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## Overthrowing the Kingdom of Darkness The History and Hysterics of Bob Larson

by **G. Richard Fisher**

In the quest called the search for the historical Jesus, Richard Bauckham observes:

“Among current historical Jesuses on offer there is the Jesus of Dominic Crossan, the Jesus of Marcus Borg, the Jesus of N.T. (Tom) Wright, the Jesus of Dale Allison, the Jesus of Gerd Theissen, and many others.”<sup>1</sup>

The strangest mythological Jesus of all is the Jesus of Bob Larson. His “Jesus” is a wild, woolly, and frenetic Jesus, the Jewish exorcist. Larson claims to be just like Him. If ever there was a distortion of the Savior, this is it. Paul warns that some will come preaching “another Jesus” (2 Corinthians 11:4). Larson is one who is doing just that. To take a small component of Jesus’ ministry and impose it on every part of Christian experience is a distortion that launches many into functional heresies.

**WILL THE REAL BOB  
PLEASE STAND UP?**

Bob Larson has a way of reinvent-

ing himself. He launched himself in 1972 with his book, *The Day Music Died*. For a time, Larson became what appeared to be an evangelical apologist refuting cults and New Age philosophies. Larson next tried his



hand at fiction writing with the book *Dead Air*. It was a gory and over-the-top presentation of the highly debatable topic of satanic ritual abuse. This went sour when Larson’s secretary turned vice president turned ghost writer, Lori Boespflug, revealed that she had not only written most of *Dead Air*, but parts of Larson’s second novel, *Abaddon*. Litigation followed, but eventually settled out of court.

The evils of rock music, cults, the New Age, and satanic ritual abuse were in the past all presented by Larson as the most urgent issues — until he abandoned each for another, more lucrative, subject.

Sometime following *Dead Air* (c. late 1990s), Larson became a  
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# Editorials

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## ORAL ROBERTS GOT HIS 20 YEARS

Twenty years ago, faith healer Oral Roberts thought he was on the verge of being “recalled” by his Maker — or at least that’s what he wanted his faithful to think. At that time, he pleaded with God, “Give me 20 more years.” Those two decades have now come and gone, and many have forgotten — or are unaware — of the sad legacy contained therein.

It was in 1987 that Roberts was conducting what was, at the time, his largest fund-raiser ever. He said he needed \$8 million dollars to resuscitate his medical school project. The medical school itself was the result of another of Roberts’ calls from God.

This story really started 10 years earlier. In February 1977, Roberts’ daughter Rebecca, along with her husband and four other people, were killed in a small-plane crash in Kansas. After the accident, a grieving Roberts retreated to the California desert, where he said he received a vision from God. In that vision, he said he was told to build the City of Faith, a 60-story medical clinic, a 30-story, 777-bed hospital, and a 20-story research tower in Tulsa, Okla.

Roberts’ plan — or as Roberts would have had people believe, God’s plan — met opposition from the very beginning. Representatives from Tulsa’s other hospitals

protested the proposal. Roberts received a license for the hospital only after he reduced his request to 294 beds, a distinct decrease from what Roberts said God had called for.

It was during this legal dispute that Roberts had another of his purported visions: the 900-foot Jesus. “There I was face to face with Jesus Christ, the Son of the Living God,” he told his partners. This “Jesus,” he claimed, stood 300 feet taller than the 600-foot City of Faith.

The complex was completed in 1981 at a cost of about \$150 million. While the project appeared to be a completely functioning medical center, it was little more than a facade. In February 1983, only four floors of the hospital were open and carried a normal patient load of 75 to 85 people.

While the medical school and facilities continued to suffer financial distress, Roberts said he received another word from the Lord. In January 1986, Roberts said God chastised him for not sending the medical teams out to the nations as he had been commanded to do. Roberts then said God told him: “You are on the last rung of the ladder. Your next move, you will be standing in front of Me, telling Me why you’ve not sent My Healing Teams and put My medical presence in the nations.” God then added, “I want you to believe you can raise the eight million dollars it takes to run the medical school so you can give scholarships to all the medical students.”

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### PERSONAL FREEDOM OUTREACH

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## HAL'S BACK

Following a 13-month hiatus, prophecy author and news commentator Hal Lindsey will be returning to the Trinity Broadcasting Network. In December 2005, TBN canceled his "International Intelligence Briefing" program because of his outspoken views on radical Islam. In January, TBN announced that Lindsey would be back on the network with a new current-events broadcast, "The Hal Lindsey Report." The announcement came from Paul Crouch Jr., TBN's Vice president of Administration, who said, "We are pleased to welcome Hal Lindsey back to TBN's lineup of award-winning programming."

TBN management contends that Islam is essentially a peaceful religion; Lindsey argues otherwise. That disagreement led to the cancellation of his "International Intelligence Briefing" program. While TBN indicated a desire to have Lindsey return to its airwaves over a year ago, Lindsey said he would not because of the network's efforts to suppress his opinions. At that time Lindsey told WorldNetDaily, "I am not going back to TBN. There's a friendship there, but also differences in opinion in what ought and ought not to be presented. And I don't want any censorship." (See "TBN Pulls Plug on Lindsey," *The Quarterly Journal*, April-June 2006, pg. 3.)

Lindsey said his new broadcast would examine current events and national and international issues from a biblical perspective, and that it would be hard-hitting, informative, and inspirational. Following the announcement, the weekly program began airing on Friday evenings. Lindsey's return to TBN will yield him a potential audience of an estimated 100 million homes in the U.S. alone.

—MKG

## PURPOSE DRIVEN, BUT BIBLICALLY INCORRECT

Social causes and shared agendas can make for strange bedfellows. Rick Warren, senior pastor of Saddleback Church in Southern California, demonstrated this last December when he allowed Sen. Barack Obama, D-Ill., to speak at his church during Warren's second annual Global Summit on AIDS.

Even before the Dec. 1 seminar, called "We Must Work Together," a group of Christian leaders tried to persuade Warren to withdraw the invitation. "The evangelical

church can provide no genuine help for those who suffer from AIDS if those involved do not first have their ethic of life firmly rooted in the Word of God," the group charged in its appeal to Warren.

Obama, who professes to have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and who is a member of a United Church of Christ congregation, favors keeping abortion — including partial-birth abortion — legal and has supported some positions favored by the homosexual lobby. In his recently published book, *The Audacity of Hope*, he includes a description of his "conversion" and his religious beliefs. And while he has called on Americans to embrace "faith" in their daily lives, he is not specific about which faith they should embrace.

Those attending the summit greeted Obama with a standing ovation, according to American Family Radio reporter Jim Brown. Rock singer Bono, who also professes to be a Christian, and Bill Gates also addressed the conference via video.

Kevin McCullough of WMCA Radio suggested in an editorial, "There is definitely something for Barack Obama to gain by appearing in Rick Warren's pulpit — the implied endorsement and blessing for the 2008 presidential race." McCullough said his listeners were hung up on when they called Saddleback Church to express concern over Warren's aligning himself with Obama.

Warren justified his invitation and sought to silence his critics by responding that "Jesus loved and accepted others without approving of everything they did. That's our position too."

—MKG

## MISSING BOY FOUND IS EMBARRASSMENT FOR PSYCHIC

People called it the "Missouri Miracle." On Jan. 12, law enforcement agents discovered in a St. Louis suburb two boys who had been abducted more than four years apart. William "Ben" Ownby, age 13, had gone missing just four days earlier, while Shawn Hornbeck, now age 15, had been missing since October 2002, after being abducted while riding his bike near his home 60 miles from St. Louis. The hero in this amazing saga was

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# White Lies

## Difficulties and Distortions in the Lives and Teachings of Paula and Randy White



Late last year, *Christianity Today*, a magazine characterized in recent times by doctrinal entropy, offered a sound observation:

“Pentecostalized Christianity is nearly synonymous with the prosperity gospel. So while we listen to our brothers and sisters, we also need to proclaim biblical truths that counter the ‘health and wealth’ message. The spiritual gift most needed in the 21st century is the gift of discernment (1 Cor. 12:10).”<sup>1</sup>

About the same time, the Reuters news service published a small article with the headline, “Hundreds sick on world’s largest cruise ship.”<sup>2</sup> Although neither the headline nor the article had anything to do with today’s megachurches, it did draw a very practical conclusion along this line. How so? Because bigger is not always better. Bigger is not always safe or healthy.

Islam, for instance, has more than a billion followers. If bigger were automatically better, Islam would be very, very good. The ruins of massive pagan temples all over Greece and Turkey tell us that heathens in darkness believed their gods would be impressed by bigger buildings. Yet a baby in a manger in an obscure village says something different and reminds us that God can do wonders

by **G. Richard Fisher**  
and **M. Kurt Goedelman**

with the weak, the frail, and the insignificant. Think back on the contrast between Herod the Great, the “King of the Jews” installed by the Roman Senate in 37 B.C., who built a kingdom of stone; and Jesus Christ, the “King of the Jews” born in a stable and who built a kingdom of people.

The Apostle Peter warned that individuals and groups, both small and large, can twist and distort the Scripture (2 Peter 3:16). No doubt, the bigger and more impressive the group is, even twisted Scripture may seem straight. The peer pressure of a large group can overcome reality. Illusion, after all, sometimes *feels* better and more real than reality.

Twisting the Scriptures is a serious matter. Saying that God said something when He did not is a lie and borders on blasphemy. So many Word Faith teachers are quick to say that God “told” them various things, when in fact He didn’t. To try to use God’s Word to foster teaching that is really unbiblical is a horrible distortion and fabrication. It is a horrible lie with horrible consequences.

This is what popular televangelist Paula White and her “Bishop” hus-

band Randy are doing. Paula’s mixture of Word Faith teaching, self-help concepts, false prophecies, and out-of-context verses to support her confused theology is a stew which is, at best, spiritually non-nutritional and, at worst, deadly. Claiming that she may temporarily help some people cannot be the final arbiter, because cults, New Age advocates, psychologists, and the like all claim the same thing. The discerning Christian must inquire if her teachings are true to Scripture. Paul warned that we should not “think beyond what is written” (1 Corinthians 4:6) and Jesus sternly said, “the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day” (John 12:48).

### PAULA WHO?

On Jan. 1, 2005, the *Tampa Tribune* listed Paula as one of “Tampa Bay’s 25 People to Watch.” Last year the online encyclopedia, Wikipedia, offered a brief biography of Paula White:

“**Paula White** is a Christian evangelist. She is currently co-pastor of Without Walls International Church, a megachurch in Tampa, Florida along with her husband Randy. She speaks in many conferences nationwide, especially targeting hurting women. Her small stature (she is only about 5 feet, 2 inches tall)

when she enters a room does not match with her powerful 'big lady' voice. Through 'unction of the Holy Ghost', she can belt out many prophesies. She admires T.D. Jakes as her 'spiritual father'. Living the good life as a child in Tupelo, Mississippi; it abruptly ended when Paula's family went 'astray'. She then lived the rest of her teenage life through poverty and sexual abuse until 17, when she found a Bible one day. She married Randy, a recent graduate of Lee College (now Lee University) in 1989. After two years of ministry in the Washington, D.C. area, they moved to Tampa and started what became Without Walls in 1991. She hosts *Paula White Today*, a talk show which airs on several Christian television stations nationwide."<sup>3</sup>

The timeline Paula gives for her conversion to Christianity conflicts with other documentary evidence. According to a *Tampa Tribune* article, in 2004, on the then rising evangelist, "She had a child out of wedlock at age 18, then married. But the union only lasted a year."<sup>4</sup> The newspaper offers details of her conversion:

"Her son was still an infant, she was still a teenager, when a Christian friend showed her passages in the Bible that offered her comfort and compelled her to embrace God in her life."<sup>5</sup>

Her late-teen conversion is confirmed in an interview Paula gave to *The 700 Club*. She said that when she was 18 years old, "I got saved! I got rescued. I was radically changed."<sup>6</sup> Paula confirmed her conversion at age 18 in another interview:

"I had never heard the gospel until I was 18 years old, and I had not been in church. Then I was at a friend's house, and his uncle said, 'I can give you the answer to the love you're looking for and for the hope you need.' He led me to Christ — I heard the gospel for the first time [and] my life was radically changed. ...

I just knew my life was suddenly radically changed."<sup>7</sup>

However, records show Paula was less than five months shy of her 20th birthday when her son Bradley was born.<sup>8</sup> Thus, the data seems to indicate that the birth of her "out of wedlock" son and her failed marriage followed — not preceded — her conversion when her "life was suddenly radically changed."

Last January, the Without Walls International Church web site claimed

ship of 5,000 in 1988, a dispute over Strader's leadership started the church on a steady decline. By the time WWIC purchased the facility, renaming it Without Walls Central, Strader's flock was said to have "dwindled to 1,500."<sup>9</sup>

In July 2005, the *Tampa Tribune* reported that WWIC was the nation's fastest-growing church, having added 4,330 attendees during the previous year.<sup>10</sup> That figure significantly eclipsed Joel Osteen's Lakewood



*In June 2005, the Whites' Without Walls International Church agreed to purchase Carpenter's Home Church in nearby Lakeland. The 10,000-seat auditorium, located on a 75-acre campus, was sold for about \$8 million. It was renamed Without Walls Central and dedicated on Sept. 11, 2005.*

18,000 members. A month later Paula's ministry web site was claiming a membership of 26,000. Helping fuel its growth, WWIC signed a contract in June 2005 to purchase Carpenter's Home Church in nearby Lakeland. The 10,000-seat auditorium, located on a 75-acre campus, was sold to Without Walls for about \$8 million. Carpenter's Home Church was built in 1984, under the leadership of its pastor, the Rev. Karl Strader. When the structure was built, Strader claimed worshippers from Central Florida would fill its sanctuary. However, one year after a peak member-

Church in Houston, which had an increase of 3,000 attendees.

Amid all this growth, hardly an eyebrow is raised regarding Paula's constant praise of T.D. Jakes, whom she calls her "spiritual father"<sup>11</sup> and "spiritual mentor."<sup>12</sup> Jakes enmeshes himself in a Oneness Pentecostal theology which denies the doctrine of the Trinity and espouses the heresy of Modalism.<sup>13</sup> To this end, Paula has never offered a disclaimer. And Jakes reciprocates Paula's admiration.

Paula's mannerisms and cadence when on stage is reminiscent of Jakes'

style. *Charisma* magazine noted that some refer to her as “Barbie-like.”<sup>14</sup> Others observe that if she slowed down a bit she would, in fact, resemble a female Joel Osteen.

### THE PAULA SHOW

There is little doubt that Paula has a natural gift to speak by rote. Her rhetoric is reminiscent of a scene in the movie *The Truman Show* where Truman Burbank, the character played by Jim Carrey, begins to realize that everything is a show being orchestrated around him. As he sits in his car in his driveway, he watches the same scene play over and over again in the rearview mirror. First, a lady rides by on a red bike, then a man walks by carrying a bouquet of flowers, finally a VW Beetle with a dented fender drives by. A few minutes later the very same scene plays over, and then over again. Truman exclaims, “They’re on a loop. ... They just go round and round.” Paula is much the same; catch her for five minutes and you may well have her full content — and even the full content isn’t a lot.

Perhaps, to make up for a lack of content, she thinks that by speaking loudly and fiercely, she can impress. And it does impress some. However, there is a big difference between machine-gunning information at people and real understanding and application. Her delivery is so fast-paced that it overwhelms the listener, who has little time to evaluate what is being said. With talk of birthing visions and birthing dreams coming fast and furious, the hearer may give up trying to keep up and just conclude, “She must be right because she seems so forceful, so sincere, and so committed.”

And when Paula speaks, she wants you to know that it’s no mere mortal words being offered. A few minutes into her message, she will tell her audience:

“I feel a set-up anointing. ... But I’m prophesying from the Lord right now. ... I don’t know who I’m prophesying to, but I feel the Holy Ghost in this place. I feel

God getting ready to release something in your spirit. There’s a turn-around anointing. ... I’ve got a word for you. Grab the person next to you, grab their hand, throw your hands up high in the air. Because God’s getting ready to release a prophetic word to you right now. ... Well, I’ve got a word of the Lord. Should we go with a word? And this is God getting ready to do something significant. God [is] getting ready to do something. I came with a prophetic word. The beginning of this year, God spoke to me on an extended fast. And He said this would be the year of the supernatural. God would add His super to your natural. ... Well, how do I know the Lord’s speaking to me? Because you’re going to feel an unction in your spirit.”<sup>15</sup>

### WONDER WOMAN

On her ministry’s web site, Paula is unabashedly advertised as a “Pastor, Life Coach, Motivational Speaker, Author, Philanthropist, TV Personality, Wife, Mother, Preacher and Teacher.” One almost wants to add, “And she can leap tall buildings in a single bound.”

Paula has played into and plays off the worn-out self-help movement and the declining fads of people such as Bruce Wilkerson and Tony Robbins.<sup>16</sup> After one of her appearances on the *Tyra Banks Show*, she was critiqued in the following manner:

“Paula White says her becoming a Christian was ‘crucial to her success.’ Christianity has now become just another self-improvement measure that will help low self-esteem and get you on the track to be all that you can be. No mention of sin, no mention of God’s holiness, no need for a Savior for our souls, just Jesus as a ‘Life Coach’ buddy who can provide therapeutic answers for our obesity, eating disorders, drug addiction, social problems and a bad self-image.”<sup>17</sup>

### WHITES’ TESTI-MONEY

Though the Word Faith teachers have taught their hard-core followers to believe that their gurus should be rich and live luxuriously (they deserve it and God wants it for them, after all), the Whites have come under fire for their lavish lifestyle. Because they teach the prosperity gospel — that Christians should be financially wealthy — they certainly live that message:

“An August 2002 profile in the Tampa Tribune described the Whites’ \$2.1 million home overlooking Hillsborough Bay, Fla., two luxury cars, a private jet on loan from a friend and a combined salary of about \$300,000 from their church, plus an \$80,000 annual housing allowance.”<sup>18</sup>

Apparently, the staff of Without Walls International Church knows what the Whites want and need. In a letter sent to the congregation, dated Oct. 31, 2002, it was stated that a “literal translation” of 1 Timothy 5:17 meant that the people were supposed to “beat or pulverize” the Whites “with monetary reward.” The staff went on to write, “we are asking everyone, who are both willing and able, to join with us, in sowing a love offering of at least \$100.00 per household into the lives of Pastors Randy and Paula. We certainly understand that some will prefer to sow \$500.00, \$1,000.00, \$10,000 or more.”<sup>19</sup>

Of course, “double honor” (1 Timothy 5:17) does not really mean “beat or pulverize” with money. Such is a silly perverted twist from a prosperity gospel mindset. The verse simply means that if a church has true, trustworthy, and godly elders (i.e., elders who *rule well*), that the local church should make sure to pay them so that they are not lacking. The next verse illustrates this and informs us that, “The laborer is worthy of his wages.” It does not mean make them rich — or “beat them with money.”

Charles Ryrie points out that double honor means “Respect and remunera-

tion (v. 18). The church was beginning to face the problem of financial support of its workers."<sup>20</sup>

Just a few weeks after the appeal by the WWIC staff, another letter went out to the faithful of Paula White Ministries. This one, dated Nov. 25, 2002, requested they become "a 2003 World Partner with Paula White." In the correspondence, Paula announced, "I have a word from the Lord for you that will TRANSFORM YOUR LIFE in 2003. God has given me instruction on how you can reach the next spiritual level while helping this ministry launch a powerful new year of ministry. ... **Partner, I believe God has joined you and me in a COVENANT CONNECTION.**"<sup>21</sup> The bottom line on God's instruction and becoming a 2003 World Partner with Paula White was "to commit a gift of at least \$20 a month" or "you may want to give \$50 or \$100, or even more each month."<sup>22</sup>

### MAGIC NUMBERS

One of Paula's fund-raising methods is to tell people there is a major breakthrough waiting to happen in their lives if they will sow the right amount. Sowing, of course, means sending her the money or sending it to the organization for which she is raising the money. The amount she calls the "instruction of the Lord" and it is, many times, a Psalm chapter and verse.

For instance, in November 2002 on the Trinity Broadcasting Network, she used Psalm 68:19. First came Paula's windup:

"So God is speaking to you. And when God begins to speak to you — because I'm about to prophesy. I didn't come to preach, I came to prophesy. Been locked away with the Lord. Had my hand on the pulse of God. Put my ear to the bosom of God. And God has given me a word for you. And when I begin to deliver that word, you have to jump in. You have to get in synchronization with the Holy Spirit and activate the word.

How do I get it? Get up and go to the phone and become part of a vision that is bigger than you. When you begin to sow up, you go up. And God is doing great things with TBN. This is a great ministry — the greatest ministry that God is raising up."<sup>23</sup>

Then came her pitch:

"When the Holy Ghost begins to speak to you, I want you to get up and go to your phone and for the next 12 months I want you to sow 68 dollars and 19 cents. You would say, 'Why 68-19?' Because Psalm 68:19 says, 'daily God loads you up with benefits.'"<sup>24</sup>

In March 2004, she again was doing fund-raising for TBN. This time she set the amount from Psalm 71:21, meaning \$71.21:

"When God speaks to you, you better praise Him, you better go to the phone and sow \$71.21."<sup>25</sup>

In April 2005, the magic number was \$66.12. That figure from Psalm 66:12 was at that time, "the instruction of the Lord" for the next twelve months.<sup>26</sup> So now it was \$66.12 a month.

This is so contrary to the intent of Scripture that it is close to blasphemy. Linking God to these kinds of schemes is frightening. It is a little more sanitary than trying to find direction by divining animal livers and entrails as the ancients did, but in its essence it is pagan divination.<sup>27</sup>

Some might say, "Don't you believe God could do it this way?" The short answer is that God would *not* do it this way. Chapter and verse numbers are not inspired, but were put in the text simply to help us refer to and find passages in Scripture. Moreover, the New Testament is filled with information regarding principles for giving. We do not need mystical numbers and contrived esoteric teachings to give us that information.

F.F. Bruce explains:

"Some of the divisions which appear in copies of the Hebrew

Bible were fixed by the end of the Masoretic period. The division into verses is quite early; it can be traced back to the early centuries of the Christian era. There were fluctuations of practice with regard to verse division in various centres; the standard division of the Old Testament into verses which has come down to our own day and is found in most translations as well as in the Hebrew original was fixed by the Masoretic family of Ben Asher about A.D. 900. ... The division into chapters on the other hand, is much later, and probably was first carried through by Cardinal Hugh of St. Cher in 1244."<sup>28</sup>

Using chapter and verse numbers (from the Bible) in an arbitrary and subjective way as Paula does, shows that she is a product of cultural conditioning. She is really postmodern in her thinking, though she probably would not know what postmodernism is. This view, also called deconstructionism, marks all the new prophets as they turn the Bible on its head through subjective twisting and distorting of the text. Barbara Lipstadt makes this salient observation:

"[Postmodernism] began to emerge in the late 1960s. Various scholars began to argue that texts had no fixed meaning. The reader's interpretation, not the author's intention, determined meaning. Duke University professor Stanley Fish is most closely associated with this approach in the literary field. ... Others rightfully worried that it opened the doors of the academy, and of society at large, to an array of farfetched notions that could no longer be dismissed out of hand simply because they were absurd. ... It also fostered an atmosphere in which it became harder to say that an idea was beyond the pale of rational thought. ... it created an atmosphere of permissiveness toward questioning the meaning of historical events and made it

hard for proponents to assert that there was anything ‘off limits’ for this skeptical approach. This relativistic approach to the truth has permeated the arena of popular culture, where there is an increasing fascination with, and acceptance of, the irrational.”<sup>29</sup>

One may be surprised — and glad for her donors — that God did not give Paula Psalm 150 — but that may be forthcoming.

transform your mind, to take you to where you want to live.”<sup>30</sup>

What two spiritual giants would appear? The introduction continued:

“If you want to change the way you live, change your thinking. I want them to bring their wisdom to you today, give people tools to really transform their lives.”<sup>31</sup>

The two icons of wisdom and mind transformation were Donald Trump and co-author Robert Kiyosaki ready

dren. The Donald — living in the lap of luxury, flying around in his own private jet, hosting his own reality program, *The Apprentice*, and here on this ‘Christian’ program to share his worldly wisdom with all of us: how to become rich — how to become a billionaire.”<sup>33</sup>

The pitch finally came and people could get the book for a “gift” of \$25 with Paula’s promise that “It will radically change your life. ... Then you can have the life you’ve been dreaming of.”<sup>34</sup>

Paula’s ministry is still making the book available. For \$25, one can purchase the “Why We Want You To Be Rich” pack from Paula White Ministries.<sup>35</sup> Not only will “Trump and Kiyosaki teach you what they believe you need to know to be rich,” but “To complete this powerful message, Paula has included her teaching on ‘The Value of a Vision’ on CD.”<sup>36</sup>

The Apostle Paul would say: “Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols?” (2 Corinthians 6:14-16). The only thing Paula should be saying to Donald Trump is that he needs to repent and turn to Christ. How in the world (and in the Name of God) can she hold him up as a paragon of wisdom and mind transformation for believers? The Apostle Paul called for a transformed mind, but it is through Scripture and the Holy Spirit that it occurs, not the ungodly example of ungodly people who are obviously living for the flesh.

### THE WHITE HOUSE

In June 2002, the Whites secured a \$2 million, 30-year mortgage to purchase a \$2,150,000, five-bedroom, 8759 square foot English Manor home at one of the city’s premier addresses on Hillsborough Bay in Tampa.<sup>37</sup> The



*The White House: In June 2002, Paula and Randy purchased a \$2,150,000, five-bedroom, 8759 square foot English Manor home at one of the city’s premier addresses on Bayshore Boulevard overlooking Hillsborough Bay in Tampa.*

### GOD, PAULA, AND DONALD WANT YOU RICH

Last fall, Paula hit another low-water mark in her cheapening of the Christian faith. In October 2006, her television broadcast, *Paula White Today*, was titled, “Discover God’s Abundant Life for You.” The show opened with a sensationalistic hook regarding her two featured guests. She appealed to the element of surprise with a buildup:

“Two of the greatest minds that have ever been raised up for such a time as this, are here to

to hawk their new book, *Why We Want You To Be Rich*. Paula’s ministry overstated and hyped the program as a “groundbreaking interview” and an “unprecedented media event.”<sup>32</sup>

Here is a justified reaction from one apologetics ministry:

“Yes — the Donald. Donald Trump — to give you the wisdom of the world to transform your life! I mean, who wouldn’t want a life like his? On his fourth marriage — all to beautiful (at least by outer appearance) women who mothered his chil-

average list price for a home in this area is \$530,910.<sup>38</sup>

If one considers the taxes and maintenance on a \$2.1 million home, along with deployment of a private jet, it is no wonder the Whites are constantly begging for donations and are so up-front with their money pitches. Paula often claims God tells her the exact amount each person is supposed to send. Donors never think about the fact that the prosperity message does not work for them, but only for the ones they are sending money to. Paula does not have to sing as many did years ago, "I've got a mansion just over the hilltop in that bright land where you'll never grow old." She has her mansion here and now.

This is a far cry from the self-denial of Jesus and the apostles. It is foreign to "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal" (Matthew 6:19). It is distant from Moses who esteemed "the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt" (Hebrews 11:26). It is apart from those who, destitute, afflicted, and tormented, wandered in deserts and mountains and caves of the earth (Hebrews 11:37-38). It seems that all these hadn't been given the prosperity message.

It appears that the Whites have been a part of at least seven non-profit, six profit, and one limited liability corporations since 1991.<sup>39</sup> It is hard to tell how many of these continue.

### BREAK THE CURSE

Paula also teaches the idea that Christians can have curses on them that need breaking, and she may well be the one who can do it. Of course, Christians do not have curses and such teaching is more superstitious than it is biblical. In one of her meetings the following was reported:

"How many of you know God's about to reverse a curse in your life?' she asks, her voice booming out to the nearly 6,000 churchgoers attending Super Sunday.

'Slap somebody upside the head and say, "Reverse the curse!"'"<sup>40</sup>

The word "curse" is in the Bible, but it is quite a different concept than taught by Paula. In the Old Testament, the word "curse" more often than not refers to God's judgment, as in Deuteronomy 27:11-26. The word "curse," used of judgment, is attached to various sins such as idolatry (Deuteronomy 27:15), immorality (Deuteronomy 27:20-21), bribery (Deuteronomy 27:25), and — just as important — repentance, forgiveness, and obedience are the obvious antidotes.

The word "curse" was used in the Balaam story in Numbers 23, not in the sense of some inherent power to be magically applied to someone, but rather as a wish or pronouncement of non-favor. Balaam admitted that he could not undo God's favor. He said, "How shall I curse whom God has not cursed? And how shall I denounce whom the LORD has not denounced?" (Numbers 23:8). The word "denounce" is the equivalent of the word "curse."

In the New Testament, the only curse referred to is the "curse" of sin, guilt, and lostness that Jesus removes from every believer. Paul writes:

"For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.' But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for 'the just shall live by faith.' Yet the law is not of faith, but 'the man who does them shall live by them.' Christ has *redeemed us from the curse of the law*, having become a curse for us (for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree')" (Galatians 3:10-13, emphasis added).

Christ has set us free from the only curse that mattered.

Indeed, as Deuteronomy states, "the LORD your God turned the curse into a blessing for you, because the LORD

your God loves you" (23:5). The book of Proverbs assures us that a "curse" is like a flying bird that cannot land (26:2). Paula's teaching is a grave error which can put sensitive souls into great bondage.

### GREAT CLAIMS — NO EVIDENCE

Paula White, like so many Charismatic extremists, makes mighty claims and boasts of incredible feats. However, they turn out to be bogus. She claims a vision when she was 18 years old and has shared it in various places:

"The Lord showed me millions of people,' she says. 'When I would open my mouth, masses and millions of people would get saved, delivered or healed. But when I shut my mouth, the people would fall into utter darkness.'"<sup>41</sup>

Obviously these kinds of statements are for effect.<sup>42</sup> Now more than two decades later the millions saved, delivered, or healed have not materialized. A spiritual awakening of this magnitude would be obvious everywhere and reported widely. The hype is reminiscent of the bogus claims made by the leaders of the now defunct "Pensacola Revival" at the Brownsville Assembly of God. This kind of exaggerated claim has long been a staple of Pentecostalized Christianity, which gained prominence in the 1940s with the Latter Rain Movement.<sup>43</sup>

It is similar to another claim Paula made last year when she wrote, "It is through our hands that Jesus will heal the sick, raise the dead."<sup>44</sup> Paula is living in an illusion and the deluded are following along.

### THE BLIND LEADING THE BLIND

Paula demonstrates her lack of discernment by quoting favorably from Helen Keller with no disclaimer. Paula, in writing about having and fulfilling a vision, says that Keller once was asked "what could possibly be worse than blindness."<sup>45</sup>

Apparently, Paula thought that Keller's response, "To have sight, but no vision" was insightful to her own message.

The misfortune in this is that Paula has cited Keller without qualification. Keller was not only physically blind, but spiritually blind as well. Keller followed the occultist and universalist Emanuel Swedenborg, and in her 1960 book, *Light in My Darkness*, advocated without question Swedenborg's teachings.<sup>46</sup>

Swedenborg (1688-1772) was a contemporary of Franz Mesmer and "is most noted for his communication with angelic beings, the results of which filled many volumes of theological treatises and biblical commentaries. Systematized, his thought became the basis of the Church of the New Jerusalem. ... one cannot understand Spiritualism without reference to his thought and his metaphysical assumptions, which would become major building blocks taken over by Mary Baker Eddy and her students."<sup>47</sup>

Paula's error in citing Keller is misleading by affirmation. To quote another person favorably leaves the reader assuming that the writer referred to is sound and that all they say is all right. It endorses the person quoted in the mind of the reader.

### LIMITING GOD

Not all of Paula's sources of inspiration are as suspect as Keller. However, at times, when she does cite a trusted source, the theology she puts forth is suspect. An example of this is her citation of John Wesley. Paula presents a defective view of God in her teaching on prayer, when she says that God is restricted to our prayers and confessions. Here she mimics the error of David (Paul) Yonggi Cho,<sup>48</sup> but she does not cite Cho to bolster her thinking. She goes much more mainstream, citing Wesley:

"During an exhaustive study on the subject, I came across an intriguing quote by John Wesley. He said, 'It seems that God is limited by our prayer life — that

He can do nothing for humanity unless someone asks Him to do it."<sup>49</sup>

Despite Paula's questioning if Wesley had the "answer" and her declaration that she "found affirmations in the Word" to that effect, her (and Wesley's) concept is a frightening and unbiblical thought. The idea that God can do nothing unless someone asks Him has staggeringly negative implications. It means that we command and control God. Paula may well believe that, as it neatly fits within the perimeters of Word Faith errors.

No one asked God to create the heavens and the earth. No one asked God to send a flood or save Noah and his family. No one asked Jesus to die on the cross and rise again. The idea of God being dependent on man and being unable to act without man is absurd at best, and heretical at worst.

That He even invites us and allows us to pray is all because of His great mercy and grace. A God who is even slightly dependent on man and easily manipulated by man is a figment of a distorted imagination and a charade. It is a god who is less than the True and Living God.

Paula's teaching sounds like that of someone unfamiliar with the sovereignty of God. The Apostle Paul affirmed, "For who has known the mind of the LORD? Or who has become His counselor? Or who has first given to Him and it shall be repaid to him?" (Romans 11:34-35). In short, God owes us nothing and is not beholden to us. He does not need us, but we desperately need Him. It is He Who is Lord, and not we ourselves.

Those who would say God makes His plan contingent on man need an introduction to the doctrine of God's sovereignty:

"The Scriptures abundantly teach that God is sovereign in the universe. Note the following statements: 'All that is in the heavens and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O Jehovah, and thou art exalted as head above all' (1 Chron. 29:11); 'the

earth is Jehovah's, and the fulness thereof; the world and they that dwell therein' (Ps. 24:1); 'woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! a potsherd among the potsherds of the earth! Shall the clay say to him that fashioned it, What makest thou? or thy work, He hath no hands?' (Isa. 45:9); 'behold, all souls are mine: as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die' (Ezek. 18:4); 'all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?' (Dan. 4:35); 'is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?' (Matt. 20:15); 'who worketh all things after the counsel of his will' (Eph. 1:11). See also Rom. 9:14-24; 11:36; 1 Tim. 6:15; Rev. 4:11."<sup>50</sup>

It must be acknowledged that the intricacies of prayer in relation to God, and answers to prayer are complex issues and there is no simplistic answer. Does God make his plans contingent upon man? We must answer the question in the negative if we truly believe in the sovereignty of God. Good and wise men have struggled for centuries with the questions of how prayer and our petitions harmonize with the sovereign plan and purpose of God. We must be careful to keep a biblical balance lest we fall into error on either side.

One theologian tries to help us through the struggle while maintaining a biblical balance:

"We say, Prayer changes things; but how does that statement harmonize with the sovereign plan and purpose of God? ... The positive answer to this question involves a right view of God's foreknowledge and foreordination. We remind the reader again of the fact that God has set certain general bounds within which His universe is to operate.

Within these bounds He has given man freedom to act. Prevenient grace restores the power to choose or reject the offer of salvation. Once saved, man has the power of the Spirit in his life and may cooperate largely or only in a small degree with the Spirit in the accomplishment of God's work. ... God foreknew what each man would do in respect to prayer, and embraced that fact in His foreordination. Thus when a man prays he only carries out what God foresaw he would do, and what He set him down for to do. Where man fails to cooperate with God within the bounds of His predetermined will, there He works by reason of His sovereignty apart from prayer. In doing so, however, as we have already said, He does not set aside any law of nature, but rather counteracts it by higher or stronger law. His will is the law of nature, and when His will changes in any particular instance, the law of nature involved is overcome by His law."<sup>51</sup>

Paula does not declare God weak. She will speak about His power, His might, and His grandeur. The problem is that all the might, power, and grandeur is locked up in a sense, waiting for our faith and our affirmations and words to unleash it. It is much like the genie in a bottle. The genie, who has all kinds of wonderful powers, needs us to uncork the bottle. The powerful genie can do nothing unless we ask him. It is up to us.

### WHAT'S AHEAD?

A few years ago, Paula appeared with Benny Hinn on his *This is Your Day* broadcast. She tells Hinn, "I just want to prophesy for a moment."<sup>52</sup> She began by telling Hinn that God was going to enhance and give a 1,000 times more anointing. She assured Hinn that 2004 was the year for harvest and supernatural increase and that Hinn would have favor with presidents (although no specific president was named). She then gave what were called "prophecies" for the

then coming year of 2004, but in very broad terms. What she said can only be described as "buckshot" or "soft" prophecies.

She appears smart enough not to be boxed in with details that can later be verified. Her prophecies are broad statements that can be interpreted in any way the hearer wishes. It is the stuff of which supermarket tabloid predictions are made. They are much like the nebulous words of Nostradamus, which were more a riddle than clear direction.

Lord," which by the way, according to Luke 4, already had happened in the ministry of Christ.

Paula appears to captivate Hinn with a few of her riffs and clichés, such as "Yesterday is in the tomb, and today is in the womb." She also breaks out into tongues (with no interpretation). She says that God actually told her that the triple portion would raise up the "unknown soldier" and that the glory of God would be released on the earth that year. In fact, "the dead will be



*The Without Walls International Church worship experience: Surrounded by four cameras and five large projection screens, Senior Pastor Paula White outlines her "principals to success" during her Feb. 4, 2007, sermon. In July 2005, the Tampa Tribune reported that WWIC was the nation's fastest-growing church.*

She described a vision from God that, for the year ahead, the anointing would come in an unprecedented way. She saw two huge doors and two guards who opened the doors. This was supposed to indicate that in 2004 the "floodgate" would open and there would be "harvest time" — a year of "supernatural divine visitation." All of these statements about a particular year being *the year* have been a staple delivered by Hinn and others for more than two decades. In the mid-1990s, the cliché used was "the acceptable year of the

raised." On this last point she gets specific enough to discredit herself. One could search the newspapers of the world for verification of one dead body brought to life supernaturally in 2004. Such an event, without question, would have been reported.

Peter Worsley, Professor of Sociology at the University of Manchester in England, writes about what he calls "spongy" prophecies in his book, *The Trumpet Shall Sound*:

"... the belief is so vague, so ambiguous, so generalized, that

no particular event can possibly constitute a falsification of it. Conversely, given a spongy enough style of prophecy, all events can be interpreted as positive confirmation of the prophecy. More precise prophecies do face the serious problem, and prospect, of disconfirmation. ... Prophecy is most subject to disconfirmation when it is precise and testable, least vulnerable when most vague."<sup>53</sup>

### NON-PROPHET PAULA

For all of Paula's claimed prophetic insight, she appears to have been ignorant of the fact that the driving school, known as REACT, Inc. (Restoration & Evangelism Advanced through Community Training), which operated its office on their church property, was selling bogus commercial driving licenses. In April 2002, the *Tampa Tribune* revealed that two years earlier, the FBI had busted the illegal operation and sent its head, Tony Puleo, to a federal prison for an 18-month sentence.<sup>54</sup> His partner, Hillary M. Winniczek, "was sentenced to 22 months in jail and fined \$7,500."<sup>55</sup>

Paula's husband Randy claims he too was scammed and did not know applicants were getting commercial licenses for cash. While the racket was independent of the church, WWIC received 10 percent of the school's gross receipts, which Randy called a "tithe." Many of those enrolled at the bogus school paid between \$800 and \$1400.<sup>56</sup> The tragedy in this occurrence is that two of the unqualified truck drivers from REACT "were later involved in two separate accidents with a total of nine fatalities."<sup>57</sup>

More recently, Paula again demonstrated her lack of the prophetic — or at least a lack of integrity and discernment — when she and Randy invited Joe Redner to address their congregation regarding Redner's 2006 campaign for a seat in Florida's Hillsborough County Commission District 5. Redner's 10-minute address about protecting the environment, improving public transportation, and

reducing overcrowding in schools received applause and shouts of "Preach! Preach!" from Paula's congregation.

The depravity in this episode is that Redner is a self-professed humanist who admitted in a federal lawsuit that he is a homosexual and that he owns a strip club in the Tampa area. In fact, the *St. Petersburg Times* calls Redner the "strip club king."<sup>58</sup> Paula, in allowing Redner a platform in her church, clearly violated 2 John 10.

### STRANGER THAN FICTION

While much of the above focuses on Paula, it is helpful to also take a closer look at her husband Randy. Some of the most helpful information can be gleaned from public court documents and sworn testimony. Many of these documents are a window into his world and his ethics.

One very revealing document is the deposition of Randy White taken on Sept. 17, 2003. Randy had been deposed by the plaintiff in a paternity action brought against one of his church members. Randy's sworn testimony yielded a 34-page document. The foundational questioning therein provides an intriguing perspective of the man:

"Q ... Can you please state your full name for the record.

A Randy Allen White. ...

Q Are you the senior pastor for Without Walls International Church?

A Yes. ...

Q Have you been divorced?

A Yes.

Q Okay. Are you a certified counselor in the area of marriage and family counseling?

A No.

Q Have you counseled or given advice in the areas of marriage and family counseling?

A No. ...

Q Is the reason that you don't counsel in the areas of family and marriage issues is because of your divorce?

A No.

Q Do you have a reason why you don't counsel in those areas?

A Too busy. ...

Q Are you a college graduate?

A Yes.

Q What college did you attend, and what type of degree did you attain?

A Lee College. I finished it through continuing education.

Q What type of degree did you attain?

A A bachelor's degree in theology. ...

Q Have you ever referred to yourself as being a doctor, having a doctoral degree, either verbally or in writing? ...

THE DEPONENT: No. ...

Q No? Never referred to yourself as Dr. or Pastor Randy White?

A Pastor.

Q Dr. Randy White?

A Pastor.

Q In your books, have you ever referred to yourself as Dr. Randy White? ...

THE DEPONENT: Well, I have an honorary degree. I don't know. Sometimes I may something like that. ...

Q Okay. Does your advertisement reflect Dr. Randy White?

A No.

Q None of your advertisements reflect as Dr. Randy White?

A Not that I'm aware of."<sup>59</sup>

Further into the deposition, Randy is questioned about business reports and financial documents that he was ordered by the court to bring and many of which he failed to bring.

In page after page of questioning, Randy denies knowing things that a good administrator and/or pastor should have known about people and events within his church, including charges of multiple sexual relationships between the defendant and a youth pastor, a church bus driver, and a prominent televangelist.

According to the document, the plaintiff then suggests that Randy has used "exact events" of the plaintiff's relationship with the defendant in a

chapter titled, "Breaking the Curse," in his book *Without Walls*. This chapter details the account of an unmarried and pregnant active church member who, thinking she would receive the rejection of the church, met with the opposite:

"Every staff member met Julie with open arms and words of encouragement. A few months later, someone in the church gave her a baby shower, which was well attended. Paula made it a point to be there with a gift. Her card said, 'Julie, I love you. Here's a gift for your baby.' When Julie's baby girl was born, she had everything she needed, from clothing to crib."<sup>60</sup>

The plaintiff said the situation described, including the baby shower attended by Paula, was his. He maintained that he had not given Randy permission to disclose these issues in his book:

"Q Is the book that you wrote, *Without Walls*, still published, circulated, or distributed to the public?

A Yes.

Q Does your book contain — does your book describe factual events that occurred at *Without Walls*?

A Most of it's factual, yes.

Q Did you change most of the names to protect the privacy of the individuals in your book?

A Yes.

Q In a chapter in your book titled *Breaking the Curse*, the events described there reflects the same, exact events detailed in the petitioner's relationship — my relationship with [the defendant]. Is this correct?

A I don't know.

Q Okay. Where did you get the information for the chapter, *Breaking the curse*.

A It was probably fictional.

Q Fictional? Your book was fictional?

A Some of it.

Q Some of it was?

A (Nodding head affirmatively.)

Q Okay. ...

Q According to the — the book that was published, incidents and persons portrayed in this volume are based on fact. Now you're saying it's fictional?

A Some of it.

Q Some of it was fictional? So when you published the book and you indicated it was based on fact, it was false?

A Yeah.

Q So you lied?

A Yeah.

Q So you have a propensity to lie?

A Yeah.

Q However, some of the names and details have changed to protect the privacy of individuals, has that changed?

A I don't know. ...

Q ... You indicated that the names changed to protect the privacy of the individuals?

A I said it was fiction. It was fictional.

Q Okay. So this chapter's completely fictional?

A Yes. ...

Q Have you at any time obtained permission for anyone described in this book for the purpose of publishing private matters?

A I — I believe the publisher did, yes."<sup>61</sup>

The document also discloses that when Randy later was cross-examined about his admission to lying and being a liar, he was asked if he was being facetious. He replied, "I was being facetious."<sup>62</sup> That put Randy in a quandary: If he was telling the truth under oath about lying, he would be a confessed liar. However, if he was lying about his lying (which he says he was), then he still committed perjury.

As far as Randy's alleged memory lapse in regard to referring to himself as "Dr. Randy White," both legal and church documents contain his signature above the name, "Dr. Randy A. White." The legal document is a sworn affidavit from July 16, 2001, concerning business conducted by

Without Walls International Church. The church document is a Dec. 18, 2002, letter to his congregation reviewing ministry highlights of the year and projection for the new year.<sup>63</sup>

## WHITE AVENUE — A ONE WAY STREET?

Although the Whites consistently campaign for money to come in, they do not seem quite so eager to give any out. Most of the "apostles" of prosperity expect money to flow in only one direction. The Apostle Paul said that we should "Render therefore to all their due" and "Owe no one anything" (Romans 13:7,8). In other words, pay what we owe every time and on time. However, Randy's track record is less than honorable.

Court documents exist showing that in 1992, while Randy was employed by the Bayshore United Methodist Church in Tampa, his ex-wife Debra Jean White filed a petition for unpaid child support for the couple's three children. A year earlier, the Circuit Court of the Thirteenth Judicial Circuit of Hillsborough County, Florida, had issued an "Immediate Income Deduction Order" against Randy for the "total sum of \$265.50, bi-weekly" (based upon \$88.50, bi-weekly, per child).<sup>64</sup> In January 1992, an "Order Establishing Arrears" against Randy was imposed by this same court in the amount of \$5,195.50.<sup>65</sup> Randy's three children, Kristen (then 14), Angela (then 11) and Brandon (then 8), had their mother Debra fighting for them. On Aug. 11, 1992, Randy was served with an "Evidence of Final Judgment and Certificate of Delinquency" by the Circuit Court which, in part, stated, "The Central Governmental Depository hereby certifies that a delinquency in support payments exists as of the date of this certificate."<sup>66</sup>

What is ironic in all this is Paula's public statements about her compassion for children. For instance, she writes:

"What would happen if we made a commitment to God to end the cycle of oppression by

offering compassion and dignity to children shamed by their circumstances? What if we were to show them how precious they are to Him? What would they accomplish as a result of our kindness? How many lives would they change? The task seems huge, I know. But it begins with reaching out to one child. You have the power to touch a person's life for eternity."<sup>67</sup>

It would also start with fathers who kept their marriage vows and who cared for the physical needs of their children without having to be hauled into court. This compassion in writing may be a little too late.

A handful of events in the distant past may not mean much to some, but it seems that this pattern continued. In June 1994, the Whites and their Destiny Ministries (dba South Tampa Christian Center) were to be evicted from their location by court order because they "failed to deposit the rental payments due into the Registry of the Court or file proof with the Court that payment for rent had been made as required by Florida Statutes 83.232."<sup>68</sup> In July, the court issued a "Default Final Judgment" against Destiny Ministries, stating, "a total amount due of \$1,361,340.26 to accrue interest at 12% hereafter per annum pursuant to Section 55.03, Florida Statutes, plus prejudgment interest for seven (7) months in the amount of \$95,170.09, for a total judgment amount of \$1,456,510.35."<sup>69</sup>

The local church headed up by the Whites had a "Claim of Lien" filed against them in July 2000 when a contracting company tried to collect an unpaid amount of over \$47,000 (of a \$121,675 bill) for "labor, services or materials" on Without Walls International Church property.<sup>70</sup> Even the Electric Company filed a "Corrective Summary Judgment" against WWIC in November 2000 to retrieve unpaid bills of over \$43,000, along with another \$12,000 for late charges, court costs, and attorney fees.<sup>71</sup>

In December 2001, the bogus driving school, REACT, along with WWIC

were ordered by the county court's small claims division to pay David Dang, Sr., "the sum of \$778.06 with costs in the sum of \$149.20 making a total of \$927.26."<sup>72</sup> Court records show the judgment was "satisfied in full" on June 17, 2002.<sup>73</sup>

In April 2002, Jacqueline D. Knight filed a "Claim of Lien for Services Rendered" against the Whites and their Destiny Ministries/WWIC. Knight was seeking nearly \$17,000 for "General public relations and marketing duties" provided to the church.<sup>74</sup>

With the pattern of courts and attorneys having to pressure the Whites to meet their financial obligations — and with the trail of court and legal documents this leaves in its wake — the couple seems to show little concern about their testimony. The Whites may not know the Bible in terms of living it, but they know attorneys, the court system, and money maneuverings very well. If bills are still going unpaid and the attorney's fees remain constant, the pressure for soliciting large amounts of income must be enormous. Sadly, some Christians can get used to anything, including unethical and unbiblical ways of doing business. The prophet Jeremiah warned, "Do not learn the way of the Gentiles" (Jeremiah 10:2).

According to God's Word, elders are to be "blameless, the husband of one wife" (1 Timothy 3:2), and "must have a good testimony among those who are outside" (1 Timothy 3:7). Having a track record of court actions against a minister can only give an abysmal reputation locally and in the larger community. The Apostle Paul would have none of this. He asserted, "avoiding this: that anyone should blame us in this lavish gift which is administered by us — providing honorable things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men" (2 Corinthians 8:20-21). Charles Ryrie comments on these verses and says that Paul's team "acted as trustees of the money to insure complete propriety in the handling of it."<sup>75</sup>

## GETTING TO KNOW HIM

In November 2005, Paula put her thoughts about her husband in print:

"When I met my husband, Randy, he was much heavier than he is today. He had a bowl haircut and wore green velvet bow ties, platform shoes and polyester suits. He had no money. But I did not marry my husband for his looks, his fashion sense or his wealth. I knew a great barber and a good tailor and had a reliable diet plan. I married him for who he was. What I never wanted to change and knew I could not change was the man Randy was on the inside. ... You need to know a person before you enter into covenant with him or her."<sup>76</sup>

It is also interesting to hear Paula's take on her marriage in another recent article:

"When Randy and I would fight during the first several years of our marriage, the aftermath would be disastrous. We had heated disagreements, and during those times my husband would say as little as possible, then he'd walk away to regain his composure and get his thoughts together. If I had been willing to leave him alone for an hour or two to give us time to calm down, everything would have been fine. But I wouldn't do it. I freaked out whenever he attempted to leave while I was upset about a situation. I didn't care if he wanted to yell at me all night long or if I found myself staring at a blank wall. I needed him right there with me! My reaction to Randy's habit of walking out during arguments caused more than its share of tension between us. If I tried to convince him not to go, he would shake his head and say, 'Paula, stop being so insecure!' His words made matters 10 times worse. In fact, they would infuriate me. How dare he accuse me of being insecure. ... Today, Randy and I very seldom fight.

But when we do have a problem, I give him the space he needs. Besides, what's the point in making a scene? He's coming back anyway."<sup>77</sup>

It would have been so much better to hear that two mature adults have finally learned to sit down and calmly discuss a problem and bring a biblical solution to the existing differences according to Ephesians 4:22-32. Randy is still walking out and Paula has gotten to the place of passive resistance. It hardly sounds like spiritual maturity or a godly example.<sup>78</sup>

### WHITE WASHED

It is really hard to understand how anyone can take the Whites seriously. It all points to the low level of discernment in the Church and to the fact that many professing Christians are adrift on a sea of feelings and emotions. It seems that anything will do as long as it is big, flashy, loud, and overstated.

The Whites have an abysmal track record in terms of money management. Paula's use of the Bible as a subjective, magical numbers game to be used to manipulate and plead for money is deplorable. Her view of God as a Being who can be manipulated and controlled by His creation is off the charts. Their materialistic emphasis and exalting ungodly millionaires is neither biblical, nor is it representative of a Savior who had nowhere to lay His head. Her putty-like prophecies, which can take any shape and form, are downright silly. The difficulties and distortions in their teachings are a reason they should be critiqued and avoided. In the end, Without Walls International Church may help some because of some caring staff, but considering all the above, if it does, it is most likely in spite of the Whites.

The idea of truly "helping people" is a concept that needs to be thought through. It may appear to be helping someone by cleaning them up and dressing them up (short term), but if ultimately they are placed on the wrong road, the "help" has been

deceptive in terms of long-range outcomes. Let's always strive from beginning to end to put people on the safest of roads — the truly biblical road — so that short term or long term they will be just where God wants them to be. Lies, even "white" ones, cannot be tolerated.

### Endnotes:

1. Ted Olsen, "What Really Unites Pentecostals?," *Christianity Today*, Dec. 5, 2006. Document available at: [www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2006/december/16.18.html](http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2006/december/16.18.html).
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raucous, in-your-face, knock 'em down, drag 'em out exorcist. Larson's television broadcasts and live meetings could be described as "Jerry Springer meets the devil."

Fordham sociologist Michael Cuneo has documented in his book *American Exorcism* that there is a subculture (of troubled and confused people) drawn to exorcists. The clientele certainly is there, and so is the money.

It seems that Larson is not beyond hoaxing others. Information was given on one of Larson's radio broadcasts in which he let a report stand that seemed to indicate his home was burned down by an arsonist because of his opposition to Satanism. Lori Boespflug exposed the lie, saying, "That incident was a hoax."<sup>2</sup>

Larson also changed wives in a very public divorce. First Timothy 3:1 says of elders (and by extension leaders) that they are to "be blameless [and] the husband of one wife." Deacons are held to the same standard. James tells us that leaders and teachers will be held to the highest standard, "My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment" (James 3:1). Larson identifies every sin and human weakness with the tag of "demon," but he will probably never speak against "the demon of divorce."

If Larson were living in any other era, he would be called an occult practitioner. The spectacles he puts on are more in line with the paganism of ancient Babylon, Greece, and Rome.<sup>3</sup> The Jews of Christ's time had pagan exorcisms and lengthy rituals, as seen in Acts 19:13-16.<sup>4</sup>

Larson's side show is a throwback to the primal scream therapy of the late 1960s. Ole Anthony of the Trinity Foundation labels Larson as a "pitch man" and "a bad carney."<sup>5</sup> It is nothing to see people writhing on the floor at a Larson meeting, or Larson jamming a Bible into someone's stomach, or just whacking them alongside

the head with a Bible. It is calculated craziness.

One Larson critic, who monitored him during the 1990s, recently told PFO:

"1992-1998 saw a marked decline in his ministry, the radio shows, and his meager foray into television on TBN and on obscure satellite channels. Last I heard, he had some church in Scottsdale and was taking his exorcism show on the road at various small churches and rented rooms at the odd Holiday Inn. I actually attended one of these sometime around 1999, and no more than 40 people showed up in a rented hotel room that had seats for 150."<sup>6</sup>

### WHY — WHY — WHY?

We often hear the statement, "you cannot judge another person's motives." But the Bible is clear that we often can see and know another person's motives.

Romans 13 says that governing authorities are in the ideal sense there for our peace and safety. They are there to punish evil. In courtrooms, attorneys present information to juries as to the guilt and motives of those being prosecuted. If a man took out a \$2 million insurance policy on his wife and then three weeks later she was murdered, and he was clearly linked to her murder and clearly guilty, the motive would not be a mystery.

David feigned insanity (1 Samuel 21:13-14) out of fear and Elijah fled and fell into depression out of the same motive (1 Kings 19).

The Apostle Paul was clear and to the point as he addressed wrong motives for preaching, "Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some from also goodwill. The former preach Christ from selfish ambition" (Philippians 1:15-16).

Paul clearly rebuked Peter and revealed his motive for courting Jews over Gentiles. Paul said that Peter "separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision" (Galatians

2:12). The fear of man is a motive that drives many. The Apostle Peter clearly states that we can be in ministry "for dishonest gain" (1 Peter 5:2). Greed can be a motive even in ministry.

The Apostle John reveals that a man named Diotrephes loved to have "preeminence" (3 John 9). Pride and the desire to control drove Diotrephes. John wrote of his motive. This shows clearly that the Bible is not against naming motives if those motives are persistent and clear.

Jude says plainly that some false teachers are greedy and do what they do for profit (vv. 11, 16). The motives were obvious.

Larson's motives are not a great mystery. *World* magazine reported that:

"While the 1990 tax records show the ministry paid Larson \$131,879 and allowed him an expense account of \$35,750, Larson certified to the court under oath that his income in 1990 was \$403,310."<sup>7</sup>

A decade later, the television news magazine *Inside Edition* disclosed "according to tax records he receives almost \$300,000 a year in salary and benefits from his ministry and TV company."<sup>8</sup> Even more recently, Charity Navigator, an online organization which monitors and evaluates charities, revealed Larson received compensation of \$142,242 in 2004.<sup>9</sup> Charity Navigator gives Bob Larson Ministries an "Overall Rating" of "0 Stars" out of a possible four stars. In an updated broadcast of its original investigation, *Inside Edition* confirmed the 2004 salary figure and added that Larson also received "\$186,000 for travel, \$24,000 for meals and \$28,000 in benefits."<sup>10</sup> Larson told the news magazine, "None of those amounts which you've indicated is a paid salary to me."<sup>11</sup>

Some might think that was a bit excessive. On Larson's own web site,<sup>12</sup> he has a video available of an exorcism room at the Vatican. He charges the hefty price of \$120. That is clearly excessive for a videotape. It is

quite obvious that Larson is all about selling and sensationalism. Also on his web site and in his public meetings, Larson is constantly asking for checks or credit cards, so that people can be a “partner.” However, in most partnerships the profits are divided equally. Larson also is soliciting donations for his \$1.2 million prayer center. His motive is no great conundrum.

Paul says that real Christian leaders do not peddle the Word of God (2 Corinthians 2:17). Although we may not always be able to discern with certainty a person’s motive, some motives are too obvious to miss. *The Geneva Study Bible* adds a note to 2 Corinthians 2:17:

“Paul’s goal was not personal benefit or financial reward, but the glory of God. ... All Paul’s ministry was carried out in the sight of God, providing him a strong motive for keeping his conscience clear.”<sup>13</sup>

Larson is a blatant materialist. He appeals for “stocks, bonds, jewelry, a fund” and even “property” to be given to him so that he can fight the devil.<sup>14</sup> In its 2000 investigative news report, *Inside Edition* documented his two homes in gated communities; one in Vail, Colo., and another in Scottsdale, Ariz. The Vail residence is valued in excess of \$1 million.

Larson says he lives in an exclusive gated community because he receives death threats. Yet, in every one of his public meetings Larson is wide open, vulnerable, and exposed to anyone who wants to do him harm. His public lifestyle leaves him vulnerable at every level, if, in fact, the death threats were real.

Larson’s weekly television broadcast, *Bob Larson presents Spiritual Freedom*, is a repetitive and incessant infomercial for all his products. The program promotes Larson as “the world’s foremost authority on the occult, demons, and the supernatural.” During a recent broadcast, Larson aired footage of a New Zealander named Shane.<sup>15</sup> At one point during Shane’s purported exorcism, he vomits up the ancestral demons from 12

preceding generations. At least that is how Larson explains it. Shane could have just been sick to his stomach from the intensity of the session. Larson puts the sign of the cross in oil on Shane’s forehead. Jesus left those he delivered from demons nameless and anonymous. Larson parades them in front of a camera then sells their performance. One wonders about the legalities of this unless they sign a waiver or release.

Viewers can receive a copy on DVD of Shane and others for only \$30 or any “gift” above that. Larson is quick to say that the \$30 does not cover the cost of the video, but you can “give \$300, \$3,000 or \$30,000.” On the *Bob Larson presents Spiritual Freedom* from the following week, there is the offer of a DVD on “How To Do Deliverance” for a mere \$69.<sup>16</sup> The sales pitches are relentless.

### LARSON’S LEAGUE WITH ROME

Even more troubling is Larson’s love affair with Rome and his networking with error and confusion. On Larson’s web site and in his presentations, he claims that he is just doing what Jesus did. He plays off the acronym DWJD — *Doing What Jesus Did* — and he expects people to believe it. He tells of meeting and interviewing the Vatican’s head exorcist Gabriele Amorth. Larson isn’t doing what Jesus did.

Jesus never touched a demon-possessed person. He did not have to. Jesus did not spend all kinds of time in elaborate rituals, incantations, screaming, wrestling, head-banging, manhandling, anointing with oil, or using other religious paraphernalia. Jesus never smacked a person with an Old Testament scroll. He did not have to. Jesus could muzzle demons with a word — and often did so. His encounters with demons were brief and powerful with immediate and unmistakable results. He was always masterfully in charge.

In Mark 1:25, “Jesus rebuked him, saying, ‘Be quiet, and come out of him!’” This shows the ease and brevity with which Jesus handled evil

spirits. Again in Mark 9:25, Jesus said, “I command you, come out of him and enter him no more!” It is nothing for a Larson follower to make three or four return trips with a claim of returning demons. With Jesus that was not possible. *Inside Edition* revealed during its report on Larson that they had documented a woman who had been exorcised “three times” by Larson.<sup>17</sup> Larson sees no problem with this — even with it being distant from “doing what Jesus did.”

### NOT WJD

What Larson does is totally unlike *what Jesus did*. We could say that Jesus took control and commanded demons with decorum. Jesus was totally and absolutely in charge. Three things marked Jesus’ encounters with demons: 1) a sanctified calm, 2) an incredible confidence, and 3) an absolute and authoritative word of command. We might say Jesus was brief and to the point. There was nothing messy and protracted.

William Alexander puts it so well:

“Jesus set aside the practical dualism of Jewish demonology. In the assurance that He was the Stronger One Who was able to conquer Satan, the strong one, and to spoil his goods, Jesus was able to aid effectively the demons whom He met, and to command evil spirits with a voice of authority.”<sup>18</sup>

Larson further elaborates on his web site about his Vatican trip (mentioned above) where he interacted with the Roman Catholic exorcist, Father Gabriele Amorth. Larson extols the *Rituale Romanum*, which is the Roman Catholic rite of exorcism. Larson speaks with reverence of the crucifix used in the exorcisms by Amorth. Jesus, however, never used religious paraphernalia to dismiss demons. Larson talks of the straps he saw in the Vatican exorcism room used to restrain people, should they get violent during an exorcism. Jesus never used straps or tied anyone down.

What Larson saw was more a chamber of horrors. Even the most violent

demoniac ever encountered by Jesus did not have to be strapped down, manhandled, and held at bay with religious accessories. The Gadarene demoniac had been chained down by those who did not know what else to do. Jesus in the calmest of manners simply permitted the demons to go into swine (Luke 8:32). It was the pigs that acted violently (v. 33). That is what Jesus did. His deliverances were instantaneous and permanent.

The encounters Jesus had with demons and demoniacs were not a model and pattern for the Church. He commanded and cast out demons to *show who He was*. He did it to demonstrate *His* authority.

Jesus even used the demons in a unique and singular way to confess who He was. The demons acknowledged, "You are — the Holy One of God!" (Mark 1:24, Luke 4:34). Again, "he cried out with a loud voice and said, 'What have I to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God?'" (Mark 5:7, Luke 8:28, Matthew 8:29). Mark 3:11 records, "And the unclean spirits, whenever they saw Him, fell down before Him and cried out, saying, 'You are the Son of God.'"

We could no more copy Jesus in demonic encounters — and the Bible never says we should — than we could change water to wine, multiply food, raise the dead, transfigure, walk on water, or rise from the Mount of Olives to heaven. All of these dynamic exploits were to demonstrate that Jesus was the Messiah and, in fact, the all-powerful Deity. Even the apostles who carried the direct authority and power of Jesus on those few occasions of demonic encounter simply spoke that instantaneous word of command (Acts 16:18) as Jesus did. They truly emulated their Master.

Jesus never performed an exorcism and was not an exorcist. Modern exorcisms are marked by rituals, noise, incantations, formulas, long amounts of time, liturgies — and in Larson's case, fund-raising. Spitting, vomiting, cursing, fainting, and pandemonium can be elements along with incense, holy water, and crucifixes. Sometimes they are interspersed

with candle lighting. Hours of antics can pass with a claim being made of returning demons. The Roman Catholic exorcisms that Larson identifies with are ritual-laden and unbiblical. One Roman Catholic publication includes:

"Elements of the rite include the Litany of Saints; recitation of the Our Father, one or more creeds, and other prayers; specific prayers of exorcism; the reading of Gospel passages and use of the Sign of the Cross."<sup>19</sup>

Frederick Leahy compares the biblical act of casting out demons with its modern day counterpart:

"Christ did not practise exorcism in the modern sense of the word. He bade the demons depart and never return, commands they had no choice but to obey."<sup>20</sup>

### JUST WHAT IS GOING ON?

Certainly Satan has some hand in the chaos and misinformation that mark Larson's demonstrations. Satan may be acting differently than we think. A stage magician's craft relies upon misdirection. The smoke and mirrors of Larson's meetings are just a distraction that keeps people from any idea about the new birth or the biblical principles of New Testament sanctification. The repetitive sameness of the Larson campaigns leaves people with little or no balanced Bible input. It is Larson's shell game and followers will never find the truth. It is reductionism, leaving ignorant people with about 99% of the Bible unknown and untaught.

Larson's whole show is a re-creation of medieval mythology and ethnic folklore. Jesus refused to acknowledge superstition and cryptic formulas. The Jews believed demons dwelt in crumbs, so Jesus had the apostles gather up the leftover bread to enjoy it. The Jews believed demons dwelt on unwashed hands, so Jesus did not insist on ceremonial hand washing. The Jews believed that demons prowled in desert places, so that is right where Jesus goes to enjoy communion with the heavenly Father.

They believed that demons infested Samaria, so Jesus boldly went there.<sup>21</sup>

One thing that never seems to get picked up by Larson's followers, and seems to be missed or ignored, is the assumption that the demons Larson claims to be speaking to always tell him the truth! Larson is always reporting what this or that demon said in his exorcisms. No one ever picks up on the fact that the very nature of demons is that of lies and deception. Satan is, after all, called the father of lies (John 8:44). The Larson Traveling Circus is so old that it is new and fits right in with the mystical and superstitious nature of America's contemporary eclectic spirituality. His theater is certainly based on faulty theology.

Leahy again captures the tone of the New Testament:

"We are not asked to diagnose cases of supposed possession. It is much wiser and safer in such situations to rely prayerfully in faith upon the proclamation of the Word of God, witnessing to and praying for the sufferer. ... Nothing less than the 'new birth' will meet the need of the demoniac or any other sinner. When this takes place the demon has been dispossessed. The only guarantee against possession is to be indwelt by the Holy Spirit, that is, to be 'born again'."<sup>22</sup>

"Professional" wrestling is a good analogy: Everyone in the arena knows why they are there. They know how it all goes, and that every one of them is part of the show. Everyone is personally involved in the spectacle and goes along with all the chaos. Everyone gets caught up in the bizarre and unreal.

Imagine being in a Larson meeting and becoming not only part of the show, but one of its stars. You may become the central actor in a cosmic drama between good and evil in the universe. This is stagecraft and theater at its best. You can tip the scale in favor of the God of heaven. That would be hard to resist, for some especially if their life is normally humdrum and routine.

Much of Larson's routine and spectacle feed off of ignorance and the need to be seen. Much of the commotion is generated by followers who know what is expected. Some are just confused, needy, desperate, and untaught. Everyone can get into the act and become a part of the main attraction in the greatest show in the universe. It is hard to resist.

Larson's demanding and forceful personality is the catalyst for incredible peer pressure and the group dynamics that set off the fireworks. On occasion, Larson has been hoaxed himself by some who pretended to be afflicted with demons. In a reverse of the theatrical, Larson unknowingly went along with *their* show.<sup>23</sup> The tables were turned on him and it clearly demonstrates that Larson cannot distinguish a real demon from a pretend one. If Larson can be fooled by jokesters, why should anyone take him seriously when he pretends to have insight into the unseen world? Just as ludicrous is Larson's pretense of commanding angels as he does his exorcisms.

### IS THERE A DOCTOR IN THE HOUSE?

Larson's medical diagnoses make his show extremely dangerous. It is disturbing to see Larson talk to people in almost baby talk, supposedly regressing them to their childhood. Of course, his diagnosis is always demons and so habituating sins are often glossed over. Sinful habits are renamed as "demons," though the demon of materialism is never found.

Some years ago, a self-proclaimed exorcist (named Don Rogers) traveled through New England servicing some of the extremist Charismatic churches. He would do his routine and cast out the "demons" of cigarettes and anger, the "demons" of lust, bitterness and gluttony, and so forth. The problem, however, was that it did not take long for the exorcised "demons" to return. Biblical sanctification is not a quick fix. Quick fixes never last.

Furthermore, as Larson pontificates on the diagnosis without objective proof, untreated physical problems

may continue to go untreated. This does not bother Larson because he will be in another city a few days later and no one is the wiser. What remains true is that *we interpret what we see based on what we believe* — whether it is true or not. Absolutely everything in the Larson show is tagged with the name "demon."

So much of this socio-psychological manipulation has been recognized for centuries, both in and out of religious circles. Years ago it was called mesmerism. Our task is to always just present the Gospel, no matter what the circumstances:

"Similar distinctions between the real and the spurious have to be made in considering alleged demon-possession. Even in the evil physical phenomena witnessed in primitive societies, and associated by the people with Satan worship, the probability of occasional, or even frequent, cases of self-induced symptoms of possession has to be recognized. The Christian worker who is faced with the physical phenomena associated with demonism, must bear in mind the possibility (a) of involuntary imitation, (b) of deliberate, self-induced imitation; both conditions being perpetuated by the occurrence, from time to time, of actual demon-possession. It may frequently be impossible to diagnose with any certainty in which of these conditions a person is to be classed, and this only serves to emphasize that the servant of Christ is not asked to diagnose alleged cases of possession, but to confront the demonic, whether it may express itself directly or indirectly, with the Word of the Risen Saviour and earnest prayer in His holy name."<sup>24</sup>

Further:

"It should be remembered, in observing religious phenomena, that the possible operation of the power of mass hysteria, or, as it used to be called, the principle of sympathy, makes it exceedingly difficult *at the time*, to distinguish

between the spiritual and purely psychological. The impulse of mass hysteria can be almost irresistible, as is witnessed by the behaviour of crowds in situations of riot and hysterical emotion."<sup>25</sup>

Larson's incantations, cryptic formulas, and yelling of repetitive words are essentially "vain repetitions." Jesus forbade magic formulas. Larson's teaching that demons come out through the orifices of the body<sup>26</sup> is not only disgusting, but in line with ancient Egyptian paganism that associated a demon with various organs and parts of the body. Jude warned against those false teachers that "speak evil of dignitaries" and "speak evil of whatever they do not know" (vv. 8, 10). He further warns against reviling accusations in opposition to the demonic (v. 9).

The ethnic demonism of the Jews during the time of Christ included many railing accusations against demons:

"The Jewish adjuration addressed to the demon of epilepsy is a fine sample of 'a railing accusation': O thou demon thou art hidden, thou son of foulness, thou son of abomination, thou son of uncleanness, be thou cursed, crushed, anathematized."<sup>27</sup>

Ephesians 6:10-18 is the clearest of all passages and is a mandate of spiritual warfare and freedom for the Church. When dealing with "principalities and powers," a wrestling match is not suggested. Chanting, screaming, roughing others up, and pretending to command and control Satan and his demons are not in the text. Our coping mechanism is the disciplines and virtues described in these passages. Truth, righteousness, the Gospel, faith, the Word of God, and prayer are clearly delineated. There is nothing about exorcisms here. No doubt because neither Jesus nor the apostles ever did what Larson is doing.

### HOW FIRM OUR FOUNDATION

Larson seems narcissistic because most of the attention goes to him.

There is also an obsessive focus on Satan and demons. Our focus is to be Christ (Colossians 3:1-2, Hebrews 12:2). Richard Mayhue reminds us of our great resources in Christ for true spiritual warfare:

"...our Lord Jesus Christ has not left us defenseless. Let me show you the arsenal that is at our command. The Saviour's victory at Calvary (John 12:31, Rev. 12:11). The promise of overcoming (1 John 5:4-5; Rev. 21:7). The intercessory ministry of Christ (John 17:15, 20). The knowledge of Satan's tactics (2 Cor. 2:11). The believer's spiritual armor (Eph. 6:10-17). The Holy Spirit's indwelling power (1 John 4:4). The believer's prayers (Matt. 6:13; Eph. 6:18-20; Mark 9:29). The instructions for defeating Satan (James 4:7-8). The sure knowledge that Satan has been rendered powerless with regard to death (Heb. 2:14). The encouragement of ultimate victory (Rev. 20:1-10)."<sup>28</sup>


The Bible is clear that a Christian cannot be possessed by demons. The Christian is the temple of God's Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is greater and more powerful than any and all demons and cannot be dispossessed (1 John 2:14, 4:4, 5:18).

Therefore, Christians are not to focus on or obsess about demons or the demonic. Believers are to take the apostles' example, realizing that Christ and His grace are stronger than demons, and we simply present the Gospel to all. As Paul instructed, the Gospel is "the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes" (Romans 1:16). The demonized, whether real or imagined, are no exception.

#### Endnotes:

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9. "Bob Larson Ministries," Charity Navi-

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19. Matthew Bunson, General Editor, *2004 Our Sunday Visitor's Catholic Almanac*. Huntington, Ind.: Our Sunday Visitor Publishing, 2004, pg. 137.
20. Frederick S. Leahy, *Satan Cast Out*. Carlisle, Penna.: Banner of Truth Trust, 1990, pg. 88.
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23. "The Exorcist," op. cit.
24. *Satan Cast Out*, op. cit., pp. 180-181.
25. Ibid., pg. 181, italics in original.
26. G. Richard Fisher, "Demonic Operation - The Deliverance Game of Modern Day Exorcists," *The Quarterly Journal*, Vol. 26, No. 4, pg. 22.
27. *Demonic Possession in the New Testament*, op. cit., pp. 132-133.
28. Richard Mayhue, *Unmasking Satan*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Kregel Publications, 2001, pg. 156. 

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## EDITORIALS

(continued from page 2)

Three months later, Roberts said God reminded him with these words: "I want you to get this going in one year or I will call you home. I've got to do something to get the attention of my people. If I have to call you home, I'm going to do it."

As the months passed, donations to Roberts' cause did not match what he had asked for. In nine months, less than half of the \$8 million had been raised. On Jan. 4, 1987, Roberts confessed on television that unless he came up with \$4.5 million, his days were numbered.

"If we don't turn it around by March, God's going to call me home. Please help extend my life. Please help me open the nations. Please help me turn the medical school around. We're well on our way. We lack \$4.5 million between now and March. Help us," Roberts pleaded.

While many were appalled at the idea that God would hold Roberts hostage, Roberts said it was not unscriptural. "If the partners of [the Apostle] Paul had not come to him with the money, his life would not have been extended. It's in the Bible. It's happened all over again," Roberts told his viewing audience.

"You know, God is actually obligated to meet our needs when we give of our seed faith," Roberts' wife Evelyn said. It was a win-win situation. You give, Oral lives, and God is *obligated* to meet your needs. It can't get much better than that.

Roberts closed out the broadcast that day by praying:

"Father, I've delivered my soul today. I can do no more by myself, than what I am doing. Please help me. Give me new partners; cause my regular partners to pick up this burden. Extend my life, let me live beyond March. Let me finish my work on earth. *Give me 20 more years.*"

The strategy worked. A Florida dog-track owner sent Roberts what he needed, sparing us from finding out if the threat against Roberts would be carried out. However, the City of Faith sat vacant for several years before being sold to a group of investors for commercial development. It turned out to be a monument to a false prophet.

God has now given him those 20 years. And in those two decades Roberts has, time and again, shown himself to be a false prophet. Roberts claims to speak with divine unction, but in fact states ill-conceived ideas from his own mind and attributes them to God, much as the prophets of Jeremiah's day:

*"Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you. They make you worthless; they speak a vision of their own heart, not from the mouth of the LORD. ... I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran. I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied"* (Jeremiah 23:16, 21, emphasis added).

Roberts repeatedly has had to retreat to silence about his failed prophecies or, when he did address them, has claimed he did not "possess all the information." This, of course, discredits Roberts' claim to speak for the Almighty, unless God is not omniscient or willfully misinformed him.

During these past 20 years, Roberts also continued an unhealthy affiliation with and indulgence of other false prophets and aberrational teachers, including Benny Hinn and Paula White. It is a sad legacy: A litany of false prophecies that kept his "partners" sowing their financial "seed-faith" to keep his dreams alive. The Apostle Peter warned of such teachers when he wrote:

*"Many will follow their shameful ways and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. In their greed these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping"* (2 Peter 2:2-3, NIV).

—MKG

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## NEWS UPDATES

(continued from page 3)

Ownby's schoolmate, Mitchell Hults, who gave investigators a detailed description of a white Nissan pickup truck in the area at the time of Ownby's disappearance. That clue eventually led to the discovery of the two boys.

Throughout the Hornbeck story, there were many individuals who never stopped offering the hope that Shawn would safely return home. Yet the outcome proved to be a major embarrassment for one prominent psychic, who offered no hope to Shawn's family.

Four months after Shawn's disappearance, his mother and stepfather sought the help of popular psychic Sylvia Browne. Browne appeared on the Feb. 26, 2003, broadcast of *The Montel Williams Show*. The parents were in the audience and were able to interact with the psychic. When she was asked if Shawn was still alive, Browne shook her head and said, "No." Shawn's mother wept at her answer.

Browne also gave Shawn's parents and the audience a description of the abductor, "The guy was dark-skinned. Although he wasn't black, he was more Hispanic-looking. [He] had real long dark hair and strange enough, Hispanic, he had dreadlocks." The man with whom Shawn had been living with and who has been charged in the abduction is a white male who bears no resemblance to the man Browne described.

A week following Shawn's rescue, his parents told CNN reporter Anderson Cooper that they were told if they wanted to talk further with Browne they could, "at her normal standard fee." Those who have monitored Browne's operation said she charges \$700 for a session lasting from 20 to 60 minutes.

Psychic debunker James "The Amazing" Randi, on the Jan. 26 broadcast of *Larry King Live*, said Browne's methodology was standard fare for clairvoyants. "These people, when they're wrong, they're usually dramatically wrong. When they're right, they're only right with common things that you would expect to be true," Randi told King. The probability was that Shawn had been killed and Browne echoed that expectation, Randi noted.

Browne, on her web site, countered the accusations saying, "I have **never** nor ever will charge anyone who seeks my help regarding a missing person or homicide. ... To be accused of otherwise by James Randi and others like him is a boldface lie. ... As I have stated on Montel, on my radio show, in my books and in each of my lectures, I cannot possibly be 100% correct in each and every one of my predictions. I have never claimed to be."

—MKG

## TELEVANGELIST SUED BY FAMILY

The positive-confession theology of televangelist Darlene Bishop has her headed for court as a result of a lawsuit brought by the four children of her late brother. Darrell "Wayne" Perry, a country songwriter, died in May 2005 of throat cancer.

Perry's children have accused their aunt of wrongful death, clergy malpractice, and fraud. The lawsuit alleges that Bishop persuaded her brother to suspend chemotherapy treatment in favor of divine healing. In a separate lawsuit, which went before a judge on Jan. 5, Bishop was accused of probate irregularities and the

mishandling of her brother's estate, of which she had been named executrix nearly two years before his death.

Bishop issued a press release which stated that, "The allegations made by Darrell Wayne Perry's children are completely without merit." She also maintained that the allegation that she "hastened her brother's death is completely unfounded." The statement, released through her ministry, announced that, "Bishop never advised him against medical treatment; instead, she either personally took him to his medical appointments or arranged for someone to do so."

Bishop's positive-confession theology is borne out in her book, *Your Life Follows Your Words*. The advertisement for this volume boasts, "You will not be able to put this book down as Darlene Bishop uncovers the truths of how your life follows your words. By the time you finish this book, your faith will be so strong, that you will be able to believe God for anything." The publication claims "her brother [was] healed from throat cancer." She also writes in the book that "God healed her of breast cancer."

According to an Associated Press report, "in a deposition taken for the case in probate, Bishop says she believed she had cancer, but a physician did not diagnose it." Bishop also contends that the omission of disclosing her brother's death in the book was that it was published while he was in remission. However, in spite of her brother's death, Bishop continues to advertise and sell, without qualification, the book with its claims of divine healings.

Perry wrote a No. 1 hit for country singing star Tim McGraw in 1994. He also wrote songs for Lorrie Morgan, Toby Keith, and the Backstreet Boys.

Bishop is co-pastor, along with her husband Lawrence, of the 4,000-member Solid Rock Church, north of Cincinnati. She hosts *Sisters*, a weekly 30-minute television program. She is also a popular conference speaker in Charismatic venues. In March she appeared at Paula White's "Life by Design Conference" with White and T.D. Jakes.

—MKG

## RESUSCITATING ARMSTRONG

From the time of its inception, the Worldwide Church of God, the sect founded by the late Herbert W. Armstrong, was considered unorthodox in its doctrine and practice. Armstrong considered himself Christ's sole true apostle on the earth who announced the "true original Gospel." He went to great lengths to try to show the Trinity was a pagan-derived doctrine, presented a defective Christology, denied the bodily

resurrection of Christ, and adhered to a strict legalism and sabbatarianism.

Following Armstrong's death in 1985, several of the church's key leaders appeared to agree, renouncing many of its founder's heretical teachings. This transformation was hailed by many evangelicals as a move from a "cultic sect" to a "Christian church." With the theological mutations came a diminishing of Armstrong's heretofore unquestioned authority. Yet not all of those within the WCG hierarchy endorsed the "conversion" to orthodoxy, and schisms followed.

A new book, *Raising the Ruins*, written by Stephen Flurry, contends that the church's deviations were not the result of a spiritual awakening, as church leaders maintain. Flurry argues the group was taken over by corrupted visionaries with an agenda.

An editorial review from his book promotes it as "the shocking, gripping untold story of the doctrinal hijacking and spiritual destruction of the Worldwide Church of God after the death of its founder." The review also alleges to be "the story of a cabal of leaders who destroyed Mr. Armstrong's work, sold the church's assets and hoarded the money."

Flurry maintains that some of the doctrinal alterations were occurring under Armstrong's nose before he died. The two men most villainized by Flurry are Joseph Tkach Sr., who succeeded Armstrong as pastor general of the church (and who died in 1995), and his son, Joseph Tkach Jr. Tkach Jr. told his version of the WCG's revisions in his 1997 book, *Transformed by Truth*. (See, Peter Ditzel, "Transforming the Truth - The Worldwide Church of God Continues to 'Make' History," *The Quarterly Journal*, July-September 1998, pp. 5-12.)

Flurry is a member of the Philadelphia Church of God, executive editor of its news magazine, *Philadelphia Trumpet*, and president of Herbert W. Armstrong College in Edmond, Okla.

Flurry's book, published in October 2006, is an ambitious attempt to recover what Armstrong loyalists see as the religious leader's severely maligned legacy. Flurry identifies Armstrong as one of the foremost religious leaders of the 20th century, the world's leading televangelist, and a Bible-based humanitarian.

Apart from the book, the Philadelphia Church of God is also resuscitating the late cult leader by way of the printing and free distribution of seven of Armstrong's principal books. The Philadelphia Church of God, following a fierce legal battle with the Pasadena-based mother church, gained copyright for the publications.

After *Raising the Ruins* enjoyed brisk sales of its initial printing of nearly 15,000 copies, Flurry and his church rushed to a second printing of 50,000 copies in late December.

—MKG



# Books in Review

## CHRISTIANITY ACCORDING TO THE BIBLE

by Ron Rhodes

Harvest House Publishers, 287 pages, \$12.99

Sometimes what we think we know about the Christian faith may not be so. Apologist Ron Rhodes asks whether his readers are “experiencing authentic Christianity or a cultural counterfeit?” And in his latest volume, *Christianity According to the Bible*, he tries to help them explore and correct their misunderstandings of a biblically based faith. The book is subtitled, “Separating Cultural Religion from Biblical Truth.” Rhodes says that the “truth of the matter is that America is very religious but biblically ignorant.”

While this book could be filed under “Systematic Theology,” one need not be frightened by that designation. Rhodes has a real ability to take what some see as difficult and unappealing, and make it clear, coherent, and palatable. That talent again comes across in this book.

In the Introduction, Rhodes writes, “the more research I do, the stronger my conviction becomes that today’s Christianity has become tainted — at least to some degree — by modern culture.” With that statement, Rhodes is off and running. He emphasizes that tainted beliefs will yield tainted Christians. (For example, he points out, “many Christians openly attend R-rated movies with nudity and divorces.”) That’s why it is so important for one to adhere to genuine biblical teaching.

The pieces of the Christian faith Rhodes sews together include the Bible and its interpretation, the nature and attributes of God, the person and work of Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, sin and its consequences, the Church, angels, Satan, and more. Scripture warns believers to “rightly divide the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15). If one doesn’t cut and assemble the theological pieces of the faith correctly, the result is distorted patchwork of Christianity.

This is a wonderful book for all — even unbelievers — to read and ponder. It is also an excellent volume from which any Sunday school or Bible study teacher could draw to develop a generous curriculum on the essential

tenets of the Christian faith. Each chapter concludes with a handful of “Discussion Questions.” The book is also enhanced with occasional subject diagrams.

The book’s back cover states, “Make sure your Christianity is shaping your culture — not the other way around.” In a day and age when that is a tragic and sundry reality, *Christianity According to the Bible* is a summons to biblical doctrine and practice.

—MKG

## WHO ARE YOU TO JUDGE?

by David Swavely

P&R Publishing, 213 pages, \$13.99

One thing you have to say about David Swavely — he is an equal opportunity offender. In this excellent volume on judging others, Swavely manages to offend almost every one of his readers. His premise is simple: “The sin of judging is negatively evaluating someone’s conduct or spiritual state on the basis of nonbiblical standards or suspected motives” (pg. 8). With this definition most would probably agree — in principle. It is when this principle intersects our way of living that the trouble begins.

*Who Are You to Judge?* challenges our thinking in the areas of music, working mothers, birth control, gambling, alcohol consumption, demand feeding, frequency of the Lord’s Supper, home/Christian school vs. public school, fasting, movies, television, art, and even coffee drinking.

Swavely is not content with abstract principles. If he were, he would probably attract more fans, but then his work would be far less valuable. The author wants to apply these principles to life and here it gets sticky.

If Swavely doesn’t pull the rug out from under you on at least one of these, you would be the exception. And, according to the contents of this book, you would have escaped the error of legalism.

I like Dave Swavely, not just because he is bold (which he is), and not just because he writes clearly and understandably (which he does). I like him mostly because he is biblical. He takes every issue back to Scripture, examines it in the light of God’s Word, and refuses to go where God does not go.

—GEG

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