

The Quarterly Journal



THE NEWSLETTER PUBLICATION OF PERSONAL FREEDOM OUTREACH

VOL. 25, NO. 1

JANUARY-MARCH 2005

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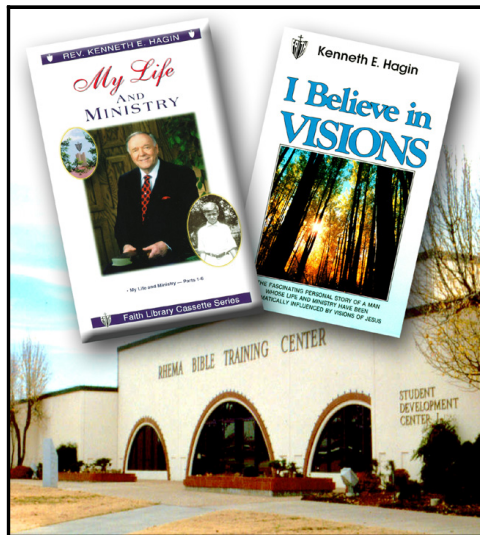
The Visions and Voices of Kenneth E. Hagin

by J. Greg Sheryl
with M. Kurt Goedelman

The late Kenneth E. Hagin created for himself a tremendous legacy. He is widely credited with being the father of the Word-Faith movement, so much so that he has been given the nickname "Dad." In a "special foreword" from a new edition of Hagin's best-seller, *The Believer's Authority*, published after his death in 2003, his son summarizes Hagin's impact not only on his RHEMA Bible Training Center students, but Christendom in general:

"Kenneth E. Hagin was a mentor in the Body of Christ. It would be impossible to measure the difference he made. RHEMA students number in the tens of thousands, and millions have received from his teachings. How many more have been ministered to by those Brother Hagin taught? How many times has a copy of *The Believer's Authority* or *Plans, Purposes, and Pursuits* or *The Word of Faith* changed hands to touch the lives of even more people?"¹

Hagin died Sept. 19, 2003, at the age of 86. While most would consider a life that long to be an achievement in



itself, Hagin's "health gospel" gave cause for the details of his death to be tweaked, so as not to impugn his teaching that believers pass from this life not as a result of "sickness and

disease." The initial report of his death said that following breakfast on Sept. 14:

"Rev. Hagin sat at the end of the table, smiled at Oretha, sighed, and his head fell to his chest. He was quickly transported by ambulance to a local hospital where he was admitted to the cardiac intensive care unit. *He remained hospitalized with his family at his side until the time of his passing.*"²

However, a more recent published account of Hagin's death disposes of his six-day stay in the hospital:

"In September of 2003, Rev. Kenneth E. Hagin went to be with the Lord. While eating brunch with his wife and some close friends, he looked at Oretha, his wife of nearly 65 years, sighed, and slumped over in his chair. *And he was with his Lord!*"³

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Editorials

NOT IN A BOX, BUT IN A BOOK

Charismatic extremists often try to malign those who respect the authority and sufficiency of Scripture by leveling a false charge of: "You are trying to put God in a box!" Those who think biblically are accused of keeping God in *their* box. These new catch phrases put us in a war between living by raw emotion and living by exposition of Scripture.

Those who believe all that we need for salvation as well as life and godliness is found in God's Word are being falsely charged with a lie about a non-existent box. All of life must have perimeters. We must choose our perimeters well. Feelings are not reliable because they shift and change. Like lane lines on a road, biblical perimeters keep us safe and out of trouble.

The book of 2 Peter 1:3-4 assures us that God "has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him" and that this all comes to us through His "exceedingly great and precious promises."

Second Timothy 3:15-17 says: "...and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable *for doctrine, for reproof, for correction,*

for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be *complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work*" (emphasis added). The Scriptures may not give instructions for repairing an automobile, but it will provide everything needed to fix a life, such as the wisdom of good stewardship to select the best auto mechanic at the most affordable price.

Bruce Bickel has stated: "The revelation of the divine mind and will which we have in *sola Scriptura* is dependent upon revelation from God Himself. It is an example of God's merciful kindness to fallen humanity that He has willed that all of the knowledge needful for a relationship *with Him*, and for correct worship *of Him*, should be provided *by Him*" (*Sola Scriptura!* pg. xi, italics in original).

No, God is not in a box, but His revelation and His orders are in a Book. He Himself superintends that Book by His Holy Spirit.

Giving a child a letter containing parental desires and directions does not put a person in a box. It is a loving gesture, not a restrictive one. The parent is more than just that letter, but the letter contains the precise will, and willingly contained. If God wishes to contain His will in 66 books — and He has — He is free to do so. To say He cannot do so is in fact limiting Him as extremists often do.

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PERSONAL FREEDOM OUTREACH

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PASSION-LESS EVANGELISM

Hailed as “the greatest evangelistic tool” of our day, Mel Gibson’s *The Passion of the Christ* failed to live up to the promises of its vast marketing campaigns. The movie made its theatrical debut last February on Ash Wednesday, opening to record crowds. Many Christian leaders and mainline evangelical churches heavily promoted the film, purchasing and reselling — or giving away — tickets. Late last August, the film was released on DVD and home video. First-day sales in the home market venue totaled over 4 million copies, which set a record for an R-rated motion picture.

According to a Barna Poll, 31 percent of American adults said they saw the film. Of that number, less than one-half of 1 percent — 335,000 — said the film was a motivation to be more active in evangelism with the Gospel. The Barna report offered that “major transformation is not likely to result from one-time exposure to a specific media product.”

At the home market release, the film had grossed \$370 million, making it one of 2004’s top box office grosses. Christians, in a very large part, helped catapult the film into its box office success. Perhaps, based upon the Barna Poll, the money spent on the film by Christians would have been better invested with missionaries, than with Gibson, his Tridentine Catholicism-laced motion picture, and Hollywood.

—MKG

ACCOUNTING THE PROPHET

The man Benny Hinn dubbed “the most accurate prophet on the earth today,” has come under discipline by several of his peers. Paul Cain, labeled by some as a modern day super-prophet, has been called into accountability by his fellow prophets Rick Joyner, Jack Deere, and Mike Bickle.

In a “Special Bulletin” posted on Joyner’s MorningStar Fellowship Church web site, it was stated, “In February 2004, we were made aware that Paul had become an alcoholic. In April 2004, we confronted Paul with evidence that he had recently been involved in homosexual activity. Paul admitted to these sinful practices

and was placed under discipline, agreeing to a process of restoration which the three of us would oversee. However, Paul has resisted this process and has continued in his sin. Therefore, after having exhausted the first two steps of Matthew 18:15-17, we now have a responsibility to bring this before the church.”

Cain first became a ministry associate of the late arch-heretic William Branham. He has been more recently affiliated with the self-acclaimed body known as the Kansas City Prophets. Prophet Mike Bickle and his KCP first gained prominence under the label Kansas City Fellowship, then moved into a brief affiliation with the Vineyard Fellowship. Today, the movement hails under the banners Friends of the Bridegroom and International House of Prayer. They have not spoken directly to the Cain revelations, but are directing inquiries to the Joyner web site and calling it a “joint statement regarding Paul Cain.”

—MKG

TBN: A MODERN DAY PRODIGAL

In a series of articles late last summer, the *Los Angeles Times* disclosed the methods, inner workings, and vast fortune of the Trinity Broadcasting Network. While the findings were alarming, they merely confirmed with specifics what has been apparent during the history of the largest Christian broadcasting network.

According to the newspaper, “TBN collects more than \$120 million a year from viewers of its Christian programming — more than any other TV ministry.” The bulk of these donations comes in small amounts — \$50 or less — with lower-income, rural viewers in the southern United States being the most faithful of TBN’s donors. Other revenue is acquired through the sale of network time to not only Crouch’s theological peers, but to mainstream ministers such as D. James Kennedy and Southern Baptists Charles Stanley, Adrian Rogers, and James Merritt. Sale of air time accounts for 20 percent of TBN’s total income. There is a waiting list to buy time on the network.

These donations and sale of air time underwrite an annual salary of \$403,700 for Paul Crouch, TBN’s founder, chairman, and president. His wife, Jan, the network’s vice president and director of programming, is

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John Alexander Dowie

The Flawed Forerunner of Charismatic Extremism

by **G. Richard Fisher**



American showman P.T. Barnum said, "People love to be humbugged." A contemporary of Barnum, John Alexander Dowie, who was an early patriarch of the modern religious-healing movement, said, "I am a businessman who is in the ministry."

Those who survey the roots and ancestors of faith healing often come across the name John Alexander Dowie. Dowie was born in Edinburgh, Scotland, on May 25, 1847. During his early teen years, Dowie's family moved to Australia, where he spent more than half of his adult life. Dowie finally settled upon American turf in 1888. He died March 9, 1907.

It is hard to believe that this man who ran a healing home on a more than 6,000-acre plot of land between Chicago and Milwaukee could be so soon forgotten. There is probably not one Christian in a thousand who has heard of Dowie. Perhaps he has been neglected somewhat by the modern Charismatic movement for a variety of reasons. He lived long before faith healing became so lucrative and his notoriety in the U.S. was limited to the Chicago area. Further, he slightly prefaced the Pentecostal movement, dying about the time Pentecostalism was emerging from infancy. Additionally, his doctrinal base may have been weakened within Pentecostalism because he never stressed tongues. Finally, his teaching of the nature of

God may have been also weak or unclear because some of his followers "moved on into Oneness Pentecostalism."¹

Yet, despite a lack of grand prominence, Dowie is a name that circulates in modern Pentecostal and Charismatic camps — and when it does, it comes with a great deal of respect and devotion.

Dowie biographer Gordon Lindsay illustrated his importance when he wrote, "God raised up John Alexander Dowie, for a specific work, which was to reintroduce Divine healing to the Church."² Lindsay's comments are not merely those of an overzealous author. Dowie called himself a restored apostle and the forerunner of worldwide revival and restoration. Dowie emphasized that his healings were the "real deal."

Photographs of Dowie show a bearded and benign-looking Santa-like figure. Despite his appearance, he sparked controversy everywhere he went. Every knock was a boost that enhanced his notoriety. He seemed to invite and enjoy negative press.

There are striking parallels between Dowie and many modern faith healers. One book says, "Dowie opposed all medicine" and "directly influenced many healing evangelists of early Pentecostalism."³

Notwithstanding the state of medicine in that era, it still seemed unwise and even foolish to condemn all medical advice and help. Dowie may have been the first one to use the term "Full Gospel," which meant that healing should be included in the Gospel message. We do know that the term was procured years later by the Full Gospel Business Men's Association and by most Pentecostals since. Yet, there can be nothing more full than the Gospel that Paul received and preached: Christ's death, burial, and resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:1-4).

Dowie also left his mark in South Africa — at least for a time. According to a report by *Christianity Today's* web site:

"Zionist churchgoers in southern Africa ... whose church bears no relationship to the Jewish movement of the same name, can be easily identified by their white clothing with blue or green sashes, wooden staffs, and worship that incorporates many different elements of charismatic expression. However, this large indigenous movement traces its origins to the Chicago suburb of Zion, Illinois. There, Australian preacher John Alexander Dowie led a theocratic commune that emphasized the spiritual gift of healing. While he never ventured

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WHY GOD IS NOT WORD-FAITH

Is Healing Available by Faith on Demand?

by G. Richard Fisher

Word-Faith teachings have swept through Christendom in the past several decades, riding a wave of television evangelists, itinerant preachers, and megachurch pastors who tell their audiences and congregations that we can demand from God, through the power of faith, anything we want and expect to get it. Some point to the growth and apparent prosperity of the movement and acceptance of these teachings as evidence that God has blessed it.

We can determine whether God is behind the Word-Faith movement or not in the same way we determine anything else we can about Him: by investigating Scripture regarding His nature, character, attributes, and work. He gave us the Bible for that very reason. Moses said, "The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but *those things which are revealed belong to us and our children forever*" (Deuteronomy 29:29, emphasis added). God invites us to come and reason with Him (Isaiah 1:18). Jesus said to come and learn of Him (Matthew 11:29).

Word-Faith — also known as Word of Faith — is not a denomination, but a loosely aligned group of extremist teachers and televangelists who tell us we can claim and speak riches and health into existence.¹

Former PFO director Steve Cannon

shows where Word-Faith really leads and what it implies:

"The implications of these presumptive teachings are horrifying. The sovereignty of the infinite God is replaced with the sovereignty of finite man. To teach that man can 'demand' from God and have everything that he says presupposes that man knows what is best in every situation. The only way that could be true is if man is all-knowing."²

A representation of the wild Word-Faith claim regarding healing comes from Essek William Kenyon (1867-1948) and is a template for most all Word-Faith teachers and followers:

"I know that I am healed because He said that I was healed, and it makes no difference what the symptoms may be in my body. I laugh at them, and in the Name of Jesus I command the author of disease to leave my body."³

Last August, Trinity Broadcasting Network president Paul Crouch offered a book, *Christ The Healer*, by F.F. Bosworth.⁴ Bosworth was a disciple of E.W. Kenyon and a fellow traveler with William Branham.⁵ More than a half-century after his

death — with the help of TBN, Crouch, and Bosworth — Kenyon's teachings live on.

In Kenyon's view, all sickness is essentially from Satan and we can — with the power of faith — command Satan and demand our healing. We have the sovereignty in this encounter because Jesus gives it to us. Faith, in this view, is not a living trust which we exercise toward God and His Word, but a mystical power that we wield and manipulate to get what we want.

Kenyon taught that it was always God's will to heal and that a sick believer was not the norm. He said:

- "You are healed. The Word says you are. Don't listen to the senses. Give the Word its place. God cannot lie."⁶
- "It is wrong for us to have sickness and disease in our bodies when God laid those diseases on Jesus. He became sick with our diseases, that we might be healed."⁷
- "Learn to say: 'I am healed because He did that work and satisfied the Supreme Court of the Universe.'"⁸
- "Sickness does not belong to the body of Christ. It is not normal or natural."⁹

Kenneth Hagin asserted, "I believe that it is the plan of God our Father that no believer should ever be sick."¹⁰ T.J. McCrossan argues that on the cross Jesus died for our sins and our sicknesses.

It may be more correct to say that Jesus died for sin and atoned for all the effects and curse of the fall. Not all the merits of Jesus' death will be experienced until resurrection. But in wanting the final payoff now, McCrossan tries to argue that Jesus intended the Church to presently meet all the conditions. He believed that if only Christians would fulfill the requirements, "He would then

Word-Faith preachers say words can create reality; positive confessions bring positive things and negative words bring disaster. We cannot speak new realities into existence. Words influence, but they do not create.

DOING THE TWIST

Word-Faith promoters often appeal to Exodus 15:26, but out of context. The verse says, "I am the LORD God who heals you." In its proper context, however, the healing is not a healing after one is sick, but clearly God wanting to keep them from getting sick. It is plainly preventive. God as

used in a general way as in "all kinds of," meaning a large sampling of something. The Bible unequivocally uses Psalm 103:3 in this latter way as can be amply demonstrated and proven right from the Bible. The term "the analogy of faith" means that all teaching should be subject to Scripture, agree with other related Scripture, and be interpreted by Scripture. If a teaching is right, then the entire counsel of Scripture on that subject must agree.

Word-Faith leaders and others, for various reasons, have chosen to refer to Psalm 103:3 in an absolute sense that God can heal absolutely anyone who believes and it is always His will to do so. However, it can be biblically proven that Psalm 103:3 must be taken in a general way as stated above, and *every Jew knew it*. The Bible shows in numerous places where God was not pleased to heal for His own sovereign reasons. The issue here is not what God can do, but what the Bible says He does and will do. We could postulate that God could create another world — or even two — like ours, but Genesis 2:2 says after this world was created, "God ended His work which He had done." God had power to create more, but we know from the Bible He opted not to. God has power and prerogative for anything He pleases, but to keep us from confusion, chaos, and disorder He tells us what He does do and will do.

LET'S GET IT STRAIGHT

First, the Hebrew word "healing," which appears in Psalm 103:3, is not used strictly of the body, but of inner conditions of brokenness, selfishness, sorrow, grieving, and sin. Hebrew linguists Johann Keil and Franz Delitzsch share that the "diseases" of Psalm 103:3 are not, "merely bodily diseases, but all kinds of inward and outward sufferings."¹³

So the word used in Psalm 103:3 can be translated "suffering." God aids us in all kinds of suffering. In fact, we must remember that the Psalms were written in parallelisms

“Never, ever, ever go to the Lord and say, ‘If it be thy will...’ Don’t allow such faith-destroying words to be spoken from your mouth.”

– Benny Hinn

have healed all church saints, in response to their faith."¹¹

Faith healer Benny Hinn also says that it is always God's will to heal:

"Ladies and gentlemen, saint of God, healing *is* the will of God for you. Never, ever, ever go to the Lord and say, 'If it be thy will ...' Don't allow such faith-destroying words to be spoken from your mouth. When you pray 'if it be your will, Lord,' faith will be destroyed. Doubt will billow up and flood your being. Be on guard against words like this which will rob you of your faith and drag you down in despair. It is His will. Jesus said, 'I will'."¹²

Healer is prefaced by, "If you diligently heed the voice of the LORD your God and do what is right in His sight, give ear to His commandments and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have brought on the Egyptians" (v. 26).

Another of the verses that is often misused is Psalm 103:3, which says, "Who forgives all your iniquities, Who heals *all* your diseases" (emphasis added).

The word "all" can be all in a universalistic sense as in "all nations" everywhere and not mean every last person in those nations. Then it can be used in an absolute sense of all: every single one of them. It can be

so that the verses before and after expand, amplify, and fill one another out. Verses 3-5 of Psalm 103 are a catalog of God's "benefits" (v. 2). The "healing" is not only from suffering, but in fact includes forgiveness (v. 3), redemption from destruction (v. 4), renewed stamina (v. 5), and the blessings and benefits of the rest of the Psalm. The context beautifully displays the idea of all kinds of blessing, or that He heals all manner of sorrows. This is not forced onto the text, but is borne out throughout the Bible.

GOD'S FIRST EXEMPTION

Second, if the healing of Psalm 103 was used in the absolute sense, then God lied. In the absolute sense, God did not heal *all* diseases, and He did not tell lepers, for example, to "name it and claim it."

Amazingly, God spends four chapters telling priests how to diagnose, catalog, regulate, and even prescribe remedies for rashes, skin conditions, sores, leprosy, and so forth (Leviticus 12-15). God did not prescribe the heel of the priest's hand to the invalid's forehead, or a flagellation of the masses with the priest's outer garment, or any other maneuver classified as a "fresh anointing." Some with skin conditions that appeared to be leprosy had to be isolated from the population for the sake of others. No "speak it and receive it" here, but careful regulations so as not to infect others in the family of God. It was medical help and, if you will, common sense.

Fully developed lepers of Israel were quarantined by God, not healed. An exemption, such as Naaman, points out God's sovereignty in this matter. One could conclude that Word-Faith teachers suggest God was giving negative confessions to priests and lepers.

SPECIAL CARE

For what it's worth, there seemed to be an ancient belief in regard to the sovereignty of God and leprosy, reflected in the Byzantine Church in

Israel (c. mid-fourth century A.D.). This may reflect an even more ancient Christian connection to God's command for the Old Testament priests to treat lepers with wisdom and mercy:

"Callistus employed the term 'holy disease,' which was euphemistically used during the Middle Ages for today's leprosy or Hansen's disease. From the Byzantine period onward, Christianity portrayed those suffering from the disease as being chosen by God to suffer in this world for the rewards of the world to come — that is, a heavenly paradise. Therefore, those suffering from the disease came under the patronage of the ecclesiastical authorities, and council edicts were issued from the fourth century onward for their care."¹⁴

This certainly is a circumstantial piece in the bigger puzzle.

True, Jesus healed *some* lepers to fulfill prophecy and establish His sovereignty, power, deity, and Messiahship. It is most important to remember that up until that point in time, healing a number of lepers was unheard of, but Jesus did it. As well, Jesus did not heal all lepers in Israel or the Middle East.

Third, regulations regarding foods and hygiene had to be vigorously practiced by Israel. Pre-emptive health measures and steps, such as not handling animal carcasses, were established (Leviticus 11). Even if a dead animal had to be buried out of necessity, one would have to wash even his clothes (Leviticus 11:40). Human waste had to be buried.

Leviticus chapter 21 does not say, "Form a healing line so I can perform creative miracles on these sons of Levi. Have them claim their healing," with regard to those who were otherwise unfit to enter the tabernacle. Rather, it bars some from entry and doesn't offer the hope of healing:

"Speak to Aaron, saying: 'No man of your descendants in succeeding generations, who has

any defect, may approach to offer the bread of his God. For any man who has a defect shall not approach: a man blind or lame, who has a marred face or any limb too long, a man who has a broken foot or broken hand, or is a hunchback or a dwarf, or a man who has a defect in his eye, or eczema or scab, or is a eunuch. No man of the descendants of Aaron the priest, who has a defect, shall come near to offer the offerings made by fire to the LORD. He has a defect; he shall not come near to offer the bread of his God'" (Leviticus 21:17-21).

Warren Weirsbe offers helpful comments on this section of Scripture:

"We're not sure of the meanings of all the Hebrew words for the defects named in this paragraph, but 'blind or lame, disfigured or deformed' seems to summarize them (21:18, NIV). Some of these would be birth defects; others might be the sad consequences of sickness or accidents. The ancients weren't as skillful in setting broken bones or dealing with diseases as physicians are today. ... this biblical passage must not be used today to humiliate or intimidate anybody with a physical disability. It was never written for that purpose. The priests were special people with an important job to do, and God wanted them to be the very best physically."¹⁵

Word-Faith adherents cannot protest against these passages from Leviticus saying they do not apply, because their teachers repeatedly use the Old Testament, quoting verses such as Psalm 103, Isaiah 53, and Exodus 15:26. They also make much of "Jehovah Rapha" (The LORD, your Healer). God is always the same and He does not change (Malachi 3:6).

DOES GOD LACK FAITH?

The Word-Faith mantra, "Claim your healing," is not of God. Cer-

tainly one cannot claim God is unbelieving or without faith when He simply excluded the disabled from priesthood. God excluded all kinds of ailments *de facto* and made no other provision. So in the *absolute* sense, all diseases or afflictions were not healed. Also, there is no hint that somehow unbelief is at the root, or that the afflicted could change the situation simply by claiming they were not dwarfs or had no broken or twisted limbs. God, for His own sovereign reasons, *allowed them to stay that way*.

One long, large, and heavy nail in the coffin of the Word-Faith delusion is the statement God Himself made to Moses regarding His perfect and absolute sovereignty: Moses claimed exemption from ministry for a speech problem. Yet God did not say, "Moses, claim your healing. You are healed. Don't listen to the senses." But rather the Lord responded, "Who has made man's mouth? Or who makes the mute, the deaf, the seeing, or the blind? Have not I, the LORD?" (Exodus 4:11)

We can only bow in awed silence before this statement. The fullest explanation remains until heaven. To suggest that Satan did what God says He did, as Kenyon alleges, is blasphemy. Satan does not have creative power. Satan may be a secondary and circumstantial part of what God does, but he is simply on a long leash under God's sovereignty. It seems the Bible is full of negative confessions because that is simply part of the reality of our fallen world.

To further reinforce this, God, through Moses, says to the children of Israel, "I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal" (Deuteronomy 32:39). God can — and does — all of these things because He is the Sovereign of the universe.

IS THERE A DOCTOR IN THE HOUSE?

The prophet Isaiah commanded the medical means of his day and was not ashamed to do so. Hezekiah was

extremely sick and his body was permeated with infection from a boil. He was on his death bed (Isaiah 38:1). Then Isaiah intervenes not with a supernatural, instantaneous healing, but rather with the proclamation, "Let them take a lump of figs, and apply it as a poultice on the boil, and he shall recover" (Isaiah 38:21).

In the heritage of Isaiah, the Apostle Paul said to Timothy, "No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for your stomach's sake and *your frequent infirmities*" (1 Timothy 5:23, emphasis added). There is ample proof that Paul was not suggesting that Timothy sit in a bar each evening. The word "little" is used and it can be shown historically that there were wine mixtures with a grape base (with additives) that were strictly medicinal. It might be akin to saying stop by the drug store and pick up some Pepto-Bismol or Mylanta.

Roman statesman Pliny (A.D. 62-113) mentions wines "broken by the strainer" which were "most adapted to the sick."¹⁶ The term "broken by the strainer" is difficult to translate, but some believe it had to do with breaking down the alcoholic content. Evidence exists that Greeks diluted certain wines and repeatedly filtered them to make them "weaker, lighter, sweeter, and more pleasant to drink."¹⁷

A very interesting parallel today is that one of the major "over-the-counter" medications for upset stomach and nausea is pure grape or cherry glucose and fructose. Grape juice has also been found to contain an enzyme that is helpful for artery health and heart disease.

It is fascinating to see how Jews have always looked at the topic of health, healing, and doctors:

"HEALTH: The biblical exhortation to 'take heed to thyself and keep thy soul diligently' (Deut. 4:9. cf. also Deut. 4:15) was traditionally interpreted as enjoining care for one's [health] and physi-

cal well-being. From the verse 'and surely your blood of your souls will I require' (Gen. 9:5) is derived the prohibition against inflicting any self-injury. ... Rabbinic law prohibits any action likely to endanger [health], and some authorities consider a vow to abstain from food for seven days to be automatically invalid since it endangers life. A person who insists on fasting on the Day of Atonement despite being forbidden to do so on medical grounds is considered to have committed a crime; under such circumstances fasting carries no merit, but is, on the contrary, 'nonsensical piety.'¹⁸

Further, another Jewish source says:

"In his occupational role, the doctor was believed only to be emulating his Creator's moral attribute as the Compassionate Healer of man's sorrows and afflictions. Since, according to the Jewish conception, the healing of illness came from God through the mediation of his 'messenger,' the doctor, it is not infrequently that in old Jewish religious writings one stumbles across adulatory references to the physician as 'God's messenger.'... What especially aroused some of the advanced Rabbinical thinkers was the debasement of the Torah by reciting passages from it with the intention of effecting miraculous cures."¹⁹

What is clearly developed in Scripture is a picture that God can and does heal *when He so chooses*, but may withhold healing for His sovereign purposes as with lepers, Moses, and the exemptions to the priesthood. Remember also that God healed Job only when He was ready. The Bible is never against medical help, and even Jesus acknowledged, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick" (Luke 5:31).

Wayne Detzler observes that, "Man's power is derived. He receives

it all from God. This is true of special professional skills.”²⁰

Benny Hinn disrespects Jesus — as well as doctors. It is a wonder he hasn’t been a magnet for lawsuits.²¹ At his 2004 Calgary, Alberta, crusade a lady who has had lupus for 18 years appeared on stage with Hinn, claimed she was healed, and told him the doctors are supposed to operate on her. Hinn tells the lady and the mesmerized audience:

“There’s such anointing here, there is such—I can’t—I—I—if I don’t give it away, I’m going to blow up. You don’t understand, I’m under such a heavy anointing, you tried to tell me this lady has lupus—haaahh — if I don’t give it away, I’m going to blow up. I just don’t want to blow up. ... Oh, don’t worry about the doctors, they’re wrong when Jesus comes in. When Jesus comes in, forget the operation. ... They’re supposed to operate, she said. Don’t you know that the Great Physician just touched your body? You don’t worry about those little guys. They’re little, little guys now. They’re just men like you with flesh on. Just because they’re called a doctor, it doesn’t mean they have the authority. I tell you who has the authority, not your doctor, but the *great doctor* has the authority!”²²

HORSE OR HORSE FEATHERS?

Hinn often tries to get traction by referring to great revivalists of the past. The assumption is that Hinn knows what he is talking about, has studied the lives of these men, and is on the same path as they were. All three claims are entirely false. Hinn has endorsed and linked himself to heretics of all stripes, as well as mainstream non-Charismatics. It is the appearance of linkage that is important to Hinn. The image conveyed is, they were great, therefore my linkage to them makes me what?

Take John Wesley — or more specifically Wesley’s horse — as an example. During his miracle crusade in Washington state, Hinn reported that God “healed the horse of John Wesley.”²³ PFO sent a letter to Hinn’s organization asking for documentation. No response was ever received. There is nothing in the Bible to suggest that God heals horses. God commanded and allowed the substitutionary death of many animals, which strongly suggests they have no comparison at all to humans. The assumption projected though is that Wesley believed as Hinn does. The picture conveyed is that Hinn and Wesley are able to get something really unusual and special from God.

Wesley’s beliefs about healing were the polar opposite of Hinn’s. Wesley biographer John Telford reports:

“Wesley’s medical knowledge helped him to relieve much suffering. In 1746, the same year that the lending stock was started, he began to give medicines to the poor. ... This success led Wesley to form a dispensary at Bristol, which soon had two hundred patients. Wesley’s shrewd observations on medical works show how carefully he sought the best light of his time.”²⁴

Telford goes on to discuss Wesley’s involvement with various kinds of medicines, electrical treatments, herbal remedies, and Wesley’s writing of a medical manual for the poor.²⁵ By all reports, Wesley’s treatments and medicines were hugely successful and as good as any physician of his day.

OIL IS WELL

Adam Clarke was a master of Oriental languages, a leader within Methodist circles, and a personal friend of John Wesley. Clarke perpetuated Wesley’s theology in his six-volume commentary of the Bible. One can easily see the medical bent of Wesley reflected in Clarke’s exposition of the James 5 prayer and anointing section. Clarke looks at James’ instruction to

anoint the sick with oil and reflects back on the medicinal use of oil in the Gospel account of the Good Samaritan. He then says:

“I am satisfied that it has no other meaning than as a *natural means* of restoring health; and that St. James desires them to use *natural means* while looking to God for an especial blessing. And no wise man would direct otherwise.”²⁶

Hinn is as unlike John Wesley as anyone could possibly be.

There is only one biblical concept that can help us with the tension in balancing all the above Scripture references. There is one aspect of the character of God that can make reasonable sense of the struggle we have balancing healing and medical help because we know that Word-Faith claims and mantras cannot hold up. It all makes sense and becomes more understandable when we realize that at the new birth we passed through the judgment side of God (in and through Jesus Christ) and stepped into His compassion and mercy side (Romans 8:1).

THE BIBLICAL KEY: THERE ALL THE TIME

What unfolds in Scripture is the truth that *healing is not a right, but a mercy*. In Psalm 103, after the psalmist extols God for healing all kinds of sorrows in life, he repeatedly calls this *mercy* (“tender mercies” in verse 4, “merciful and abounding in mercy” in verse 8, “great is His mercy” in verse 11, and “the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting” in verse 17). None of God’s deliverances can be disconnected from His mercy.

Unless we see the biblical truth that healing is a mercy, we will be open to all kinds of charlatans. There are two words for mercy in the Old Testament. The first is *reham*, and the other is *hesed*. The former is described as “a strong emotional element, usually identified as pity, compassion, or love, with some practical demonstra-

tion of kindness in response to the condition or needs of the object of mercy."²⁷ The latter described as the "manifestation of kindness and goodness, compassion and sympathy, both as demonstrated by God ... and as required of man."²⁸

The words are virtual synonyms. There is no difference in the New Testament. In Jesus' ministry on earth He did not heal all in Israel. The number that He did heal is infinitely small compared to the world's population. Consistent with the Old Testament and healing as a mercy, we read, "And when Jesus went out He saw a great multitude; and *He was moved with compassion* for them, and healed their sick" (Matthew 14:14, emphasis added).

The Apostle Paul agrees as he reports the grave illness of a friend and fellow worker, Epaphroditus:

"For indeed he was sick almost unto death; *but God had mercy on him*, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow" (Philippians 2:27, emphasis added).

Paul says that his friend was near death through illness, but Paul does not speak, claim, or demand a healing. In reverence he reports simply that "God had mercy upon him." Healing is a mercy and not a right to demand. Knowing that fact is the scale that balances all the above. It is a truth that needs to be not only heralded, but enjoyed. It lets God be God, while it gives us expectation with humility, accepting any answer God is pleased to give. It can bring us great comfort. It is surely a mercy that we live as long as we do (Psalm 90). Medical help is another mercy.

Word-Faith advocates have not considered the prominence, priority, and importance of mercy. The word is used in the Psalms about 72 times. Similarly, the word *merciful* appears in the Psalms 11 times. Needy people seeking Christ (while He was on earth) seemed to really understand it. A man came to Jesus to heal his son

and says, "Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is an epileptic and suffers severely" (Matthew 17:15). And blind Bartimeus seemed to get it when he cried, "Jesus, Son of David, *have mercy on me!*" (Mark 10:47, emphasis added). Lack of understanding of mercy can have disastrous results. Maybe this is why Word-Faith teachers are so cavalier and have little mercy, leaving people to throw away needed medicine or blaming themselves for loss of healing.

LET'S JUST DISCUSS IT

It is difficult to penetrate the facade of Word-Faith beliefs and discuss them with their adherents. Lack of mercy on their part might be one reason, but there are two others.

First, the Word-Faith brass prime and predispose followers by convincing them that any dissent — even from other Christians — is simply unbelief. They try to pre-empt any analysis and cut down the person who objects by saying, "You can't put God in a box" or "You don't believe God." The critic is called a Pharisee, a Jezebel, a heresy hunter, or one with a "religious spirit." The mindset is illustrated by a woman who called this writer a prime candidate for the "Pharisee Hall of Shame" without having read the critique that prompted her comment.

Second, dialogue is frustrated because of the Word-Faith adherents' magical and superstitious thinking. This reasoning starts with an answer and not much else, if anything, is needed. This selective process ignores or minimizes anything with the answer — *even the Bible*. It can result in experiences such as the person who, upon being shown 1 Corinthians 14 during a discussion about tongues and interpretation, says, "Why are you always going to the Bible? I am talking about the work of the Holy Spirit."

With this type of reasoning, the mind will often connect imaginary dots backward to salvage the answer. One writer observes that "supersti-

tious or magical thinking tends to start with an answer and work backward to the evidence, in contrast to scientific or rational thinking that allows evidence to lead to an answer."²⁹

So-called positive confession (that is, we can just speak healing into existence because we have it coming) is a dangerous myth. People may neglect a God-given medical cure and hasten their demise. Positive confession is just a religious twist on an old theme. Read the following quote and insert the words "positive confession":

"A cowboy named Clark Stanley, who called himself 'The Rattlesnake King,' sold a Snake Oil Liniment that was reputedly 'good for man and beasts.' In 1893, at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, Stanley is said to have held crowds spell-bound as, dressed in colorful western garb, he slaughtered hundreds of rattlesnakes, processing the juices into the cure-all. A circa 1890s advertisement described Stanley's snake oil as 'a wonderful pain destroying compound.' It was 'the strongest and best liniment known for the cure of all pain and lameness.' To be 'used external [*sic*] only,' it treated 'rheumatism, neuralgia, sciatica, lame back, lumbago, contracted muscles, toothache, sprains, swellings, etc.' It also, the ad said, 'cures frost bites, chill blains, bruises, sore throat, [and] bites of animals, insects and reptiles,' in fact being 'good for every thing a liniment should be good for.' Promising 'immediate relief,' it sold for fifty cents a bottle."³⁰

For all of Kenyon's assertions of faith and power, he could not keep his marriage together or speak it back into existence. Kenyon's wife Alice would eventually "file divorce charges against Essek, accusing him of making advances toward other women. She stated that he treated her

in a 'cruel and inhuman' manner. ... There is no record of Kenyon appearing in court. He apparently did not respond to the accusations. ... He continued to teach that *agape* love would never end up in the divorce court. In his own life, the ideals of his teaching clashed bitterly with the realities of human frailty, whether his own or Alice's."³¹ In the end Kenyon just shifted all the blame to Alice and her alleged lack of *agape* love.

It is telling that *Charisma* continues to promote so many of the Word-Faith teachers in its lucrative advertising. In July 2004, the magazine ran a pair of back-to-back articles, one on ex-Catholic priest "healer" Francis MacNutt³² and, amazingly, a second one on the topic, "When Healing Doesn't Come."³³

What is even more ludicrous is that so many of the modern self-proclaimed super-apostles and super-prophets — though advocating Word-Faith for others — themselves wear glasses and visit doctors! One of the biggest offenders is C. Peter Wagner. Wagner is a self-proclaimed end-time apostle who admits to having diabetes and his wife severe debilitating arthritis.³⁴ Simple logic would preclude anyone from being charged with excessive doubt for questioning why an ailing Wagner — who cannot heal himself or his wife — should be able to heal others or tell them to get healing.

Just as is evidenced in the life of his "signs and wonders" colleague John Wimber, sickness and death are a part of the curse for Wagner. Romans 8 is clear that that curse will not be lifted until Jesus comes and we are resurrected (Romans 8:18-23). At the time of the resurrection, "the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God," but not until then.

Our bodies are waiting to be transformed (Philippians 3:21). As Paul addresses our bodies *now*, he uses words such as "corruption" (1 Corinthians 15:42), "dishonor" and "weak-

ness" (v. 43), and "natural" (v. 44). However, *then* at resurrection he calls our glorified bodies "incorruption" (v. 42), as well as "glory" and "power" (v. 43). We will be incorruptible, glorified, powerful, and deathless — but not until *then*.

D.R. McConnell gives a great summary of these important truths and the sequence of God's unfolding program:

"Contrary to the Faith anthropology, the believer's body is not made impervious to disease through faith, the new birth, positive confession, or anything

progressively from the power of our sins. One day we will see Jesus face to face and have final deliverance from even the presence of sin.

We are not suggesting that all Word-Faith teachers are always amiss and that they may not do good things at times. Even the pagan temple of Diana in the days of the Apostle Paul provided sanctuary for hurting people.³⁶ Even institutions that are wrong and heretical can, no doubt, do some good things. PFO specifically questions Word-Faith doctrine, especially as it applies to healing and the Bible. In this regard they are "weighed and found wanting."

“Disease will be defeated only when death is finally defeated: at the return of Christ and the general resurrection.”

– D.R. McConnell

else. It remains a 'perishable' body of 'weakness' and 'dishonor.' But at the return of Christ, the believer's decaying and mortal body will undergo an incredible change (1 Cor. 15:51-55). *Disease* will be defeated only when *death* is finally defeated: at the return of Christ and the general resurrection. *The error of the Faith theology is that it ascribes a power to faith healing that will be manifest only at the end of the age.* This is but one of many examples of its overrealized eschatology. As wonderful as it is, healing power is only a stopgap provision. At best, it can only ward off disease and death."³⁵

At conversion we receive deliverance from the guilt of our sins and

Jesus warned about false christs and false prophets showing signs and wonders to deceive (Matthew 24:24). He also called us to turn away from those who say, "Look, He is in the desert!" telling us "Do not go out" (Matthew 24:26). The Gospel of Matthew was barely finished when the assault on Judaism, as well the Church, began. Shortly after the time of Jesus, the Jewish historian Josephus recounts:

"Moreover, imposters and deceivers called upon the mob to follow them into the desert. For they said that they would show them unmistakable marvels and signs that would be wrought in harmony with God's design. Many were, in fact, persuaded and paid the penalty of their

folly.”³⁷

Word-Faith’s self-appointed apostles, teachers, prophets, and wonder workers lead many into a wilderness of disappointment and despair.

SPECIAL OLYMPICS

In fact, Christians are all in the “Special Olympics” — that is, the *Spiritual Special Olympics*, limping our way to the finish line. That we have as much health as we do is surely due to the mercy of God. It is also His mercy that we can have medical help to subdue some of the ailments which plague and beset us. In the end, it is all only the mercy of God. His mercies are new every morning and endure forever.

Satan was right when he said, “Yes, all that a man has he will give for his life” (Job 2:4). People love their flesh so much they will invest in quack cures. They will believe lies. They will pay for phony placebos and nostrums. They will gamble heavily on faith healers to their loss. Truth be known, Word-Faith “theology” is not theology at all, but obsessive and excessive anthropology.

God is not Word-Faith. Rather He hates the concept because it is based on lies and distortions. It distorts who He is, what His Word says, what faith is, and what resurrection is all about. It distorts the Bible’s balanced picture and, as well, offers false hope and often leads people into doubt, depression, and deep despair. It bilks and misleads believers, and in the process gets them to dump their hard-earned money into the lavish lifestyles of phony faith healers. It is to be deplored and warned against.

Since God is not Word-Faith, no one else should be either. Jesus did not come with the Word-Faith message, but simply a message of compassion, mercy, forgiveness, and ultimate resurrection. Our faith is to be in Him, not in faith.

We must never forget that, “faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God” (Romans 10:17, empha-

sis added). And we must always keep before us that, “Behold, the eye of the LORD is on those who fear Him, On those who hope in His mercy. ... Let Your mercy, O LORD, be upon us, Just as we hope in You” (Psalm 33:18, 22).

Endnotes:

1. See further, Steve Cannon, “The Presumptuous Teachings of the Word-Faith Movement,” *Personal Freedom Outreach Newsletter*, Vol. 6, No. 4, pp. 4-6. This article is also available in tract form from PFO.
2. *Ibid.*, pg. 6.
3. E.W. Kenyon, *The Hidden Man*. Lynnwood, Wash.: Kenyon’s Gospel Publishing Society, Inc., 1970, pg. 99.
4. In 1924 Bosworth penned the messages for the first edition of this book. Since that time, the volume has been enlarged and reprinted numerous times. In the 1973 (eighth edition) reprint it is claimed for this book that it “has become the greatest classic on the subject of Divine Healing and a textbook in church Bible classes, Bible schools, and seminars” (Foreword).
5. Stanley M. Burgess and Gary B. McGee, Editors, and Patrick H. Alexander, Associate Editor, *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1988, pg. 94.
6. E.W. Kenyon, *Jesus the Healer*. Lynnwood, Wash.: Kenyon Gospel Publishing Society, 1968, pg. 26.
7. *Ibid.*, pg. 44.
8. *Ibid.*, pg. 66.
9. *Ibid.*, pg. 67.
10. Kenneth Hagin, “Healing: The Father’s Provision,” *Word of Faith* magazine, August 1977, pg. 9, cited in D.R. McConnell, *A Different Gospel*. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1995, updated edition, pg. 156.
11. T.J. McCrossan, *Christ’s Paralyzed Church X-rayed*. Youngstown, Ohio: Rev. C.E. Humbard, 1937, pg. 305.
12. Benny Hinn, *Rise & Be Healed*. Orlando: Celebration Publishers, Inc., 1991, pg. 37, italics and ellipsis in original.
13. Johann Keil and Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1985, Vol. 5, pg. 120.
14. Joseph Zias, “Was Byzantine Herodium a Leprosarium?”, *Biblical Archaeologist*, Vol. 49, No. 3, September 1986, pg. 183.
15. Warren Wiersbe, *Be Holy*. Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1994, pg. 95.
16. William Patton, *Bible Wines or The Laws of Fermentation*. Little Rock: The Challenge Press, no date, pg. 93.

17. *Ibid.*, pg. 94.

18. R.J. Zwi Werblowsky and Geoffrey Wigoder, Editors, *The Encyclopedia of the Jewish Religion*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1965, pp. 178-179.

19. Nathan Ausubel, *The Book of Jewish Knowledge*. New York: Crown Publishers Inc., 1964, pp. 192-193.

20. Wayne Detzler, *Living Words in Philipians*. England: Evangelical Press, 1984, pg. 85.

21. One example of a lawsuit brought against Hinn resulted from his 1986 Oklahoma City healing crusade, where an 85-year-old woman, Ella Peppard, died from complications suffered after someone who was “slain in the Spirit” by Hinn fell on her, fracturing her hip. A \$5 million lawsuit was filed by Peppard’s relatives and was eventually settled out of court. (See further, G. Richard Fisher and M. Kurt Goedelman, *The Confusing World of Benny Hinn*. Saint Louis: Personal Freedom Outreach, 2002, pp. 120-121.)

22. Benny Hinn, *This is Your Day*, Trinity Broadcasting Network, Aug. 26, 2004, tape on file.

23. Linton Weeks, “True Believers,” *Washington Post*, Aug. 31, 2002, pg. C01.

24. John Telford, *The Life of John Wesley*. New York: The Methodist Book Concern, no date, pp. 335-336.

25. *Ibid.*, pp. 336-338.

26. Adam Clarke, *The New Testament of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*. New York: Abingdon Press, no date, Vol. 6, pg. 827, italics in original.

27. Merrill C. Tenney, Editor, *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1975, Vol. 4, pg. 188.

28. *Ibid.*

29. Joe Nickell, *Investigating the Paranormal*. New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 2001, pg. 62.

30. *Ibid.*, pg. 166, brackets in original.

31. Joe McIntyre, *E.W. Kenyon and His Message of Faith: The True Story*. Orlando: Creation House, 1997, pp. 154-155, italic in original.

32. J. Lee Grady, “The Priest With Healing Hands,” *Charisma*, July 2004, pp. 50-55.

33. James R. Hall, “When Healing Doesn’t Come,” *Charisma*, July 2004, pg. 56-57.

34. J. Lee Grady, “Professor of the Spirit,” *Charisma*, February 2004, pg. 52.

35. *A Different Gospel*, op. cit., pg. 159, italics in original.

36. Colin Hemer, *The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia in Their Local Setting*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989, pp. 48-56.

37. Flavius Josephus quoted in Shimon Gibson, *The Cave of John the Baptist*. New York: Doubleday, 2004, pg. 87.

to Africa himself, Dowie commissioned a number of his followers as missionaries to the southern region of the continent, where their evangelical message and emphasis on spiritual gifts found a receptive African audience. Soon many 'Zion' churches sprang up across Africa that had no connection to the original Dowie-linked groups except for the name."⁴

WHAT IS IT?

As noted, Dowie was a forerunner of the modern Charismatic restoration movement. Restorationism has many strands, and forms of it can be traced back to as early as the 1700s. Its premise is that believers must get back to the pure apostolic practices of the first-century Church in an even greater way.

In its most extreme form, leaders declare their era and lifetime as the very last days. Actually, some in *each* generation have declared their day as *the very last days*. Many have been, at best, date-suggesters or, at worst, date-setters as to the return of Jesus Christ. The promoters present themselves as conduits from heaven to earth. Dowie fit the description.

Restorationists decry "church as usual" and insist on apostolic powers, signs, wonders, and healings. Followers are manipulated into believing there is little time left and through current miracles God's Kingdom can come to earth and overwhelm the ungodly, while perfect health is granted to all who will have faith enough to believe for it. The healer or self-proclaimed apostle is the "Apostle" for the end-time revival. This scenario has been played out in almost every century since Jesus.

BRING IT ON

Consistency alone in appealing to the book of Acts would demand that:

- Those who lie or fib to God

would meet the fate of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:5, 10);

- The leaders' shadows create healings (Acts 5:15);
- There will be episodes of miraculous transport (Acts 8:39-40);
- There also will be angelic deliverances from prison (Acts 12:7-9);
- No harm will come from venomous serpents (Acts 28:1-6).

All of this, however, is lost on overly invested followers who have given their minds to their leader. We must never forget that the book of Acts is an historical record, which means that not everything described is prescribed.

Additionally, Acts is clearly a transitional book where the Church is phasing out of temple worship (Acts 3), Apostolic miracles, and other aspects of Judaism. That there was a Judaistic Christianity from which the Church was emerging seems clear from an unbiased reading of Acts through Jude. Demand for circumcision, the Sabbath, sacred seasons, and levitical legislations and distinctions between clean and unclean meats eventually disappeared in the mature Church. Acts and the apostles were the foundation (Ephesians 2:20). However, we now are the building (1 Corinthians 3:9-12).

Fenton John Anthony Hort saw this precisely:

"Till the voice of God was heard in quite other accents, a Palestinian Church could not be more or less a Judaic Church. This temporary duality within Christendom is constantly overlooked or misunderstood: but, if we think a little on the circumstances of the case, we must see that it was inevitable."⁵

Apologist Hank Hanegraaff further details end time restorationism, explaining that "the belief that at the end of the age God will restore supernatural signs, 'super apostles, and prophets' — is a key ingredient

in the mythology of the Counterfeit Revival. ... Men like A.A. Allen, William Branham, and Jack Coe perpetrated the myth that a restoration of healing would lead to a final Pentecost greater than the first."⁶

Enter John Alexander Dowie. Dowie was born in Scotland and moved to Australia with his family when he was 13. In 1868, he returned to Europe where he studied Latin, Greek, logic, and moral philosophy. His major weakness was that he had no formal theological or doctrinal training. After three years of study, Dowie returned to Australia where, in 1876, he married a cousin. Two years later, and after serving several local congregations as pastor, he launched an independent healing ministry.

In 1880, Dowie entered politics and "ran for Parliament from Sydney, New South Wales,"⁷ but was defeated. It was here that he began to grow somewhat paranoid and it could be argued that the political loss triggered a determination to be beholden to no one. He became critical of all churches and was accountable to no one but himself. In fact, his "beliefs were based primarily on his own interpretation of the scriptures."⁸ Although Dowie confessed no authority but the Scripture, it was the Scripture as he understood it.

In 1886, Dowie launched his periodical *Leaves of Healing*. The format was testimonies of healing and Dowie's teachings. Much of his exposure and success can be attributed to the periodical's wide circulation.

THE CHRISTIAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

In 1888, he moved with his wife, son, and daughter to Evanston, Ill. Later he began to hold services in Zion Tabernacle and in 1895 he established his Christian Catholic Church. The name conveyed the message that his teachings would be accepted universally (thus "Catholic"). Dowie carried his 200 pounds on a 5-foot-4-inch frame, but people thought of him as being taller. Dowie

was always well aware of strategic things such as location, self-promotion, and titles. It seems that any press was good press in Dowie's mind. By now he had taken the self-conferred title of "Doctor" Dowie. This was the height of deception and arrogance.

Other well-known Pentecostals claim spiritual lineage from Dowie. These include F.F. Bosworth, John G. Lake, and Gordon Lindsay. Still other Pentecostal leaders have aligned themselves to the spiritual ancestry of Dowie. However, given Dowie's ques-

promised prosperity and riches for all who joined him; many were lured through selfishness and greed. Then there were the claims of healing that resonated with the people of that era. Medicine was in a dismal state in the late 1800s, and many treatments were based on pure guesswork.

It should also be noted that Dowie's claims were not investigated and documented in terms of "before" and "after" diagnosis. Thus, a hundred years after the fact, it is unclear whether we are dealing with psycho-

advised that the whole do not need a physician, clearly conveying that the sick do (Luke 5:31). Jesus also told the story of the Good Samaritan, passing over without comment, that the medicinal means of wine and oil rubbed in were a common fact (Luke 10:34). Paul advised a medicinal route to Timothy, stating, "No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for your stomach's sake and your frequent infirmities" (1 Timothy 5:23).

We cannot blame Satan and personal sin for all sickness. The fall is one overall, general reason why people suffer. That curse will not be lifted until Jesus returns (Romans 8). When the Prophet Elisha died of sickness (2 Kings 13:14), God still continued to use even his bones to raise the dead (13:21). One woman — who pretty much denied that Christians should ever be sick — after the death of her father, who was a Christian, told this writer that he "died healthy."

Dowie eventually bought thousands of acres near Lake Michigan and started building his Zion City, where he established blue laws and imposed fines for unbecoming behavior. He opened a lace factory and employed thousands of his followers.¹⁰ Dowie, at one point, reserved 10 trains and took 3,000 workers to Madison Square Garden where he held meetings for them for 10 days, and which earned for him an audience with the mayor of New York City.¹¹

Dowie's theology veered even more widely from orthodoxy as he promoted Universalism, the belief that everyone will eventually make it to heaven — even those who have gone to hell. Dowie documented this view in print in various editions of *Leaves of Healing* and in pamphlets. Historian Philip Cook relates Dowie saying to his wife, "I know God's mercy never dies, and that he will receive at the end all unto Himself."¹²

Universalism was taught by the very unorthodox Church Father, Origen, as early as the third century A.D.



Shiloh House is one of Zion's few remaining structures from the Dowie era. This palatial three-story, 25-room mansion was built in 1901-02 and was Dowie's residence. In 1967, the home became the headquarters of the Zion Historical Society. It is listed on the National Register of Historic Sites.

tionable life, teachings, and motives, it is a wonder that any would want to link with him in any way.

NO MORE PILLS OR PIGS

Dowie loved conflict and seemed to promote it. He insisted his followers use faith, not medicine, and "that his followers abstain from use of all pork products."⁹

One can readily understand how Dowie could draw crowds. Like the Word-Faith leaders of today, he

somatic cases, altered states, spontaneous remissions, hysterical claims, or even exhibitionism. It has been rightly said that extraordinary claims require extraordinary proof. It is known that at one point Dowie faced possible criminal prosecution when he refused medical aid for a woman who died while giving birth. Scant laws existed, giving Dowie a way of escape from the judge's gavel.

Perhaps Dowie should not have been so hard on physicians. Jesus

He, like Dowie, denied endless punishment and taught that even the devil would ultimately be redeemed. Such views were being promoted in America before and during Dowie's day. One theological dictionary says:

"Universalism is the doctrine of the ultimate well-being of every person. The doctrine has a pagan and a Christian form. According to the former, all will ultimately be happy because all are, by nature, the creatures and children of God. The universalistic heresy (it is rejected by the general tradition of the church — Eastern, Roman and Protestant) in Christianity teaches that although all of the human creatures of God have fallen into sin and are lost, all will be saved through the universal redemption of Christ."¹³

The basic assumption of Universalism is wrong. All are *not* children of God, according to John 1:12. It is through receiving Christ personally that we can claim that status. Jesus even addressed some as children of the devil in John 8:44. Nowhere in the Scripture is there the teaching that God overlooks sin universally, and then unilaterally imposes the merits of Christ's death on all — especially those who live in blatant rejection of Him. Matthew 25:46 seems quite clear that both heaven and hell are of equal duration. The same "eternal" dimension is given to both. Old Universalism is now called "Inclusivism," but a new wrapper cannot change the contents.

In the old Universalism it was God who just overlooked sin. In the new Inclusivism it is Jesus who universally applies His salvation work to all. Perhaps Dowie would have disavowed these nuances, but nevertheless he ended at the same place: everybody makes it in the end.

As Dowie aged he became increasingly more bizarre. Anton Darms, an early overseer in Dowie's Christian Catholic Church, acknowledges that in 1895 Dowie was arrested more than

100 times and frequently jailed in Chicago for ignoring the law by running a hospital/sanitorium without proper licensing. Darms shares that "many so hated him they were even plotting to murder him."¹⁴ Such is hardly worthy conduct for a minister of the Gospel. Romans 13:1-4 commands respect for law and lawful authority. To spurn such is to spurn God Himself. Dowie was not suffering for the Gospel's sake, but for his own lawlessness, foolishness, and arrogance.

Dowie ignored major passages in Scripture regarding the demeanor of Church leaders and functioned as a law unto himself. Paul urges that leaders be "of good behavior ... not quarrelsome" (1 Timothy 3:2-3) and that "he *must* have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil" (1 Timothy 3:7, emphasis added). Surely Dowie did fall into the snare of the devil and a great delusion:

"He reasserted his restorationist hopes and announced in 1901 that he was the prophesied Elijah, the Restorer. In 1904 he told his followers to anticipate the full restoration of apostolic Christianity and revealed that he had been divinely commissioned the first apostle of a renewed end-times church."¹⁵

WRONG AGAIN!

Dowie's precise claim was that Elijah of the Old Testament was Elijah number one, John the Baptist was Elijah number two, and he was Elijah number three, who would be the very last Elijah. He even tried to dress in character. In Philip Cook's volume there is a photograph of Dowie dressed up resembling an Old Testament High Priest with a large puffy hat and ankle-length robe.¹⁶

Yet despite trying to look the part, Dowie failed miserably as a prophet, declaring that his City of Zion would influence the world to such a degree over 100 years that it would usher in the return of Christ in 2000. The

perfection of his city would prepare the world so that Jesus could come back to a perfect earth.

Apologist Bob Liichow observed:

"It seems as though God's grace had run out towards Mr. Dowie. It was bad enough for him to claim to be the forerunner of the return of Christ calling himself Elijah. Yet his deception and ego took him even further to declare himself the first Apostle of the renewed Church."¹⁷

Dowie's integrity and financial honesty has been called into question for good reason because "in 1906, he lost control of his community. Individuals there had suffered severely as a result of financial mismanagement."¹⁸

A year earlier, in 1905, Dowie demonstrated insensitivity to the very standards he had established. He began to give too much attention to a Ruth Hofer, at times being seen alone with her or riding alone with her in his carriage. Dowie made the fatal mistake of building her special quarters. Gossip flared and Dowie was even accused of polygamy. Whatever was or was not going on, it left Dowie in a position of looking very guilty.¹⁹

At the very least he was guilty of stupidity. His conscience did not seem fine-tuned, and he either did not understand how others would view him, or did not care.

First Timothy 3:2 states that a leader "must be blameless." Dowie gave no attention to this passage of qualifications. As far as the polygamy charges, there is conflicting testimony as to whether Dowie taught polygamy for his time or predicted it for his coming kingdom, once it was established worldwide.

A REALLY POOR EXAMPLE

Dowie always taught that doctors were taboo, and any sickness was the result of personal sin. Great disaffection set into the minds of Dowie's followers, even before his debilitating stroke in 1905. Ruth Hofer was only the beginning. Several events began to

topple Dowie's house of cards, including, in the same year, the death of his 21-year-old daughter, Esther, and his coachman, Carl Struck, who died of pneumonia.²⁰ Months prior to suffering his own stroke, Dowie lost his personal attendant, Col. Carl Stern, also after a long bout with pneumonia. According to Philip Cook, "Next to Esther Dowie's passing, Stern's death was the most notable since the community had been founded."²¹

Facts clearly indicate that Dowie was certainly a destitute representative of his healing message and claim of being Elijah the Restorer:

"The flamboyant Dowie, recuperating from a stroke which partially paralyzed him, lost control of the church in 1906 to Wilbur Glenn Voliva, whom he had appointed to run the church in his absence. Voliva found the church near bankruptcy and led a revolt that saw Dowie deposed just a year before his death."²²

Dowie passed away — as do all faith healers. He was 60. The predicted golden age had not come. His theocracy in Zion City was a failure. His memory is a disgrace.

Consider a few of Bob Liichow's conclusions concerning Dowie:

- "His views on divine healing were biblically unsound and there is no proof that he healed 1,000's."²³
- "He was unteachable."²⁴
- "He was proud, he refused to admit his mistaken ideas even when confronted by those who respected him."²⁵
- "At best Dowie was an extremely deluded individual."²⁶
- "He lived in luxury while his followers lived in poverty."²⁷
- "Dowie loved money and had a bank vault in his basement with literal bathtubs filled with coins that he would stand next to and run his hands through them."²⁸

DOWN WITH DEMOCRACY, UP WITH DICTATORSHIP

Dowie was openly critical of American democracy. It did not dawn on him that democracy allowed him to do what he was doing. His Zion was neither a true commune (having all things in common), nor was it a true theocracy (ruled by God). Rather it was a dictatorship, though some would argue a benign one. Dowie was an autocrat who used a subjective hermeneutic to make the Bible say what he wished. Everyone was expected to be in lockstep with his whims. David Edwin Harrell has written much on healing and healers. He usually writes favorably about Pentecostal and Charismatic healers, but in the case of Dowie he is brutally honest:

"Dowie was able and lusty, but he was also tyrannical and unpredictable. ... He ruled Zion with an iron hand, and his financial irresponsibility and taste for personal luxury soon caused some disciples to have second thoughts. Doubts were also raised by Dowie's claims to repeated divine revelations exalting his personal status."²⁹

That he was a business success was his main advertisement and justification for a time. Then again, so were others like Jim Bakker and Jimmy Swaggart. Money does not guarantee truth or morals. The truth is that "the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil" (1 Timothy 6:10), and money as a motive can "drown men in destruction and perdition" (1 Timothy 6:9).

Voliva's coup provided no reform, or no better a situation, as he himself was an autocrat and shamed his people by promoting vigorously the teaching that the earth was flat.³⁰ Fully disenchanted with Dowie, the people began to fracture under Voliva, and his leadership could not keep the fractures from growing.

Before and after Dowie's death, his original followers began to splinter and either joined or started competing groups. Zion City, the 10-square-mile

community, is now just a small modern day town with little memory of Dowie and the original Christian Catholic Church. Many of the old businesses have disappeared. The city's approximately 25,000 inhabitants have numerous denominational churches (an abomination to Dowie) and Dowie's church has metamorphosed into "an Evangelical Protestant Church."³¹

The modern church building located on the site of the original tabernacle was built Nov. 26, 1961. The church name was changed in 1997 to Christ Community Church. There is no doubt that the church today has abandoned the more quirky beliefs and legalism of its founder.

Walking through Zion City there is no immediate inkling of its history, and it seems like any other American town with its Aldi, K-Mart, Piggly Wiggly, Zion Auto Body, and the new Country Inn and Suites. The Genealogical Society of Zion keeps alive the fading beginnings.

One thing that almost all utopias have in common is failure. Of the 129 communal utopias in America during the late 1800s, perhaps only one or two succeeded.³² The odds are certainly against communal utopias, as is the Bible. We cannot confuse the unique, short-term, and necessary situation of Acts 2 with the later normative teaching on the life of the Church. The later teaching of 2 Thesalonians 3:7-10 and 1 Timothy 5:8 show clearly nuclear households and personal responsibility.

Marcus Bach, who has studied little-known religions, comments:

"Most of these utopia seekers were convinced that time was running out, that God was preparing to roll down the curtain on men's affairs, and that when He did, He would look around for His elect, those who were in the world but not of it; those whose lives had been insulated by the solid walls of a righteous faith. The attempt to establish these little utopias ... were in

complete conformity with the highest expression of God and man. ... [They] had been built on a desire for perfect fellowship, a revolt against existing conditions, the belief in a Chosen Leader, a conviction that an era was ending and that the Lord's elect should be prepared for some great burst of glory. ... That their utopian experiment failed is no surprise. Reality never seems able to approximate the ideal. ... we draw a mental blueprint for our own utopia and wonder why in the world it cannot quite come true."³²

Dowie's mental blueprint got him a secular city, not a celestial one.

WHAT DID WE FIND?

Well, we've checked it out, and it didn't check out. Those who espouse an admiration of Dowie extend an admiration ill-placed. Dowie receives a failing grade in so many areas.

Dowie, like King Jehoshaphat of old (2 Chronicles 17-20), lived a life of mixed good and evil. Like Jehoshaphat, his life ended with all his ships wrecked (2 Chronicles 20:35-37). Further, like Jehoshaphat, Dowie and his legacy are severely tarnished and barely remembered. His health issues were a screaming testimony to him which should have led to his repentance for preaching a false message. It didn't. He went up like a rocket and down like a rock.

He is a long-forgotten curiosity who had an illusion of a celestial city and perfect health for all. He is an example to all that we must stay in reality and properly interpret the Word of God. Good intentions are not enough. Peter warned, concerning the Scriptures, that "untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction" (2 Peter 3:16).

Endnotes:

1. Stanley M. Burgess and Gary B. McGee, Editors, and Patrick H. Alexander, Associate Editor, *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*. Grand Rapids,

Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1988, pg. 249.
 2. Gordon Lindsay, *John Alexander Dowie*. Dallas: Christ for the Nations, Inc., Reprint 1980, pg. ix.
 3. Daniel G. Reid, Contributing Editor, *Dictionary of Christianity in America*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1990, pg. 365.
 4. Christian History & Biography, "Did You Know?" from *Christianity Today* web site. Document available at: www.christianitytoday.com/ch/2003/003/14.2.html.
 5. Fenton John Anthony Hort, *Judaistic Christianity*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1980, pg. 83.

Mich.: Baker Book House, 1973, pg. 539.
 14. *Life and Work of John Alexander Dowie*, op. cit., pg. 9.
 15. *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, op. cit., pg. 249.
 16. *Zion City, Illinois*, op. cit., pg. 173.
 17. Robert S. Liichow, "God's 'General' Mr. Alexander Dowie," *Truth Matters*, May 2004, pg. 9.
 18. *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, op. cit., pg. 249.
 19. *Zion City, Illinois*, op. cit., pp. 200-201.
 20. *Ibid.*, pg. 120.
 21. *Ibid.*, pg. 177.
 22. J. Gordon Melton, Editor, *The Encyclopedia of American Religions*. Tarrytown, N.Y.: Triumph Books, 1991, Vol. 3, pg. 288.



Built on the site of Dowie's Shiloh Tabernacle now stands Christ Community Church. The church, which adopted its present name in 1997, has abandoned the strange beliefs of its founder and has metamorphosed into "an Evangelical Protestant Church." The original Shiloh Tabernacle was completely destroyed in 90 minutes by fire in 1937.

6. Hank Hanegraaff, *Counterfeit Revival*. Dallas: Word Publishing, 1997, pg. 15.
 7. Philip L. Cook, *Zion City, Illinois*. Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1996, pg. 9.
 8. *Ibid.*, pg. 8.
 9. *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, op. cit., pg. 249.
 10. Anton Darms, *Life and Work of John Alexander Dowie*. Self-published, no date, pg. 12.
 11. *Ibid.*, pg. 14.
 12. *Zion City, Illinois*, op. cit., pg. 19. Also see pg. 232, endnote 4.
 13. Everett F. Harrison, Editor, *Baker's Dictionary of Theology*. Grand Rapids,

23. "God's 'General' Mr. Alexander Dowie," op. cit., pg. 9.
 24. *Ibid.*
 25. *Ibid.*
 26. *Ibid.*
 27. *Ibid.*, pg. 10.
 28. *Ibid.*
 29. David Edwin Harrell Jr., *All Things Are Possible*. Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1975, pg. 13.
 30. *Zion City, Illinois*, op. cit., pg. 223.
 31. *Ibid.*, pg. 217.
 32. Marcus Bach, *Strange Sects and Curious Cults*. New York: Dorset Press, 1961, pg. 180.
 32. *Ibid.*, pp. 179-180, 181.

And so the cycle continues. Hagin's descendants — by doctoring the account — are now claiming for him what Hagin claimed for his own mentors and the early proponents of the "health" philosophy. Consider Hagin's description of the deaths of F.F. Bosworth and E.W. Kenyon:

'I was personally acquainted with Bosworth. The last time I was in one of his meetings, he was 77. At 80-some-odd years of age, he announced one day, 'This is the greatest day of my life. God has shown me that I'm going home.' He called in a friend for a time of visiting. Then he went home. Kenyon, too, went home to be with the Lord without sickness and disease at the age of nearly 81. ... One morning his wife and daughter asked what he would like for breakfast. He replied, 'You girls go ahead and eat. I don't believe I will eat right now.' A short time later he was home with the Lord. He went home the Bible way without sickness or disease.'⁴

It long has been documented that Hagin duplicated — even to the degree of obvious plagiarism — the writings and teachings of Kenyon. The particulars now claimed for Hagin's death bear a curious resemblance to those claimed for Kenyon.

Hagin claimed to have lived a life marked by the extraordinary and miraculous, including the spiritual gifts of healing, prophecy, and discerning of spirits. Additionally, one of the facets which most characterized Hagin was his claim to visions, especially — although not exclusively — visions of Jesus Christ. His book *I Believe in Visions* is, among other things, a record of his eight visions of Jesus that he said took place between September 1950 and August 1963. Because the Preface to the book says, "This book does not contain all the

visions I have received from the Lord; however, it does contain the major ones,"⁵ it might be questioned whether Hagin had more visions of Jesus than the book records, at least within the 13-year time frame indicated. However, Hagin repeatedly established the number of his divine visitations of Jesus as elsewhere he stated, "The Lord has appeared to me in visions seven or eight times"⁶ and in still another book he wrote, "Eight times Jesus Himself appeared to me and talked to me."⁷

Thus, we can safely believe that the book records all the visions Hagin claims to have had of Jesus within those 13 years. Perhaps, it should be noted that Hagin later claimed at least one additional vision of Jesus, which he said occurred in July 1987.⁸

Because of the visions and other supernatural events Hagin claimed for his life and ministry, author Bruce Barron has stated, "Just a small fraction of Kenneth Hagin's supernatural experiences, if genuine, would require the conclusion that he has lived a very extraordinary life."⁹

Nevertheless, in his book, Barron backpedaled from questioning if Hagin's visions were "genuine" by saying Hagin's visions "carry no conclusive signs of fabrication."¹⁰

Likewise, D.R. McConnell, the researcher responsible for exposing Hagin's plagiarism of Kenyon, states:

"...it would be very easy to degenerate into a fruitless discussion as to whether Jesus really does appear to Hagin. The truth of the matter is that we shall never know the answer to this question, at least, not definitively. Hagin's visionary experiences of Jesus and journeys to heaven and hell will forever remain a matter of personal conscience between him and God. ... these experiences in and of themselves are of a personal, *subjective* nature and will never, this side of judgment day, be proven or disproven by *objective* means. It

can no more be proven that Jesus did not appear to Hagin than Hagin can prove that he did."¹¹

While Barron may be correct in stating that they bear no *conclusive signs* of fabrication; and while McConnell may be correct in his assertion that we will not know *definitively* this side of eternity whether Hagin's visions of Jesus really took place, there *appears* to have been fabrication, indeed, in at least some of Hagin's visions and other supernatural experiences.

WILLINGNESS TO PLAGIARIZE

As noted above, McConnell has demonstrated in his book, *A Different Gospel*, that Hagin unquestionably plagiarized the writings of E.W. Kenyon.¹² McConnell charges that Hagin plagiarized from Kenyon's writings, "both repeatedly and extensively."¹³

Despite evidence to the contrary, Hagin responded, in part, to McConnell's charge of plagiarism by stating, "Kenyon's influence on my ministry has been minute. ... Only his teachings on the name of Jesus have much to do with my theology."¹⁴

Additionally, "Hagin has answered by claiming that the Holy Spirit gave him the same words as Kenyon without his having prior knowledge of the sources."¹⁵ However, Hagin not only took Kenyon's words, but also taught doctrines that were based on those Kenyon taught.¹⁶

Hagin apparently did not limit his literary theft to Kenyon alone. McConnell also puts forth the claim by Dale Simmons "that as much as 75% of one of Hagin's best selling pamphlets, *The Authority of the Believer*, which was first published in 1967 and has gone through 21 printings, was taken word-for-word from a series of articles published in 1932 by John A. MacMillan under the same title, 'The Authority of the Believer.'"¹⁷

Again, when confronted with the certainty of his plagiarism, Hagin said:

"I have found through the years that when individuals are speaking on the same subject they will say virtually the same thing. This is because it is the same Spirit that is leading and directing. He will show you things in the same ways and you'll have the same thoughts although you may never have met or read after the other person."¹⁸

One will notice that this is the same rationale Hagin gave above for his plagiarism of Kenyon. While this explanation may have sounded plausible to Hagin, it does not ring true. Thus, Hagin has shown that he was capable of lying about his theft of the intellectual property of others. Because this is so, we could well believe that he might lie about other matters — such as his visions — as well.

IMPAIRED VISION?

One must give Hagin credit for being able to tell stories in an entertaining and sometimes humorous manner. There is a great degree of similarity in Hagin's various accounts of his visions (i.e., in his telling of the same vision at different times). However, the similarities are not perfect.

An indication that Hagin's visions may not be accurate occurs in a vision of Jesus, which Hagin said he had in December 1953, and recorded in his 32-page booklet, *How To Write Your Own Ticket With God*.¹⁹

The glaring inconsistency — which challenges the truthfulness of Hagin's visionary claims — is the date of this particular vision. It is said to have occurred between the dates which Hagin had previously given in *I Believe in Visions* for his third vision of Jesus (said to have been in 1952) and his fourth vision of Jesus (said to have been in 1957).²⁰

Also, in a portion of his eighth vision of Jesus (which reportedly took place in 1963), Jesus spoke to Hagin about his sister,²¹ who had cancer, and whom Hagin had been praying for. According to Hagin:

"He [Jesus] said, 'Your sister will live and not die. There is no danger of immediate death.' He said that she would live at least another five years, and she did. (When she died after five years exactly, she did not die from the condition that existed at that time; her death was caused by something else.)"²²

Therefore, according to Hagin, his sister lived "exactly" five years beyond his 1963 vision of Jesus, and what happened next would have occurred in 1968. Hagin adds yet another vision of Jesus, this one of Jesus and his sister speaking with one another in heaven following her death. According to Hagin:

"After my sister died at age 55 of cancer, I lay on my bed, meditating. Suddenly it seemed like I left my body. I was up in heaven. My sister and Jesus were standing talking. Her back was to me. I don't know what Jesus was saying, but when He saw me, He stopped talking and looked at me. ... (This vision took place on Thursday night.) We buried my sister on Saturday."²³

This now brings the tally of Hagin's visions of Jesus to 10 (excluding his 1987 vision of Jesus), again contradicting his statements above (made before 1987) that he had had *eight* visions of Jesus.

Adding to the confusion and inconsistency, in *I Believe in Visions*, Hagin recounts the following regarding his third vision:

"Suddenly in the vision I saw a woman. I immediately recognized her as being the former wife of a minister. I had been introduced to her and her husband on one occasion. Other than that, I didn't know either of them and I had no communication with either of them in any way. I only knew that she had since left her husband."²⁴

Compare this with his description of the same portion of this 1952 vision

recorded in another of his writings:

"In the vision, I recognized the woman; I knew who she was. I did not know her personally. I knew she had left her husband, who was a pastor, for another man, (In fact, her former husband was this very pastor I was praying with [i.e., while Hagin was having this vision] in that parsonage kitchen.)"²⁵

Also, within Hagin's description of his sixth vision of Jesus, which he said occurred in February 1959, Hagin claimed that Jesus told him concerning the reason he had had an accident in which he dislocated his elbow:

"Some time ago when you preached to a convention of ministers, you stated that your ministry was that of a teacher and a prophet. You got into trouble because you reversed the order, putting your teaching ministry first and your prophetic ministry second. When you did that, you got out of my *perfect* will and into my *permissive* will, thus opening the door for the devil to attack you. ... If I hadn't permitted Satan to do this to arrest your attention, you would not have lived past the age of 55, because you would have continued in my permissive will instead of my perfect will."²⁶

Supposedly in the vision, Jesus continues to reproach Hagin, saying, "This is the third time I have had to speak to you about this. For this reason, I am going to let you wear your arm in a cast and then in a sling for a little while."²⁷

Despite these serious warnings from the Lord about keeping his prophetic ministry uppermost and his teaching ministry secondary, Hagin later stated in another book, "God's plan for me was to teach and to stand in the office of the prophet as He wills."²⁸

CORRECTIVE VISION

A further problem with Kenneth Hagin's sixth vision of Jesus is

pointed out by researcher Dale Simmons in his master's thesis on Hagin. Simmons notes that in the 1972 edition of Hagin's book, *I Believe in Visions*, Hagin's "Jesus" told him "there are twenty-four individuals in the New Testament who are called apostles."²⁹

However, as Simmons points out, "The problem with this accounting is that Jesus counts Paul twice, listing him [both] fifteenth and nineteenth in the tabulation."³⁰

Then the following edition of *I Believe in Visions* (published by Hagin under the auspices of his own minis-

try and used for references in this article) corrected "Jesus" by giving the number of apostles mentioned in the New Testament as 23 instead of 24, and by having "Jesus" count Paul only once instead of twice!³¹

It is of no small consequence to observe that the "Jesus" depicted in Hagin's vision is shown to be one who has a problem with knowing and applying simple math.

try and used for references in this article) corrected "Jesus" by giving the number of apostles mentioned in the New Testament as 23 instead of 24, and by having "Jesus" count Paul only once instead of twice!³¹

This correction alone, in the latter printing of Hagin's publication, is enough to pull the rug right from under his claim to have received visions from the Lord. While Hagin's faithful may try to dismiss this revision in subsequent editions of his volume as insignificant, it clearly speaks to the human source of Hagin's reputed vision. It is of no small consequence to observe that the "Jesus" depicted in Hagin's vision is shown to be one who has a problem

DOUBLE VISION

with knowing and applying simple math to those in the Scripture addressed as "apostles," thereby mis-speaking, and needing to have His words corrected. This "Jesus" is not the Jesus of the Bible. Here Hagin gives solid reason to those who are lovers of the truth to reject his claims of visions. Jesus is truth and His words are true. They do not have to be altered or changed to conform to truth.

In a six-tape series called *My Life and Ministry*, Hagin speaks about an experience he had with the Lord in

1956 in which he claimed the Lord told him that a recession was coming. Hagin then emphasized that this recession took place in 1957:

"And a number of times that happened with me, just as the sun's coming up, I'll sit right straight up in bed out of a deep sleep and — and to me now, it's — it's, I know it isn't audible but it seems almost audible — like a voice speaking to you, said, now see, this was May of 1956, said 'There is a recession coming — not a depression, but a recession. Get ready for it.' Well, I might have gone into great detail about that, but I didn't. Now not only, see, did the Spirit of God tell me,

but then another supernatural experience about two months later and I let it get by me. And the recession came in '57 if you know anything about it. '57!'"³²

Yet, in a later tape in the very same series, Hagin again referred to this same 1956 experience with the Lord, but this time he stated that the recession took place in 1975! With specific detail, Hagin disclosed:

"But suddenly jus—because I looked outside—just as the sun comes up I come wide awake and sit straight up in bed and hear a voice speaking to me. Now I remember nineteen and — and fifty-six in the month of May we was holding meetings in Long Beach, California. And we — then we were going from there over to Redondo Beach. We'd move a trailer already over there — a forty-three-foot Imper—Imperial Mansion. And suddenly I sat straight up in bed, and I heard these words, 'A recession is coming — not a depression, but a recession. Get ready for it.' Well, the recession came in '75. Now, in our first year we had school, '74, you know, we started school. '74 we was at Sheridan Road facilities. And our first seminar that I conducted was in the fall and it was in November. And so when — I got it — I — I've still got it written down. Still got it in my possession over at the office. At 5:45 in the morning, suddenly I came wide awake, sit straight up in bed. And the Spirit of God said to me, 'A recession is coming.' It came in '75. 'Now you'll not feel the crunch if you'll do what I tell you to do.' He told me to let two key people go, He told me to dismiss so many employees. I went over that afternoon after I had morning class and met with them, said I'm sorry to tell you, but this is what the Lord said to me, 'You will not feel the crunch like others do if you'll do what I tell you to do.' And so we

dismissed, I don't know, fourteen, fifteen employees, two key people. There were some things we were doing, He said, 'Stop doing that right now. Just stop that.' And so I did. Praise God."³³

Since the time Hagin supposedly received his revelation that a recession was coming, there have been eight recession cycles in the United States. Clearly, given the frequency and length of these business downturns (eight in less than 50 years and ranging from under a year to nearly three years in length), Hagin's revelation is one that couldn't miss. And, as he did, it was a revelation which could be said to have come to pass in any number of instances. Hagin, so to speak, got great mileage out of his divine warning, getting two for the price of one.

In addition to the recession that began in August 1957, there were two others between the time that Hagin received his "divine word" and its supposed fulfillment in 1975 — those being April 1960 and December 1969. (And just for good measure, why not throw into the mix — as fulfilling this prophecy — the recessions which began in January 1980, July 1981, July 1990, or the current one which began March 2001?) It should also be stressed that Hagin's claim that a 1975 recession fulfilled the revelation given to him is a bit of a stretch. The recession which took place during that period actually began in November 1973 and lasted through the end of 1975. So by the start of 1975 many were already deeply entrenched in "the crunch" of the recession and by the latter months of that year, recovery was beginning to be felt.

It is also noteworthy to question — in the case of applying this May 1956 revelation to the 1975 recession — why God would instruct Hagin 19 years in advance to dismiss 15 employees. And equally questionable is the fact that God spoke these instructions in the immediate present, "Stop doing that *right now*. Just stop it," 18½ years before the action could be

obeyed and implemented. Once again, Hagin has left, for the discerning, subtle indicators and evidence that his revelations, visions, and interpretations are a product of his own mind.

Additionally, in his book *Christianity in Crisis*, apologist Hank Hanegraaff records a number of different days/dates in August 1934 that Kenneth Hagin states that he was healed of some life-threatening conditions he had had.³⁴

ARTIFICIAL VISION

In addition to the apparent discrepancies noted above, some of Hagin's supposed supernatural experiences seem unlikely, at best. For example, in one of his booklets Hagin speaks of a woman in one of his meetings "who stood in mid-air dancing! Her feet were not touching the floor. Everyone saw it."³⁵

Hagin also claims some homiletical help in one of his visions of the Lord. In the vision, Hagin asked the Lord to help him with a sermon, and, in response, the Lord personally gave Hagin a specific four-point outline for the message.³⁶ What pastor or minister would not welcome a vision from the Lord in which He helps him with his sermons in such a direct way!

Hagin also asserts that Jesus revealed to him in a vision that the Apostle Paul was the author of the book of Hebrews!³⁷ Surely any Bible commentator would covet having Jesus appear to them in a vision and answer all their Bible questions like this.

And it is not only Hagin who had supposed visions of Jesus. According to Hagin, the Lord Jesus appeared to Hagin's mother before he was born. Jesus, it is claimed, is said to have come off of a white cloud and stood in front of her, saying:

"Fear not. The child shall be born, for he shall bear witness concerning my Second Coming.' He was trying to tell me that my child would take part in the revival that would usher in the coming of the Son of Man. He

would not be the only one, of course, but he would have a part in the last great move of God's Spirit."³⁸

On another occasion, when Hagin was a teenager and dying, a glory cloud³⁹ filled the room where he was lying. According to Hagin's mother, his grandmother tried to enter the room where young Kenneth lay:

"She tried to run through that glory, and she bounced off it like you would bounce off a rubber ball. She could not enter in. ... Granny backed up about halfway across the dining room and made another run at the open door — and bounced off it like you'd bounce off a giant rubber ball. Then she backed up all the way across the dining room, against the wall on the other side, and made the third run at it — and bounced off again. She couldn't get into that room!"⁴⁰

In still another unlikely episode, Hagin relates how a man in a former congregation of his had apparently died and then gone to heaven. The man related how he saw Jesus, who then told the man that he would have to return to his life on earth. The man vigorously protested this:

"He [Jesus] reached around as a person would if he were standing by a window. It seemed that He pulled back a curtain and when He did, I heard Brother Hagin say, 'Lord, I'm not going to let him die. I'm not going to let him die.' He [Jesus] said, 'See, you are going to have to go back. Brother Hagin won't let you come yet.'"⁴¹

Hagin's response to this man's story was, "I have always believed we have more authority than we think we have!"⁴²

Of another purported vision of Jesus, Hagin said:

"Then the Lord said this to me, which is not just for my benefit, but for yours, 'If you will learn

to follow that inward witness [of the Spirit] I will make you rich. I will guide you in all the affairs of life, financial as well as spiritual. (Some think He's only interested in their spiritual atmosphere, and nothing else. But He's interested in everything we are interested in.) I am not opposed to my children being rich. I am opposed to their being covetous.' I have followed that inward witness and He has done just what He said He would do. He has made me rich."⁴³

In yet another vision, Kenneth Hagin said that the Lord gifted him with a healing anointing in his hands. In the vision:

"Then He [Jesus] smiled — I can see Him yet, how He smiled — and said, talking about the anointing in my hands, 'The anointing is not in your feet — I didn't tell you to lay your feet on anybody. The anointing is not in your head — I didn't tell you to lay your head on anybody. It's in your hands.' And He grinned when He said that. I believe He has a sense of humor, don't you?"⁴⁴

These instances of unlikely scenarios could be added to. Suffice it to say that such stories stretch the bounds of credulity.

CLAIMS OF DIVINE AUTHORITY

McConnell censures Hagin for "the way that Hagin denies that his theology has any historical roots."⁴⁵ Indeed, through his purported visions, other supernatural experiences, and even direct statements, Hagin claims the authority of heaven for at least some of his theology and even biblical interpretation.

For instance, in a booklet entitled *How God Taught Me About Prosperity*, Hagin says unequivocally, "The Lord Himself taught me about prosperity. I never read about it in a book. I got it directly from heaven."⁴⁶

In another booklet, Hagin maintains:

"I heard a voice speak to me from heaven. To me it was audible. And it was just as real as any man's voice I've ever heard. It was a man's voice. I know it must have been Jesus. He said, 'I want you to go teach my people faith.' ... I teach on many other things, yet faith is one subject I've stayed with faithfully. I'm not disobedient to what God said. I've done what God said to do. I've taught faith, and I was out there when no one else was."⁴⁷

In still a later book, Hagin stated:

"There is a difference between dancing in the flesh just because *you decide to* and dancing in the Spirit *under His unction*. I'm just telling you what the Lord said to me; you can do with it what you want. What you do with it is up to you. Don't come fussing to me about it; all I know is what Jesus, the Head of the Church, said to me: 'It is unscriptural to dance before the Lord in the New Testament. But it is scriptural to dance in the Spirit.'"⁴⁸

Only a couple of pages after asserting this, Hagin goes on to say:

"Jesus said something that astounded me. Understand what I'm going to say so you don't get the wrong impression about it. He said to me, 'Clapping is neither praise nor worship.' Jesus said that to me. He went on to say, 'To clap is to applaud.' I'd never heard anyone say that."⁴⁹

Perhaps a dictionary would have been useful to Hagin in determining the meaning of the word "clap."

Sometimes Hagin's Jesus is more ominous in tone. In one of Hagin's visions, Jesus purportedly told Hagin that He would hold the Church accountable for unnamed mistakes that the President (presumably President Nixon) made:

"When I heard Jesus say that, I cried out, 'My God!' and began to weep. Jesus continued, 'Yes, the Church is responsible before God Almighty. I know when you tell that to some Christians, they will laugh. But you wait until they stand before My Judgment Seat and see if they laugh when they are the ones who will receive the judgment.'"⁵⁰

McConnell makes a relevant comment when he says regarding Kenneth Hagin:

"Obviously, any preacher worth his salt has the conviction that he is in some sense speaking in behalf of God, but to use a supposed appearance of Jesus or threats of divine wrath to coerce an audience into swallowing a teaching 'hook, line and sinker' cannot go unchallenged."⁵¹

Apologist Robert Bowman says something about Word-Faith teachers in general that applies to Hagin in particular, when he observes:

"On the positive side, it must be acknowledged that the Word-Faith teachers constantly tell their followers to check out their teachings in the Bible. But this process, where it goes on at all, evidently occurs on such a superficial level that no real critical discernment is exercised. On the negative side, the Word-Faith teachers' claims to be prophets and apostles, to have regular conversations and private Bible studies with Jesus and the Holy Spirit, and to be God's 'anointed' (who must not be 'touched') all have the effect of discouraging discernment."⁵²

DO AS I SAY, NOT AS I DO

In a story not altogether unlike Ahab coveting Naboth's vineyard (1 Kings 21), in one of his booklets, Hagin claims his landlord's house by faith:

"At first we [Hagin and his wife] rented a three-bedroom frame

house. Then I said, 'We could buy this house, and the payment would be much cheaper than rent.' We agreed, and I asked my wife to see if the owner would sell it. The owner replied, 'No, we won't sell it. We built it for our own home, and we plan to move back there someday.' I wrote my wife, 'Well, they want to sell it; they just don't know what they're talking about, because Jesus said, "You can have what you say." And that house is mine.' The next time I was home, I went outside, walked around the yard, and prayed, 'You said every place the sole of your foot shall tread upon shall be yours (Josh. 1:3). My feet have trod upon it. It's mine.'"⁵³

Eventually, Hagin (apparently blind to his own covetousness) got the house. However, Hagin was able to spot covetousness when he was on the forfeiting end of it, as evidenced by the following scenario from another, later booklet:

"They [students at his school who sponge off other students] want to 'claim' everything you've got. One fellow tried to 'claim' my red Bronco. That's coveting. If he wants a red Bronco, he can claim one, but he can't claim mine. I've still got my Bronco, and he is still walking."⁵⁴

VISION EXAM

The Scripture speaks of false teachers in the Body of Christ, of whom it says, "And in their greed they will exploit you with deceptive words" (2 Peter 2:3a). *The New International Version* renders this, "In their greed these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up."

Although we have not been able to conclusively prove that Hagin is guilty of fabrication regarding his supernatural experiences, we have tried to introduce enough evidence to show that at least some of what Hagin claims to have received in the way of visions and other supernatural experi-

ences are suspect. The cumulative effect of Hagin's confusion, plagiarism, revision of visions, and so forth severely impugn his claim of being a divine visionary. It is sufficient, we believe, to demonstrate at the very least that Hagin's legacy is one not of celestial prestige, but one which is highly suspect.

In one of his booklets, Hagin claims, "I never had any trouble with lying. After I got born again, I never wanted to lie anymore. I haven't had any problem with that one at all."⁵⁵

Elsewhere, he tells a story of an evangelist who lied to people about what he really believed. Hagin says:

"He [the evangelist] told the people, 'I don't let them know I believe this, but it's all right to lie as long as you're lying for good.' (Brother, it's wrong to lie, regardless of what it's about!) ... By their fruits you shall know them. This evangelist could prophesy long and loud, but who would believe his prophecies? Once you knew about him, would you?"⁵⁶

No doubt in the months and years to come, the achievements of Hagin will be worked, reworked, and transformed into even more incredible proportions than that which he claimed for himself while he was alive. It's a pattern all too frequent among those in the Charismatic and Pentecostal camps who regard such men as "God's Generals." And it is a pattern already being shown in the evolving accounts of his death. We should pay careful attention to the above words of Hagin regarding the lying evangelist. And perhaps we should ask those same two questions Hagin posed about the lying evangelist about Hagin himself.

Endnotes:

1. Kenneth E. Hagin Jr., in Kenneth E. Hagin, *The Believer's Authority Legacy Edition*. Tulsa, Okla.: Kenneth Hagin Ministries, Inc., 2004, pg. xxxii.
2. "Kenneth E. Hagin, world-renowned minister and author, dies after nearly 70 years in ministry," report on Kenneth Hagin Ministries web site, emphasis

added. Document available at: www.rhema.org/update.cfm.

3. *The Believer's Authority Legacy Edition*, op. cit., pg. xxxii, emphasis added.
4. Kenneth E. Hagin, *The Name of Jesus*. Tulsa, Okla.: Kenneth Hagin Ministries, Inc., 1979, pp. 10, 11.
5. Kenneth E. Hagin, *I Believe in Visions*. Tulsa, Okla.: Kenneth Hagin Ministries, Inc., 1984, Preface page. This book does not make mention of an earlier edition of the book, published in 1972 under the same name by Fleming H. Revell Company. The 1972 edition lacks the Preface given above.
6. Kenneth E. Hagin, *How You Can Know the Will of God*. Tulsa, Okla.: Kenneth Hagin Ministries, Inc., 3rd edition, 1999, pg. 50.
7. Kenneth E. Hagin, *How You Can Be Led By The Spirit Of God*. Tulsa, Okla.: Kenneth Hagin Ministries, Inc., 1978, pg. 101.
8. Kenneth E. Hagin, *Plans Purposes & Pursuits*. Tulsa, Okla.: Kenneth Hagin Ministries, Inc., 1988, pp. 1-7. A misprint in the eleventh printing of the second edition gives the publication date as 1986. However, even Hagin could not have a vision in 1987 which he recorded in 1986! Upon checking with Kenneth Hagin Ministries, they identified this as a misprint, and gave the publication date as 1988. Hagin also discusses his 1987 vision in his book *He Gave Gifts Unto Men*, (Tulsa, Okla.: Kenneth Hagin Ministries, Inc., 1992).
9. Bruce Barron, *The Health and Wealth Gospel*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1987, pg. 173.
10. Ibid.
11. D.R. McConnell, *A Different Gospel*. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1995, updated edition, pp. 69-70, italics in original.
12. Ibid., see esp. pp. 1-14. See also Robert M. Bowman Jr., *The Word-Faith Controversy*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 2001, pp. 25-26, 36-41.
13. *A Different Gospel*, op. cit., pg. 7.
14. Vinson Synan, "The Faith of Kenneth Hagin," *Charisma & Christian Life*, June 1990, pg. 68.
15. Ibid.
16. See, for example, *A Different Gospel*, op. cit., pp. 7-8, 12 and *The Word-Faith Controversy*, op. cit., pp. 37-38.
17. *A Different Gospel*, op. cit., pp. 67-68, citing Dale H. Simmons, "Mimicking MacMillan," unpublished term paper, Oral Roberts University, Tulsa, Okla., April 23, 1984.
18. *A Different Gospel*, op. cit., pg. 68, citing Kenneth Hagin, personal correspondence to H. Robert Cowles, Executive Vice-President of Christian Publications, Feb. 28, 1984.
19. Kenneth E. Hagin, *How To Write Your Own Ticket With God*. Tulsa, Okla.: Kenneth Hagin Ministries, Inc., 1979, pg. 3.

This sermon by Hagin also comprises chapter 6 (pp. 73-93) of his book *Exceedingly Growing Faith*, (Tulsa, Okla.: Kenneth Hagin Ministries, Inc., 1983).

20. *How To Write Your Own Ticket With God*, op. cit., pg. 3. Compare with Hagin, *I Believe in Visions*, op. cit., pp. 65, 91.

21. The name of Hagin's sister was Oleta Hawks Armstrong. (See further, Kenneth Hagin Ministries web site document, www.rhema.org/obituary.cfm.)

22. *I Believe in Visions*, op. cit., pg. 129.

23. Kenneth E. Hagin, *Don't Blame God*. Tulsa, Okla.: Kenneth Hagin Ministries, Inc., 1979, pp. 29-30.

24. *I Believe in Visions*, op. cit., pg. 75.

25. Kenneth E. Hagin, *The Triumphant Church*. Tulsa, Okla.: Kenneth Hagin Ministries, Inc., 1993, pg. 98.

26. *I Believe in Visions*, op. cit., pg. 100, italics in original.

27. *Ibid.*

28. *Plans Purposes & Pursuits*, op. cit., pg. 19.

29. Kenneth E. Hagin, *I Believe in Visions*. Old Tappan, N.J.: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1972, pg. 99, cited in Dale Hawthorne Simmons, *Hagin — Heretic or Herald of God?; A Theological and Historical Analysis of Kenneth E. Hagin's Claim To Be A Prophet*, (Tulsa, Okla.: Oral Roberts University, 1985), pg. 50, note 73.

30. *I Believe in Visions*, 1972 edition, op. cit., pp. 99-100, cited in Simmons, *Hagin — Heretic or Herald of God?*, pg. 50, note 73.

31. *I Believe in Visions*, op. cit., pp. 104-105.

32. Kenneth E. Hagin, *My Life and Ministry*. Tulsa, Okla.: Kenneth Hagin Minis-

tries, 1984, Tape #36H05, side 1. Hagin relates this same incident, also giving the date of the recession as 1957 in *I Believe in Visions*, op. cit., pg. 94.

33. *Ibid.*, Tape #36H06, side 2.

34. Hank Hanegraaff, *Christianity in Crisis*. Eugene, Ore.: Harvest House Publishers, 1993, pg. 402, endnote 4.

35. Kenneth E. Hagin, *Why Do People Fall Under The Power?* Tulsa, Okla.: Kenneth Hagin Ministries, Inc., 1981, pg. 10.

36. *How To Write Your Own Ticket With God*, op. cit., pg. 5.

37. Kenneth E. Hagin, *The Gifts and Calling of God*. Tulsa, Okla.: Kenneth Hagin Ministries, Inc., 1986, pg. 12.

38. *I Believe in Visions*, op. cit., pp. 59-60.

39. McConnell notes, "The appearance of a 'glory cloud' was a common claim among the preachers of the [mid-20th century] Healing Revival." (See *A Different Gospel*, op. cit., pg. 72, note 8.)

40. Kenneth E. Hagin, *The Glory of God*. Tulsa, Okla.: Kenneth Hagin Ministries, Inc., 1987, pp. 9-10.

41. Kenneth E. Hagin, *Plead Your Case*. Tulsa, Okla.: Kenneth Hagin Ministries, Inc., 1979, pp. 17-18.

42. *Ibid.*, pg. 18.

43. Hagin, *How You Can Be Led By The Spirit Of God*, op. cit., pg. 33. See also *I Believe in Visions*, op. cit., pg. 124.

44. Kenneth E. Hagin, *Understanding the Anointing*. Tulsa, Okla.: Kenneth Hagin Ministries, Inc., 1983, pg. 138. Also see Kenneth E. Hagin, *Hear and Be Healed*. Tulsa, Okla.: Kenneth Hagin Ministries, Inc., 1987, pg. 5.

45. *A Different Gospel*, op. cit., pg. 68.

46. Kenneth E. Hagin, *How God Taught Me About Prosperity*. Tulsa, Okla.: Kenneth Hagin Ministries, Inc., 1985, pg. 1.

47. Hagin, *The Gifts and Calling of God*, op. cit., pp. 30-31. Also see, *How You Can Be Led By The Spirit Of God*, op. cit., pg. 104. Nevertheless, despite Hagin's avowed emphasis here on teaching faith (as he claims the Lord commissioned him to do), he appears to try to downplay and minimize that emphasis in a 1990 article by Vinson Synan, which notes, "With regard to the charge that his is a 'faith movement,' Hagin points out that only eight of his hundred books are about faith per se" ("The Faith of Kenneth Hagin," op. cit., pg. 70).

48. *Plans Purposes & Pursuits*, op. cit., pg. 97, italics in original.

49. *Ibid.*, pp. 99-100, italic in original.

50. *The Triumphant Church*, op. cit., pg. 236.


51. *A Different Gospel*, op. cit., pg. 70.

52. *The Word-Faith Controversy*, op. cit., pg. 223.

53. Kenneth E. Hagin, "You Can Have What You Say!" Tulsa, Okla.: Kenneth Hagin Ministries, Inc., 1979, pg. 20.

54. Kenneth E. Hagin, *The Coming Restoration*. Tulsa, Okla.: Kenneth Hagin Ministries, Inc., 1985, pg. 11.

55. Kenneth E. Hagin, *Casting Your Cares Upon the Lord*. Tulsa, Okla.: Kenneth Hagin Ministries, Inc., 1981, pg. 6.

56. Kenneth E. Hagin, *Seven Steps for Judging Prophecy*. Tulsa, Okla.: Kenneth Hagin Ministries, Inc., 1982, pg. 3. 

EDITORIALS

(continued from page 2)

How thoughtless it is to suggest that God placed Himself in a box with Israel by giving the Ten Commandments or the five Books of Moses — His covenant with Israel. Remember God placed Himself *on a box* called the Ark of the Covenant. Then He Himself says through Isaiah, "To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isaiah 8:20).

We are supposed to believe extremist claims just because they say so. Jesus, however, said that the proof of two or three verifiable witnesses were required. Astronomer Alan Hale has said that all say-so claims must be put under certain scrutiny for proof: "Extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence. ... The burden of proof is on the positive. If you are making an extraordinary claim, the burden is on you to produce the extraordinary evidence to prove you are correct; the burden is not on me to prove that you are wrong" (Hale

cited in *Theophostic Counseling: Divine Revelation? or PsychoHeresy?*, pp. 29-30, ellipsis in original).

Throughout the history of the Church, Scripture has been displaced by extrabiblical ideas and practices. Soon these odd things were given as much authority as the Bible. John MacArthur sees the issue as "extrabiblical doctrines were canonized and a body of opinion that found no support in Scripture began to be asserted as infallibly true" (*Sola Scriptura!*, pg. 157).

So today, Charismatic extremists — and there is a distinction between extremism and the Pentecostal mainstream — are trying to box God into their strange and exploitive claims:

"The claims of private new revelations are many. Pat Robertson routinely gets the 'word of knowledge' on national television. ... What puzzles me is the restricted specificity of these revelations. The disease and the city are named, but never the name and address of the person being healed. Here the prophecy can be neither verified nor falsified" (R.C.

Sproul in *Sola Scriptura!*, pp. 90, 91).

Imitating animal sounds, getting smacked by a coat, moaning and screaming with “birth pains” while lying on a church floor are all a part of the new traditions. They are all vain repetitions.

Those who want new extrabiblical revelations open the door to unbridled runaway emotionalism. Recent reports tell of a woman who claims to have healed a car with the laying on of hands and who then took it for a spin even though the plates had expired six months ago. Now we are to believe that she could put God in the box as being indifferent to motor vehicle laws.

But there is no need to get silly to make this point. If it is wrong to “put God in a box,” then one could question any biblical teaching. Is Jesus the only way of salvation? Can’t there be other ways, other religions, other beliefs which bring us into fellowship with God? No, we are not limiting God or “putting Him in a box.” God Himself has set the limits and revealed them in His Book.

For extremists to use the box illustration as a bludgeon is really nothing but a straw man which they erect and then try to knock down. They themselves are guilty of putting God in a box made of extremism and carnal excess, a Pandora’s Box, if you will.

To remind the reader of what Pandora’s Box is, *The Columbia Viking Desk Encyclopedia* states: “Pandora ... in Greek mythology, [is the] first woman on earth. Zeus ordered her creation as vengeance on man and sent her as a wife to Prometheus’ brother, Epimethius, with a box he forbade her to open. She disobeyed and loosed all evils attending man” (Vol. 2, pg. 946). The key is “*loosed all evils.*”

It is dangerous to say that God is doing something He is not. That practice will open a Pandora’s Box of sensuality, flesh, wild emotion, exploitation, carnal feelings, and perhaps even a door to the occult.

Unfortunately, chaos has become the new unbiblical tradition for many. Benny Hinn meetings are so predictable as to be boring. Those who clone Hinn are even more predictable and boring. Enough healings have been followed up on and proved bogus to know the adrenaline hype of the moment has little, if any, lasting effect. There are only so many ways that people can take a dive at a Hinn meeting.

Chaos awaits those who set up experience as a competitor to the Bible. People who want to worship God on their own terms will reap the awful consequences. It surely is strange fire or like the corrupted, self-constructed worship of the wicked sons of Eli (1 Samuel 2:12-17). Paul warned that we are “not to think beyond what is written” (1 Corinthians 4:6). The Corinthians tried to go beyond the Word and Paul warned, “will they not say that you are out of your

mind?” (1 Corinthians 14:23) People can get so steeped in extreme Charismatic traditions they no longer care about their testimony or what others think.

Those of us who believe in the absolute sufficiency of the Word for all of life, worship, and practice allow God to be God and submit to the decency, safety, and sanity of His revealed and written Word. We are proud to say we believe in the authority and sufficiency of the Scriptures. We will not be cowed, cajoled, or verbally abused to step beyond God’s clear instructions and what is written. We will not violate God’s Word and be driven by the new traditions of men. Pandora’s Box, with all its attendant evils, await those who do.

—GRF

NEWS UPDATES

(continued from page 3)

paid \$361,000 annually. Other family members share in the good fortune. For example, the Crouches’ oldest son, Paul Jr., receives \$90,800 a year as vice president for administration, and younger son Matthew has used millions of dollars of ministry funds to produce motion pictures based on Christian apocalyptic prophecy.

The Crouches’ compensation goes well beyond hefty salaries. They travel the world in a TBN-owned, \$7.2-million, 19-seat Canadair Turbojet. They have use of about 30 homes owned by the network in California, Tennessee, Ohio, and Texas, including two mansions in Newport Beach, a mountain retreat in Lake Arrowhead, Calif., and a Texas ranch. The couple also drive luxury automobiles and “have charged expensive dinners and furniture to TBN credit cards.” A former personal assistant to Jan told the *Times*, “she regularly used ministry money and a network-owned van to stock the bars in Paul’s and Jan’s separate condominiums” at TBN’s Nashville-area complex.

Even more shocking was the revelation that in 1998, a \$425,000 settlement was paid to Lonnie Ford, a former TBN employee. Ford was going to publish allegations of a homosexual encounter he had with Crouch in 1996 at Lake Arrowhead. TBN officials maintain that ministry money was not used in the settlement, but declined to reveal the source of the cash. The financial concession was said to have been a result of advisers convincing Crouch that “it would be cheaper to settle than to litigate” and that it would circumvent harmful publicity.

The *Times* also revealed “TBN has posted surpluses averaging nearly \$60 million a year since 1997. Its balance sheet for 2002, the most recent available, lists net assets of \$583 million, including \$238 million in Treasury bonds and other government securities and \$31 million

in cash." This glut of funds causes many to question TBN's continued desperate appeal for support during its semi-annual, weeklong fund raisers. The telethon rhetoric suggests an end to TBN programming if pledges are not made and kept. "The question is: Shall we keep this great, live prime-time 'Praise the Lord' program on the air for another year? It's really up to you," Crouch chided viewers during the network's 2003 fall telethon.

The network's riches are handled by a three-member board of directors which includes Paul and Jan Crouch and Ruth Brown, Crouch's 74-year-old sister. Yet one may have to wonder about the board's scope and cohesiveness — or lack thereof. According to the *Times*, "In a 2001 legal deposition, Jan said she did not know she was a corporate officer and could not recall the last board meeting she attended."

Former employees of the network and other knowledgeable sources have also disclosed that despite the appearance of matrimonial bliss between Paul and Jan, "off the air, they lead separate lives and rarely stay under the same roof."

The testimony of TBN's supporters is also revealing. "I don't go to church. ... I turn the TV on and it's right there. Sometimes I will watch it for weeks on end, every day," said Sherry Peters, a bookkeeper living in Mississippi. Similarly, Olivia Foster, of Westminster, Calif., said, "Without TBN, I wouldn't be here. That's the Gospel truth. It gave me purpose that God could use me. I watch it 18 hours a day." Such comments tell of the unhealthy spiritual diet of TBN sponsors. In addition, Foster sends TBN \$70 a month from her \$820 disability check.

The Crouches began TBN in 1973, first broadcasting on a small UHF channel in Santa Ana. Today TBN airs on more than 6,000 stations worldwide, including 23 full-power and 252 low-power stations of its own. Its programs are also available over the Internet.

—MKG

HAS JOHN THE BAPTIST'S CAVE BEEN DISCOVERED?

Many religious and secular news services were busy last August reporting sensational stories regarding a cave found in a Kibbutz in Israel said to have been used by John the Baptist and perhaps even Jesus for baptismal rites. The reports suggested that inscriptions possibly proved the use of this approximately 79-foot by 11-foot cave (accessible by chiseled steps) by the very John the Baptist of Gospel fame. Readers were further teased with the news of an "etching" of John himself on the wall of the cave. Christians were quick to jump on the news and

the hype catapulted the sales of the excavator's book, *The Cave of John the Baptist*. Shimon Gibson subtitled his book, "The Stunning Archaeological Discovery That Has Redefined Christian History." However, nothing Gibson presents in any way substantiates, redefines, or advances Christian historical study.

As the smoke cleared and more specific information was divulged, readers of the book realized that the initial reports were based on numerous suppositions, suggestions, imaginative scenarios, and the connecting of dots that may not have been there. Even the circumstantial evidence seemed weak.

The association of the cave with John turns out to be very tenuous. The cave is about 2½ miles outside of Ein Karem. Ein Karem is five miles west of Jerusalem in the hill country of Judea. John came from the hill country of Judea, but the Bible is not specific about the exact location or its proximity to Jerusalem. There is hill country to the east, west, and south of Jerusalem in the territory of Judea.

Ein Karem was named Beth Haccarim in the Old Testament; Byzantine tradition, no earlier than A.D. 350, placed John's birthplace there. The Byzantines may have positioned the John site there in Ein Karem simply for ease of access, the lush hills (in the west), and perhaps more for a commemoration. Gibson made a huge leap from a later-than-New Testament tradition to a cave well outside of Ein Karem — one that is pure speculation based on an assumption.

All we can really know about the cave is that it was hewn and existed from about 800 B.C., and was originally a reservoir. There are water catchment basins near it, which reveal its primary use. The debris of 100,000 pot shards shows that it became a dump for broken pottery over the years and later may have been used by Byzantine monks. There may have been use of the cave as a *miqveh* (ceremonial bath) at one time or another, but by whom, no one knows. There are no dates or names for the few inscriptions (some appearing to be rough crosses) on the walls and the so-called John figure could be anyone or anything. There is nothing discovered that was written that could connect the cave to John. We really do not even know when the rough "drawings" were made.

As much as Christians like to have archaeology confirm, clarify, and complement the Bible, the "John cave" raises more questions than it answers. No one really knows for sure if John was in Ein Karem, let alone in a cave two to three miles from there. It is probably safe to say that there is no archaeologist who agrees with Gibson's conclusions because there is no hard evidence to back his claims.

The International Jerusalem Post, in its Aug. 27, 2004, edition, carried a terse, but precise statement: "Archaeologists said last Monday they have found a cave where they

believe John the Baptist baptized many of his disciples. The cave, in Kibbutz Tzova near Jerusalem, contains Byzantine-era wall carvings. However, others said there was no proof that John the Baptist ever set foot in the cave" (pg. 4).

—GRF

BOOKS IN REVIEW

(continued from page 28)

All in all, this is a very valuable contribution to a debatable subject. It is clear, concise, and cogent. One extra feature is type size making it easier on older eyes.

—GRF

SELF-ESTEEM: ARE WE REALLY BETTER THAN WE THINK?

by David M. Tyler

Personal Freedom Outreach, 98 pages, \$7.99

Today's Church is plagued by worldly philosophies. One of these views is the self-esteem movement, which first appeared in churches during the late 1960s and early

1970s. In his latest work, PFO director David Tyler equips believers with a biblical response to the falsehood of self-esteem teaching.

Even within the Church, sin sometimes is labeled as something other than what it is. Low self-esteem is blamed for one's bad character and deeds. The self-esteem gospel is a supposed quick fix for behavioral problems.

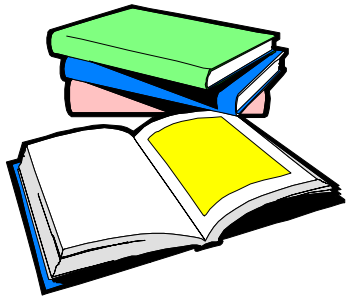
The concepts covered in Tyler's work are thought-provoking and easily understood. Not only does his volume tackle the self-esteem gospel, it also instructs the believer in the lifelong process of biblical sanctification. The Christian is instructed in Ephesians 4:22-24, "that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness."

Christians need to be ready, willing, and able to respond biblically to the deceptions which are being fed to us at all levels. We should not be persuaded to believe as the world believes, but be able to apply the Scriptures in a practical manner. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

—AMG

PERSONAL FREEDOM OUTREACH — STATEMENT OF BELIEF

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



Books in Review

EXAMINE THE EVIDENCE

by Ralph Muncaster

Harvest House Publishers, 604 pages, \$14.99

Some of the more helpful apologetic resources in recent years have been the numerous 48-page booklets by author Ralph Muncaster on a variety of key theological issues, ranging from the nature of God to prophecy to alleged Bible contradictions to evolution. These small but practical volumes make up his "Examine the Evidence" series. Now these works have been made even more helpful and practical, as many of the booklets have been reworked and combined into a single 600-page tome, bearing, as its title, the designation used for the series.

Muncaster's proposal is to place Christianity on trial, and then "examine the evidence" for its claims. The evidence examined is compelling. He surveys scientific evidence, medical evidence, historical evidence, archaeological evidence, biblical transmission evidence, and the evidence of changed lives. His verdict: Christianity and the Bible are "trustworthy on every count."

While this integrated volume brings with it many of the charts, graphs, key concept panels, and timelines of the smaller publications, there are several new features. For example, questions have been added at the conclusion of each of its 40 chapters as a way to review and self-test the material just covered. Also included with each chapter is an outline of group study activities to be used with Bible classes. An index is provided and makes locating subjects and information a more amiable task.

Kudos to Harvest House Publishers as well. While other Christian publishers are pushing the prices of their books to new extremes, HHP has shown fiscal restraint in making this 600-page volume so affordable.

This work is one of those great resources that is a must for the reference section of any apologist's library.

—MKG

THE PROBLEMS OF THE AFTERLIFE

What Destiny Awaits Unbelievers?

by Samuel Fisk

Biblical Evangelism, 92 pages, \$6.99

Samuel Fisk does not mince or waste words. He plows headlong into the errors of Universalism with Bible in hand. He lays out 16 biblical reasons why Universalism is a gross error. He is scholarly and scriptural as he examines the misuse of biblical words by Universalist apologists. He also examines annihilationism, an offshoot of Universalism.

His synopsis of the book is compelling:

"Universalism may be described in simple terms as the idea that everyone will at last be saved, that sooner or later — some sooner, some later — all souls are to reach the place where suffering and retribution will exhaust itself, restoring all to a level of love and light. This teaching, or rather philosophy — for such it is — assumes various forms, some being known as Universal Reconciliation, Restitution of all Things, Triumph of Love, Eternal Hope, Larger Hope, Postmortem Conversion, Neo-universalism, and more recently as Reconciliation Theology. Some believe punishment will be remedial, ending when sufficient penalty has been exacted. Others propose that in a state after death another chance is to be given for repentance and turning to God, and by what is then realized all will avail themselves of the final option. Others, that God's overpowering grace alone will of itself finally elevate all to perfect and everlasting rest. Since such teaching is growing in popularity today, this book aims to point out the need and hopefully to help meet it" (pg. 6).

Fisk wonderfully succeeds both to point out and meet the need.

Fisk does his homework with Hebrew and Greek words such as *sheol* and *hades*. He looks at the root word for *gehenna*. He ferrets out the correct understanding of the words "destroy" and "destruction." This he does in a non-technical way that can be grasped by any reader. He also examines the subject of degrees of punishment.

(continues on page 27)

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