts 2:23 declares. The people of Jesus' day, being fallen sinners, were only doing what they desired to do in crucifying Jesus.

The death of Jesus was sovereignly designed by God, yet Scripture assigns human culpability. The human factor loomed large as Peter charged, "Him ... you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death" (Acts 2:23). Likewise, Paul does not lay blame at the feet of Satan directly, but says, "Which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known they would not have crucified the Lord of glory" (1 Corinthians 2:8).

It seems to be more man's revenge than Satan's.

Some of the other items mentioned on the presentation concerning the crucifixion are of little consequence, but remain wrong. The video says, "the soldiers made a crown of poisonous thorns." If this were true, Jesus probably would not have survived to the cross. The Bible simply says, "the soldiers twisted a crown of thorns and put it on His head" (John 19:2).

THOSE JEWS!

There is also an anti-Semitic suggestion added to the statement of the crowd at the crucifixion when they said, "His blood be on us and on our children" (Matthew 27:25). This is interpreted by Chick to mean that the Jewish suffering through history is the result of their first century rejection. Citing the Matthew passage, the narrator then offers, "God took them at their words. They have suffered ever since." As much as Chick despises the Roman Catholic Church, he picks up one of the ideas it uses to support centuries of anti-Semitism.

Roman Catholic author James Carroll admits that, especially from the time of Constantine forward, "For Jews, the cross became the symbol of the ultimate *cul de sac*."¹⁹ The Crusades of the Middle Ages were fueled by anti-Semitism and anti-Islamicism. It is documented that a "Jewish man was stabbed five times by a group of Crusaders 'in memory of the wounds suffered by Jesus.'"²⁰

In exegeting this Gospel passage, we must first consider the statement in Matthew 27:25 came out of the ignorance of the people at Pilate's hall. It simply means that they would

take Pilate's responsibility, which they could not anyway. Hardship and devastation came automatically to that generation because the rejection of Jesus has links to the later destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple by the Romans. This Jesus prophesied in Luke 19:41-44. We know, too, that according to the first half of the book of Acts, thousands of Jews were saved. We cannot dismiss the fact that suffering is a part of life and many nations have suffered for various reasons. Suffering is a consequence of the fall.

Secondly, no respectable exegete would lay the verse on unborn generations. It is not reasonable to say, "They have suffered ever since." The *New Geneva Study Bible* offers this commentary:

"When Pilate seemed reluctant to act, the people were not afraid to say they would take the responsibility themselves. Their guilt, Pilate's guilt, and Judas's, is not determined by them but by God (cf. Acts 4:27). According to Ezekiel, descendants do not share the guilt of their parents unless they cooperate in their sins (Ezek. 18:20; cf. Acts 2:23, 39)."²¹

ETHEREAL BLOOD?

Chick also says that "the blood that Jesus shed on the cross that terrible day was not human blood; it was God's precious blood." This leads to all sorts of philosophical and theological concerns: Since God is Spirit, how could God have blood? What is God's blood? Does God need blood to exist? Was Jesus really less than human with supernatural God blood? Because Christ's blood was shed, poured out, where did the blood of God end up since all of God is immortal? Again Chick adds to the Bible.

Certainly this idea could not be derived from the Bible. Although the Chick video does not specifically state it, perhaps he has misconstrued the Acts 20:28 statement of Paul when he says, "shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood." The words "of God" clearly

refer to (or modify) the word "Church" and not the word "blood." The blood in the verse is clearly the blood of Jesus. Hebrews 2:14 makes abundantly clear that Jesus' humanity and His identification with us is based on the fact that He shared human flesh and blood (minus sin of course). So without being a partaker of our true humanity (flesh and blood), which He "shared" as the writer of Hebrews says, He would not have been truly the God/man or adequate Savior. There are also adequate alternate renderings of the Acts 20:28 passage that read, "the Church of the Lord," which certainly fit the context more readily.²²

The bottom line is that the Bible would not mislead us. If Christ's blood — which at times is literal and at other times a metaphor for His dying or sacrificing His life — was something other than blood, the writers of the New Testament would have come up with another word and not confuse us. They constantly used the word *haima*, which would not and could not be taken in any other way than human blood. Whether he realizes it or not, Chick is denying the essential humanity of Christ and giving untaught Christians something to quarrel over.

Moreover, Chick's verbiage is unforgivably misleading and mystical. D.A. Carson warns against the kind of superstitious literalism that makes a fetish out of the blood of Jesus:

"[the] *blood of Jesus* refers to Jesus' violent, sacrificial death. In general, the blessings that the Scriptures show to be accomplished or achieved by the blood of Jesus are equally said to be accomplished or achieved by the death of Jesus (e.g., justification, Rom. 3:21-26; 5:6-9; redemption, Rom. 3:24; Eph. 1:7; Rev. 5:9)."²³

The liturgical exercises of the Roman Catholic system make a magic fetish out of Jesus' blood, as it does to the cross and His "Sacred Heart." Chick's declaration does not appear too far removed from the metaphysical blood of Catholicism.

BUT THERE IS SOME GOOD

No doubt, Chick's supporters will argue that the "plan of salvation" is presented and so that justifies all the errors and quirks. But again we need recall the illustration of the bagel. Jesus clearly emphasized not only evangelism, but discipleship, in the Great Commission. We are to "teach everything" He commanded and teach them to observe or obey (Matthew 28:19-20). If this video presentation brings converts, it is possible that they arrive in the bizarre and conspiratorial world of Jack Chick, with its dubious cast of characters.

The Light of the World does not explain important issues fully or clearly. Others are pictured poorly and some lean toward heresy. The verbal additions to the Word of God are a cultic practice and are not just explanation or application. *The Light of the World* is really less of a light and more of a hindrance to the untaught.

Endnotes:

1. Robert M. Bowman, Jr., *Orthodoxy and Heresy*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1992, pg. 54.
2. Robert B. Fowler, *The History of the World According to Jack T. Chick*. San Leandro, Calif.: self-published, 2000, pg. 1-6.
3. For more information on the Illuminati, see G. Richard Fisher, "The Present-Day Illuminati Theory: The Real or Illusionary Threat of a Secret Worldwide Conspiracy," *The Quarterly Journal*, Vol. 18, No. 1, pp. 5-9.
4. See further, Darryl E. Hicks and David A. Lewis, *The Todd Phenomenon - Ex-Grand Druid vs. the Illuminati - Fact or Phantasy?* Harrison, Ark.: New Leaf Press, 1979.
5. See further, G. Richard Fisher, "Comic Book Hero to Convict - The Incredible Saga of John Todd," *The Quarterly Journal*, Vol. 14, No. 2, pp. 4, 8-10.
6. See further, M. Kurt Goedelman, "The Alberto Phenomenon," *The Journal of Pastoral Practice*, (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing), Vol. V, No. 2, pp. 83-88.
7. "A Shock for Rivera," *Take a Closer Look*, Concerned Christian Growth Ministries, Vol. 9, No. 3, April 1988, pp. 12-18.
8. Jack T. Chick, *Alberto*. Chino, Calif.: Chick Publications, 1979, pg. 20.
9. *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5. The Rivera household was depicted as a large home with several servants.
10. Since 1989, PFO has written and published several investigative reports on

Rebecca Brown. The greater part of these reports have been collected and published by PFO under the title, *Drugs, Demons and Delusions - An Investigation of the Testimony, Claims and Doctrine of Rebecca Brown, MD*. This 54-page booklet is available from PFO (Saint Louis).

11. Chick Publications was responsible for the initial printings of these volumes. In the late 1980s, Brown's relationships with both sidekick Elaine and publisher Jack Chick ended. However, these splits did not cause the books or their fabricated contents to cease. Whitaker House publishers now reprints these earlier volumes as well as Brown's current eccentric offerings.

12. For further reports on the deluded rambling of charges by Brown against PFO, see "Rebecca Brown's Axis of Evil," *The Quarterly Journal*, Vol. 23, No. 1, pp. 2, 21; and "Rebecca in Fantasyland," *The Quarterly Journal*, Vol. 23, No. 4, pp. 3, 21-23.

13. See further the article, "The Cultic Root System of David Otis Fuller & King James Onlyism" by G. Richard Fisher in this issue of *The Quarterly Journal*. Also see, Roy E. Beacham and Kevin T. Bauder, General Editors, *One Bible Only?* Grand Rapids, Mich.: Kregal Publications, 2001, pp. 44-45.

14. See further, Phillip Wesley Comfort, *The Quest for the Original Text of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1992.

15. "Did You Know?," *Christian History*, Issue 80, Vol. XXII, No. 4, pg. 3.

16. Gordon Melton, *American Religious Creeds*. New York: Triumph Books, 1991, Vol. 1, pg. 2.

17. See further, Hank Hanegraaff, *Christianity in Crisis*. Eugene, Ore.: Harvest House Publishers, 1993, pp. 129-135.

18. *The Complete Christian Dictionary for Home and School*. Ventura, Calif.: Gospel Light, 1990, "domain," pg. 192.

19. James Carroll, *Constantine's Sword, The Church and the Jews*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 2001, pg. 289.

20. David Rausch, *A Legacy of Hatred*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1984, pg. 28.

21. *New Geneva Study Bible*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1995, pg. 1553, study note on Matthew 27:25.

22. See further, Adam Clarke, *The New Testament of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*. New York: Abingdon Press, nd, Vol. 5, pp. 854-855.

23. D.A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1984, pg. 34, italics in original. For a larger presentation of the history and nuances in blood mysticism, see G. Richard Fisher and M. Kurt Goedelman, *The Confusing World of Benny Hinn*, (Saint Louis: Personal Freedom Outreach, 2002), pp. 145-154.

position, which first was championed by Dean Burgon in his volume, *The Revision Revised*, held that Church tradition alone made the final call. Because a group of manuscripts called the "Byzantine text-type" or "Majority Text" had been preserved by the Greek Orthodox Church since the fourth century and was the underlying text for Erasmus and the KJV translators, it was to be preferred. Added was the fact that the Anglican Church had used the KJV for a number of centuries, so in Burgon's view that tradition dictated the day. Burgon said, "the test of *Catholic Antiquity*. ... I decline to recognise any other criterion of Truth."⁷

They confuse inspiration with esthetics.

5. The reasoned eclecticism position. This, at times, is also referred to as the "right to be considered" position of Harry Sturz. Sturz argued that the Byzantine family of texts (forerunners of the KJV and designated as the Majority Text-type) are independent of other text types.

As well, it is claimed, they are equal to them, having a right to stand on their own and be considered as equal witnesses with all other text-types. These, it is said, are not superior or inferior, but inherently authoritative enough to be taken seriously.

However, it is tough sledding for Sturz because of the paucity of unam-

tions were developed from the understandings and cultic mindset of Seventh-day Adventist Benjamin Wilkinson. Doug Kutilek explains:

"In the realm of King-James-Onlyism, just such a genealogy of error can easily be traced. All writers who embrace the KJV-only position have derived their views ultimately from Seventh-day Adventist missionary, theology professor and college president, Benjamin G. Wilkinson (d. 1968), through one of two or three of his spiritual descendants. In 1930, he wrote *Our Authorized Bible Vindicated*, a book of several hundred pages which attracted almost no attention in its day (no doubt chiefly because it was awash in a vast ocean of error)."⁸

Although Wilkinson escaped the notice of most, and his book was largely ignored, some understand that he is the real "father" of the modern King-James-Onlyism viewpoint. It would be brought into evangelicalism by stealth.

WHOLESALE BORROWING

The foremost promoter of Wilkinson was David Otis Fuller in the 1970s through his book, *Which Bible?* Fuller deceptively hid the Adventist background of Wilkinson and simply said, "here is a scholar of the first rank with a thorough knowledge of the subjects about which he wrote. Dr. Wilkinson taught for many years in a small and obscure Eastern college."⁹ Fuller had to know that Wilkinson, who converted to Adventism in 1891, studied for ministry under the Seventh-day Adventists, served as an Adventist missionary in Haiti, was Dean of Theology at Adventist Washington Missionary College, and eventually became its president. Wilkinson was an active Adventist leader and promoter for 56 years.

Just in case it has been forgotten what Adventists taught during Wilkinson's time, they believed Ellen G. White was a prophetess and her visions and commands to keep the Sabbath as an essential part of the

Although Wilkinson escaped the notice of most, and his book was largely ignored, some understand that he is the real "father" of the modern King-James-Onlyism viewpoint.

The case was closed for Burgon, even though this text-type could not be dated earlier than A.D. 350. Many today opt for the superiority of the Byzantine text-type simply on faith. A more recent promoter of this view is Zane Hodges, though he leans more toward the Byzantine text-type, not because of tradition, but being superior in its own right. With Burgon there was a confusion of inspiration and tradition.

4. The readable and reverence position. Some hold to the KJV, citing grandeur of language and out of reverence for Elizabethan English. Within this position many simply prefer it and are a bit more tolerant. The "thees" and "thous," they say, are more respectful of God. They prefer the flow of the translation.

biguous Byzantine readings before A.D. 350. There is no confusion of inspiration here, but rather simply an absence of any hard evidence for his position.

6. The rummage and pick position. This view is simply a mix-and-match conviction. Take any or all of the above and combine them any way you wish. Without clarity or sense, some weave in and out of numbers one through four, never stopping to fine-tune any one of them. It is a subjective stew. Christian-witnessing tract entrepreneur Jack Chick seems to be a model of this. This is a confusion of inspiration and argumentation.

ENTER THE MAIN PERPETRATOR

The bulk of the present KJVO posi-

Christian life were straight from God. They legislated dietary regulations and believed that upon death even believers went into a kind of soul sleep. They believed that going to church on Sunday was the mark of the beast and that Satan would bear the sins of the world as he wandered the earth during the millennium as the true scapegoat of Leviticus 16.

Add to that the teaching that Jesus entered into some heavenly compartment on Oct. 8, 1844, to begin to do an “investigative judgment” as to who was in and who was out of the Kingdom. It was necessary for Christ to finish His atoning work in this way, despite the fact that He said, “it is finished” on the cross.¹⁰

Offshoot Adventists today are trying to move toward a more “evangelical” position, but the Adventism of Wilkinson’s era was monolithic and unbending. It definitely had many marks of a cult.

Dale Ratzlaff was a fourth-generation Seventh-day Adventist and was educated in SDA schools from first grade through seminary. He taught their doctrine in an SDA high school for seven years and was pastor at two SDA churches. As a former Adventist he reminds us:

“SDAs believe the writings of Ellen G. White (EGW) are inspired on the same level as the Bible. Because she is the later inspired writer, many SDAs hold that her interpretation of the Bible is to be preferred.”¹¹

DECEPTION BY ELIMINATION

If Fuller did not know Wilkinson’s background, his research abilities and scholarship are extremely poor. If he did know — and many that know say he did, but concealed it — he is guilty of outright deception. On that count alone he needs to be rejected. It is fairly evident that Fuller knew and worked at disguising Wilkinson’s SDA background. Doug Kutilek further observed that when quoting long passages of Wilkinson:

“Fuller carefully concealed Wilkinson’s theological orienta-

tion by deleting footnote references to the writings of Adventist prophetess Ellen G. White, although he left the quotes themselves in the text. Fuller also deleted other statements in Wilkinson’s book that would have immediately disclosed Wilkinson’s Adventism.”¹²

Wilkinson’s work is full of error on its own and it was not entirely unknown as to who he was. Kutilek additionally offers:

“That book, *Our Authorized Bible Vindicated*, was written by Seventh-Day Adventist missionary, educator, and theologian Benjamin G. Wilkinson (1872-1968). That Wilkinson was an Adventist was not widely known (and was not announced by those that knew it). The book was little noticed when it was first released and for good reason. It was full of misinformation, inaccuracies, defective reasoning and distortion. Wilkinson, for example, was the first person to assert that the Old Latin version, instead of the Vulgate, was the Bible of the medieval Waldensians and that the Old Latin corresponds textually with the Greek Textus Receptus, both of which assertions are demonstrably false.”¹³

Kutilek continues outlining the famous firsts:

“He was the first person to demonize Wescott and Hort, making them the ‘bogey men’ in the text and translation debate often by distorting their words. Wilkinson was also the first person to misapply Psalm 12:6-7 as though it were a promise of the preservation of the KJV.”¹⁴

Truth be known, any translation other than the KJV robbed Wilkinson of ammunition for his cultic beliefs. Adventists make much of KJV readings to “prove” soul sleep and their denial of hell, for instance, when punishment is referred to as destruction.

Wilkinson’s hatred of the Vulgate is clear in his writing. He either is

ignorant of or oblivious to Church history. Erasmus used the Vulgate and even used those Latin readings for his Greek text. Fuller has helped us by inserting most of Wilkinson’s chapters in his *Which Bible?* Wilkinson’s assertion is this:

“When we come to Origen, we speak the name of him who did the most of all to create and give direction to the forces of apostasy down through the centuries. It was he who mightily influenced Jerome, the editor of the Latin Bible known as the Vulgate.”¹⁵

So he is claiming that Jerome was infatuated with Origen, a heretic, and the only conclusion was that neither Jerome nor his work could be trusted.

However, the translators of the King James Version constantly praised Jerome, whom they refer to as “Saint,” throughout their long Preface to the Authorized Version, which was contained in the first editions of their work. Consider the following:

“This moved St. Jerome, a most learned Father, and the best linguist without controversy of his age, or of any that went before him, to undertake the translating of the Old Testament out of the very fountains themselves; which he performed with that evidence of great learning, judgment, industry, and faithfulness, that he hath for ever bound the Church unto him in a debt of special remembrance and thankfulness.”¹⁶

According to Wilkinson, we cannot trust Origen or Jerome, but somehow Erasmus — whose text is used for the KJV — is fine even though Erasmus revered both Jerome and Origen.

“Between that year [1516] and 1518 Erasmus also published a nine-volume edition of the works of Jerome, Erasmus’s favorite church father. Less ambitious editions of other fathers including Irenaeus, Augustine, Chrysostom, and Origen followed in the succeeding eighteen years.”¹⁷

Wilkinson promotes a wild suggestion and slanders Bishop Brooke Foss

Wescott (translator of the Revised Version of 1881) by calling him a Gnostic because of Wescott's use of the phrase "age of the ages" rather than "forever and ever." Wilkinson says this refers to Gnostic *aeons*.¹⁸ *Aeons*, according to the Gnostics, were emanations somewhat like angels:

"The aeons were attributes thought of as personal, and took the place of the abstract ideas of Greek philosophy."¹⁹

These emanations or *aeons* do not even come close to the word age. Yet, no matter what dissatisfaction one might have with Anglicans such as Wescott, they are not Gnostics.²⁰

In defense of Wescott, Stewart Custer produced two pages of quotes from Wescott's commentaries showing the absolute commitment to all the fundamental and foundational doctrines of the Christian faith. Wescott was committed to the deity of Jesus, as well as the pre-existence and virgin birth of Christ. He expressed faith in Jesus' resurrection and as well to His sinlessness and sacrificial blood atonement for our sins.²¹

If it is true that as Wilkinson writes, "The first stream which carried the Received Text in Hebrew and Greek, began with the apostolic churches,"²² then why are there not abundant readings of this text in extant manuscripts from A.D. 100 to A.D. 300? They just are not there. Then, the massive blunder of Wilkinson to say the "Received Text in Hebrew," is mind-boggling. The Received Text is Greek and the Hebrew texts used for the King James Version are from the tenth-century A.D. Masoretic text.

Since Wilkinson is so anti-Catholic and anti-papal, it is puzzling that he is not upset that the Received Text — which he says "was the true apostolic Bible"²³ — was composed by a Catholic Priest and authorized by a Pope. Erasmus saw his work as a continuation of Jerome's and, in fact, called his text *his* Jerome. He longed for the approval of Pope Leo X, and petitioned to lay his work "at the feet of

Leo, with a request to be allowed to dedicate his labours to him."²⁴

In the *Life and Letters of Erasmus*, Wilkinson's nemesis Origen is clearly praised,²⁵ celibacy is upheld,²⁶ the worship of St. Anne is advocated,²⁷ as well as repeated endorsements of the Roman Catholic Church expressed.²⁸ Erasmus also affirmed confession,²⁹ and transubstantiation.³⁰

A.T. Robertson is right when he concluded that the Erasmus text had become "almost an object of worship for some," even though "no two editions are precisely alike."³¹

SHELL GAME WITH THE BIBLE

If it were not so serious, it would be almost laughable to read Wilkinson rhapsodize about the Pilgrims in a flight of sheer fantasy:

"The Authorized Version was translated in 1611, just before the Puritans departed from England, so that they carried it with them across stormy seas to lay the foundation of one of the greatest governments the world has ever known. The Authorized Version of God's Holy Word had much to do with the laying of the foundation of our great country."³²

The Authorized Version is, of course, the King James Version. However, the Puritans were firmly committed to the Geneva Bible, which, according to F.F. Bruce, "was produced by English Protestants who sought refuge at Geneva during the reign of Mary Tudor (1553-58); it was issued with a dedication to Elizabeth."³³

Numerous historical sources verify that the Puritans and Pilgrims sailed to the new world with the Geneva Bible. The Geneva Bible was the first version to include verses and preceded the KJV by 50 years, as R.C. Sproul explains:

"The Geneva Bible dominated the English-speaking world for a hundred years. It was the Bible used by Shakespeare. The King James Bible was published in

1611 but did not supplant the Geneva Bible until fifty years later. The Pilgrims and Puritans carried the Geneva Bible to the shores of the new world. American colonists were reared on the Geneva Bible. They read it, studied it, and sought to live by its light."³⁴

The Puritans resisted the KJV and embraced the Geneva Bible because of its more Calvinistic note system. They used it and preferred it for at least a hundred years into our country's founding. Further, we know the Geneva Bible was loved by many, yet despised by others:

"The key factor was the Geneva *notes*. The marginal comments designed to explain the text to the reader were strongly anti-monarchy, anti-Anglican, and anti-Catholic. Those Protestant notes further emphasized individual soul liberty, predestination, and ecclesiastical separation from apostate religion. The Geneva Bible with its notes achieved widespread acceptance among the laity in the sixteenth century much like the Scofield Reference Bible with its notes has impacted believers in the twentieth century. ... It was noteworthy to find that even some of the Anglican bishops used the Geneva Bible in their sermons from 1611 to 1630. The Pilgrims took the Geneva Bible, not the King James Bible, with them on the *Mayflower* in 1620, and it was popular in the New England colonies for many years."³⁵

It can be shown that the Anglican translators of the KJV dropped a bias or two into their translation. Their refusal to translate the word "baptism" and simply transliterate it is telling. Their use of "bishop" for the simple Greek word *episkopos*, which merely means "overseer," likewise reveals a bias for their hierarchy.

It is hard to understand why one would insist we read a 400-year-old translation with words such as "bolloed," "ouches," "eared," "days-

man," "neesings," "abjects," "anon," "bestead," "eschew," "trow" and "ghost."³⁶

CULT OR NOT? — THAT'S THE QUESTION

Cultic roots bring forth cultic fruits. Kutilek is on target when he writes:

"The King James-Only movement has been more destructive and distractive among Baptists than any controversy since the Campbellite heresy of the nineteenth century. This modern movement may well exceed the Campbellites in its overall evil effects."³⁷

Cultic fruits do not please God. James says that the wisdom from above is marked by gentleness, peace, good fruit, and a willingness to yield to others (3:17). Where there is commotion and evil fruit, James says it is from the world, the flesh, and the devil (3:16).

That one could believe that God has given an infallible Bible only to English-speaking people is the height of arrogance and a staggering display of cultural and biblical ignorance.

Perhaps we can make exceptions for positions 4 and 5. As for the rest, our only conclusion is that they are cultic at best, and a full-blown cult at worst.

Here is a modern movement that has its roots in cultism and fruits that display cultism. Since the *Textus Receptus* only dates to the 17th century and the Byzantine line of texts only to the 4th century, the whole KJVO position is ultimately a faith position. Some of that faith is squarely on the man Benjamin Wilkinson.

There are text-types, such as the "P" manuscripts, which go virtually to the Apostles' doorstep and are used in translating the more modern versions. These were undiscovered at the time the KJV translators did their work and were still unknown in the time of Wescott and Hort. The "P" fragments have since helped us fine-tune our text in minor areas and are in no way decisive to doctrine. These have been recovered in the 20th century.³⁸

The KJVO advocates cannot demonstrate decisively with textual evidence that their text type is anywhere near the first-century originals. Presently there is a gap of at least 300 years from the original autographs, which is devastating to their position. To trust a cult leader — namely Benjamin Wilkinson — is to lean on a broken reed. KJVO advocates can only span the 300-year gap by wishing or bullying others into believing it is not there or use a cult leader to bolster their case. Cults base their teaching on their founders and — setting aside the hard evidence — exercise implicit faith in his word. Like father, like son — or rather like Wilkinson (and Fuller), like offspring.

Endnotes:

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2. See further, G. Richard Fisher, "Ruckmanism or Wreckmanism — The Teaching That K.J.V. Translators Were Inspired Is Dangerous," *PFO Newsletter*, April-June 1982, pp. 1, 5.
3. James B. Williams, Editor, *From the Mind of God to the Mind of Man*. Greenville, S.C.: Ambassador-Emerald International, 1999, pg. 159.
4. For additional information on Peter Ruckman, see James R. White, *The King James Only Controversy*, (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1995, pp. 6-7, 109-121), and Stewart Custer, *The Truth About the King James Controversy*, (Greenville, S.C.: Bob Jones University Press, 1981).
5. See further, Robert A. Joyner, *King James Only?* Newport, N.C.: self-published, 2000, pg. 35.
6. A.T. Robertson, *Studies in the Text of the New Testament*. New York: George H. Doran and Company, 1969, pg. 47.
7. Dean Burgon, *The Revision Revised*. Paradise, Penna.: Conservative Classics, nd, pg. XXV, italics in original.
8. Doug Kutilek, "'Roots' of the KJV Controversy - The Unlearned Men: The True Genealogy and Genesis of King-James-Version-Onlyism." Document available at: www.tegart.com/brian/bible/kjvonly/doug/kjvoroots.html.
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10. For more information on Seventh-day Adventists see, *Seventh-day Adventism: The Spirit Behind the Church*, (Phoenix: Grace Upon Grace Productions, 1998, 50-minute video); and D.M. Canright, *Seventh-day Adventism Refuted In a Nutshell*, (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1962).
11. Dale Ratzlaff, *The Truth About Seventh-day Adventist "Truth."* Glendale, Ariz.: Life Assurance Ministries, 2000, pg. 6.
12. Doug Kutilek in Roy E. Beacham and Kevin T. Bauder, General Editors, *One Bible Only?* Grand Rapids, Mich.: Kregal Publications, 2001, pp. 45-46.
13. *Ibid.*, pg. 44.
14. *Ibid.*
15. *Which Bible?*, op. cit., pg. 109.
16. "The Translators to the Reader," North Australia: Covenant Press, 1984, pp. 8-9. This reproduction of "The Preface to the Authorized Version" has been updated with modernized spelling.
17. J.D. Douglas, Editor, *Who's Who in Christian History*. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers, 1992, pg. 235.
18. See *Which Bible?*, op. cit., pp. 101-102.
19. Everett Harrison, Editor, *Baker's Dictionary of Theology*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1973, pg. 238.
20. See further, Norman L. Geisler, *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1999, "Gnosticism," pp. 273-275.
21. Stewart Custer, *The Truth About the King James Controversy*. Greenville, S.C.: Bob Jones University Press, 1981, pp. 26-27.
22. *Which Bible?*, op. cit., pg. 104.
23. *Ibid.*, pg. 114.
24. J.A. Froude, *Life and Letters of Erasmus*. New York: Charles Scribners and Son, 1899, pg. 184.
25. *Ibid.*, pg. 87.
26. *Ibid.*, pg. 121.
27. *Ibid.*, pg. 80.
28. *Ibid.*, pp. 253-254, 267, 272, 332, 356-357.
29. *Ibid.*, pg. 351.
30. *Ibid.*, pg. 376.
31. *Studies in the Text of the New Testament*, op. cit., pg. 48.
32. *Which Bible?*, op. cit., pg. 233.
33. F.F. Bruce, *The Canon of Scripture*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1988, pg. 107.
34. R.C. Sproul in the *New Geneva Study Bible*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1995, pg. IV.
35. *From the Mind of God to the Mind of Man*, op. cit., pg. 121.
36. See further, G. Christian Weiss, *What You Should Know About Bible Translations*. Lincoln, Neb.: Back to the Bible, 1977.
37. *One Bible Only?*, op. cit., pg. 49.
38. See further, Philip Wesley Comfort, *The Quest for the Original Text of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1992.

Osteen served the Lord Jesus Christ as pastor, evangelist, author, and teacher for sixty years. Ordained as a Southern Baptist, he received the baptism in the Holy Ghost in 1958, an experience which revolutionized his ministry into a worldwide outreach for Jesus Christ."³

In a time of racial division, John Osteen opened wide the doors of his church to all people, and all shades and classes of people came. Although John Osteen rejected Southern Baptist theology — he received a Master's degree from Northern Baptist Seminary — he never lost sight of the need for foreign missions and his congregation still supports a great deal of mission work. At the time of his death in 1999, Lakewood Church claimed 6,000 members.⁴

Those who may have had the opportunity to survey the ministry and legacy of the late Osteen probably will agree that he appeared to have a genuine pastor's heart and a desire to see people come to a saving faith in Jesus Christ. Perhaps it was his legitimate seminary education that helped keep Osteen from espousing some of the more heretical doctrines common among Word Faith teachers today.

BEWARE OF THE LEAVEN

We should never fall under the illusion regarding the Word Faith "leaven" that he propagated, and which is being magnified through his son Joel, who assumed pastoral responsibilities at Lakewood upon his father's death. The elder Osteen was a leading crusader for the erroneous doctrine of positive confession: the idea that we can speak our desires into existence. This is also known as the "health and wealth gospel." This metaphysical belief deludes many, convincing them that they can either create or change their reality by the power of their words. For example, John stated the following:

"The miracle is in YOUR MOUTH. Dare to speak those

promises out loud. Say them to yourself! Say them to the devil! Say them to the sickness! Say them to your mountain of trouble! Confess them in the face of all contrary evidence! Say them while the pain is there!! Say them while you are so sick you can hardly think!! God is smiling down on you. He delights for you to 'put Him in remembrance' of His Word. The Lord will surely make His promises come true in your life. When we SAY and CONFESS His Word, He brings the miracle to pass!!"⁵

A few pages later in the same publication, he wrote:

"In your heart of hearts, picture yourself completely delivered from sickness, suffering and all trouble. YOU ARE!!! Now, take God's promises without fear and boldly confess them day and night. When people ask you how you feel, don't tell them. TELL THEM WHAT GOD SAYS ABOUT YOUR CASE!!! TELL THEM ABOUT THE PROMISES OF GOD!!! TELL THEM YOU DON'T GO BY FEELING BUT BY WHAT GOD SAYS!!!"⁶

SAD CONSEQUENCES OF BAD THEOLOGY

It's impossible to know if the late Osteen was deceived by, or knowingly forged the "health and wealth" message. In any case, he was no poster boy for his message. *Charisma* magazine reported, "In January 1999 John Osteen wound up in the hospital with kidney trouble."⁷ He could not speak himself well, but resorted to medical help.

But it was more than kidney trouble. On Jan. 18, 1999, Lakewood Church began a frantic attempt to "confess" John Osteen well. The church sent, via e-mail, what it called a "RED ALERT PRAYER REQUEST." The e-mailed prayer request revealed the grave nature (which had a heretofore unrevealed history) and the terminal condition of John Osteen:

"Pastor Osteen began kidney dialysis last Fall 1998 because his

kidneys were not properly clearing the toxins out of his body as they are designed to do. He had a heart catheterization in August that determined all was well with his heart at that time. Nearly three weeks ago, doctors performed surgery to put in a pacemaker for his heart as the upper and lower chambers were not in synch, and his heart rate was low."⁸

Apparently, John Osteen could not tell his body how to feel. However, as the truth was being revealed, the situation grew worse:

"The past two weeks or so Pastor Osteen has experienced excruciating pain in his chest. Doctors said it could be caused by the dialysis, or possibly a degenerated disc in his neck, but that they had to do more extensive tests this week to determine the cause of the chest pain."⁹

The complications mounted:

"Now doctors believe that smaller arteries feeding into the larger arteries of the heart are blocked and constricted. A new procedure will be available in mid-February to do balloon surgery on the smaller arteries, which they feel he may be a candidate for. Yesterday Pastor Osteen had a nuclear test done on his heart, and the test results showed his heart was greatly weakened."¹⁰

Clearly, John Osteen was dying. Perhaps God was giving him time to repent and renounce his false positive confession error, but he did not relent. He continued to give himself and others false hope:

"Pastor Osteen asks that you 'wait' on the Lord with him, and agree with him for a creative miracle for the kidneys and the functions of the heart to be normal. He is believing God for new kidneys, a new heart and circulatory system, and that he will have an appetite for food. He also needs strength in his body. Pastor Osteen's faith is strong.

His confession is strong. He is not asking for prayer out of desperation. He is a man of faith."¹¹

Even more tragic was John Osteen's failure as a prophet. The e-mail went on to state what were said to be divine promises for John Osteen and his staff, which would go unfulfilled:

"He knows God has promised him that he will be preaching into his early 90's, and he is only 77 now. God gave him a vision for 'Seven Years of Harvest', and we are just beginning our 6th year of this special thrust for world evangelism. God has promised our staff that He will bring our pastor's kidneys on a platter of praise."¹²

John and the staff were grossly misled. Less than a week later, John Osteen died. No new kidneys, no preaching into his early 90s. He never even made it to his 78th birthday. When the announcement for "Pastor Osteen's Memorial service" was made, it closed with:

"The Osteen family and Lake-wood Church will continue to serve humbly and faithfully, as we believe to see more miracles, healings, and the greater works of Jesus."¹³

The ailing "healer" was unable to speak himself or be spoken into health. He was living proof of the fallacy of his own teaching.

IT'S MINE FOR THE ASKING

John Osteen also believed he had the power to make his children what he wanted through his positive confession. Many would wish child-rearing were as easy as he made it out to be:

"I am the sum total of what I have been confessing through the years. My children are the best children that ever lived on the face of the earth. They are blessed of God. They are the sum total of what Dodie and I have confessed and loved them into being. **CONFESS THE WORD OF GOD INSTEAD OF NEGA-**

TIVE THINGS. You may say, 'How long do I have to confess it?' All of your life."¹⁴

Additionally, John Osteen is on record as fully endorsing the errant Word Faith concepts surrounding financial prosperity:

"I look at the great truths of Almighty God and with the sixth sense in my spirit-man, I believe and I have a consciousness that they are mine. I see and believe salvation is mine. Healing is mine. Prosperity is mine. All of God's blessings are mine. On the basis of this information from the sixth sense of faith, I can confidently say, 'I am healed! I am blessed! I am redeemed! I am prosperous!'"¹⁵

In the citation above, he summed up the "health and wealth gospel" in just a few short sentences. So despite the good things that John Osteen did as a pastor, he was ensnared by the subtlety of false teaching and ended up misleading many before his death. Jesus warned His disciples:

"Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees.' ... 'How is it you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread? — but to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.' Then they understood that He did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees" (Matthew 16:6, 11-12).

Even though it seems to us that His disciples were, at times, a little slow on the uptake, Jesus made His point clear. He was warning them to "beware,"¹⁶ to be on guard against the danger of doctrinal errors, which Jesus likens to leaven in bread. Jesus knew that if left unchecked, like leaven in bread, doctrinal error would spread. The leaven of false doctrine, which John Osteen instilled in his son Joel, is now expanding and misleading more people than the elder Osteen could have ever imagined.

Sadly, Joel Osteen has never denounced the errors of his father, but

perpetuates them by his silence and the sale of his father's books.

THE MASTER OF MARKETEEING

Joel Osteen had no biblical training or experience to be a pastor, which seems to be more the rule than the exception within the Charismatic camp. Its pulpits are filled with men and women who "feel called" to the pastorate. They attempt to build congregations on the "strength" of their calling. Some Charismatic leaders may go on to an unaccredited "Bible School" for a year or two, such as Rhema Bible Training Center started by the late Kenneth Hagin. However, for the majority of Word Faith ministers, schooling at a legitimate seminary would be an anomaly.

Few people would allow a surgeon to operate because he "felt called" to be a surgeon as a child, but never went to medical school. Nor would many allow someone to build a house who firmly believed God had "called" him to be an architect, yet had never gone to a college or university to study architectural design.

Yet, thousands upon thousands of professing Christians are more than willing to follow a man or woman who professes a divine calling, but has never studied Church history, hermeneutics, systematic theology, and Greek and Hebrew. They claim to hear directly from God. This is especially true for the sign-gift pastors.¹⁷

Consider Joel Osteen's own words to *Charisma*:

"'Make church relevant,' he says. 'Give them something to be able to take away. *I find today people are not looking for theology.* There's a place for it. [But] in your everyday life you need to know how to live."¹⁸

While Joel Osteen acknowledges there's a place for theology, we must inquire where it is. Theology is the study of God, His attributes, His character, and His works. We surely need to know those things in our everyday life, lest we follow false gods. The minimizing of theology by Joel Osteen makes way for his clearly

humanistic message loaded with seeker-sensitive buzzwords.

THE UPBEAT GOES ON

Charisma describes Osteen with having an "upbeat style." Of course his "style" is "upbeat." It is safe to say he really believes much of the Word Faith elements his father cultivated in him all his life. Add to this whatever offbeat spirituality Joel Osteen may have gleaned from his two years at Oral Roberts University, where he studied television production and marketing. And he is authentic: what you see is what you get. Joel Osteen is a man without any biblical education, but an admitted talent for marketing and with a definite stage presence.

To be a success in marketing, one has to know where people itch and how to scratch it. Or, one has to create a hunger for something they currently do not have, nor formerly knew they needed.

So to become a megachurch, a pastor has to make church relevant. He has to give the people what they want, something that soothes that spiritual itch. In order to be a "success" (many in attendance and lots of money), pastors must preach unchallenging messages that uplift rather than convict. He must pander to the lowest common denominator and make sure that whatever is taught does not offend anyone at anytime. This is simply a fulfillment of Paul's warning to Timothy:

"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables" (2 Timothy 4:3-4).

This is exactly where multitudes of people are spiritually today. The above text also helps explain the phenomena of people like Robert Schuller, Rod Parsley, Joyce Meyer, Paul Crouch, Benny Hinn, Robert Tilton, and now Joel Osteen.

Recall Joel Osteen's statement, "I find today people are not looking for

theology." That fact is quite obvious, because if they were, they would have to look elsewhere. Although he did not reveal to *Charisma's* readers where he derived this astonishing fact, it appears the folks he shepherds have no interest in theology.

Lest you think such a criticism a bit harsh, it is helpful to remember that theology simply means "the knowledge of God." In essence, Joel Osteen has said that people are really not interested in learning about God. Perhaps, due to his lack of biblical education, he has made a distinction between knowing the God of the Bible through sound biblical theology and knowing "how to live." The truth is, without a true knowledge of God, we really cannot know "how to live." To separate doctrine from duty is a major error addressed all through the book of Titus. Likewise, an important issue addressed by the Apostle Peter is that true doctrine and holy living are inseparably linked:

"His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue" (2 Peter 1:3).

Peter then adds:

"But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins" (2 Peter 1:5-9).

GROWTH FROM TRUE KNOWLEDGE

Scripture repeatedly declares that the more accurately one understands God, within the biblical context, the better life one will live before Him.

Nearly every parent who has a child who does not like to eat vegetables will, with regularity, make the child eat the vegetables. As good parents, they know that eating vegetables is beneficial and necessary.

The same is true for every man who stands behind a pulpit. Jesus told Peter, "feed My sheep" (John 21:16). He said, "feed" the sheep, not "entertain" them! Pastors are to give them the Word of God in its totality. In Jesus' last commission, He told them to teach "all" that He commanded (Matthew 28:20). Any pastor can fall into the trap of becoming a people-pleaser. This is why Paul, through the Holy Spirit, warned young Timothy:

"I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching" (2 Timothy 4:1-2).

Timothy was warned to be steadfast in his proclamation of the Gospel, to be ready to do so at all times (i.e., "in season and out of season"), and in his preaching to: 1) convince (or reprove), 2) rebuke, and 3) exhort the people according to the Scriptures. A minister is to preach with all long-suffering because preaching with sound teaching or doctrine is unpleasant to people's carnal nature. This is in spite of the hue and cry of seeker-sensitive pundits who lament, "Oh come now, surely you know preaching doctrinal messages is passé?" Yet Joel Osteen would do well to heed the word of the Lord from a genuine prophet who stated:

"Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy and say to them, 'Thus says the LORD God to the shepherds: "Woe to the shepherds of Israel who feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks? You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool; you slaughter the fatlings, but you do not feed the flock"' (Ezekiel 34:2-3).

There are many biblical themes which are very unpopular and even politically incorrect, yet the faithful pastor-teacher will illuminate these topics so that the flock under his care is receiving a balanced spiritual diet and is able to walk in the full light of God's Word, and not in the shadows.

Joel Osteen's ascent to the pulpit of this large congregation was an unusual one. He did not take a traditional path to pastoral work, but perhaps his training was ideal for modern, media-oriented Christendom:

"Meanwhile, son Joel, one of six children, was learning the business of television ... 'Growing up, I knew what I wanted to do. I wanted to be involved in TV production,' he says. 'That was just my passion.' In 1981 he came home from Oral Roberts University (ORU) to start the Lakewood TV ministry. 'I did that for 17 years, working behind the scenes,' Osteen says. 'My dad, he always wanted me to preach. It just wasn't in my heart.'"¹⁹

Thus, for 17 years, Joel Osteen was behind the scenes, handling all the television and marketing aspects of his father's ministry. The *Charisma* article further reveals the impact of the abilities of this father-son team:

"The younger Osteen's television-marketing talents and his dad's preaching skills resulted eventually in the church's services being aired on stations nationwide and in more than 100 countries."²⁰

No doubt, the combined talents of this dynamic-duo of folksy preaching-teaching and television-marketing was a chief cause for the growth of Lakewood Church into megachurch status.²¹

TELLING TALES

As John Osteen lay sick and dying in the hospital, he asked his son to preach for him on Sunday. Initially, Joel Osteen said, "No." He then relented and described for *Charisma's* readers his preaching efforts that day:

"I spoke for him that Sunday for the first time in my life," he says.

"I just got up there and told stories. I was so glad when it was over. I said, 'I'll never do this again in my life.'" Well, that was the last Sunday of my dad's life."²²

That was the beginning of his public ministry: he just got up and "told stories." Joel Osteen has been telling stories that have been tickling the ears of the multitudes ever since. Consider these descriptions of his preaching style:

"Everyone agrees Osteen's preaching is a key ingredient. Descriptors of his style include 'simple,' 'down-to-earth,' 'practical,' 'relatable,' 'easy,' 'folksy,' 'humble.'"²³

"The appealing style of Osteen's personality in the pulpit is unmistakable. It is part of the reason for Lakewood's current level of success."²⁴

"It's 10 a.m. when he begins his sermon. The theme is *practical* as he gives example after example of the importance of following God's timing rather than one's own. He keeps the tone cheerful, optimistic. 'God doesn't want anybody walking out of here today heavy-hearted and down-cast,' Osteen says."²⁵

Some may object and say, "Well, Jesus told stories." Yes, He did. However, the notable distinction is that Jesus told stories to teach doctrine and theology.

Indeed, Joel Osteen is charismatic in his personality. His delivery is as non-threatening as the positive messages he delivers. Considering an agglomeration of Joel Osteen's statements — with his emphasis on being "practical" — it is a logical conclusion that perhaps he believes teaching theology is somehow "impractical." His words to *Charisma*, "I find today people are not looking for theology," loudly resonate. In reality, "practical" means he tells story after story, uses numerous anecdotes, and then tries to use a proof text to bolster his point.

Surprisingly, some of *Charisma's* readers picked up on and negatively responded to these issues:

"Joel Osteen says he does not preach theology. According to the dictionary, 'theology' is the study of God, His nature, attributes and His relationship with man and the universe. Considering the above definition, what is the message coming from his pulpit at Lakewood?"²⁶

"His 'relevant' sermons are all about individualism and consumption. The implication is, 'If I just do the right things or pray the right way, God will give me happiness — especially as it relates to finances.'"²⁷

"I just finished reading about Joel Osteen and Lakewood Church. I am more convinced than ever that pragmatism dominates the church of Jesus Christ. Lakewood and pastor Osteen clearly embrace a Word-Faith theology that is not based on sound doctrine but rather represents the spirit of this age."²⁸

LET ME ENTERTAIN YOU

It should also concern the discerning Christian when a pastor can make the statement that God does not want anybody walking out of here "heavy-hearted." In contrast, Scripture declares, "godly sorrow worketh repentance" (2 Corinthians 7:10). At times, God may well want us to walk out of a service "heavy-hearted" if we have been sinning. We should allow the Word, when properly expounded, and the Spirit, when genuinely present, to break us and to convict us of sinful attitudes and practices. James concurs and states that, at times, we must humble ourselves and even weep and mourn (James 4:7-10).

However, if all one hears is "up-beat," "cheerful," and "optimistic" messages, there is little opportunity for the Holy Spirit to work conviction in the hearts of the hearers. This folksy, down-home, non-confrontational type of message also goes a long way in explaining the large crowds that gather to be entertained. Read the Old Testament prophets. They thundered, but did not tickle ears. They did not entertain.

Lakewood Church's music is an important factor in drawing crowds. Once Joel Osteen took command after the death of his father, he began to expand the musical talent as well:

"Four years ago, when Cindy Cruse-Ratcliff — former member of the Dove Award-winning Cruse Family gospel group — became Lakewood's minister of music, the church had only one Sunday morning service. ... Soon after Cruse-Ratcliff arrived, Lakewood expanded when two Sunday morning services were added and, eight months later, a Saturday night worship service. ... 'The growth was extremely rapid,' says Cruse-Ratcliff, who still serves on the 200-member Lakewood staff."²⁹

"Star power" brings people to churches as well, especially musical stars, and Joel Osteen, with his television-marketing training, is not ignorant of this fact. Ms. Cruse-Ratcliff knows people in the contemporary music scene and, as Lakewood's minister of music, she no doubt helps add to the musical strength of this megachurch by bringing in some more musical talent. According to *Charisma*:

"Helping to spice up that mix are two of the most prominent names in worship music. Marcos Witt, who fills stadiums in Latin America for worship concerts, was tapped in 2002 to pastor Lakewood's 3,000-member Hispanic congregation. Also adding diversity to the Lakewood staff is Israel Houghton, whose soulful worship anthems are sung around the world."³⁰

The music at Lakewood is excessively contemporary. They have musical stars who appeal to Hispanic (Witt), African-American (Houghton), and Caucasian members (Cruse-Ratcliff). The musical team writes many of their own songs, yet the *Charisma* article never mentions hymns.

This is not surprising when one considers that the rule among Word Faith and seeker-sensitive congregations is the absence of hymnals. Apart from the occasional singing of

"Amazing Grace," contemporary songs and choruses rule the day. Sadly, the Charismatic movement's brand of music has infiltrated many evangelical congregations, leading to an abandonment of the use of the historic hymns. It could be that hymns are, in fact, rhymed theology. It is not uncommon for seeker-sensitive churches to utilize songs and choruses that originated from the Toronto Revival or the Vineyard movement, which are two examples of some of the wildest expressions of extremism within the Charismatic renewal movement.

Musically speaking, there is a method to the madness at Lakewood and other megachurches. They work hard to cut all ties with traditional Christianity. The classic, highly theological hymns and hymnals virtually scream out the dreaded word "traditional."³¹

THE KEY TO SUCCESS?

Joel Osteen is probably the leading example of a Word Faith adherent who has combined the successful marketing techniques of the seeker-sensitive megachurches with a positive confession, health and wealth message. The blend becomes a potent hybrid that appeals to both sign-gift believers (sort of "Charismatic lite") and baby-boomer seekers.

The message that God wants to bless His children with complete physical health, give them great financial wealth, and demands little of them in return regarding their spiritual life is a highly appealing message. Also combining popular Gospel singers with highly orchestrated praise and worship teams creates a decidedly non-church atmosphere which appeals to an even wider audience.

Additionally, marketing strategies and their successes seem to run in the Osteen family. Smuggled within the confines of a recent parody of Joel Osteen in the satirical *The Door Magazine*, was the revelation of a firm operated by Joel's brother, Justin. The publication, in its spoof-interview of Joel Osteen and his feel-good gospel message, disclosed:

"Oh, that's my brother Justin. He's real smart. He's president of Justin Osteen and Associates, Inc. They're the guys who set the 'independent reasonable compensation' limits for many of today's top televangelists and preachers. I don't really understand it myself, but it has to do with tax stuff. For instance, I know he got the IRS to approve an annual compensation package of \$1.75 million for Archbishop Robert Tilton and his current wife, even though Mr. Tilton doesn't really do anything but sit around Miami eating stone crabs, re-running his old programs and mining his mailing list. He doesn't even have a church!"³²

Even though the interview was fictitious, *The Door's* publisher, Ole Anthony, told PFO that the information regarding the company operated by Justin Osteen was factual. The magazine's lampoon was based on actual interviews and documented fact.

Of further concern is that one hears little, if any, Law and Gospel proclaimed at Lakewood Church. The reality is that 30,000 people are *not* being fed a biblically balanced spiritual diet which will promote true growth in their lives. What one hears is a synthesis of Word Faith concepts wrapped up in a seeker-friendly environment by a young man with a winsome smile. One can preach grace, but if only grace is preached, it becomes something else, as Jude 4 indicates.

IF YOU BUILD IT, THEY WILL COME

Lastly, we cannot lose sight of the fact that a certain synergy builds with any church when it begins to reach such a size. People who have no solid doctrinal foundation will want to attend the place where "something" is happening. So adding a coffee bar, marketplace, and gym to the church facility will be a dynamic for such a bustling fellowship. *Charisma* reports:

"Lakewood's new International Center allows the church to ex-

pand its ministries even more. An ice rink and a basketball gym are available for use by families and city sports leagues. The church hosts concerts, sporting events, family conferences, conventions, business workshops, receptions and seminars. Plans for the future include a fitness center, and a dining and retail plaza."³³

In America, bigger is better. After all, many presume, if Joel Osteen was not being used of the Lord, then why would God allow all these people to come to Lakewood Church? The rub is that the same logic could be applied to the Latter-day Saint (Mormon) church, Islam (with its more than a billion adherents), or any other fast-growing cult. The previously cited *Charisma* reader hit the nail on the head with his comment, "I am more convinced than ever that pragmatism dominates the church of Jesus Christ."

In reality, could this, in fact, be a sign of God's judgment on His people who have forsaken His ways? We often think of God's judgment as some divine catastrophe. Yet repeatedly — and just as catastrophic — is when He simply allows people to have their own way. God gave the Israelites their desire, but sent leanness to their souls (Psalm 106:15). The words of the Old Testament prophet Jeremiah are applicable to many in the Church today:

"Be astonished, O heavens, at this, And be horribly afraid; Be very desolate," says the LORD. 'For My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, And hewn themselves cisterns; broken cisterns that can hold no water'" (Jeremiah 2:12-13).

A pastor who was into gimmicky church-growth philosophy once proposed, "If you can run a McDonald's, you can grow a church — it is not much different than hamburgers." As much as Joel Osteen believes the growth they've experienced is due to the blessing of God, it really boils down to three simple things, which have nothing at all to do with God:

- His father's legacy and an already existing megachurch.
- His own honed marketing abilities.
- A biblically errant, but hugely popular message which appeals to the masses seeking to have their ears tickled and experience a "good time" in church.

Please pray for Joel Osteen. He has a tremendous impact on many people. Pray the Lord opens his eyes to biblical truth and that he may take as bold a stand to expose error — whether his father's or others. Paul instructed to "purge out the old leaven" (1 Corinthians 5:7). It is our prayer that the leaven of Lakewood will be exposed and done away with.

Endnotes:

1. "A Tribute to Pastor John Osteen." Document available at: www.lakewood.cc/john_osteen_tribute.htm.
2. John Osteen, *How to Release the Power of God*. Houston: A John Osteen Publication, 1968, pp. 44-45.
3. "A Tribute to Pastor John Osteen," op. cit.
4. Ernest Herndon, "How a BIG Church Grew Bigger," *Charisma*, June 2004, pg. 44. Elsewhere in the article, a figure of 8,000 members for 1999 is given. It is of further interest to note that in 1985, *Charisma* reported that "more than 12,000 people attend [Lakewood Church] each Sunday" (see *Charisma*, August 1985, pg. 132). Also, the 1988 edition of the *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, citing the 1985 *Charisma* magazine as its source, claimed "a membership of 20,000" for Lakewood Church (pg. 656).
5. John Osteen, *There is a Miracle in Your Mouth*. Houston: A John Osteen Publication, 1972, pp. 6-7, upper case in original.
6. Ibid., pp. 17-18, upper case in original.
7. "How a BIG Church Grew Bigger," op. cit., pg. 44.
8. Document sent to "Lakewood Church E-List" from Renee Branson (Pastor's Secretary), Monday, January 18, 1999, under the subject heading of "Prayer request for Pastor John Osteen." Copy on file.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.
13. Document sent to "Lakewood Church E-List," dated Sunday, January 24, 1999, and sent Monday, January 25, 1999, under the subject heading of "Pastor Osteen's Memorial service." Copy on file.

14. John Osteen, *The ABC's of Faith*. Houston: A John Osteen Publication, 1981, pp. 31-32, bold and upper case in original.
15. John Osteen, *The 6th Sense ... Faith*. Houston: A John Osteen Publication, 1972, pp. 14-15.
16. The Greek word, *prosecho* ("beware"), is defined "to be in a continuous state of readiness to learn of any future danger, need, or error, and to respond appropriately - 'to pay attention to, to keep on the lookout for, to be alert for, to be on one's guard against'" (Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, editors, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament based on Semantic Domains*, from *Bible Windows 5.0*. Cedar Hill, Texas: Silver Mountain Software, 1997, version 5.0).
17. The term *sign-gift* has been used in place of *Charismatic*, because all Christians are "charismatic" believers in that each one of us have been gifted with some gift or gifts from the Holy Spirit (see 1 Corinthians 12:7). It should also be noted that most "seeker-sensitive churches" are led by individuals who are seminary educated.
18. "How a BIG Church Grew Bigger," op. cit., pp. 44-45, emphasis added, brackets in original.
19. Ibid., pg. 44.
20. Ibid.
21. Yet, the discerning reader has to wonder if Charismatic preachers stretch reports of membership figures purposely. Lakewood Church, as earlier noted in endnote 4, reported figures ranging from 6,000 members and 8,000 members (both in 1999), to attendance of 12,000 (in 1985), to membership of 20,000 (in 1988).
22. "How a BIG Church Grew Bigger," op. cit., pg. 44, emphasis added.
23. Ibid., pg. 45.
24. Ibid., pg. 46.
25. Ibid., pg. 50, emphasis added.
26. "Letters," *Charisma*, August 2004, pg. 8.
27. Ibid.
28. Ibid.
29. "How a BIG Church Grew Bigger," op. cit., pg. 44.
30. "A Little Piece of Heaven," *Charisma*, June 2004, pg. 46.
31. It is interesting that as hard as megachurches have tried to distance themselves from established "traditional" forms of Christian worship, they have created their own liturgies of a sort. Many have banners which are marched around, and/or have praise dancers. They have altar calls, and other aspects which have become standard practices, and thus *traditions*.
32. Chris Whitehead, "If You're Happy and You Know It..." *The Door Magazine*, July/August 2004, pg. 37.
33. "How a BIG Church Grew Bigger," op. cit., pg. 50.

Seminar 2004). If there were the hundreds being healed at each meeting as Oral Roberts, Kathryn Kuhlman, Benny Hinn, and others have claimed since the 1940s, there would be millions verifiably well.

Paula White added to the silliness proclaiming that 2004 is the year of the greatest outpouring of God's glory and supernatural visitation. It would be, she said, Benny Hinn's "best year" (*This Is Your Day*, Jan. 6, 2004). Hinn's 2004 campaigns were nothing more than carbon copies of previous years' shows. Heaven is not earth, as Romans 8 makes very clear. Sanctification is not glorification, no matter how often these evangelists proclaim it.

Hinn is also trying hard to get people to buy the message of restorationism and that spiritual utopia is on its way. Within a few weeks of Paula White's prophecy, Hinn featured Kenneth Copeland on his broadcast with, more or less, the same message: 2004 — The Year of Fullness. Signs, wonders, and miracles are all on their way. "2004 will be the fullest year of your life," Copeland said. The skewing of salvation, sanctification, and glorification is spiritually criminal, but these purveyors of fantasy continue to get away with it.

If we can just hold on another year, these prophets will usher in a brave new world filled with the glory of God as the waters cover the sea. And, yes, don't forget to send money. Copeland prophesies that the "overflow" coming in 2005 "depends on how much you sow toward it in 2004" (*This Is Your Day*, Jan. 28, 2004).

Dutch Sheets' claim that by praying in each state in the United States he can singlehandedly shift each region into God's purpose is a lie out of his wild imagination (*Charisma*, February 2004, pg. 16).

C. Peter Wagner is considered a top demon chaser and modern day apostle by many Charismatics. Because he has asserted that he is among modern apostles and prophets, similar to the original twelve, even the Assemblies of God have turned their back on him. For all Wagner's bluster about his power of healing and demon busting, *Charisma* magazine revealed that Wagner has diabetes and his wife has debilitating arthritis (February 2004, pg. 52). He is a lousy poster boy for his message.

It can be argued that many of the extremist healer types have imagined themselves to be something they are not. They then become what they have imagined and actually believe themselves to be what they have created in their fantasies. Anyone can make unverifiable claims of shifting the powers in unseen realms, or of being an apostle.

Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres made an interesting comment on the difference between the way Arabs use words and the Israelis use them. His observation equally applies perfectly to true Bible students and televangelists, "The role of the word in the Arab world is

different from its role in our world. For us a word is a commitment, for them it is an ornament" (cited in *Arafat's War*, pg. 125).

Even Moody Bible College is getting in on the act. Last January, college president Joseph Stowell sent a letter to Moody supporters promoting the appearance of Henry Blackaby at its Founder's Week saying, "Henry Blackaby initiated one of the most significant spiritual awakenings in recent times with 'Experiencing God.'" Brownsville Assembly of God in Pensacola, Fla., was making that same claim for its "revival" meetings a few years prior — as were others before that.

A look at the moral and spiritual state of our country, and even the Church, will lead most to the conclusion that Stowell is either naive or disingenuous. The top echelons of the Christian world get materially richer while the grassroots get spiritually poorer. The average Christian has become a casualty for the top dogs and their marketers.

One healer, one event, one apostle, one orchestrated revival, one or even two outlandishly unsupported claims will not complete life's puzzle for us. Think of someone in heaven proudly saying, "I did '40 Days of Purpose'" and Moses saying, "I did 40 years of purpose." Any program is only a tiny piece of life, a passing thing, a blip on life's radar screen.

Then think of another saying with pride, "I prayed the prayer of Jabez!" and Jesus stepping up and saying, "Yes, and I did bloody sweats in a garden. And, oh, I did the cross."

Another says, "I paid \$100 for a *Benny Hinn Bible*, did all the Blackaby seminars, and devoured a whole shelf of Watchman Nee books" and Isaiah answered, "I was sawn in two."

Some programs help us make turns and adjustments and may be good, but they only turn us toward new areas of growth and achievement. Unfortunately, their marketers often overstate their value.

Others are into what can be labeled "celebrity-by-contact." They believe it really matters whose meeting one attends. Another might say, "Hey there, I went to a Promise Keepers meeting and sat in a stadium in the hot sun. I even stood in a bathroom line next to Coach McCartney." Paul would say, "I really didn't know anybody famous except Jesus. I was stoned and beaten over the years and toward the end I still believed I had a way to go and so I pressed on and finished my course."

Many boasted — and may have even paid for — a picture with Jim and Tammy Bakker or Jimmy Swaggart. Some may now want to burn even the negatives. Jerry Falwell has sold opportunities to be photographed with him for \$10. Falwell also has hawked credit cards that would return a cash award to his school. Many in his community see him as a businessman who preaches on Sunday.

Just to show how sinful and perverted people can be, and how far they can take celebrity status, we only need look back to the Middle Ages to the concept of beneficent contagion. The idea was that if some people had extreme holiness and the powers of healing, these attributes never left them, even when they died. Somehow the “powers” still resided in their dead carcass. If others could then get near their moldering bodies they could be affected and somehow tap into, or draw off the imagined miracle residue. Even standing by the grave or tomb, or touching shreds of old clothes or pieces of the dead body (called relics), was enough.

As ghastly, ghoulish, and ghostly as beneficent contagion sounds, some Roman Catholics, as well as Benny Hinn, Jewish sects, and Muslim fundamentalists are still great believers in carcass contagion. Visitations to graves have merit in their view.

Some would give a fortune just to be flailed by Benny Hinn’s suit jacket, yet would laugh at a Roman Catholic seeking a papal blessing. Even “Protestant Popes” are all leaking umbrellas at best.

If some of the Christian “celebrities” help us at all by chance, or in some tiny way teach us something, it is only because they happened to use the Word and provided only a very tiny piece of a very big puzzle.

Red notebooks, fads, rallies, video feeds, and big name speakers do not make mature Christians. A life of struggle, obedience, and consistency only barely begins to qualify a believer for his “stripes” or rewards. We need to brush off Luke 17:10, “So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, ‘We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do.’”

Yes, good books and good authors can help us for small areas of our life and may help to contribute a few pieces to our puzzle. Consistent Bible study keeps adding even more pieces — or allows the existing pieces to come together more readily. As life cycles and changes, and the years roll on, new biblical portions must be put into place.

One can read the book of Acts and wrongly think that Paul’s life was one series of spiritual highlights occurring at breakneck speed. However, Acts chronicles Paul’s life from the standpoint of some of the events with no report of the time spans between these events. Paul spent two years in a Caesarea prison with nothing recorded. He spent months on the sea traveling from place to place. Many of those days had to be dull, boring, and mundane with perhaps seasickness thrown into the mix. Second Corinthians is a glimpse into the awful disheartened states of Paul. Additionally, the Psalms are down-to-earth, revealing David’s roller-coaster days.

Life is not just one big event. Every event is just a tiny puzzle piece. The bigger pieces may well be those days when we gutted it out, obeyed, and demonstrated fruit of the Spirit — even in mundane places.

The word “revival” is used only twice in the New Testament; once of sin being revived and the other of the physical body of Jesus being revived. Revivals are hyped all the time, yet never were commanded by Jesus and the Apostles.

Jesus commanded a discipleship model of the Christian life (Matthew 28:16-20), not a revivalistic model. If God is pleased to sovereignly heighten the process and give more converts and disciples, it just means we disciple more vigorously. Revival is God’s business, not ours. Discipleship is our paradigm and pursuit. Revival is a word that is worthless to describe or define anything. Things forbidden by Paul in 1 Corinthians 14 are passed off as revival when the inspired Apostle calls them madness.

Iain Murray in *Pentecost-Today?* warns:

“If we suppose that blessing on the scale of revival is the *only* blessing worth looking for, and if we pass over the normal out of desire to see the extraordinary, we are wrong and will be disappointed. Sometimes Christians who have been through revivals have fallen into just such disappointment. They were tempted to think that there could be no real happiness unless times of revival continued. ... The authenticity of any alleged revival is to be judged by the *same* tests by which the genuineness of all Christianity is to be tested. ... revivals consist of *more* of what Christians already possess” (pp. 29, 31, italics in original).

Instead of tending to discipleship and faithfulness day by day, some try to “make things happen,” and when it does not happen they fall into despair and despise the normal. Discipleship is denigrated.

Do not listen to the cults or televangelists who say that life should be one constant event or spiritual high. Don’t despise the normal and ordinary, since God works in those. Don’t despise the means of grace as they are major pieces of life’s puzzle. Discipleship is a puzzle-making process. Don’t believe that a self-proclaimed miracle worker will bring heaven on earth this year or any year soon. It will take Jesus to fit in the last pieces of a big puzzle.

Review the words of J.C. Ryle from his book *Holiness*:

“At our best we shall find in ourselves daily cause for humiliation, and discover that we are needy debtors to mercy and grace every hour. The more light we have, the more we shall see our own imperfection. Sinners we were when we began, sinners we shall find ourselves as we go; renewed, pardoned, justified — yet sinners to the very last. Our absolute perfection is yet to come, and the expectation of it is one reason why we should long for heaven” (pg. 32).

Remember the puzzle.

—GRF

project. "Removing the names of Holocaust victims and other known Jews from a data base containing hundreds of millions of deceased persons is an ongoing, labor-intensive process requiring name-by-name research," he said. In addition to Holocaust victims, the names of other prominent Jews were found: Gilda Radner, Menachem Begin, David Ben-Gurion, and Albert Einstein. According to a December 2002 news report, 380,000 names of Holocaust victims were in the church's data base in 1995, with around 20,000 showing up after the proxy baptisms were supposed to have been discontinued.

Baptism for the dead originally was meant for non-Mormon relatives of LDS church members. The closest living relative of the deceased can sanction the proxy baptism. According to the May 9, 2004, edition of *The Hawk Eye*, Jack Renouf, LDS director of public affairs in Nauvoo, Ill., said, "It's an offer for the dead to be able to choose to be saved or not." Renouf also indicated that, "the temple in Nauvoo was not involved in the practice," but added that "not all Jews are opposed to the idea."

While proxy baptism for deceased Jews may not be taking place at the current Nauvoo temple, the practice of baptizing for dead Mormon relatives first took place during the 1840s at the original Nauvoo temple. Renouf also stated, "The church has 117 temples operating worldwide, so you can imagine how difficult it is to track all the names and who is involved."

The World Gathering of (Jewish) Holocaust Survivors has asked Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton, D-N.Y., to assist in speeding up the process of stopping the proxy baptisms and has also met with Sen. Orrin Hatch, R-Utah. No statement was issued after the meeting.

—AMG

THERE THEY GO AGAIN

Last year Benny Hinn teamed with End-Time Handmaidens founder Gwen Shaw to prophesy that "the greatest revival of the Spirit" would start in Germany and spread across Europe. That forecast, like countless similar predictions beforehand, went unfulfilled.

The latest prophet of promise is Randy Clark, the former St. Louis Vineyard pastor who is recognized as the catalyst of the Toronto Blessing. In 1993, Clark, at the request of Toronto Vineyard Fellowship pastor John Arnott, imparted the anointing he earlier received at a series of Rodney Howard-Browne meetings. Clark later resigned from the Vineyard movement to begin an apostolic missions network.

Clark has told *Charisma* magazine, "I believe that we are going to see another healing revival, so I wanted to

do a school where there could be a solid biblical basis for both the models and the theology behind healing and power evangelism" (August 2004, pg. 27). The term "power evangelism" was coined by the late John Wimber, who gained fame with the Association of Vineyard Churches. It is defined as evangelism being demonstrated by healings, signs, wonders, and exorcisms.

Clark is currently criss-crossing the United States conducting four-day healing schools. The schools, according to Clark, were established to correct false doctrine and train Christians in the healing ministry. According to the *Charisma* news report, Clark further stated, "People like the models I learned in the Vineyard and the balance, so I do expect that there will be a multiplication of healing in churches, communities and nations as a result of our healing schools."

—MKG

MOON SHINE

U.S. government lawmakers, including senators and representatives from both major parties, were part of a reception last spring that honored about 100 people for their efforts on behalf of local, national, and world peace. However, the "Crown of Peace" ceremony held on Capitol Hill turned out to be an awards event honoring the Rev. Sun Myung Moon, founder and leader of The Unification Church.

Afterward, some of the elected officials said they were deceived about the true purpose of the gathering. "There was no indication Moon would be there," a staff person for Sen. Mark Drayton, D-Minn., said. Another, Rep. Roscoe Bartlett, R-Md., maintained he "had no idea Moon would receive an award and deliver a speech."

However, George A. Stallings, who helped organize the ceremony, said the invitation sent to officials announced that Moon and his wife would be honored during the event. The Washington Times Foundation was among the sponsors of the reception. *The Washington Times*, owned by Moon, is a conservative newspaper in the nation's capitol. The reception was held at the Dirksen Senate Office Building, which would require the approval of a senator. According to Stallings, the name of the senator is "shrouded in mystery."

During the ceremony, a crown was placed on Moon's head. Rep. Danny K. Davis, D-Ill., donning white gloves, carried the crown on a pillow to Moon. Davis said that while he was a Methodist who "disagreed with many of Moon's religious teachings," he nevertheless "praised Moon's efforts on behalf of world peace," according to *The Washington Post*.

At the gala event, Moon delivered a lengthy address. According to the *Post*, Moon was quoted as saying that

he was “sent to Earth ... to save the world’s six billion people,” and that “Emperors, kings and presidents ... have declared to all Heaven and Earth that Reverend Sun Myung Moon is none other than humanity’s Savior, Messiah, Returning Lord and True Parent.”

Moon and his Unification Church have a long history of wooing and entertaining respected evangelical and political leaders in an effort to gain legitimacy for his message and ambitions.

—MKG

BOOK OF MORMON GOES COMMERCIAL

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has found a new channel for its most conspicuous scripture to be made available: Doubleday Publishing. The New York-based publisher will release to bookstores on Nov. 16, a hardcover edition of *The Book of Mormon*. It will sell for \$24.95.

Doubleday and Mormon church officials have jointly worked on the project for more than a year. While the new edition is said to “reflect design changes introduced by Doubleday to make the volume more easily read and understood by a non-Mormon audience,” church leaders promise that the text will remain faithful to the editions published by the LDS church and used by its members. The style changes will eliminate exhaustive cross refer-

ences, footnotes, and the index. However, a seven-page “Reference Guide” will be added to acquaint the reader unfamiliar with the intent of the Mormon scripture.

According to Elder Henry B. Eyring, who serves on the church’s Scripture Committee and is a member of the Quorum of Twelve Apostles, the Doubleday edition is not aimed at LDS church members. “However, many members may feel that this new edition would be an ideal gift for friends who are not members of the Church,” he said.

The volume will be the first official trade edition of the LDS scripture. Since first being published in 1830, more than 120 million copies of *The Book of Mormon* have been printed and distributed by the LDS church, with over five million copies in 2002 alone. The typical method of distribution has been through the church’s missionaries, members, and other distribution outlets such as visitors centers at its temples and historical sites. The Doubleday edition is hoped to increase distribution through avenues such as retail shops, airport bookstores, and Internet outlets.

According to an LDS church news release, Michelle Rapkin, Religion Division Vice President for Doubleday, said, “The Mormon faith has become one of the largest in America. We’re proud to be the first publisher to bring this vitally important work to bookstores across the country and to add it to our outstanding library of authorized religious texts.”

—MKG

PERSONAL FREEDOM OUTREACH — STATEMENT OF BELIEF

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



Books in Review

THE 10 THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT THE CREATION VS. EVOLUTION DEBATE

by Ron Rhodes

Harvest House Publishers, 192 pages, \$9.99

Ron Rhodes has a knack for making difficult concepts easy to read and grasp. Not only does his book bring us right up-to-date in terms of the creationist-evolutionist debate, but it equips believers to respond to those who question a creation by God.

The style and intellectual depth of this volume can be grasped by most any level of reader from junior high school and up. This is a very critical factor, considering the onslaught of evolutionary teaching directly confronting our young people today. The book contains the essentials to help the student, or for parents wanting to assist their child. Christian home-schoolers — while directly shielded from evolutionism — will also find it a tremendous resource.

Rhodes introduces us to the intelligent design movement which is spearheaded by even non-Christians. His book places us on the cutting edge of the modern controversy. Few may know or even realize that there are different kinds of evolutionary thought. Chapter one covers that. Likewise, Rhodes sets the stage with “Why This Debate Really Matters,” also covered in his opening chapter.

What about “ape-men” discoveries? Chapter 5 informs us on that. Is the “big bang” theory compatible with special creation? Chapter 10 answers the question. Rhodes even tackles the question of the “gap theory” — the teaching that God created the world billions of years ago — a view held by some reputable Christian teachers. He succinctly lays forth the biblical objections to this theory. Also examined — and responded to — are the diverse views of progressive evolution and theistic evolution.

Christians — young and old — need an intelligent and robust faith. They need not cower or remain silent

because of what may seem overwhelming “scientific” evidence against biblical creationism. This book helps believers acquire the information and confidence to respond. It is a must, must read.

—GRF

THE TRUTH BEHIND THE DA VINCI CODE

by Richard Abanes

Harvest House Publishers, 96 pages, \$6.99

This is a tremendous book. It is fact-filled and the smaller text gives much more reading than what its size suggests.

Abanes is a careful researcher and has done his homework as he refutes the Gnostic viewpoints of Dan Brown and his runaway best-seller, *The Da Vinci Code*. Brown, in his blockbuster novel, has not only rewritten Church history, but has twisted and distorted it with lie upon lie. Abanes painstakingly corrects the lies with biblical and historical truth.

Was Jesus married to Mary Magdalene? What is the Holy Grail? Did the Church invent the deity of Jesus at the Nicene Council? Were the books of the Bible agreed upon by very close vote centuries after the time of the Apostles? What are the Gnostic Gospels? Did the Church suppress woman and goddess worship and substitute a patriarchal rule? Did Da Vinci have secret codes imbedded in his writing and art? Are there really lost books of the Bible that have emerged? What is the Gospel of Thomas? These are just some of the issues examined and answered by Abanes.

Point by point, in a very readable format, Abanes deciphers and unshrouds the fabricated “codes” of *The Da Vinci Code*. He goes headlong into the fiction and fantasy world of Dan Brown and clears away the thorns and thickets of fables and myths. This book is not pedantic and “heavy,” but written at a level all can grasp. It is inexpensive enough to be able to purchase in quantity for friends and acquaintances who have hopped on *The Da Vinci Code* bandwagon. It is an informative resource — a needed “crash course” into the basic foundation of Church history.

—GRF

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