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The Legend of William Branham

by J. Greg Sheryl

William Marrion Branham can justly be called the father of modern faith healers. One scholar wrote that he "was and is an enigma. He was born in poverty; he died in controversy, and his name is known around the world."¹

According to one account:

"In 1946 Branham claimed that an angel commissioned him to be a prophet with the message of divine healing. From 1946 to 1955 Branham conducted a healing ministry that only [his ministry contemporary] Oral Roberts could match. The Pentecostal masses revered his legendary healing gifts, the ability to detect diseases by the vibration of his hand and the ability to discern the secrets of a person's heart."²

Branham had a storied ministry, especially in his heyday from the late 1940s through the late 1950s.

Branham's devotees have developed into what has become literally a "cult following" estimated to number in the millions worldwide.³



Some readers may remember reading or hearing within the past two years about a certain "Christian" pastor, Youcef Nadarkhani, who was imprisoned in Iran and facing a death sentence for refusing to convert to Islam. This pastor had ties to Branham. One article on Pastor Nadarkhani stated:

"He is reported to be the evangelical pastor of 'the Church of Iran'. However, what might come as a shock to many evangelical believers is that Pastor Nadarkhani is actually one of the leaders in a growing cult in Iran, which is linked with the Oneness Pentecostalism (Jesus

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Editorials

JOHN HAGEE SEES BAD MOONS ARISING

In September 1969, the popular musical group Creedence Clearwater Revival topped the charts with their song, "Bad Moon Rising." The song began with the lyrics: "I see the bad moon arising. I see trouble on the way. I see earthquakes and lightnin'. I see bad times today." Apparently, pastor and author John Hagee has taken a page from CCR's songbook.

Hagee is notorious for predictions that never develop. Conspiracy-debunker Paul Coughlin writes that during the Gulf War in the early 1990s, Hagee appeared on the Trinity Broadcasting Network saying that the Gulf War would be a bloodbath for American soldiers and that it was the start of World War III. As Coughlin notes, it was "totally untrue," but Hagee just keeps saying things that are untrue "and people hear those things and forget" (*Secrets, Plots & Hidden Agendas*, pg. 143).

Hagee is the pastor of Cornerstone Church in San Antonio, Texas. His doctrine and proclamations have been evaluated in earlier editions of *The Quarterly Journal*. And while Hagee never wants to be accused of date-setting, a declared date by any other description is a date set. In regard to that, he is disingenuous and does suggest that certain current events of his choosing have prophetic significance. He allows his hearers to connect the dots on the prophetic calendar as he leads them along

in speculation, setting forth what seems to be terminal dates.

In his current video series *The Coming Four Blood Moons*, he refers to our generation as "the terminal generation." Terminal means "at the end" or "final." However, there is no way that Hagee could know that there are no generations beyond this one.

His ministry's website states, "This prophetic sermon is a teaching like you have never heard before!" Each of the three sermons from the series is available from his ministry on audio or video at a cost, but several versions of the sermons posted on YouTube.

Hagee himself refers to the four blood moons as "a concept you've never heard before." If one is not knowledgeable about astronomy or history, then they probably have never before heard of blood moons. However, the theory that Hagee proposes has been around awhile, even if his followers and listeners have never heard of it.

First, it is important to know a bit of information concerning blood moons. The frequency of these blood moons can be traced throughout modern history all the way back to ancient times. Author William Koenig has published an extensive listing and shows that blood moons have often occurred on Jewish holidays. These blood moon events occur *regularly* and are often the first full moon after the so-called harvest moon.

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HINN AND EX-WIFE RE-WED, SON ARRESTED

Wedding bells finally rang for faith healer Benny Hinn. In June 2012, he announced to his followers that he and his ex-wife, Suzanne, were reconciling and planned to remarry. Their 30-year marriage had ended in February 2010. At a “public meeting” detailing the reconciliation, he said that an Oct. 28, 2012, date was set for the remarriage ceremony.

But the date passed with no word of the ceremony taking place. Many of Hinn’s followers and critics wondered about the silence. Several weeks after the October date passed, Hinn posted a “special word” on his ministry’s website saying, “Those who are giving spiritual guidance and oversight have encouraged us to walk, not run, and to wait on the Lord as He completes His plan for our future.”

Then, in February, Hinn posted “a joyous announcement” on his ministry website which said in part, “On March 3, less than two weeks from now, Suzanne and I will stand before God and our family members as we celebrate the restoration of our marriage in a ceremony conducted by Dr. Jack Hayford, evangelist Reinhard Bonnke, and Suzanne’s father, Dr. Roy Harthern!”

During the ceremony, Bonnke said the event was a “miracle” and that he sees “a river of the balm of Gilead flowing to millions of broken marriages” because of the Hinns’ remarriage. Wave Nunnally, contributing author to *The Confusing World of Benny Hinn*, said that Bonnke “literally makes the Hinn ceremony and reunion a Lourdes/Fatima/Medjugorje for marriages” and that “the comment suggests that God’s grace is being imparted through the conduit of Benny and Suzanne’s remarriage.”

Nearly 1,500 people attended the wedding ceremony which was held at the Holy Land Experience in Orlando, Fla., a Christian theme park owned by the Trinity Broadcasting Network. Just days after the ceremony, Hinn began hawking *The Marriage of Pastor Benny and Suzanne Hinn: a Story of Love and Restoration DVD* on his website for \$25.

Yet not all recent events have been so blissful for Hinn. Two weeks before his wedding, his son and two bodyguards were arrested at his miracle crusade in Manaus, Brazil. According to the online edition of the British newspaper, *Daily Mail*, the trio was detained by local police “after allegedly beating up a deaf and dumb

man” at the healing rally in Brazil. A local pastor, Hestephenson Araujo, was attending the crusade and as Hinn was delivering his sermon, he approached the platform hoping to receive an “anointing” from Hinn. Because he was moving toward the stage with a bottle of water, Hinn’s 21-year-old son, Joshua, and two bodyguards thought he was going to throw water on the healing evangelist. They intercepted Araujo and took him to a trailer where they interrogated and beat him.

Police said that because Araujo was unable to hear or speak, the beating and punching continued. Police were called by “concerned members of the public.” Araujo was rescued, taken to a local hospital, treated, and released.

The newspaper further reported: “According to police, Mr. Araujo’s father, a sign language translator, entered into an agreement with Benny Hinn’s representatives to not press charges against the men. Police sources told Brazilian website Portal do Holando that the agreement involved a ‘large sum of money.’”

Hinn’s son and the bodyguards were released and immediately left Brazil for the United States. It was not Joshua’s first run-in with the law. In June 2012, he was arrested on suspicion of DUI by the Tarpon Springs, Fla., police.

—MKG

AUTHOR DAVE HUNT DIES

Dave Hunt, well-known apologist and best-selling author, died April 5. He was 86.

Hunt had a long list of ministry accomplishments. In 1992 he founded The Berean Call ministry, which is based in Bend, Ore. The organization was a catalyst for the defense of the Christian faith through his many books, newsletters, videos, and speaking engagements.

Hunt’s best-known book is *The Seduction of Christianity*, which he co-authored with longtime ministry associate T.A. McMahan. This 1985 cutting-edge volume was one of the first major publications to battle the onslaught of false teachers who were infiltrating the Church with their false teachings. Hunt and McMahan took on controversial subjects such as faith theology, possibility thinking, and psychology — and they were not afraid to name names. The book has remained in print for over 25 years.

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WHAT'S IN A NAME?

WHAT ONENESS THEOLOGY TEACHES US ABOUT DOCTRINE

by Bradley D. Lafferty

Jonathan Edwards, the Puritan preacher, once said:

“It is of exceedingly great importance that we should have right notions and conceptions of the nature, attributes, and perfections of God. It is the very foundation of all religion, both doctrinal and practical; it is to no purpose to worship God, except we know what we worship. ... It is impossible we should love, fear, and obey God as we ought, except we know what He is, and have right ideas of His perfections, that render Him lovely and worthy to be feared and obeyed.”¹

This makes apologetics and the pursuit of right doctrine of prime importance in Christian theology and practice. If we don't know what we seek, we won't know it when we find it. And if we pursue a God that in reality does not exist as we describe Him, or does not ask of us what we say He does, we cannot truly follow Him.

Because we are flawed and limited beings, there exists some room for differences in church polity and personal practice — a “wideness in God's mercy.” The apostles were twelve different men who interacted with Christ in twelve personal and distinctive relationships. They shared a common truth, which we call doc-

trine, but described and lived out that truth in different ways. This means that our faith in personal practice may look different when observed by different peoples, in different places, and at different times.

This does not mean that truth is relative, subjective, or circumstantial. The truth that man must act in faith by following the teachings of God is still true. While Christians have liberty in practice and expression, they are not allowed latitude in their definition of God's nature. It must be grounded in and drawn from Scripture. As such, there exists the danger of defining doctrine to include specific, individual necessity as part of the definition.

In plain form, this would represent a violation of Revelation 22:18, which says, “For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book.” Eve was guilty of just this infraction at the fall, when she added that they were to not even touch the fruit, when all God had said was to not eat it. Though this may have appeared a good way to provide a level of certainty for them, it actually served to weaken their position as a whole. It displayed a disturbing lack of faith in the sufficiency of God's instructions,

as well as making the rule seem overly restrictive, and easier to question. When man involves himself in improving on what God has said, “Sin is at the door.”

GOD IS IN THE DETAILS, TOO

Details do matter. What may begin as a slight deviation can become a gaping chasm later. A one-foot putt struck one degree off-center will still fall into the hole. That same stroke from 40 feet will miss the hole by nearly eight inches. If doctrine is the details of what we believe, then we had best get our doctrine straight from the outset, lest we miss the truth at the end.

There exists, then, a balance that must be struck; one which holds the details as important — and truth as absolute — while leaving the individual room to maneuver into position to follow it. Harold O.J. Brown wrote:

“Too much enthusiastic faith without a corresponding degree of theological understanding is almost certain to lead to error, perhaps to serious heresy. Too much doctrine unaccompanied by a living and growing faith is the recipe for dead orthodoxy.”²

As Brown suggests, one must hold fast to the truth of doctrine, or the faith it supports will be baseless,

while simultaneously avoiding making the truth something constructed from personal circumstance. Being aware that God made each man in His image, but different, and the differences each man brings with him to the cross may well result in differences in the details of the practice of faith. One must be willing to work in love with others toward the same eternal goals.

This balance is sometimes hard to come by, especially when the differences appear to be slight at the outset. Take the present-day controversy over "Jesus' Name" or "Jesus Only" baptism.

A BAPTISM BY ANY OTHER NAME

The exact words spoken over a convert being baptized would appear to be inconsequential. But this is not the case.

Jesus' Name baptism, a tenet of Oneness Pentecostalism that arose out of the Assemblies of God denomination³ in the early 1900s, finds its roots in a sermon preached by Canadian evangelist Robert E. McAlister at a meeting in Los Angeles in 1913. Douglas Jacobsen details the origins of the movement:

"The emergence of Oneness pentecostalism is usually associated with the camp-meeting held at Arroyo Seco (in the Los Angeles area) during the spring of 1913. There is evidence that Oneness views had been circulating in certain parts of the pentecostal movement before that time, however, so it is perhaps best to view the Arroyo Seco meeting as the place where pentecostals who were already predisposed in this direction were first able to solidify their views and connect with other like-minded believers. The Arroyo Seco revival clearly helped pave the way for Oneness pentecostalism to coalesce into a visible theological movement."⁴

It was at the Arroyo Seco camp meeting where McAlister announced "that the Apostles did not employ the triune formula in water baptism."⁵

McAlister asserted "that the Apostles administered baptism 'only' in the name of Jesus (Acts 2:38; 8:16; 10:48; 19:5)."⁶

John G. Scheppe, a German pastor in attendance, claimed that after a night of intense study and prayer, God had revealed to him that this was the truth. Jacobsen wrote:

"The morning after MacAlister's [*sic*] talk, another minister, John G. Scheppe [*sic*], went running through the camp shouting that the instruction to baptize believers in Jesus's name was the new revelation for which people had been hoping. The meeting as a whole was not quite sure what to make of all this, but a small coterie of pentecostal leaders was convinced that the new message of baptism in Jesus's name signaled a critical turning point in the history of the movement. They left the meeting determined to spread the new message of Jesus-only pentecostal faith across the country, hoping to unite pentecostals under this new banner."⁷

Author and pastor Larry DeBruyn describes what followed:

"The 'New Issue,' as it was called, spread like a wildfire in the Assemblies of God in the early 1900s. Significant numbers of pastors became convinced that baptism needed to be administered 'in the name of Jesus Christ,' thereby invalidating the Trinitarian formula historically believed by and practiced within the Assemblies of God. Pastors enthusiastically submitted to re-baptism in Jesus' name, and took the issue back to their local churches where they also re-baptized members of their congregations according to the same formula. To the present day, replacement baptism continues as a major issue for Oneness Pentecostals."⁸

In Matthew 28:19, Jesus says, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of

the Holy Spirit." This is the basis for centuries of Church teaching and tradition on baptism.⁹

This questioning and undoing of hundreds of years of Church belief, doctrine, and practice, and establishing that baptism must be done in the name of Jesus only or it is of no effect, seems to be a dubious undertaking at best, especially because the biblical references used to support the premise (Acts 2:38; 8:16; 10:48; and 19:5) do not actually appear to do so.

Expounding grammatically upon Acts 2:38, DeBruyn states:

"The prepositional phrase 'in the name of Jesus Christ' (Greek, ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ) functions adverbially. A grammatical issue to be resolved is whether the adverbial phrase qualifies the general command to 'repent,' or the more individual command to 'be baptized,' or both. In that a conjunction (Greek, καὶ) joins both verbs ('Repent, *and* ... be baptized'), the phrase 'in the name of Jesus Christ' may best be understood to modify both 'repent' and 'be baptized.'"¹⁰

Additionally, DeBruyn says:

"Because there is no apostolic formula for repentance mentioned in the narrative, then neither can it be inferred that 'in the name of Jesus' is a formula for baptism. In referencing his command to repent and be baptized 'upon' Jesus' name, Peter appealed to the Lord's authority for what he had ordered."¹¹

Expositor John Gill said that "in the name of Jesus" was "not to the exclusion of the Father, and of the Spirit, in whose name also this ordinance is to be administered, (Matthew 28:19) but the name of Jesus Christ is particularly mentioned, because of these Jews, who had before rejected and denied him as the Messiah; but now, upon their repentance and faith, they are to be baptized in his name, by his authority, according to his command; professing their faith in

him, devoting themselves to him, and calling on his name."¹²

So, when context and circumstances are considered, the passage is found to refer to environment and repentance as well as baptism. As such, it must be pointing to the authority under which the command was given, not providing us a liturgy for the baptismal ordinance alone.

In regard to Acts 8:16, DeBruyn states:

"... as in Acts 2:38, the prepositional phrase 'in the name of the Lord Jesus' is adverbial to 'been baptized' (Greek, βαπτισμένοι ὑπὲρ Χριστοῦ). As such, the Acts narrative describes only the time frame and manner in which the Samaritans had experienced baptism. ... The verse indicates only that the Samaritans had not yet been initiated into the sphere of life in the Holy Spirit, and as such, provides no baptismal formula or liturgy. The mention of baptism in this verse does not warrant that Jesus' Trinitarian formula for baptism be denied."¹³

It should also be noted that the Samaritan believers were not rebaptized, addressing another frequent teaching of Oneness Pentecostalism, that rebaptism in Jesus' name only for those previously baptized in the Trinitarian form is essential to salvation. Vinson Synan says, "According to oneness teaching, the only valid baptism is in 'Jesus' name' and not 'in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.'"¹⁴

Pastor and Pentecostal leader Garfield T. Haywood wrote:

"The Blood and the Name of Jesus are inseparable. To be *saved* by water baptism, it must be administered in the name of Jesus. ... The life of the Blood of Christ is connected with baptism when it is administered in His Name."¹⁵

This has led some in the Pentecostal movement to teach that those not baptized in the name of Jesus only are

not truly saved and to demand rebaptism of those who had previously been baptized under the Trinitarian form to affect proper salvation. Had this been the case, however, then Paul would surely have had the Samaritan believers rebaptized "correctly." Because he did not, one is left to wonder if the teaching has theological merit.

DeBruyn points out that in Acts 10:48, the phrase "'in the name' follows the main verb of the sentence, 'he ordered.' Had Luke intended to emphasize that baptism was to have been accomplished by a formulaic use of 'in the name of Jesus Christ,' he could have positioned the phrase after 'to baptize.' In this case the translation would be, 'And he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.' As the wording stands, it literally reads, 'And he [Peter] *ordered them in the name of Jesus Christ* to be baptized.' As such, 'in the name of Jesus Christ' modifies 'ordered' and denotes the source and authority of the command which he gave to be baptized."¹⁶

As with Acts 2:38, the passage refers to the authority under which the order to baptize is given, and therefore fails to support the Jesus' Name position.

Addressing Acts 19:5, DeBruyn finds problems with regard to the belief system of Oneness Pentecostalism:

"[T]he dialog between Paul and the Ephesian disciples of John provides insight into the standard formula used in baptism. 'Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?' he asked, to which they responded, 'No, we have not even heard whether there is a Holy Spirit' (Acts 19:2). Note: their confessed ignorance of the Holy Spirit then stimulates Paul to ask them, 'Into what then were you baptized?' (Acts 19:3) Evidently, it appeared incredulous to Paul that, in their undergoing the baptismal rite, these Ephesian disciples had 'not even heard whether there was a Holy Spirit.' As his follow-up question indicates, Paul assumed that they

would have at least heard of the Holy Spirit when they were baptized. ... Those disciples should have become acquainted with the name of the Holy Spirit at the time of their being baptized according to the Trinitarian formula."¹⁷

DeBruyn then adds:

"... the grammar and context of Acts 19:5 do not support a dogma that 'in the name of the Lord Jesus' needs to be recited over each person baptized."¹⁸

He also then addresses the rebaptism issue:

"... the rebaptism of the Ephesian disciples was no rebaptism at all. It was an initial baptism of disciples with reference to Jesus Christ becoming Lord in their lives. To deduce that this text warrants, even mandates, a rebaptism in the name of Jesus stretches the text beyond legitimate application."¹⁹

John Wesley said of the twelve men in the passage:

"They were baptized twice; but not with the same baptism. John did not administer that baptism which Christ afterward commanded, that is, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost."²⁰

A.T. Robertson explains:

"The point here is simply that these twelve men were grossly ignorant of the meaning of John's baptism as regards repentance, the Messiahship of Jesus, the Holy Spirit. Hence Paul had them baptized, not so much again, as really baptized this time, in the name or on the authority of the Lord Jesus as he had himself commanded (Matt. 28:19) and as was the universal apostolic custom. Proper understanding of 'Jesus' involved all the rest including the Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). Luke does not give a formula, but simply explains that now these men had a proper object of

faith (Jesus) and were now really baptized."²¹

As stated above, where a one-degree deviation in a putt can lead to greater separation further on, it can be seen that the "advancement" of Oneness Pentecostal theology from a misunderstanding of the liturgy of baptism to the call for rebaptism of anyone administered the right "incorrectly," leads to doctrinal differences that become hard to overlook.

BAD PENNIES AND BAD THEOLOGY ARE SURE TO RETURN

Unfortunately, the departure is not finished. DeBruyn continues by writing that "rebaptism according to the 'new formula' also spawned contingent and serious theological issues regarding God's person and nature. ... To Oneness Pentecostals, the one name employed in baptism provides a theological insight into God's ontological being."²²

David Jacobsen tells us about early Pentecostal leader Garfield T. Haywood:

"Haywood began his reflections on the nature of the godhead by explicitly rejecting the doctrine of God as Trinity, which had been held in common by the Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches (and later most Protestant churches) for over 1,500 years. He thought that classic Trinitarianism was just one more part of a long tradition of error that had misled Christian thinking for centuries."²³

Additionally, the "discovery" of Jesus Only baptism, according to Pentecostal historian David Reed, "sowed the seeds of a radical Christocentric alternative that reasoned that, if there is only one name (Jesus) to be used in baptism, that name must be given by God in biblical revelation, and it must reflect the radical unity of God's being."²⁴

This "radical" unity to which Reed refers is actually nothing more than a revival of the ancient heresy known

as Sabellianism, or Monarchial Modalism. C.A. Blasing explains the particulars by pointing out that:

"A more sophisticated form of modalism was taught by Sabellius in Rome early in the third century and was given the name Sabellianism. ... It seems that Sabellius taught the existence of a divine monad (which he named *Huiopator*), which by a process of expansion projected itself successively in revelation as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. As Father it revealed itself as Creator and Lawgiver. As Son it revealed itself as Redeemer. As Spirit it revealed itself as the giver of grace. These were three different modes revealing the same divine person."²⁵

Sabellius was excommunicated by Calixtus, the bishop of Rome, in A.D. 220.

The Trinity is one of the great mysteries of faith. This is due in part to how humans examine, categorize, and evaluate information. Data is said to be true if it corresponds positively to data already accepted as true. As such, information for which no known corollary can be drawn is much harder to examine and verify. And because there is no other thing in the known universe which is Trinitarian in nature, it is very difficult to describe or evaluate the doctrine outside — or inside — the realm of faith.

Man naturally rebels against anything that appears to violate the natural order of things. Chaos and contradiction are counterintuitive to how knowledge is treated. From a purely logical standpoint, the idea that something can be both three and one simultaneously is difficult to imagine. Short of a knock on the head, one finger will not usually appear to be three. So it is understandable that the doctrine of the Trinity would present difficulties to the human mind. In fairness to Oneness Pentecostal theology, it is only logical to reject a Trinitarian baptism if there is no Trinity. Had they arrived at this position in this order, then, it would be easier to understand.

But the answer, as was noted earlier, is never to add to what God has said, or to try to "re-explain" His nature. The answer lies in acceptance through faith that God has revealed Himself correctly to mankind. As DeBruyn asserts:

"[T]he Bible teaches there never was a time when the Son was not (John 1:1-2). The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are eternal contemporaries one with another (John 17:5; 15:26). As such, the Son, as distinct from the Father and Holy Spirit, existed as a divine Person before His birth in Bethlehem. This is the Trinitarian teaching of Holy Scripture."²⁶

Matt Perman describes the Trinity:

"The Bible speaks of the Father as God (Phil. 1:2), Jesus as God (Titus 2:13), and the Holy Spirit as God (Acts 5:3-4). Are these just three different ways of looking at God, or simply ways of referring to three different roles that God plays? The answer must be no, because the Bible also indicates that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are distinct Persons. For example, because the Father sent the Son into the world (John 3:16), He cannot be the same person as the Son. Likewise, after the Son returned to the Father (John 16:10), the Father and the Son sent the Holy Spirit into the world (John 14:26; Acts 2:33). Therefore, the Holy Spirit must be distinct from the Father and the Son."²⁷

Other questions of practical importance arise in relation to Trinitarianism. If God says His name is the singular "I Am" (Exodus 3:14) and also repeatedly says "let us" do such and such (Genesis 1:26; 11:17), then there is no justification for attempting to describe God in other terms. Jesus was not a ventriloquist. Someone else was speaking "from above" at His baptism (Mark 1:10-11) and at His Transfiguration (Mark 9:7). And Jesus prayed to His Father in those earthly prayers.

So, from such an apparently insignificant issue as who gets mentioned

when someone is baptized, we arrive at a different salvation and a different God. This is why doctrine, apologetics, and biblical interpretation are so essential. While practice is fluid, truth is not. *How* one worships may well be a matter of circumstance or preference, but *whom* one worships is not.

This controversy is important because of the popularity of leaders such as televangelist T.D. Jakes. Jakes is pastor of The Potter's House in Dallas and was raised in Oneness Pentecostalism. Jonathan Moorhead, in his master of theology thesis, offers this warning about Jakes:

"An alarming fact in his early days as a pastor is the affiliation of his church with the Higher Ground Always Abounding Assemblies. Although his website only identifies this organization as 'a Pentecostal church organization that governs approximately 200 churches,' the modifier for 'Pentecostal' is omitted. The modifier that Jakes avoids is 'Oneness.' The Higher Ground Always Abounding Assemblies is a black Oneness Pentecostal group that Jakes has been a part since the inception of his ministry."²⁸

Moorhead continues his concern:

"T.D. Jakes' affiliation with the Higher Ground Always Abounding Assemblies should raise warning flags to anyone who is familiar with the organization. The distinctive of the group is strictly Oneness in its view of the Godhead. In spite of this heretical view, T.D. Jakes has never denounced the organization, and continues to work with it as 'a leader and elected bishop.'"²⁹

Jakes was recently afforded a public forum in which to denounce his Oneness associations. In January 2012, he met with pastors James MacDonald of Harvest Bible Chapel of Rolling Meadows, Ill., and Mark Driscoll of Mars Hill Church in Seattle, Wash., at a theological roundtable called Elephant Room. The topic was Jakes' Oneness teachings, and

whether he had reached a turning point in his understanding and adopted a Trinitarian theology, as had been reported.

Given the opportunity to state his position, Jakes said that God "manifests" Himself to man as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. When pressed, he would not go beyond this statement. At issue is the definition of the term "manifests," for that is the very word Oneness Pentecostals use to describe the appearance of the varying "modes" of God. If Jakes was indeed embracing Trinitarianism, it would seem prudent to adopt new language as part of the process. Not doing so leaves room to question his true intent.

Despite the title of his article which claimed, "T.D. Jakes Embraces Doctrine of the Trinity, Moves Away from 'Oneness' view," reporter Michael Foust cites Southern Baptist leader Malcolm Yarnell who observed:

"T.D. Jakes wants to have both Trinitarians and Oneness Pentecostals, who are Unitarian Modalists, classified as brothers in Christ at the same time. But you cannot affirm both are in the realm of truth without removing the Trinity as a fundamental basis of the Christian faith. You cannot have both beliefs at the same time: either God is both three and one (as Trinitarians believe and Unitarians deny) or God is only one (as Unitarians like Oneness Pentecostals believe and Trinitarians deny). There is no bridging this divide without losing the Trinity itself, for He is the God we worship."³⁰

COMPROMISING DOCTRINE FOR UNITY

Ecumenism has long been an issue in the Church, but far too often the quest for ecclesiastical unity comes by sacrificing biblical doctrine on the altar of theological compromise. While Psalm 133:1 tells "how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity" and the Church is reminded by Christ that "all will know that you are My

disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35), history teaches that any time two or more groups of people assemble, the likelihood that differences in practice, followed by tension and dispute, will increase. But this elusive unity can be achieved, while both displaying the love Christ desires and maintaining and preaching "the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3).

Jude's epistle is a great treatise on this topic. Jude immediately establishes that mercy, peace, and love should be multiplied among them (v. 2). Jesus was not a fan of the Pharisees of His day. He condemned them for being legalistic, uncaring, self-important tyrants. The Church has no place for this kind of religion and those who practice it, like Westboro Baptist Church, and they should be called out and set right. But that does not mean that contending for the truth is a bad thing. In verse 3, Christians are called to "contend earnestly for the faith." This command comes immediately after the injunction to be a caring community, so the required contending here cannot in any way be viewed as counterproductive to that call.

Some would say that tolerance and acceptance of any sincere belief or practice is the goal. Individuality mandates that religion be individual, too. God made us different, so He must be passive with us being different about Him. But the unity the Psalmist wrote of cannot be achieved by ignoring the errors of others. As Paul would say, "May it never be!" It is more unloving to ignore another's inaccuracies and leave them in their error than it is to bring them back to full fellowship with God. It is not loving to avoid warning someone that a bridge down the road is out because it might offend them in their sincere attempt to reach the other side of the river. In the same way, the biblical instruction in Galatians 6, "Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness" (v. 1) represents a gesture of caring and love. That is Jude's point in these first three verses: that love need not be

what is sacrificed in the pursuit of truth, only error.

Jude then addresses the issue at hand: "For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ" (v. 4). Notice that the charge against these men is summed up in that they altered the truth by "turning" and "denying," and arriving at what Jude calls lewdness. Albert Barnes describes this lewdness, saying these men were:

"Abusing the doctrines of grace so as to give indulgence to corrupt and carnal propensities. That is, probably, they gave this form to their teaching, as Antinomians have often done, that by the gospel they were released from the obligations of the law, and might give indulgence to their sinful passions in order that grace might abound."³¹

In response, Jude calls believers to "remember." First, he reminds his readers "that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe. And the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day" (vv. 5-6).

Jude reminds his readers that God is the judge and will deal with these people in His time, according to His sovereign will. It also points out what God thinks of "turning" and "denying."

The next remembrance was "the words which were spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ" (v. 17). In essence, Jude is calling them to return to the doctrine or "the faith which was once for all delivered" from verse 3. Jude is saying that the way to real unity is a commitment to the truth of the Gospel. He affirms this with his next charge, to be "building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit" (v. 20). A firm foundation is the secret

to any successful building project, and a common faith will always promote unity in the midst of its followers.

In all things Christian, the Word of God should be the foundation and guide. Proper exegesis, interpretation, and apologetics must be Bible-based, not experientially derived. If experience is allowed to become the basis of doctrine, then things have become reversed and error results.

The order of Genesis is as follows: God, the never changing, creates the universe, which follows standard laws and principles. Into that universe, He introduces man, made in His image, but not standardized. There is variation and individuality. At no point is the individuality of His creation meant to be a determining factor in establishing or defining truth. But in His sovereignty, He allows for variation in fellowship and worship, which cannot occur without variation in practice.

Finally, Jude urges them to "keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life" (v. 21). Once again, the call to love in the midst of contending and correction is given and reinforced by the injunction of verses 22 and 23: "And on some have compassion, making a distinction; but others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh." If there was only one true practice, there could not be multiple approaches.

Proverbs 12:15 and 21:2 make it clear what God thinks of the ways of man: "The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but he who heeds counsel is wise" and "Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but the LORD weighs the hearts." And that perhaps is the secret to this dilemma: it is not the actions, but the heart of the believer, that matters to God, and should matter to us. If someone practices the true faith a different way, but that practice does not undermine or diminish the faith, then we are to strive for unity. If that faith is called into question, or altered, then that person needs to be confronted and corrected in love.

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9. See further, E. Calvin Beisner, "Jesus Only" Churches. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1998. On page 71, Beisner writes, "The proper formula for water baptism is triune." He supports that claim by saying, "Jesus prescribed this formula in Matthew 28:19" and "The early church used a triune formula," and cites numerous statements for validation.
10. "IN THE NAME OF JESUS," op. cit., pp. 20-21, italic and ellipsis in original.
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cit., pg. 7, italic and ellipsis in DeBruyn citation.

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WILLIAM BRANHAM

(continued from page 1)

Only) cult, which is non-Trinitarian, believes in baptismal regeneration, and is very closely linked and supported by the United Pentecostal Churches outside of Iran.⁴ They — with less than 200 members inside Iran — greatly admire and follow the teachings of an American preacher, William M. Branham.⁵

All these things show that even though this is a very small movement, "Message" churches or "Message" believers (what Branham's followers call themselves) are yet a force in today's world. Additionally, in some Christian charismatic circles, Branham is revered. His influence on modern-day faith healers should not be underestimated.

THE LEGEND OF WILLIAM BRANHAM

Evidence of the legendary nature of Branham's ministry can be seen in some oft-quoted words from a biography of Branham, written by Gordon Lindsay, who later along with his wife, Freda, founded Christ For The Nations in Dallas:

"The story of the life of William Branham is so out of this world and beyond the ordinary that were there not available a host of infallible proofs which document

and attest its authenticity, one might well be excused for considering it far fetched and incredible. But the facts are so generally known, and of such a nature that they can be so easily verified by any sincere investigator, that they must stand as God's witness to His willingness and purpose to reveal Himself again to men as he once did in the days of the prophets and the apostles. The story of this prophet's life — for he is a prophet, though we infrequently use the term — indeed witnesses to the fact that Bible days are here again."⁶

William Branham's eldest son, Billy Paul Branham, asserted:

"Throughout the life of this humble servant of the Lord, who so epitomized the Spirit of Christ, the manifestations of God were so perfectly vindicated that they cannot be explained away by any natural reasoning. Of the hundreds of thousands of visions which the Lord gave to Brother Branham around the world, not one time did there ever occur a vision which was not confirmed and attested to be the Word of the Lord."⁷

David E. Harrell, Jr. says that William Branham and Oral Roberts were "the two giants of the healing revival"⁸ which took place from 1947 through 1958.⁹

HOW BRANHAM BECAME LEGENDARY

Branham's claim to fame is the result of three things: his healing ministry, which included an amazingly accurate ability to tell people things about their lives which he presumably had no natural way of knowing; his prophetic ministry, through which he prophesied future events; and his teaching ministry, which promulgated some bizarre and divisive doctrines. His teaching ministry seems to have been largely built on and dependent upon his prophetic ministry.

In addition, Branham had an apparently simple, sincere, and humble demeanor that appealed to his audience.¹⁰

Much of the information about Branham's life story comes from Branham himself, including information about the spiritual gifts he displayed, the accounts of the many visions and prophecies he related, and some of his notable healings.

For instance, in 1950, in collaboration with Branham, Lindsay published an account of Branham's life and ministry up to that time. Two chapters were written by ministry associates of Branham and three chapters were based on testimonies by members of Branham's church.¹¹

According to these members, Branham was a prophet of God.¹² The

book's longest chapter is a transcription of Branham relating some of the visions he had received up to that point.¹³

One author wrote of Branham:

"He had long been a pastor in a small independent Baptist church; he was introduced to the pentecostal world by the despised oneness pentecostals; his preaching was halting and simple beyond belief. But William Branham became a prophet to a generation. A small, meek, middle-aged man with piercing eyes, he held audiences spell-bound with tales of constant communication with God and angels. Night after night, before thousands of awed believers, he discerned the diseases of the sick and pronounced them healed."¹⁴

Some of the accounts of events in Branham's life are different in ways that are difficult to reconcile. More problematic is the fact that Branham himself is the apparent *source* for many of these disparate accounts of his life.

Professor C. Douglas Weaver writes:

"Branham's autobiographical stories were often embellished, and sometimes contradictory. Other sources, written by his associates or followers, are apologetic and hagiographical in nature."¹⁵

Weaver later writes, "Branham's hagiographers constantly embellished his life story."¹⁶

WILLIAM BRANHAM, TELL ME A STORY

The legend of William Branham begins with his birth: Lindsay's biography of Branham contains nothing particularly unique except:

"As the neighbors gathered in to see the new born babe, there seemed to be, so it is told, a strange feeling of awe in the room."¹⁷

Lindsay continues by suggesting that there was something supernatural concerning this feeling of awe:

"Who can say that it [the awe] was not the presence of the angel who, under the direction of God, has guided William Branham in many of the events of his life, and who later was to speak to him in person?"¹⁸

Elsewhere, Branham would later recount the story of his birth, stating that, "a Light come [*sic*] whirling through the window, about the size of a pillow, and circled around where I was, and went down on the bed."¹⁹

The impression one gets from reading about Branham's childhood is that of a boy who grew up in deep poverty, whose father was an alcoholic, and Branham himself continually feeling different from everyone else because of his mystical experiences.

Branham said:

"And Mother was fifteen years old when I was born, Dad was eighteen. And I was the first of the nine children. ... Now, we was [*sic*] very poor, just the poorest of poor. ... I was born on April the 6th, 1909."²⁰

Branham also explained that his family was completely irreligious.²¹ Lindsay relates, "the boy [Branham] was about seven years of age, ... It was at this time that God *first spoke* to the lad."²² The occasion was Branham carrying some water from the barn to the house, a distance of "about a city block." Halfway, Branham decided to rest under a poplar tree. As he did so:

"I heard a sound as of the wind blowing the leaves. I knew that it wasn't blowing any other place. ... I stepped back from the tree and noticed that in a certain place about the size of a barrel, the wind seemed to be blowing through the tree leaves. Then there came a voice saying: '*Never drink, smoke, or defile your body in any way, for I have a work for you to do when you get older.*' It frightened me so that I ran home, but at that time I never told anyone about it. ... I believe that the angel of God was in that tree, and in later years I was to meet

him face to face and talk with him."²³

Although Branham stated that "at the time I never told anyone about it," in recounting this same incident in 1959, he says that after he arrived home, he explained to his mother what had happened and that she laughed at him.²⁴

Also in *that* version of his life story, he mentions a different "first vision" occurring when he was about two years old: "At the year of about ... something a little over two years old, the first vision taken place."²⁵ Branham relates that he heard a bird singing in a tree. After the bird flew away:

"... a voice came from where the bird was in the tree, like a wind caught in the bush, and it said, 'You'll live near a city called New Albany.' And I've lived, from the time I was three years old until this time, within three miles of New Albany, Indiana."²⁶

In this later account of Branham's life — not the Lindsay biography — Branham mentions that, about a month after hearing the voice telling him not to drink or smoke, he had a vision:

"I was playing marbles out with my little brothers, out in the front yard. And all at once I had a strange feeling come on me. And I stopped and sat down aside of a tree. And we were right up on the bank from the Ohio River. And I looked down towards Jeffersonville, and I seen a bridge rise up and go across the river — span the river. And I seen sixteen men (I counted them) that dropped off of there and lost their lives on that bridge. I run in real quick and told my mother, and she thought I went to sleep. But they kept it in mind, and twenty-two years from then the Municipal Bridge now (that many of you cross when you cross there) crossed the river at the same place, and sixteen man lost their life building that bridge across the river."²⁷

In Lindsay's biography, Branham makes a briefer reference to this incident in a chapter where he relates visions he has had.²⁸ However, there are problems with this vision which are pointed out on a website (<http://en.believetheSign.com>) that while somewhat sympathetic toward Branham's ministry as a healer, tries to objectively evaluate his ministry.²⁹

There it states:

"We have not been able to find any historic documents or evidence supporting the statement that 16 men died during the construction of the Louisville Municipal Bridge. Additionally [from another account of this incident by Branham], it is clear that William Branham stated that the 16 men died by drowning. ... Based on research done by [the blog] Searching for Vindication,³⁰ it appears that there were 2 fatalities in the construction of the bridge.³¹ ... The research documented on the Searching for Vindication website refutes any claim that the records in 1929 were inaccurate, and that the 16 fatalities were simply not recorded. We would highly recommend those interested in this issue to read the research performed by Searching for Vindication. ... William Branham related this same story many times and other ministers have repeated it as the gospel truth."³²

It cannot be overstressed that the source of much of the information commonly encountered about Branham's life and ministry seems to have been Branham himself or one of his followers, and that different versions of the same incident that he himself told are sometimes either difficult to reconcile or are contradictory.

As a young man Branham was very aware that despite his mystical childhood experiences, he was not saved. One thing that seems to have had reinforced this sense of "lostness" was the death of his brother, Edward.

About two years after Edward's death, Branham was overcome with

gas while working at the local gas company, where he was testing meters at the time. As a result, he eventually ended up in the hospital, where the doctors told him he needed to have an operation on his appendix. During his time in the hospital, he became afraid of dying, and realized he wasn't ready to meet God. He claims that he had a vision, in which the voice of God confronted him with his refusal to obey God's call on his life earlier.³³ At this point, Branham made a commitment to the Lord, saying, "Lord, if that is you, let me go back again to earth and I will preach your Gospel from the housetops and street corners. I'll tell everyone about it!"³⁴

BRANHAM'S CONVERSION STORY

It seems surprising that Branham would surrender to God for ministry when he didn't even believe he was saved yet. Nevertheless, he describes his conversion this way:

"I started out to seek and find God. ... One night I became so hungry for God and a real experience that I went out to the old shed back of the house and tried to pray. ... All at once there came a light in the shed and it formed a cross, and the voice from the cross spoke to me in a language I could not understand. It then went away. I was spellbound. When I came to myself again, I prayed, 'Lord, if that is you, please come and talk to me again.'"³⁵

"I knew that something had appeared to me, and as I prayed it appeared again. Then it seemed to me that there had been a thousand pounds lifted from my soul. I jumped up and ran to the house and it seemed as though I were running on air. Mother asked, 'Bill, what has happened to you?' I replied, 'I do not know but I surely feel good and light.' I could not stay in the house any longer. I had to get out and run."³⁶

"I knew then that if God wanted me to preach he would heal me,

so I went to a church that believed in anointing with oil, and I was healed instantly. I saw then that the disciples had something that most of the ministers do not have today. The disciples were baptized with the Holy Ghost and so could heal the sick and do mighty miracles in His name. So I began to pray for the baptism of the Holy Ghost. One day about six months later God gave me the desire of my heart. He spoke to me in a great light telling me to preach and to pray for the sick and He would heal them regardless of what disease they had. I then started preaching and doing what He told me to do."³⁷

In this account of his conversion experience, Branham makes no mention of his having any consciousness of sin or of him believing in Jesus as his Savior. Also puzzling is his recollection of going into the house and responding to his mother's question about what happened to him by admitting that he didn't know other than that he felt good and light. No mention of repentance, forgiveness, or salvation. Nevertheless he confidently recounts this incident as his salvation experience.

Although Branham claims that God answered his prayer for the baptism of the Holy Spirit after six months, he later testified about subsequently attending a series of Oneness Pentecostal meetings and says, "I wanted the Baptism of the Holy Ghost if God would give it to me."³⁸ So one is left wondering when he did receive this baptism.

BRANHAM'S MINISTRY BEGINS

Weaver notes that following his conversion, "Branham was ordained an independent Baptist minister; and he developed a small band of followers."³⁹ In his testimony, Branham refers to this church as "the Missionary Baptist Church."⁴⁰ However, Weaver writes:

"... the actual name of the church [to which Branham belonged] was First Pentecostal Baptist. ...

The pastor of the church, Roy Davis, asserted, 'I am the minister who received Brother Branham into the first Pentecostal assembly he ever frequented.' Davis elaborated that he was the first person whom Branham saw anoint with oil and pray for the sick. Moreover, Davis claimed that his home served as the site for Branham's reception of the Holy Spirit baptism."⁴¹

From Weaver's description of this church, it appears that it was as much or more a Pentecostal than a Baptist church. Regardless, this pastor both baptized and ordained Branham.⁴²

Lindsay writes that at age 24, Branham held a tent meeting in Jeffersonville. Following this revival, Branham baptized 130 people in the Ohio River.⁴³ Lindsay wrote that at the baptismal service, "a heavenly light appeared above him as he was about to baptize the seventeenth person. This was witnessed by the vast congregation that stood looking on."⁴⁴ Elsewhere in the book, Lindsay elaborated on this same incident:

"As Brother Branham was about to baptize the seventeenth person, he heard a still small voice which said, 'Look up.' Three times the words were repeated. He looked up and there from the sky appeared a bright star. After a few seconds had passed, the people looked up and many of the people saw the star also. Some fainted and others shouted and still others ran away. Then the star apparently was withdrawn back into the sky. The incident created such an interest that an account of it appeared in the local newspaper."⁴⁵

Presumably, this is how Lindsay heard Branham tell of the experience. In a different version, however, Branham related the experience this way: He was baptizing the seventeenth person:

"And just then a whirl come down from the heavens above, here come that Light, shining down. Hundreds and hundreds of people on the bank right at

two o'clock in the afternoon, in June. And It hung right over where I was at. A Voice spoke from there, and said 'As John the Baptist was sent for the forerunner of the first coming of Christ, you've got a ... have a Message that will bring forth the forerunning of the Second Coming of Christ.' And it liked to a-scared me to death."⁴⁶

Weaver observes, "Significantly, however, this official biography [i.e., the Lindsay biography], published in 1950, made no mention of the forerunner prophecy."⁴⁷

Weaver later admitted, "I have been unable to locate the newspaper article [describing a light appearing at the baptismal service]. Branham's followers in Jeffersonville do not have a copy. Lee Vayle [a friend of Branham] suggested that one of Branham's former acquaintances might have destroyed much of Branham's personal files."⁴⁸

On his website, "William Branham and His Message," John Kennah, a former committed "Message" believer from June 1980 until December 1989⁴⁹ made this statement concerning the supernatural events that supposedly attended the June 11, 1933, baptismal service:

"As for whether or not the supernatural element of the 1933 baptism incident even occurred, I have found no extant evidence to support that it did. William Branham claimed that local newspapers carried the story, but even Voice of God Recordings Inc. [an organization that publishes and promotes Branham's messages, in both written and audio formats] admits that there are no known existing copies of such articles (they say the newspaper company which supposedly carried the story, *The Louisville Herald Post*, went out of business and all back issues were destroyed in the 1937 Ohio River flood)."⁵⁰

It again appears that the only support we have for anything supernatural occurring at this baptismal service comes from Branham himself. How-

ever, Weaver notes that Branham's claim that something supernatural happened during the baptismal experience in the summer of 1933 was part of Branham's ongoing testimony during the days of the healing revival.⁵¹

THE YEARS PRIOR TO THE 1947-1958 HEALING REVIVAL

Weaver writes:

"From 1933 to 1946 Branham was the bivocational minister of the Branham Tabernacle in Jeffersonville, Indiana. After the successful revival of June 1933, Branham's supporters had joined together and organized this small independent church."⁵²

During those years, a number of significant events occurred in Branham's life. One of these was his marriage to Hope Brumbach.⁵³ Two years later, his eldest son, Billy Paul, was born. Approximately 11 months after this, they had a daughter, whom he named Sharon Rose, after "The Rose of Sharon," spoken of in Song of Solomon 2:1.⁵⁴ Branham describes this time in his life as one of being poor, but very happy.⁵⁵

A second event that occurred during this time was that, in 1936,⁵⁶ on the way back home from an out-of-town fishing trip, Branham spontaneously decided to attend a series of meetings held by Oneness Pentecostals. According to Branham, "That is where I got acquainted with Pentecost."⁵⁷ However, based on what we have seen above about his experience at his home church, First Pentecostal Baptist, Branham's assertion seems highly doubtful. In any event, Branham seems to have developed an admiration for them there, and they welcomed him. Although he claims to have received a number of invitations from them during that occasion to preach at some of their churches and although his wife and mother were supportive of his involvement with them,⁵⁸ in a subsequent version of this story, Branham faults his mother-in-law for discouraging him from associating with them again.⁵⁹

In 1937, tragedy struck the Branham household due to the Ohio River

flooding. His wife, who was already sick at the time,⁶⁰ became critically ill due to her evacuation because of the flood. Both of his infant children became "seriously ill with pneumonia."⁶¹ After a time, both his wife and his daughter died. He believed that the deaths of his wife and daughter were the result of his disobedience in refusing to minister to Oneness Pentecostals.

Branham subsequently married Meda Broy, a woman who had helped care for his son Billy Paul, both before and after his first wife's death.⁶² They had additional children.

BRANHAM'S ANGELIC VISITATION

Branham credits the beginning of his widespread healing ministry with an event on May 7, 1946.⁶³ Branham was an Indiana game warden at the time. That afternoon, he had gone home for lunch, and was outside, when a great wind blew through a maple tree at his house. His wife became frightened. Branham relates:

"Trying to get hold of myself, I sat down and told her that after all these twenty odd years of [my] being conscious of this strange feeling, the time had come when I had to find out what it was all about. The crisis had come! I told her and my child good-bye, and warned her that if I did not come back in a few days, perhaps I might never return. That afternoon I went away to a secret place to pray and read the Bible."⁶⁴

Branham testified that he became engrossed in prayer and agonized before God, pleading with Him for help. He continued:

"Then along in the night, at about the eleventh hour, I had quit praying and was sitting up when I noticed a light flickering in the room. Thinking someone was coming with a flashlight, I looked out of the window, but there was no one, and when I looked back, the light was spreading out on the floor, becoming wider. ... as I looked up,

there hung that great star. However, it did not have five points like a star, but looked more like a ball of fire or light shining down upon the floor. Just then I heard someone walking across the floor, ... He appeared to be a man who, in human weight, would weigh about two hundred pounds, clothed in a white robe. ... Seeing how fearful I was, he began to speak. 'Fear not. I am sent from the presence of Almighty God to tell you that your peculiar life and your misunderstood ways have been to indicate that God has sent you to take a gift of divine healing to the peoples of the world. IF YOU WILL BE SINCERE, AND CAN GET THE PEOPLE TO BELIEVE YOU, NOTHING SHALL STAND BEFORE YOUR PRAYER, NOT EVEN CANCER.' ... He told me how I would be able to detect diseases by vibrations on my hand. He went away, but I have seen him several times since then. ... I do not know who he is. I only know that he is the messenger of God to me."⁶⁵

Lindsay estimates that the angel spoke with Branham for about "half an hour"⁶⁶ and it was through this encounter that Branham received two signs associated with his healing ministry. The first was his ability to diagnose diseases through manifestations he received in his left hand. The second was Branham's "word of knowledge," through which he could tell people things about their past.⁶⁷ Branham points to this angelic visitation and commission as the beginning of his widespread healing ministry.

Lindsay's biography of Branham based on accounts given by members of Branham Tabernacle relates that Branham spoke of the angel visiting him "on Memorial Sunday night in the year 1946,"⁶⁸ which would have been May 26, 1946, because Memorial Day that year fell on the following Thursday, May 30th.⁶⁹ While Branham was speaking to his congregation, a telegram arrived, asking him to come to St. Louis and pray for a dying girl named Betty Daugherty.

Branham made the trip and prayed for the girl, who was healed in dramatic fashion. A few weeks later, Branham returned to St. Louis to conduct a revival.

The girl's grateful father, the Rev. Robert Daugherty, testified in Lindsay's book that:

"I will be glad to write to anyone in question of her healing, or any of the healings that took place during the [subsequent] revival which Brother Branham held there in St. Louis in 1946."⁷⁰

Peter Duyzer, a former "Message" believer produced a detailed study of Branham's life, teachings, and ministry, titled *Legend of the Fall*.⁷¹ In that e-book, Duyzer mentions that this account of the girl's healing is problematic for the following reason: Branham related the incident of the girl's healing in a booklet he wrote that was printed in 1945, the year previous to the date given in Lindsay's book.⁷²

In that booklet from which Duyzer quotes, Branham plainly dates this healing as having occurred in 1945.⁷³ Duyzer stated:

"WMB [Branham] and his party drove to St. Louis by car and arrived on June 14, 1945. The campaign is recorded and daily entries are made from June 14 right through June 26. The year is 1945, because the dates and days of the week fit no other year. Why is this important? WMB could not have allowed these meetings in St. Louis of 1945 to have occurred prior to his alleged angelic commission of 1946. Coupled with the in-breaking of the Healing Revival in 1947, the 1946 angelic commission had to stand. Thus the dates of the St. Louis meetings had to change. Objections might be brought based on the fact that in Lindsay's book Robert Daugherty states that the meetings occurred in 1946. How can this be reconciled? In the booklet called, 'Jesus Christ, The Same Yesterday, Today and Forever,' written by WMB there is an almost identical testimony by Robert

Daugherty, except he says, 'I will be glad to write to anyone in question of her [Betty's — PMD] healing, or any of the healings that took place during the revival which Bro. Branham held here in St. Louis in 1945.'⁷⁴ Only WMB, no one else, gave Gordon Lindsay all the information for his book including the changed date.'⁷⁵

Former Message believer John Kenah agrees:

"The testimony of Rev. Daugherty which was published in *A Man Sent From God* was clearly revised to reflect Wm. Branham's later claim that he began his healing revival as a result of his angelic commission which he said occurred on May 7, 1946. In summary: It's clear that in the account given in 'I Was Not Disobedient [to the Heavenly Vision]', Wm. Branham claims his ministry started in 1945 as a result of his obedience to his 'Bread of Life' vision. Not once does he tell of being commissioned by an angel. However, in *A Man Sent From God*, and every subsequent account thereafter, Mr. Branham claims he began his ministry in 1946 after an angel commissioned him to do so. There is no mention of the vision of the 'Bread of Life.' In my opinion, it couldn't be more obvious that Mr. Branham's testimony of having been visited and commissioned by an angel to begin a ministry of Divine Healing was developed long after he had already begun his worldwide ministry. The two different accounts of how his ministry began can't both be true. Are either of them true?'"⁷⁶

Using what appears to be the revised date (May 7, 1946), for the apparently revised vision (the angelic commission), Weaver states:

"As Branham's ministry progressed, the link between his commission and the end-time was further embellished. Apparently confusing historical data, he announced that the day of his

commission, 7 May 1946, was the same day that the Jews in Palestine signed a peace treaty, and became a nation."⁷⁷

In a footnote, Weaver elaborates, "The state of Israel was established 15 May 1948. No significant event occurred on 7 May 1946."⁷⁸

Branham's ascent in the public eye seems to have followed the time of his St. Louis revival, which apparently occurred in 1945 — *not* 1946, as Branham later claimed.

HEALINGS AND MIRACLES

Many healings have been attributed to Branham's ministry and his advocates seem ever ready to tout these while ignoring his many failures in this area.

Posted on the Internet is the healing account of Congressman William Upshaw, who had lost the use of his legs as a boy, and had used crutches for 59 years.⁷⁹

Another account tells of a boy with an obvious asthma condition who was taken to a Branham meeting by his uncle and healed. As a result of this, the uncle was saved and became a dedicated Christian.⁸⁰

In addition to many healings ascribed to Branham's ministry, there were also other apparent supernatural occurrences such as light appearing on or around Branham. The most famous of these photographs of Branham was taken "In Houston, Texas, on January 24, 1950,"⁸¹ and shows a light over Branham's head.

One of the two signs that the commissioning angel had told Branham would accompany his healing ministry was the ability for Branham to know the secrets of people's hearts. Ern Baxter, who taught at William Branham's healing meetings from 1947-1953 or 1954,⁸² stated:

"Branham had a tremendous word of knowledge.⁸³ Before praying for a person, he would give accurate details concerning the person's ailments, and also details of their lives — their home town, activities, actions — even way back in their child-

hood. Branham never once made a mistake with the word of knowledge in all the years I was with him. That covers, in my case, thousands of instances."⁸⁴

Similarly, Pentecostal researcher W.J. Hollenweger wrote:

"The author, who knew Branham personally and interpreted for him in Zürich, is not aware of any case in which he was mistaken in the often detailed statements he made. It was characteristic of Branham's kind-heartedness that he gave certain personal revelations to those who were seeking healing in a whisper, so that they were not picked up by the microphone and revealed to the spectators."⁸⁵

This same author noted:

"Much that was written about him in Pentecostal journals seems to be exaggerated, but there are a number of well-attested cases of miraculous healings. It has even been asserted that he raised the dead."⁸⁶

However, the saying, "all that glitters is not gold," seems to have found fulfillment in Branham's healing ministry, for Hollenweger subsequently stated:

"However generously he is judged, it must be admitted that his sermons were not merely simple, but often naive as well, and that by contrast to what he claimed, only a small percentage of those who sought healing were in fact healed."⁸⁷

He also cited a testimonial letter:

"Two years ago I came, suffering from a longstanding and severe bile and liver complaint, to one of Brother Branham's evening meetings in Zürich. Although I had not drawn the slightest attention to myself, his son gave me a little card, but those who received them were not called up that evening — but regardless of the cards, some of the sick people were called up, either directly by Brother Branham, or by you yourself. To my unspeak-

able joy I was one of those who was spoken to (although I was right at the back and out of sight of Brother Branham). You had to call me three times (with an accurate diagnosis by Brother Branham), until I understood that it was actually I who was meant. This word was given to me: 'Be comforted, my daughter, your faith has helped you, you will be healed.'"⁸⁸

Hollenweger then tells us that, "The sick woman gave a detailed account of her further misfortunes, the worsening of the pain, and the onset of new diseases and her increasing loneliness. In her despair she wrote the above letter and begged me to tell Branham of her sickness."⁸⁹

In yet another testimony, the doctors had given Donny Morton, a boy that Branham prayed for, only six months to live. His father took Donny to a Branham healing service, where Branham prayed for the child. Although the boy lived longer than the time predicted by the doctors, "he died within the year."⁹⁰ Weaver commented on this "healing": "Whenever Branham related the story, he remembered the healing of Donny Morton and the article [written about the incident] by *Reader's Digest*. The boy's death is never mentioned."⁹¹

Ronald Kydd notes:

"In 1947, one year after his initial foray into prayer for the sick, Branham held a series of meetings in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. A pastor who had helped handle the logistics of the services later stated that many whom Branham had pronounced healed in fact died."⁹²

Kydd adds:

"The same charge was laid against the evangelist a year later by W.J. Taylor, a district superintendent with the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada. He and his executive called for a thorough investigation."⁹³

Kydd states:

"Watching films of the meetings and taking everything that hap-

pened at face value, the viewer would assume that almost everyone was healed. Eyewitness Taylor reports having that same impression 'as one stands in the meetings.' After all, this man who pulled all that correct information about people out of the air said they were healed. Given his 'gift,' one might be inclined to believe him. When some sort of follow-up was done, however, the results were not nearly so encouraging."⁹⁴

Duyzer devotes chapter 15 of his e-book to examining some of the healings Branham claimed took place.⁹⁵ Apparently only relatively few of those prayed for were healed, despite whatever assurances Branham may have given them.

The story of the Houston photo showing Branham with a light above his head has not gone unchallenged. One researcher who is somewhat sympathetic to Branham's ministry still makes this observation about that photograph:

"If the pillar of fire was directly over William Branham's shoulder, it would have cast light on top of his head and the pulpit. Instead, the top of his head is not lit as it would be if the light was coming from over his head. It appears to have been illuminated primarily from the flash of the camera taking the picture."⁹⁶

Another former Branham follower also questions both this photo⁹⁷ and another series of photographs where a supposedly supernatural light appears near Branham.⁹⁸

Duyzer also addresses Branham's having raised people from the dead by saying:

"Raising the Dead is one thing that WMB claimed to have done about five times and stated he had the death-certificates to prove it. ... Around 1973, Ed Byskal, together with this author, was holding meetings in Lima, Ohio. Billy Paul Branham, his sister Rebekah and his step-mother, Mrs. Meda Broy

Branham, attended. This author asked Billy Paul to see the five death certificates. Billy Paul replied, 'Well, Brother Peter, I lent them out to someone, and I can't remember who.' Dr. Doug Weaver told this author that he too had asked Billy Paul to see the death-certificates and received a similar response. How can such important documentation get lost? There were no certified copies made? The originals are all lost and people are just asked to believe all this?"⁹⁹

BRANHAM'S PROPHETIC MINISTRY

Branham led people to believe that he was a prophet. He related visions that God had given him and also spoke messages that included the words, "Thus saith the Lord." Additionally, Lindsay's biography of Branham contains at least six references stating or alluding to Branham as a prophet.¹⁰⁰

Duyzer wrote concerning Branham's daughter:

"Rebekah Branham Smith, in *'Only Believe'* Vol. 4, Issue 11, p. 6, 'The biography by Gordon Lindsay, *'William Branham, A Man Sent From God'* [was] written in collaboration with William Branham, a distinction in authorship which was agreeable to both the subject and the writer. William Branham highly recommended the book and offered it for sale in the healing campaigns and from his home office."¹⁰¹

This discredits the claim that Branham was a "humble man," something which the Lindsay biography claims for Branham in several places.¹⁰² Weaver notes, "Even the book written about the 1951 South African campaign was titled *William Branham: A Prophet Visits South Africa*."¹⁰³

At times Branham did not relate some of the visions and words God had supposedly given him, until *after* the facts they revealed had already occurred. Sometimes his visions or prophecies were vague. At other

times, when they were specific, they were wrong.

Weaver relates one prophecy that is often mistakenly attributed to Branham:

“In [Branham’s book] *The Exposition of the Seven Church Ages* ([pg.] 322) Branham supposedly said: ‘I predict (I do not prophesy) that these visions will have all come to pass by 1977. And though many may feel that this is an irresponsible statement in view of the fact that Jesus said that “no man knoweth the day nor the hour,” I still maintain this prediction after thirty years, because Jesus did not say no man could know the year, month, or week in which His coming was to be completed.’ Not until after 1974 did ‘Message’ believers find out that Lee Vayle, the editor of the book, had put this quote into Branham’s mouth. Except for a few other embellishments, however, the book is an accurate summary of Branham’s ‘message.’”¹⁰⁴

In the same place, Weaver also states, “Though Branham had predicted 1977 [for the end of the world], he was always cautious to say the rapture might come at any time.”¹⁰⁵ Branham was certainly mistaken regarding his prediction for the date of the end of the world!

BRANHAM’S TEACHING MINISTRY

Branham’s teaching became perhaps the most controversial aspect of his ministry. Branham’s associate, the late Ern Baxter, stated in an interview:

“When he would speak, especially in those early days, he would say some things that were terribly provocative. To me, unnecessarily so. So when we talked together, we agreed that apart from his giving testimonies and relating his life story, I would do all of the speaking, and he would do all of the ministering to the sick. That was the way it was when we were together.”¹⁰⁶

Later in his interview, Baxter recounted:

“Branham saw himself as a teacher of some kind of ‘in’ truth. To me, some of it was quite esoteric. I became aware early in his ministry that there was a mixture. I urged him not to say some things in public. As long as we worked together he refrained. One of the reasons for my leaving him was that he was starting to say some seriously wrong things. When that, coupled with other circumstances, eventually became unbearable, I resigned.”¹⁰⁷

Pentecostal scholar Gordon Fee stated:

“[Biblical] Interpretation that aims at, or thrives on, uniqueness can usually be attributed to pride (an attempt to ‘out clever’ the rest of the world), a false understanding of spirituality (wherein the Bible is full of deep truths waiting to be mined by the spiritually sensitive person with special insight), or vested interests (the need to support a theological bias, especially in dealing with texts that seem to go against that bias). Unique interpretations are usually wrong. This is not to say that the correct understanding of a text may not often *seem* unique to someone who hears it for the first time. But it is to say that uniqueness is *not* the aim of our task. The aim of good interpretation is simple: to get at the ‘plain meaning of the text.’”¹⁰⁸

Some of Branham’s controversial teachings included:

- His claim to be the end-time prophet to the Bride of Christ.¹⁰⁹
- Condoning divorce.¹¹⁰
- A misogynistic attitude. “This attitude was comprehensive, covering physical appearance, sexual drive, and marital relationships.”¹¹¹
- Denial of the eternality of the punishment of hell.¹¹²
- Calling denominationalism “the mark of the beast.”¹¹³

- Teaching that “Trinitarianism is of the Devil.”¹¹⁴
- The “doctrine of the serpent’s seed.” Weaver states, “Perhaps the most disreputable belief espoused by Branham was his doctrine of the serpent’s seed. The evangelist was heavily criticized for preaching his conviction that Cain was conceived from Eve’s sexual intercourse with the serpent in the Garden of Eden. ... The first lengthy exposition of the serpent’s seed doctrine was given in 1958.”¹¹⁵

D.R. McConnell wrote:

“Branham’s doctrine was always marginal at best, and towards the end of his ministry, it became outright heretical. He denied the doctrine of the Trinity, teaching instead the ‘Jesus only’ doctrine. He taught that he was the prophet Elijah, whose ministry would result in the return of Jesus. ... Although Branham’s is an extreme example, it illustrates that a ministry of miracles and healing in no way proves soundness of doctrine.”¹¹⁶

BRANHAM’S SUDDEN END

Branham was hit by a drunk driver on Dec. 18, 1965, while traveling through Texas headed for Jeffersonville for Christmas. He was in a coma for several days and died on Christmas Eve.¹¹⁷ Despite his death, some of his followers believed that Branham would rise on Easter Sunday, April 10, 1966. Weaver wrote:

“Branham’s burial on 11 April 1966 in Jeffersonville was accepted reluctantly by many disciples. The dream of Branham’s return did not die, however, and continued to persist in the 1970s.”¹¹⁸

Weaver also stated:

“The persistence of the belief in Branham’s resurrection is still evidenced each Easter. The Branham Tabernacle sponsors an annual Easter revival in which the worshipers listen to Branham’s taped sermons. Many disciples come to the revival in

anticipation of their 'prophet's' resurrection."¹¹⁹

Elsewhere, Weaver noted:

"Since his death in 1965, Branham's followers have partially or totally deified him and have given his sermons scriptural status, the voice of God to this last generation."¹²⁰

EVALUATING BRANHAM

Branham's ultimate judgment comes from the Lord. However, based on both the Scriptures and research, we may say some things regarding Branham's ministry.

We have pointed out that much of the "miraculous" that was supposedly a part of Branham's life is based on Branham's own unverified account. There is a principle that is presented repeatedly throughout the Scriptures: For something to be accepted as legally valid, it should be attested to by at least two or three witnesses (Numbers 35:30; Deuteronomy 17:6; 19:15; Matthew 18:15-16; John 8:16-18; 2 Corinthians 13:1; 1 Timothy 5:19; Hebrews 10:28). Much of Branham's testimony fails this test.

Although it may be exaggeration to say that Branham never told the same exact version of a story twice, such an overstatement makes the point that Branham did tell different versions of a story in ways that are difficult or impossible to reconcile. All this is a strong indictment against his credibility. Because of Branham's disparate accounts, it is difficult or impossible to separate fact from fiction in his biography. It is especially difficult to verify the many purported supernatural events about which he alone could testify.

In discussing false teachers, the Apostle Peter wrote:

"In their greed these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up" (2 Peter 2:3a, NIV).

Concerning Branham's prophetic ministry, the Bible says:

"But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in My name,

which I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die. And if you say in your heart, 'How shall we know the word which the LORD has not spoken?' — When a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the thing does not happen or come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him" (Deuteronomy 18:20-22).

In fact, Branham *did* prophesy things that did not come to pass, one example being his predicting the end of the world to take place in 1977.

Some of the healings attributed to Branham were exaggerated by him or others or were only apparent healings. And the healings were not as common as people who attended the meetings were led to believe. Still, there appear to have been some healings at the meetings.

Branham's "word of knowledge" is questionable as well. Bob Dorsch, who is Christian illusionist André Kole's assistant, asks, "If the gifts that psychics displayed were genuine, why wouldn't they simply play and win the lottery?"¹²¹ And Kole's coauthor, Jerry "Chip" MacGregor, a Christian who describes himself as "a longtime performer and debunker of religious theater," said that Branham's practice of having people write out their information on prayer cards was consistent with a standard mind-reading show and that his apparent ability to know things about people he had never met could be faked. He also said he didn't believe that God needed a "sense of theater" in order to work in a supernatural way.¹²²

While this doesn't, in itself, *prove* that Branham's word of knowledge was human trickery, it does show that it is possible to duplicate such results using natural means.

As for his teaching ministry, Branham clearly taught false doctrine.

The Bible emphasizes that simply because a person can apparently do

miracles, this alone does not make him a true prophet (Deuteronomy 13:1-5; Matthew 24:24; 2 Thessalonians 2:9-10; Revelation 13:13-15; 16:13-14).

Jesus said:

"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'" (Matthew 7:21-23).

Again He said:

"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits" (Matthew 7:15-16).

When we look at the fruit of Branham's life, his apparent lying and embellishments of his biography, his pride evidenced in leading people to believe that he was a prophet, promoting a self-serving book that served as an advertisement for himself and his ministry, and teaching false doctrine, we can only conclude that Branham was a false prophet, regardless of whatever miracles might have occurred.

The Apostle Paul could have been writing about Branham when he told the Colossians:

"Let no one disqualify you, insisting on ascetic practices and the worship of angels, claiming access to a visionary realm and inflated without cause by his unspiritual mind. He doesn't hold on to the head, from whom the whole body, nourished and held together by its ligaments and tendons, develops with growth from God" (Colossians 2:18-19, HCSB).

Endnotes:

1. Ronald A.N. Kydd, *Healing Through the Centuries: Models for Understanding*. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers,

1998, pg. 168.

2. C.D. Weaver, in Daniel G. Reid, Coordinating Editor, *Dictionary of Christianity in America*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1990, pg. 182, s.v., "Branham, William Marrion (1909-1965)."

3. A news report by Adam Walser on William Branham which aired May 14, 2012, WHAS-TV (Channel 11) in Louisville, Ky., estimates the current number of Branham disciples worldwide at 2 million. Accessed at: www.whas11.com/video/featured-videos/Exclusive-I-Team-Investigation-into-Ind-religious-group-151386375.html on March 1, 2013. In his comprehensive study of Branham, C. Douglas Weaver points out that although Branham's disciples have their own churches, these churches are each autonomous entities, and says, "The absence of a denominational structure makes statistics difficult to interpret." C. Douglas Weaver, *The Healer-Prophet, William Marrion Branham*. Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1987, pg. 152. This fine work is a revised edition of Weaver's doctoral thesis.

4. Oneness Pentecostalism is a heretical offshoot of the Pentecostal movement that denies the doctrine of the Trinity; teaching, instead, that Jesus is the only member of the Godhead; but that He manifests Himself, variously, as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, that is, one Person manifesting Himself in three different "modes." This is an ancient Church heresy called "modalism" or "Sabellianism," after a third-century proponent named Sabellius. The United Pentecostal Church (UPC) is a Oneness Pentecostal denomination.

5. Pooyan Mehrshahi, "Imprisoned pastor in Iran not an evangelical, Iranian pastor alleges." Posted Dec. 5, 2011. Accessed at: <http://blog.godreports.com/2011/12/imprisoned-pastor-in-iran-not-an-evangelical-iranian-pastor-alleges/> on March 1, 2013. Branham had a close association with Oneness Pentecostalism; and he became, like them, anti-Trinitarian, and taught baptism was to be done in "Jesus' name" only, rather than using the Trinitarian formula of "the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit."

6. Gordon Lindsay in collaboration with William Branham, *William Branham: A Man Sent From God*. Jeffersonville, Ind.: William Branham, 1950, pg. 11. This book is a hagiography (i.e., an exalted biography of its subject) of William Branham, and leads the reader to have a superhuman and supernatural view of Branham and his ministry. Lindsay's biography of Branham contains no copyright page, although Lindsay gives the date, "February, 1950" at the end of his Introduction in the

book, pg. 18.

7. Billy Paul Branham in William Marrion Branham, *The Revelation of the Seven Seals*. Jeffersonville, Ind.: Voice of God Recordings, 2008, n.p. This quotation is taken from the book's Introduction.

8. David Edwin Harrell, Jr., *All Things Are Possible: The Healing and Charismatic Revivals in Modern America*. Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1978, pg. 25.

9. *Ibid.*, pg. 23.

10. See further, *William Branham: A Man Sent From God*, op. cit., pp. 12, 13, 21, 160.

11. *Ibid.* The men who wrote chapters included Jack Moore (chapter 13) and healing evangelist F.F. Bosworth (chapter 20). The three testimonial chapters are chapters 10-12. Gordon Lindsay, the book's author, was also involved in the healing movement himself.

12. *Ibid.*, pg. 81.

13. *Ibid.*, chapter 21, pp. 181-206.

14. *All Things Are Possible*, op. cit., pg. 25.

15. *The Healer-Prophet, William Marrion Branham*, op. cit., pg. 21, note 1.

16. *Ibid.*, pg. 22, note 3.

17. See further, *William Branham: A Man Sent From God*, op. cit., pg. 28.

18. *Ibid.*

19. William Branham, *Footprints on the Sands of Time: The Autobiography of William Marrion Branham*. Jeffersonville, Ind.: Spoken Word Publications, 1975, pp. 21, 93, quoted in *The Healer-Prophet, William Marrion Branham*, op. cit., pg. 22, brackets and italic in original.

20. A. David Mamalis, compiler, "William Branham, 'Branham's (Rev. Wm.) Life Story,'" *Los Angeles, Calif.*, April 19, 1959, Vol. 59, No. 32A, pg. 6. Accessed at: www.thefreeword.com/files/letter/59-0419A.pdf on March 1, 2013. The reader will notice Branham's numerous grammatical errors in statements along with his disjointed and rambling speaking style. Further quotations by Branham in this article will not be indicated with *sic*.

21. *Ibid.*, pg. 7.

22. *William Branham: A Man Sent From God*, op. cit., pg. 30, emphasis added.

23. *Ibid.*, pp. 30-31, italics in original.

24. "Branham's (Rev. Wm.) Life Story," op. cit., pg. 9.

25. *Ibid.*, pg. 7, ellipsis in original.

26. *Ibid.*, pg. 8.

27. *Ibid.*, pg. 9.

28. *William Branham: A Man Sent From God*, op. cit., pp. 181-182.

29. This website contains some very helpful information and fact-checking about some of Branham's life and ministry; nevertheless, in some cases, it is still somewhat biased in favor of Branham. It also continues to espouse

some of Branham's unorthodox theological views with regard to the doctrine of the Trinity and baptism in the name of Jesus only.

30. See "Latest Posts" on Searching for Vindication blog. Accessed at: <http://searchingforvindication.com/> on March 1, 2013. This website appears to be updated from time-to-time.

31. Neither of the two fatalities resulted from drowning. See "Documented Bridge Deaths," Searching for Vindication website. Accessed at: <http://searchingforvindication.com/2013/02/25/Documented-Bridge-Deaths/> on March 1, 2013.

32. "The Municipal Bridge Vision," Believe The Sign website. Accessed at: http://en.believethesign.com/index.php/The_Municipal_Bridge_Vision on March 1, 2013. This webpage reveals more details and also additional problems with Branham's vision.

33. *William Branham: A Man Sent From God*, op. cit., pp. 39-41.

34. *Ibid.*, pg. 41.

35. *Ibid.*

36. *Ibid.*, pg. 42.

37. *Ibid.*

38. *Ibid.*, pg. 48.

39. *The Healer-Prophet, William Marrion Branham*, op. cit., pg. 26.

40. "Branham's (Rev. Wm.) Life Story," op. cit., pp. 11, 12, 15.

41. *The Healer-Prophet, William Marrion Branham*, op. cit., pg. 33, note 43.

42. *Ibid.*, pg. 34.

43. *William Branham: A Man Sent From God*, op. cit., pg. 43.

44. *Ibid.*

45. *Ibid.*, pg. 71.

46. *Footprints on the Sands of Time*, op. cit., pg. 71, quoted in *The Healer-Prophet, William Marrion Branham*, op. cit., pg. 27, ellipsis in original.

47. *The Healer-Prophet, William Marrion Branham*, op. cit., pg. 29.

48. *Ibid.*, pg. 38, note 60.

49. "William Branham and His Message" website. Accessed at "My Testimony" section of the website: <http://people.delphiforums.com/johnk63/home.htm#intro> on March 2, 2013.

50. *Ibid.* Accessed at "Issues and Events in the Life of William Branham" section of the website: <http://people.delphiforums.com/johnk63/events2.htm#light> on March 2, 2013.

51. *The Healer-Prophet, William Marrion Branham*, op. cit., pp. 26-29.

52. *Ibid.*, pg. 32.

53. In Lindsay's biography, her last name is spelled, "Brumback," *William Branham: A Man Sent From God*, op. cit., pg. 44.

54. "Branham's (Rev. Wm.) Life Story," op. cit., pg. 14.

55. *William Branham: A Man Sent From God*, op. cit., pg. 46.
56. This is the date given by Weaver, *The Healer-Prophet, William Marrion Branham*, op. cit., pp. 32-33.
57. *William Branham: A Man Sent From God*, op. cit., pg. 47.
58. *Ibid.*, pp. 47-50.
59. "Branham's (Rev. Wm.) Life Story," op. cit., pp. 17-18.
60. *William Branham: A Man Sent From God*, op. cit., pg. 53.
61. *Ibid.*
62. *The Healer-Prophet, William Marrion Branham*, op. cit., pg. 131, note 118.
63. *William Branham: A Man Sent From God*, op. cit., pg. 76. According to an online calendar, May 7, 1946, was on a Tuesday (see www.rocketcalendar.com/calendar/1946-05).
64. *Ibid.*
65. *Ibid.*, pp. 77-78, capitalized emphasis in original.
66. *Ibid.*, pg. 75.
67. *Ibid.*, pp. 78-79.
68. *Ibid.*, pg. 82.
69. "William Branham and His Message" website, op. cit. Accessed at: <http://people.delphiforums.com/johnk63/evetns.htm> on March 2, 2013. (Dates confirmed by 1946 calendar accessed on rocketcalendar.com website.)
70. *William Branham: A Man Sent From God*, op. cit., pp. 86-87.
71. Peter M. Duyzer, *Legend of the Fall*. Vancouver, B.C.: Canada Apologetics Research Team (CART), 2011. An early version of this work, which doesn't include his extensive endnotes or bibliography, can be accessed for free at: <http://wmbraham.net/> (as of March 2, 2013), although the page numbers in this early version do not match the page numbers in the later edition of the e-book, cited in this article. The later e-book was available for purchase in July 2012, but was not available at the time of the writing of this article.
72. *Ibid.*, pg. 65.
73. *Ibid.*, pg. 245, note 555. (The endnote numbers for Duyzer's book, which are in Roman numerals, have been translated into Arabic numerals throughout this article.)
74. Here, Duyzer gives a reference to a link on John Kennah's website (<http://people.delphiforums.com/johnk63/evetns.htm>), *Legend of the Fall*, op. cit., pg. 245, note 558.
75. *Ibid.*, pp. 65-66, brackets in original.
76. <http://people.delphiforums.com/johnk63/evetns.htm>, op. cit.
77. *The Healer-Prophet, William Marrion Branham*, op. cit., pg. 37.
78. *Ibid.*, note 57. The correct date that Israel became a nation is May 14, 1948.
79. "Congressman Upshaw," Believe The Sign website. Accessed at: http://en.believethesign.com/index.php?title=Congressman_Upshaw on March 2, 2013. Other reputed healings through Branham's ministry may also be found at this website (<http://en.believethesign.com/index.php/Healings>).
80. E-mail on file, received July 9, 2012.
81. "The Pillar of Fire," Believe The Sign website. Accessed at: http://en.believethesign.com/index.php?title=The_Pillar_of_Fire on March 2, 2013. A photograph of this picture, as well as another picture of Branham with light around his head can be seen in the unnumbered pages at the beginning of *William Branham: A Man Sent From God*, "Picture Album of William Branham." Lindsay's account of this event is on pp. 147-156.
82. Ern Baxter, "New Wine Interviews Ern Baxter," *New Wine Magazine*, December 1978, pg. 6.
83. Baxter is here referring to one of the spiritual gifts mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:8. Although the Bible doesn't define this gift, in the modern-day charismatic movement it is commonly believed to refer to supernatural knowledge given to a person by God.
84. *Ibid.*
85. W.J. Hollenweger, *The Pentecostals*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1972, pg. 354.
86. *Ibid.* For this latter assertion, Hollenweger references *William Branham: A Man Sent From God*, op. cit., pg. 93.
87. *Ibid.*, pg. 355.
88. *Ibid.*
89. *Ibid.*
90. *The Healer-Prophet, William Marrion Branham*, op. cit., pg. 57, note 90. The *Reader's Digest* article Weaver references is Alma Edwards Smith, "The Miracle of Donny Morton," *Reader's Digest*, November 1952, pp. 29-35. See also, "Donny Morton," Believe The Sign website. Accessed at: http://en.believethesign.com/index.php?title=Donny_Morton on March 2, 2013.
91. *Ibid.* The *Reader's Digest* article does mention the boy's death, and speaks of the "miracle" of Donny Morton as being the various things that resulted (outpouring of public sympathy and support, etc.) due to the father's selfless love for his son.
92. *Healing Through the Centuries*, op. cit., pp. 172-173.
93. *Ibid.*, citing "W.J. Taylor, letter to C.B. Smith, January 20, 1948, Archives, Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada, Mississauga, Ont., 1, 3."
94. *Ibid.*, pg. 180, citing "Taylor, letter, 3."
95. *Legend of the Fall*, op. cit., pp. 107-114.
96. http://en.believethesign.com/index.php?title=The_Pillar_of_Fire, op. cit.
97. <http://people.delphiforums.com/johnk63/evetns.htm>, op. cit.
98. *Ibid.*
99. *Legend of the Fall*, op. cit., pp. 113-114.
100. *William Branham: A Man Sent From God*, op. cit., pp. 11, 81, 102, 156, 172, 183.
101. *Legend of the Fall*, op. cit., pg. 235, note 371; cf. pg. 212, note 11, brackets in original.
102. *William Branham: A Man Sent From God*, op. cit., e.g., pp. 12, 13, 21, 160.
103. *The Healer-Prophet, William Marrion Branham*, op. cit., pg. 85. The book Weaver references is Julius Stadsklev, *William Branham: A Prophet Visits South Africa*. Jeffersonville, Ind.: William Branham Evangelistic Association, n.d.
104. *The Healer-Prophet, William Marrion Branham*, op. cit., pg. 155, note 60.
105. *Ibid.*
106. "New Wine Interviews Ern Baxter," op. cit., pp. 5-6.
107. *Ibid.*, pg. 23. Unfortunately, Baxter himself (who died in 1993) was not a bastion of orthodoxy as is evidenced, for example, by his being one of the five top leaders of the controversial "shepherding movement" in the 1970s-1980s.
108. Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How To Read the Bible For All Its Worth*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1993, pg. 14, italics in original. Fee wrote the chapter in which this quotation appears.
109. *Dictionary of Christianity in America*, op. cit., pg. 182.
110. *The Healer-Prophet, William Marrion Branham*, op. cit., pg. 112.
111. *Ibid.*
112. *Ibid.*, pp. 118-119. This was a reversal of his earlier teaching on hell. *Ibid.*, pg. 118.
113. *Ibid.*, pp. 114-118.
114. *Ibid.*, pg. 120.
115. *Ibid.*, pp. 123ff.
116. D.R. McConnell, *A Different Gospel*. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1995, updated edition, pp. 165-166, note 1.
117. *The Healer-Prophet, William Marrion Branham*, op. cit., pg. 104.
118. *Ibid.*, pg. 154.
119. *Ibid.*, pg. 155. These words by Weaver were written in the 1980s.
120. *Dictionary of Christianity in America*, op. cit., pg. 182.
121. Phone conversation with André Kole's assistant, Bob Dorsch, Oct. 18, 2012.
122. E-mail on file from Jerry "Chip" MacGregor, dated Oct. 30, 2012. For more on how such seemingly supernatural knowledge can be faked, see André Kole and Jerry MacGregor, *Mind Games*. Phoenix: ACW Press, 2002.

A lunar eclipse occurs when the sun, moon, and earth align and the moon passes behind the earth into its shadow. A blood moon then is a full lunar eclipse in which the moon begins to turn a deep orange color and then deep red. It takes more than three hours to occur and is not seen everywhere on the planet at once.

Hagee himself acknowledges these can pass without our knowledge. It obviously would happen at different times in different parts of the earth due to the earth's rotation.

The event has been called the blood moon not just because of the color, but because it can happen during the time when hunters are most engaged in fall hunting. So this is a common and recurring phenomenon as the moon goes into eclipse. NASA has charts and time tables laying these out. The only thing that would make a so-called blood moon strange or sensational is if it stayed in its cycle for long after four hours. If that happens, then we could talk.

The launching pad for Hagee's teaching is from two sections of Scripture. The first is from chapter 2 of the book of Joel, particularly verse 31 which states, "The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD." This is obviously a catastrophic, worldwide, end-times, judgment event as the prophetic wording shows. Many expositors agree on that. It seems that our Lord's words in Matthew 24:29-30 are speaking of the same event.

Two verses prior to Joel 2:31 — verses 28-29 — speak of the pouring out of God's Spirit, which Acts 2:17-18 indicate was fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost. So it seems that both the Joel 2 passage and the Acts 2 passage present a panoramic view of this present age starting with great blessing, but ending in horrible judgments (Joel 2:30-31; Acts 2:19-20). This present dispensation will not end with a converted and utopian world as some suggest, but with a catastrophic outpouring of God's fierce wrath.

The traditional biblical interpretation offers that there is the outpouring of God's Spirit on the Church at Pentecost followed by the Church age of undetermined duration which will culminate in final judgment. The passages cited above give a general and sweeping overview like "book ends," while many other passages in the Bible fill in the details between those book ends. We could say it is as if Joel was looking through binoculars at two mountain peaks, but he does not focus on the valleys between the peaks. This is a generally accepted understanding.

It is important to note that neither Joel nor Luke (Acts) give dates for the blood moon event in the judgment verses; not even a hint as to any range of dates. Further,

the verses do not specify that there are four blood moons over a period of two years. Such a notion is Hagee's superimposing his ideas into Scripture. The verses only mention a blood moon in the future. These are important points. So, there are no dates and no four blood moons in Scripture. In both Joel and Acts, the passages state the moon (singular) — not moons (plural) — will be turned to blood. In the Joel passage, the word blood is the Hebrew word *dam*. The word can mean "blood" or something red in color that is, to say, red like blood.

It can be further demonstrated that Hagee imposes the idea of four moons on the text and strongly suggests that his identification of four reddish moon events (found on NASA's calendar for 2014-2015), along with an eclipse of the sun between the second and third blood moons, are exactly what Joel and Luke have written about. This is wild speculation, guesswork, and date-setting. The audience can have no other interpretation or develop no other conclusion. Hagee leads them to that point. Hagee at one juncture refers to all of this as "new revelation."

As noted, NASA has on its calendar lunar events on these particular years (2014-2015) which fall around the times of the Jewish holidays of Passover and Sukkot (Feast of Booths or Tabernacles). Hagee repeatedly says that these occurrences are to be "signals to planet earth." His audience is left to add 2 plus 2 and know that it equals 4 — four blood moons and judgment just around the corner for this "terminal generation." Hagee's signals now become God's signals.

Another weakness in Hagee's presentation is that blood moons have often occurred during Jewish feasts in the past and during other important world events. It has to do with the law of averages, and that is historically borne out.

Hagee employs language which allows him, in the future, to circumvent his prophetic discourse and which is designed to help him deny that he set any dates. But date suggesting, even with subtle language, implicates him whether he likes it or not. It is the blood moons of 2014-2015 and the judgments which are right around the corner, or so we are led to believe. Hagee demonstrates all this with the help of prestigious NASA, along with a large picture billboard of four red moons (erected on the platform behind his pulpit), leading one down the path that what he is saying is beyond dispute.

Although the scriptural facts are beyond dispute, Hagee's *interpretations* are very much open to debate. The years 2014 and 2015 are dates. Yet his hearers can easily connect the dots as Hagee goes on to ramble about the New World Order and his conspiracy theories which include the Illuminati, the Masons, Woodrow Wilson, the League of Nations, and even the creators of the dollar bill with its evil symbols. Hagee appears quite unaware that many conspiracy theorists are heavily saturated with the worst kind of anti-Semitism and Jewish hatred. The contradiction is stark and Hagee seems uninformed. He

so animates his audience that he gets standing ovations now and again. Once more, these are exciting discoveries for them and concepts they have “never heard before.”

Those buying into Hagee’s premise are probably not aware that another dubious prophecy teacher, Hal Lindsey, does not see these as “signals to planet earth,” but simply speculation. We had “John the revelator,” but now we have “John the speculator.” And we must ask, why can’t the prophecy *experts* agree?

Connecting a blood moon and darkened sun event and date fulfillment is nothing new. Adam Clarke suggests fulfillment happened at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem, in A.D. 70, writing that it was “In the taking and sacking of Jerusalem, and the burning of the Temple, under Titus, the son of Vespasian” (*Adam Clarke’s Commentary on the Bible*, pg. 721).

F.F. Bruce suggested an even earlier possibility: “The people in Jerusalem had indeed seen the sun turned to darkness, during the early afternoon of the day of our Lord’s crucifixion. And on the same afternoon the paschal full moon may well have appeared blood-red in the sky in consequence of that preternatural gloom. These were to be understood as tokens of the advent of the day of the Lord, ‘that great and notable day,’ a day of judgment, to be sure, but more immediately the day of God’s salvation to all who invoked his name” (*Commentary on the Book of Acts*, pg. 69).

And the Seventh-day Adventists were also way ahead of Hagee on this and have recorded that the dark day of Joel 2:31 actually came to pass on May 19, 1780 (Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan*, pg. 354).

Many expositors would concur that the blood moon of Joel 2 and Acts 2 are the same as the blood moon of Revelation 6. Ellen G. White further tied the May 19, 1780, occurrence to Revelation 6:12-13, choosing that documented dark day eclipse and a reddish moon as the blood moon event of Revelation 6:12 and a later meteor shower as the stars falling in verse 13. (See further, “New England’s Dark Day,” on Wikipedia.)

The Seventh-day Adventist church never has explained the meaning of the verses in Revelation 6 that go on to say that the sky would be rolled up and every mountain moved (v. 14). The careful Bible student also notes in Revelation 6 that all of mankind will try to go into hiding in dens and asking the mountains to cover them so they will not have to face the wrath of the one who sits on the throne (vv. 14-17). All of these events occur together in simultaneous fashion which is very obvious. They clearly are not separated by centuries.

Enter the real author and source of the apocalyptic blood moons teaching. Hagee admits that he got this teaching from a man named Mark Biltz. Biltz is the director of El Shaddai Ministries out of Bonney Lake, Wash., and he is connected to the Hebrew Roots

Movement. In June 2009, Biltz appeared on Sid Roth’s *It’s Supernatural* television show. His weeklong appearance indicates that Biltz is not discerning, at least as far as his networking with others is concerned. Roth has a coterie of extremist guests on his broadcasts. Roth’s motto seems to be, the wilder and stranger the story, the better.

As far back as 2008, World Net Daily’s executive news editor, Joe Kovacs (who himself teaches multiple heresies in his book, *Shocked by the Bible*), was spotlighting Mark Biltz and his blood moon theory. From that factor alone, we know this teaching has been around for a while, years before Hagee began promoting it.

Hagee, with his large following, is now popularizing blood moons while admitting he acquired it from Biltz. It is hard to understand why Hagee can refer to it as “new revelation.”

Dr. Wave Nunnally is a Professor of Early Judaism and Christian Origins at Evangel University, part of the Assemblies of God denomination, and no stranger to these issues. (He is also a contributing author to *The Confusing World of Benny Hinn*.) Nunnally wrote to PFO concerning the interpretation of what he identifies as apocalyptic literature in Joel and Acts:

“... solar eclipses, earthquakes, signs in the heavens, moon turning to blood — these and many, many more phrases are all the stock language of the literary genre called ‘apocalyptic.’ Now I’m NOT saying that they are not ever real or that when used in biblical revelation are not to be taken seriously, but what I AM saying is that literary context HAS to be taken into consideration and no one I know (liberal or conservative, Jewish or Christian, etc.) who knows much about this genre of literature would make hard-core detailed, specifically-dated predictions based on passages of this nature. The nature of the genre is ‘intentional ambiguity,’ so to build an argument in the direction of 100% certainty regarding detail and timeframe will always be tenuous at best. I think most of these guys know this, but the temptation to try is just so juicy that they can’t resist, and when they see the spike in interest on the part of their listeners (who usually know even less about the genre and its idiosyncrasies than the speaker/author), it encourages them to go even further. Being over their heads from the beginning, they only make matters worse as they proceed.”

Respected theologian Bernard Ramm alerts us to some of the nuances in apocalyptic literature:

“Apocalyptic language is prophetic, historical, and symbolic. ... In the interpretation of apocalyptic imagery a complete literalistic method is impossible. ... every effort must be made to discover whether the symbol had any meaning in the culture of the writer. *This demands a very careful and exacting*

historical research by the exegete. ... With reference to New Testament books, apocryphal literature must be examined to see whether it contributed to any of the symbols" (*Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, pp. 249-250, emphasis added).

Hagee treats Scripture like a blob of clay that he can mold as he pleases. He is an esoteric practitioner but not a faithful expositor. He has no more information about the meaning of predicted lunar eclipses than anyone else. It is the pretense of special knowledge and special revelation that falls flat under biblical and historical scrutiny. Hagee cannot ever seem to get it right because it is all speculation and flair to enhance both image and sales. It needs to be confronted and rejected.

—GRF

NEWS UPDATES

(continued from page 3)

Hunt was repeatedly recognized for his meticulous research and for staying on the forefront of the theological challenges faced by Christians.

Over 4 million copies of Hunt's books have been sold, and many of them have been translated into more than 50 languages. Other titles he authored or coauthored include, *Beyond Seduction; Occult Invasion; In Defense of the Faith; Islam, Israel, and the Nations; and Yoga and the Body of Christ*.

Hunt is survived by his wife of 62 years, Ruth; two sons and a daughter; and preceded in death by a daughter.

—MKG

INDEPENDENT FILM TARGETS WATCHTOWER

An independent film maker has produced a feature-length documentary challenging the virtuous image of his former religion. Gregorio Smith was born and raised a Jehovah's Witness and describes his first feature film as "immersive, informative, expository and controversial." The movie, titled *Truth Be Told*, had a big screen promotional showing on March 27 at Cobble Hill Cinemas, a theater complex less than two miles from the world headquarters of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society in Brooklyn, N.Y.

According to the film's website, the documentary "lifts the veil on the seemingly benign Jehovah's Witnesses religion to expose a profit-driven, isolationist culture characterized by fear, totalitarian corporate leadership, intellectual and spiritual intimidation, suspension of critical thinking, failed prophecies, doctrinal inconsis-

tency and improper handling of physical and sexual abuse allegations within the church." The film is also said to reveal "why Jehovah's Witnesses have the lowest retention rate of any religion with only 37% of those raised as Jehovah's Witnesses continuing their affiliation with the religion."

The documentary features "former Jehovah's Witnesses candidly discuss[ing] growing up inside the religion. They reveal experiences, including the effects of proselytizing door-to-door, shunning non-observant family and friends, suffering the discouragement of pursuing dreams like gaining a higher education, missing other societal holidays and customs."

Smith said he is currently seeking domestic and international distribution, including theatrical, cable and television network, and home video.

Smith is a graduate of Baruch College in Manhattan and a member of the International Documentary Association.

—MKG

THE DEVIL WEARS SECONDHAND PRADA

Bargain hunters, beware! Televangelist Pat Robertson cautions that demons could be attached to clothes and other items purchased at secondhand and thrift stores. Robertson's advice stemmed from his response in February to an inquiry from a viewer of his *700 Club* broadcast.

The viewer, named Carrie, wrote to Robertson saying: "I buy a lot of clothes and other items at Goodwill and other secondhand shops. Recently my mom told me that I need to pray over the items, bind familiar spirits, and bless the items before I bring them into the house. Is my mother correct? Can demons attach themselves to material items?"

Robertson, who has long been known for his provocative statements, recounted that "all hell broke loose" after a Philippine girl visiting Thailand purchased a demon-possessed ring. He then told the viewer: "Can demonic spirits attach themselves to inanimate objects? The answer is yes. But I don't think every sweater you get from Goodwill has demons in it. But in a sense your mother is just being super-cautious, so hey, it isn't going to hurt you to rebuke any spirits that might attach themselves to those clothes."

Robertson did not expound on why it is items from secondhand stores to which demons are attached, or if it is possible for demons to attach themselves to new and designer clothes and other items purchased at upscale stores like Saks Fifth Avenue and Neiman Marcus.

—MKG



Books in Review

THE BIG BOOK OF BIBLE ANSWERS

by Ron Rhodes

Harvest House Publishers, 414 pages, \$14.99

Theologian Ron Rhodes has drawn from his many years of work in apologetics to compile *The Big Book of Bible Answers*. His “baptism” into responding to the challenging questions about God, the Bible, and the Christian faith came over two decades ago when he found himself as a “regular” on the nationally syndicated *Bible Answer Man* radio broadcast, the program launched and made popular by Walter Martin, the late expert on cults. Since that time, Rhodes has become an award-winning author of books covering a broad range of cultic and theological subjects.

This “big book” covers a lot of ground. In the opening chapters, which focus on Scripture, Rhodes explains inspiration (what it is and what it isn’t), canonicity (why the books we have in the Bible belong there and why others are rejected), interpretation (how to derive the proper meaning of biblical texts), and translations (the good and the not-so-good, along with a study of the translating methods or philosophies). Rhodes also surveys archaeological and manuscript evidences to establish the trustworthiness of the Bible.

The section examining Scripture is wrapped up with a series of significant questions and answers specific to the Old and New Testament; questions addressing the gap theory, literal 24-hour creation days, genocide, puzzling statements, and alleged biblical contradictions.

In his next segment, Rhodes addresses a variety of questions, misunderstandings, and objections regarding the nature of God. Here the biblical evidence for God’s triune nature is discussed, as well as various “common errors” about God including modalism, pantheism, and polytheism. He also furnishes an extensive treatment of Jesus Christ, explaining His humanity, His deity and equality with the Father, His preincarnate appearances in the Old Testament, and the integrity and substance of His resurrection. The concluding chapter of this section tackles a wide range of Christological errors — from Dan Brown and his *Da Vinci Code* Jesus (who was married to Mary Magdalene) to the Latter-day Saints and their Jesus

who is the spirit brother of Lucifer to the Jehovah’s Witnesses and their Michael the Archangel Jesus.

Rhodes then moves into a variety of subject matter. He targets the skepticism of unbelievers and the theological paradoxes with which believers struggle. A sampling of that latter element includes answers to questions such as:

- How can man’s free will be reconciled with God’s sovereignty?
- If it is true that God is sovereign in all things, then why should we pray?
- Are the heathen really lost?
- What does James 2:17-26 mean when it says that faith without works is dead?
- What is the “Lordship salvation” issue all about?
- How can we go about witnessing to Jews?
- Is it okay for Christians not to attend a local church?

There is much more. Rhodes tackles questions such as “Does the Bible teach that the Christian church today can have fallible prophets?” (promoted by theologian Wayne Grudem) and “Are there apostles today?” He also examines issues such as the type of music used in worship, the ordination of women, and different views of the Lord’s Supper.

After all that, there’s still another 40 percent of the book to go. Questions about angels and demons, prophecy and the afterlife, apologetic issues, and life and death ethics are posed and answered. The chapter titled, “Apologetics and Danger Zone Issues,” responds to whether a Christian should be hypnotized, undergo holistic health care, read horoscopes, and become a Mason.

The volume contains both subject and (primary) Scripture verse indexes. These are a must for this type of book, especially because a specific subject may be dealt with in various sections of the publication.

If there is any blemish in the book, it is where Rhodes twice favorably quotes Peter Kreeft. Kreeft is a Roman Catholic philosopher who purports an out-of-body experience that sanctions universalism. Kreeft’s citations add nothing of value to the book, and are more distraction than benefit.

The book’s back cover claims, “This must-have addition to your personal library of faith-building resources not only demonstrates the solid evidence for your faith but also models what it means to be a diligent student of God’s Word.” Rhodes delivers as promised.

—MKG

Editor’s Note: The publications featured in PFO’s *Books in Review* section are available from **Personal Freedom Outreach** (P.O. Box 26062, Saint Louis, Missouri 63136). Please add \$2.50 to the price listed for shipping and handling. Due to occasional price changes by the publishers, the retail amounts listed are subject to change without notice. These publications are also available to those who help to financially support the work of PFO. Please see our funds appeal flyer for details.