

The Quarterly Journal



THE NEWSLETTER PUBLICATION OF PERSONAL FREEDOM OUTREACH

VOL. 21, NO. 4

OCTOBER-DECEMBER 2001

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Being Saved After Death is Still Alive in the Worldwide Church of God

by Peter Ditzel

"There is no need to worry that our departed loved ones, nor any of the rest of the masses of humans who have died," writes Worldwide Church of God (WCG) official, J. Michael Feazell, "are consigned to the eternal flames simply because no missionary reached them with the Gospel message before they died."¹ Those might be comforting words if they accurately reflect the teaching of the Bible. But do they? Or do they more closely resemble the heretical beliefs of the WCG's founder, Herbert W. Armstrong?

A look at the WCG's statement of beliefs reveals that Feazell's two-part article, "No Other Name," which appeared in the WCG's *Worldwide News* and on its web site, follows official WCG teaching: "God will gather all the living and the dead before the heavenly throne of Christ for judgment. The righteous will receive eternal glory, and the wicked will be condemned. It is the belief of the Worldwide Church of God that the Lord has made righteous provision in the Judgment for the unevangelized dead, and that many will respond to their risen and glorified Savior in faith and be saved, while the rest will be condemned. (Matthew



25:31-32; Acts 24:15; John 5:28-29; Revelation 20:11-15; 1 Timothy 2:4-6;

2 Peter 3:9; Acts 10:43; John 12:32; 1 Corinthians 15:22-28)."²

This teaching — often called post-mortem evangelization — is certainly not the teaching of historic, orthodox Christianity. Feazell himself verifies this by labeling the orthodox doctrine, "the strange but common belief among many Christians that all people who do not accept the Gospel before they die are eternally lost and without hope."³ This labeling of orthodox teaching as "strange" is sadly reminiscent of Herbert W. Armstrong's invectives against the Christian Church. It is also paradoxical at best for the WCG, which has claimed for several years that it is completely orthodox in its teachings.

ROOTS IN HERESY

Of course, the WCG has been known for its unorthodox beliefs ever since its founding by Herbert W. (continues on page 11)

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World Newsletter, July 2000, Volume 02800, pg. 2.

30. Jay E. Adams, *Counsel from Psalm 119*. Woodruff, S. C.: Timeless Texts, 1998, pg. 18, bold and italic in original.

31. "According to Expert Aramaic Translators..." op. cit., pg. 1.

32. For more on the Nestorians, see Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1910 (reprinted 1994), Vol. 3, pp. 714-722.

33. See further, David Bivin and Roy Blizzard, *Understanding the Difficult Words of Jesus*. Austin, Texas: Center for Judaic-Christian Studies, 1984.

34. "According to Expert Aramaic Translators..." op. cit., pg. 1.

35. See further, Merrill C. Tenney, *New Testament Survey*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1963, pg. 54 and Robert G. Gromacki, *New Testament Survey*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1978, pg. 23.

36. Edwin M. Yamauchi, "Greek, Hebrew, Aramaic, or Syriac?" *Bibliotheca Sacra*, Vol. 131, October 1974, pp. 320-321.

37. See further, *Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*. Grand Rapids, Mich.:

Zondervan Publishers, 1974, Vol. 1, pg. 249.

38. *Ibid.*, pp. 254-255.

39. F.F. Bruce, *The Books and the Parchments*. Westwood, N.J.: Fleming Revell, 1963, pp. 71-72.

40. *Ibid.*, pg. 194.

41. *Ibid.*, pg. 200.

42. *Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, op. cit., Vol. 5, pg. 874. We also recommend the academic and hard-hitting article on this issue in John Ankerberg and John Weldon, *Encyclopedia of Cults and New Religions*. Eugene, Ore.: Harvest House Publishers, 2000, pp. 357-365.

43. *Encyclopedia of Cults and New Religions*, op. cit., pg. 358, italics in original.

44. "According to Expert Aramaic Translators..." op. cit., pg. 1.

45. *Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, op. cit., Vol. 1, pg. 249. Also, given the date of the encyclopedia's report (1970s), there may not even be a few thousand at this point in time who are familiar with Aramaic.

46. *Ibid.*, pp. 372-391.

47. "According to Expert Aramaic Translators..." op. cit., pp. 1-2.

48. *Ibid.*, pg. 1, brackets in original.

49. Adam Clarke, *The New Testament of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*. New York: Abingdon Press, no date, Vol. 5, pg. 277.

50. *New Geneva Study Bible*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1995, pg. 1554.

51. J.R. Dummelow, *A Commentary on the Holy Bible*. New York: Macmillan Company, 1958, pg. 718.

52. *Encyclopedia of Cults and New Religions*, op. cit., pg. 360.

53. Tony Alamo, *Flying Saucers are End-Time Prophecy*, pamphlet, May 1999, pg. 1.

54. *Ibid.*

55. *Ibid.*, pp. 2, 4.

56. William M. Alnor, *UFO Cults and the New Millennium*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1998, pp. 159-160. In addition, any serious study of UFO claims should involve a reading of Ron Rhodes, *Alien Obsession — What Lies Behind Abductions, Sightings, and the Attraction to the Paranormal*. Eugene, Ore.: Harvest House Publishing, 1998, and Kal Korff, *The Roswell UFO Crash*. Amherst, N.Y.: Prometheus Books, 1997.

57. *Flying Saucers are End-Time Prophecy*, op. cit., pg. 5.



BEING SAVED AFTER DEATH

(continued from page 1)

Armstrong in the early 1930s.⁴ But after Armstrong died in 1986, the group began changing its doctrines, and by the mid-1990s, many churches, Christian organizations, and prominent Christian personalities had accepted the WCG as an orthodox, evangelical church. The WCG even boasts that it has, since 1997, been a member of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE). But the NAE has recently informed this writer concerning the WCG's teaching of post-mortem evangelization that it is now in dialogue with WCG leadership "in order to further understand the issues involved."⁵

AMBIGUITY TOWARD ARMSTRONG

Of significance is the fact that the organization has never acknowledged that its founder distinguished himself by being one of the most notorious heretics of the twentieth century who was proud of his unorthodox beliefs and his attacks against Christian doc-

trine. This lack of forthrightness about Armstrong can be seen on the WCG's web site, where Armstrong is said to have had "many unusual doctrines,"⁶ but where Armstrong is also said to have emphasized that "Christianity is a total way of life," and it is implied that his ministry came from God: "[Armstrong] certainly didn't envision a career as a minister. But by the spring of 1931, God began to direct him and his wife Loma to exactly that."⁷

Also, as part of the supporting evidence it presents to show that Armstrong "accepted Jesus Christ as his Savior," the WCG quotes Armstrong as writing,

"When I read and studied the Bible, God was talking to me, and now I loved to listen! I began to pray, and knew that in prayer I was talking with God. I was not yet very well acquainted with God. But one gets to be better acquainted with another by constant contact and continuous conversation. So I continued in the study of the Bible. I began

to write, in article form, the things I was learning."⁸

Then, in the next sentence, the WCG says, "As Herbert Armstrong studied the Bible, he came to a number of unusual conclusions."⁹ The WCG makes no attempt to explain how, if Armstrong was a Christian whom God was preparing for the ministry and to whom God was talking through his Bible study, Armstrong could in his Bible study have been coming to such "unusual conclusions." And earlier, this same article admits, "many of his [Armstrong's] doctrines were not biblical."¹⁰

We all make mistakes, but not to the point of establishing a heretical system of belief as did Armstrong. Yet the WCG continues to paint a picture of Armstrong as merely someone who made some mistakes, as "Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Wesley, Augustine, and many others made mistakes in their personal lives and in their practical theology. This generally does not detract from the positive things they contributed to the church."¹¹ But Armstrong did more

than merely make some mistakes. He was notorious among Christian churches for his damnable heresies.

Those who have been carefully watching the WCG know that it still holds a dangerously high opinion of Armstrong and some of his unorthodox beliefs, and has made eyebrow-raising statements of its own that even Armstrong never thought of.¹² So it comes as no surprise to some observers, but perhaps cause for others to reconsider their hasty embrace of the WCG, that the WCG is now openly emphasizing and even embellishing one of Armstrong's pet doctrines — the teaching that confessing Jesus Christ as Savior in this life is not necessary to salvation.

LAZARUS AND THE RICH MAN

Michael Feazell, in attempting to support his position, first turns to the account of Lazarus and the rich man, found in Luke 16:19-31. After giving the context and circumstances for Jesus telling the account, Feazell lists the characters:

“There are three characters in the story, the rich man (representing the Pharisees who love money), the miserable beggar Lazarus (representing a class of people despised by the Pharisees), and Abraham (whose bosom or lap was a Jewish figure of comfort and peace in the afterlife).”¹³

And, if I may summarize Feazell's explanation of the point of the story, one should not, as the Pharisees did, judge someone's standing with God by the abundance or lack of earthly blessings; the Pharisees would wrongly assume someone like Lazarus to be cursed and someone like the rich man to be blessed. So far, so good.

It is over verse 26 that Feazell becomes confused. Verse 26 states, “Besides all this, between you and us a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who might want to pass from here to you cannot do so, and no one can cross from there to us” (The New Revised Standard Version is used because this is what Feazell uses.)

Feazell takes several rather colloquially worded paragraphs to give his interpretation. But it can be summed up this way: The chasm between where Lazarus is and where the rich man is exists only because the rich man remains unrepentant. In other words, Feazell implies that there would be no chasm if the rich man, even if he remained unrepentant in his earthly life, were to express true repentance in his after-death state. But to arrive at this, Feazell has put a burden on the Scripture that will not stand. Nothing in the text supports his fanciful idea.

Instead of supporting the WCG's contention, the fact that the chasm is two-way — “those who might want to pass from here to you cannot do so, and no one can cross from there to us” — is evidence against it. Abraham does not say that the chasm would disappear or could be bridged if the rich man would only repent. Instead, he expresses the reality and permanency of the chasm by saying that no one can pass through it in either direction. Abraham never evangelizes the dead rich man. Instead, he points out to the rich man what he did *in his lifetime* (v. 25), and then tells him that now a great chasm has been *fixed*. Clearly, he is saying, “It is too late for you, rich man; you should have thought about these things while you were alive.”

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES

The second major Scripture Feazell brings up is Hebrews 9:27-28: “And just as it is appointed for mortals to die once, and after that the judgment, so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin, but to save those who are eagerly waiting for Him.” Feazell says he mentions this passage because it is “often used to prove that those who die without knowing the Gospel are automatically damned.”¹⁴

He cites no reference to support this statement, and tries to discredit the statement by saying the “passage proves nothing one way or the other about whether the dead are given the Gospel.”¹⁵ Perhaps it is true that this single Scripture, taken alone, does not

prove that the unsaved dead are not given a chance to be saved. But it certainly does not support the WCG's teaching, and it is one of many Scriptures that, taken together, show that the WCG's view is not biblical. The passage says that when Christ appears the second time, it will be to “save those who are eagerly waiting for Him” (v. 28). The unevangelized, whether dead or alive, are not eagerly waiting for the return of Jesus Christ.

Feazell then moves on to the book of Acts.¹⁶ He cites chapter 17, verses 30-31: “While God has overlooked the times of human ignorance, now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will have the world judged in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all by raising Him from the dead.”

One can only surmise that Feazell can think this supports the WCG's position because he has failed to examine both the textual and the historical context and misses an important word. Paul is addressing the Athenians. He has just quoted one of their own poets as saying, “For we too are his offspring.” He tells them that in the past, God overlooked the ignorance of those — the Athenians, and, in fact, all the Gentiles — who worshiped idols. But now — not in the future after they are dead — now he commands them to repent. Feazell has missed the word “now.”

When Paul said this, the opening of salvation to the Gentiles was only relatively recently begun. Paul, speaking from the perspective of a Jew about a God who was considered a God of the Jews, merely meant that, now that the Gospel was being preached outside the nation of the Jews, God was now commanding through that Gospel even non-Jewish people — “all people everywhere” — to repent. There is no hint here of a chance to repent after death.

THE JUDGMENT OF REVELATION 20

Another of Feazell's key Scriptures is Revelation 20,¹⁷ especially verses

11-15:

“Then I saw a great white throne and the one who sat on it; and the earth and the heaven fled from his presence, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Also another book was opened, the book of life. And the dead were judged according to their works, as recorded in the books. And the sea gave up the dead that were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and all were judged according to what they had done. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire; and anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.”

An examination of these verses discloses that they do not even remotely suggest that God will offer salvation to people who were unrepentant in this life. Jesus Christ is the judge of the living and the dead (Acts 10:42; 2 Timothy 4:1; 1 Peter 4:5). He is the judge of the great white throne judgment in which the dead stand before Him and are judged according to their works. Because all are sinners, their works only convict them as guilty (Romans 1:18-21, 32; Galatians 2:16). It is not by works that we are saved, but by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8-9). Notice that this scene shows no names being added to the Book of Life. This book already contains the names of those who have in this life confessed Jesus Christ as Savior. Those whose names are not found already written in the Book of Life are thrown into the lake of fire. No one receives a chance for salvation during this judgment. The only chance for salvation is in this life.

Read the words of Jesus:

“Very truly, I tell you, anyone who hears my word and believes Him who sent me has eternal life, and does not come under judgment, but has passed from death to life. Very truly, I tell

you, the hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. For just as the Father has life in himself, so He has granted the Son also to have life in himself; and He has given Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man. Do not be astonished at this; for the hour is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and will come out — those who have done good [as Jesus has just explained, having “done good” is hearing His word and believing Him who sent Him], to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation” (John 5:24-29).

Notice that Jesus is saying that by the time of the resurrection, the separation has already occurred. Some rise to eternal life; others rise to condemnation.

Now contrast this with what Feazell says: “When all the people of the world, the great and the small (Revelation 20:12), including all the dead (verses 12-13), stand before the judgment seat, they are facing none other than Jesus Christ.”¹⁸ Next, he asks us to:

“Imagine you are sitting in the Court of the Universe, waiting with pounding heart for the Judge of All Things to walk in and pass judgment on you. ... Then the Judge walks in and takes his throne. His presence overwhelms you. He is like nothing you could have expected. The whole courtroom seems to come alive in response to him. He is the definition of power and of authority, yet he radiates peace, serenity and love. He is so compelling that your thoughts are no longer on yourself and your dread. Your body relaxes, an unexplainable joy bubbles up from the center of your being. As awesome as he appears, you suddenly feel you would rather be smothered in his embrace

than live another moment without him. You know that whatever his verdict, it will be good, and you are no longer afraid of anything. ‘How do you plead?’ the Judge asks. His voice seems to draw the truth from your lips. ‘Guilty,’ you respond, and as you do, you realize two things at once, that you are deeply ashamed of your sinful life, and that the Judge has already dropped all charges against you. Your shame melts into grateful tears of joy and peace of heart as you receive his life-giving gaze into the depths of your soul. ‘Guilty of what?’ the Judge asks, with a playful smile. ‘There doesn’t seem to be any record against you. Are you ready to join the celebration? Good. Let’s go eat.’ And he holds open the Exit for Perfectly Sinless and Righteous Saints and beckons you to enter with him.”¹⁹

Although Feazell would agree the little scene he has painted is fiction, he obviously intends it to illustrate what he considers the truths of the judgment of Revelation 20. But, in fact, this scenario cannot be derived from Revelation 20 or, for that matter, any of Scripture. It is purely out of Feazell’s apparently overactive imagination.

Besides the obvious aspect that someone receives salvation after death, notice these additional unscriptural — even anti-scriptural and other-Gospel — elements in this WCG fairy tale:

1. The Gospel is never stated. We see here someone saved without ever hearing a word of the Gospel. In its place is internal, subjective emotion: “an unexplainable joy” bubbling up from the center of the sinner’s being. But why should a sinner who has not heard the Gospel have such joy? The Bible tells us how sinners react in the presence of God (Revelation 6:15-17).

2. A confession of guilt replaces a confession of Jesus Christ as Savior. The sinner in this story states only one word, “Guilty.” The Bible tells us what we must confess, and it is far

more than a mere admission of guilt (Matthew 10:32-33; Romans 10:9-10; 1 John 4:2-3, 15; 2 John 7).

3. The sinner is saved apart from faith. Feazell's tale mentions peace, serenity, love, and "unexplainable joy," but it has no mention of faith. The Bible tells us, "For by grace you have been saved through faith." But this story leaves this precious gift of grace out of the picture. Of course, with the Gospel left out of the picture, this is only to be expected. Saving faith must have Jesus Christ and His completed, saving work on the cross as its object. Instead of saving faith, the sinner in this story seems to have some sort of confidence that he will be let off scot-free.

4. The atonement is completely missing. Not only is the Gospel not stated, but the work of Jesus Christ that the Gospel announces appears to have no necessary part in this sinner's salvation. The Judge merely declares that the sinner has no guilt. He never says that the sinner has committed sins deserving of eternal damnation and the wrath of God. He says nothing of the fact that it is only because of Jesus Christ's atoning death on the cross, expiating our sins, that believing sinners can be declared "not guilty," and that it is only through Jesus Christ's propitiation that believers are freed from God's wrath and reconciled to Him. This scene makes one wonder if Feazell thinks that God will remove a sinner's guilt merely if the sinner feels guilty, and whether Feazell understands that God does not pardon guilt-confessing sinners by saying, "Oh, that's okay; forget it." God's righteous demands must be met; justice must be satisfied. God has made provision for this through the work of Jesus Christ. Sins are not just forgiven; they are forgiven because Jesus has paid for them.

Feazell elsewhere mentions the Gospel and faith. But after reading this scenario, this question must be asked: How can someone who takes the position of being a Christian teacher (by writing for a church) write a fictional account of someone being

saved in which so many essential elements of salvation are completely missing?

Anticipating that his story might not be well-received, Feazell writes,

"Even if you don't like my little tale of the heavenly courtroom, the point is that there is no need to worry that our departed loved ones, nor any of the rest of the masses of humans who have died, are consigned to the eternal flames simply because no missionary reached them with the Gospel message before they died. Jesus knows the Gospel too, and yes, ladies and gentlemen, he can present it even better than we can."²⁰

But if this is the case, why should we evangelize? If Jesus Christ intends to personally evangelize those who have died unsaved, why should we try to evangelize people in this life? Since we flawed humans might possibly unintentionally offend and turn some against Christ in our attempt to turn them to Him, why should we not let people live and die in ignorance so Christ himself can then evangelize them? Wouldn't this result in more people being saved? The logical conclusion of the WCG's teaching on postmortem evangelization is at odds with the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-18).

Continuing with his explanation of Revelation 20, Feazell correctly explains that the books that are opened contain the record of the works of those being judged. Because all are sinners, what is recorded in these books condemns. He also points out that another book is mentioned, the Book of Life. Then Feazell contradicts not only Scripture, but even himself. He writes,

"There is another book, the Book of Life, and the only ones who wind up in the lake with Death and Hades are those whose names don't appear in this Book (verse 15)!"²¹

Those whose names are not found in the Book of Life are cast into the lake of fire. Feazell then expounds,

"It was sitting there all along. Everybody whose name is in it gets a full pardon. And how do names get in it? By the atoning blood of Christ. The great mystery is that through Christ's Atonement, everybody's name is in it. Believers simply receive what was there for them all along."²²

Notice that Feazell admits that "those whose names don't appear in this Book" are thrown into the lake of fire. Yet, apparently willing to ignore all rules of logic and grammar, he also states, "everybody's name is in it." The Bible clearly tells us in Revelation 20:15 and 21:8 that people are thrown into the lake of fire. It also tells us that these are the people "whose name was not found written in the book of life." Feazell appears to agree with this. But then he says that everybody's name is in the Book of Life. Does Feazell then believe in universal salvation? No, he admits that unbelievers (that is, those who don't believe even upon being evangelized after death) will not be saved.

Apparently, Feazell does not see the impossibility of the following: All in the Book of Life are saved. All are in the Book of Life. Some are not saved. Feazell's teaching clearly contradicts itself. Also, as we have already seen, no new names are added to the Book of Life at the time of the judgment, so Feazell's entire argument based on Revelation 20 is pointless.

GIVING HEED TO FABLES

Apparently desiring to introduce even more fiction to support his assertions, Feazell uses a character in C.S. Lewis' *The Last Battle* (part of the *Chronicles of Narnia* series): "When Emeth, the Calormen soldier, came face to face in the final judgment with Aslan, the Christ figure in the story, he immediately loved Aslan, knowing Aslan was the true longing of his soul."²³ Of course, Feazell is trying to gain credibility for postmortem evangelization by pointing out that C.S. Lewis apparently believed it.

In fact, through Emeth and Aslan, Lewis is teaching children even more

unorthodox beliefs than that. He is also teaching what is called inclusivism; that is, the belief that the followers of religions other than Christianity can, in fact, be serving the true God even though they don't know Him. In Lewis' story, soon after meeting Aslan, Emeth tells him, "Alas, Lord, I am no servant of thine but the servant of Tash." Tash is the name of the false god in the story. But Aslan responds, "Child, all the service thou hast done to Tash, I account as service done to me."²⁴

Does Feazell, in fact, also believe in inclusivism? He writes, "Perhaps Lewis' depiction is not far off. In Matthew 25:31-46 we learn that Jesus lives in those who are his and that his works are accomplished in them even though they are not entirely aware of it. Is it too much to say that by God's grace such people might know and love the glorious risen Lord as the deepest longing of their souls?"²⁵ Apparently he considers it at least a possibility.

But Matthew 25:31-46 must not be so wrested from the context of the entire Bible. When seen in the light of all of Scripture, these verses cannot possibly mean that these inheritors of the kingdom are people who lived their entire lives and died as worshipers of other gods. Numerous other Scriptures speak of the need to repent of such darkness and turn to the true God (Romans 13:12; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; 10:7, 14; 2 Corinthians 6:16-7:1; Galatians 5:19-21).

We sincerely hope the WCG is not on the verge of teaching another heresy. The fact that C.S. Lewis was apparently an inclusivist does not make the belief any more orthodox. The Bible must be our standard, and it is unfortunate that Lewis is still too often fawned over and not enough exposed for his frequent departures from biblical Christianity. Citing Lewis and not the Bible does not lend credibility to Feazell's teaching on postmortem evangelization and suggestions of inclusivism.

VANITY FAIRNESS

Feazell makes the following interesting statement:

"Human expectations of justice and fairness are knocked on their ear when God's Son starts shelling out the fabulous grace of his Father. Witness the parable of the workers in the field (Matthew 20:13-15)."²⁶

This parable illustrates Jesus' oft-repeated maxim, "The last will be first, and the first will be last" (Matthew 20:16), and this does tend to confound human ideas of fairness. Nevertheless, in using this parable to support postmortem evangelism and even possibly inclusivism, Feazell stretches the parable too far. He does not seem to notice that all of the workers, from the first to the last, are laborers for the landowner. No one is paid who was not chosen by the landowner and worked for him. One must always bend the Scriptures out of shape to try to make them teach that anyone will be saved who does not in this life have saving faith in Jesus Christ.

What's more, it is the doctrines of postmortem evangelization and inclusivism that more closely conform to human expectations of fairness. It would be unfair, it is argued, for God to condemn to eternal hellfire those who never in this life had an opportunity to believe the Gospel. But this denies God His sovereignty to do as He will with his creatures. God does not have to abide by human standards of fairness.

The apostle Paul addresses this issue in Romans 9: "For he says to Moses, 'I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.' So it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God who shows mercy" (vv. 15-16). Is Paul saying that God must be "fair" and have mercy on everyone? No. "For the scripture says to Pharaoh, 'I have raised you up for the very purpose of showing My power in you, so that My name may be proclaimed in all the earth.' So then He has mercy on whomever He chooses, and He hardens the heart of whomever he chooses" (vv. 17-18).

Pharaoh never had a chance. But isn't this unfair? Paul anticipates the argument:

"You will say to me then, 'Why then does He still find fault? For who can resist His will?' But who indeed are you, a human being, to argue with God? Will what is molded say to the one who molds it, 'Why have you made me like this?' Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one object for special use and another for ordinary use? What if God, desiring to show His wrath and to make known His power, has endured with much patience the objects of wrath that are made for destruction; and what if He has done so in order to make known the riches of his glory for the objects of mercy, which He has prepared beforehand for glory — including us whom He has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles?" (vv. 19-24).

Notice that the objects of mercy, whether Jews or Gentiles, are called. They are not those who never hear the Gospel. While many people would like to deny it, Paul clearly teaches that some are "made for destruction ... in order to make known the riches of [God's] glory for the objects of mercy." We must not try to deny or limit God's sovereignty and glory by imposing our ideas of fairness on his plan of salvation. Of course, the Church must preach the Gospel indiscriminately.

God calls his people from among both the Jews and the Gentiles (vv. 25-29), but those saved are always described as believing the Gospel as it is preached to them by the Church sent forth; not by Jesus Christ after their death: "But what does it say? 'The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart' (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim)" (Romans 10:8). Note that what Paul says is in the heart is not some inexpressible desire of the heart or true longing of the soul as teachers of unorthodox means of salvation often speak of, but it is the proclaimed word of faith.

Paul continues, "because if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For one believes with

the heart and so is justified, and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved. ... For, 'Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved'" (vv. 9-10, 13). How? By merely having a longing in one's soul or by being evangelized after death by Jesus?

Paul never even entertains the possibility of such notions: "But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim Him? And how are they to proclaim Him unless they are sent? As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!'" (vv. 9-10, 13-15). Salvation comes through believing the Gospel, and the Gospel is brought to the world, although not to every single individual, by the Church, and it is all under God's control and for His glory.

DEADLINE

Feazell has apparently already received flack for his teachings. He writes,

"I have received letters from some readers who strongly disagree with what I have written on this topic. But it is interesting that nearly every letter that disagrees also grants in essence that the Scriptures lead us to trust that God will indeed deal righteously with those who die without knowing the name of Jesus. I offer that He will deal with them in no other way than in accord with his eternal faithfulness and mercy as demonstrated supremely in Jesus Christ, the great Judge."²⁷

Yes, all Christians would certainly agree that God will deal righteously. But, of course, Feazell's idea of how God will deal righteously and the orthodox idea based on sound exegesis of the Bible are at wide variance. Only those who wish to ignore the natural meaning of many, many passages in the Bible can maintain post-mortem evangelism.

For example, Feazell misrepresents Jesus Christ by first quoting Jesus and

then drawing an invalid conclusion from Jesus' words. But, in a twist of irony, he makes a typo that brings out evidence against him. Feazell writes,

"Jesus says simply, 'Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest' (Matthew 11:20). He doesn't say when. He doesn't say, 'Oh, by the way, beat the deadline or you're burnt toast.'"²⁸

But just because Jesus in this one sentence doesn't mention a deadline, does not mean there isn't one. By forcing his preconceptions into this Scripture, Feazell draws an invalid conclusion from Jesus' words and misrepresents Him. As we will see, other Scriptures show that there is a deadline.

Now for the irony: Feazell has accidentally referenced the verse he quoted to Matthew 11:20. In fact, it is Matthew 11:28. Matthew 11:20, and the verses immediately following it, is one of the passages that shows that there is a deadline for repentance. Matthew 11:20-24 states:

"Then He [Jesus] began to reproach the cities in which most of his deeds of power had been done, because they did not repent. 'Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! for if the deeds of power done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I tell you, on the day of judgment it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon than for you. And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? No, you will be brought down to Hades. For if the deeds of power done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I tell you that on the day of judgment it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom than for you.'"

Jesus pronounced woes on Chorazin and Bethsaida because they did not repent (Matthew 11:20-21). He told them that on the day of judgment, it will be more tolerable for

Tyre and Sidon than for them. He would not have said this if their time for receiving salvation were yet future. But what about Tyre and Sidon? They had not had the Gospel preached to them. Jesus said they would have repented had they had such miracles performed in their cities. But they did not have such deeds done in their cities. Did Jesus, therefore, hold out hope for their repentance in the judgment? He did not. He only said it will be more tolerable for them in the judgment.

"More tolerable" is not salvation. It merely suggests a lesser suffering according to the principles in Luke 12:47-48: "That slave who knew what his master wanted, but did not prepare himself or do what was wanted, will receive a severe beating. But the one who did not know and did what deserved a beating will receive a light beating." (These verses in Luke 12, by the way, are stated in the context of Jesus explaining that He, like a thief or like the unanticipated return of a master, will come at an unexpected time, and that once He returns it will be too late. He will deal out the rewards and punishments — punishments, albeit lighter, even for those who did not know). A light beating is still a punishment, and is not salvation.

Jesus did not say that the people of Capernaum will have a chance to be saved in the judgment. He said they "will be brought down to Hades" (Matthew 11:23). Does Jesus say that the people of Sodom will be saved? No. He said that if the same deeds had been performed in it, the city — because the inhabitants would apparently have repented — would have been spared destruction. He also said that it will be more tolerable for Sodom on the day of judgment than it will be for Capernaum.

Again, "more tolerable" is not salvation. It only suggests a lighter punishment. Note well that Jesus, even though He is speaking specifically about the day of judgment in these verses, never so much as hints that any of these people, whether they had had the Gospel preached to them

or not, will have a chance to repent and be saved at the judgment. Their fate was already sealed.

Jesus again implies a deadline for repentance in his parable found in Luke 12:16-21. He tells of a man who has such abundance that he plans to pull down his barns and build bigger ones to store all of his grain and goods. That night, God says to him, "You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?" Jesus goes on to explain that this is the way "it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich toward God." He makes no distinction for those who have heard the Gospel or not. The implication is clear: after your death, it is too late.

NOW IS THE DAY OF SALVATION!

Interestingly, neither Feazell nor the WCG's statement of faith mentions the most obvious Scripture concerning this subject. This is 2 Corinthians 6:2. In this verse, after appealing to his readers to "be reconciled to God" (2 Corinthians 5:20), Paul writes, "For he says, 'At an acceptable time I have listened to you, and on a day of salvation I have helped you.' See, now is the acceptable time; see, now is the day of salvation!" Clearly, Paul's teaching is that now — in this Church age, not in the future time of judgment — is the day of salvation.

The WCG has historically tried to cast doubt on this understanding of the verse by pointing out that the original Greek of this verse and the Hebrew of Isaiah 49:8 (the Old Testament Scripture that Paul quotes in this verse) do not contain the definite article "the," and, therefore, Paul was saying, Now is a day of salvation. While working for the WCG nearly 12 years ago, this writer wrongly concluded: "Certainly, this is a day of salvation for some... But the vast majority have not had their minds opened. This is not their day of salvation."²⁹

The WCG teaching at that time was that the lack of a definite article is

equivalent to an indefinite article. This is incorrect. Bible translators are perfectly right to insert the definite article "the" in the appropriate places in this verse. The context reveals that Paul was stressing urgency because now — the time between Christ's first and second comings — is the time of salvation. Paul is here conveying a sense of urgency concerning "now is the acceptable time ... now is the day of salvation!" But apparently Feazell would rather ignore this important verse.

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES

And what of the verses that the WCG lists to supposedly support its teaching on eternal judgment as found in its statement of beliefs? Matthew 25:31-32 pictures Christ as judge over the nations, separating "people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats." There is no indication here of a chance to repent and be saved during the judgment. Neither these verses nor those that follow show any goats repenting and becoming sheep!

The WCG in its "Statement of Beliefs"³⁰ also cites Acts 24:15: "I have a hope in God — a hope that they themselves [the Pharisees] also accept — that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the unrighteous." The Bible here and elsewhere plainly teaches that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and unrighteous. But it never says that in that resurrection the unrighteous will have a chance to become righteous.

In fact, the next verses the WCG cites are John 5:28-29, in which, as we have already seen, Jesus so clearly distinguishes between the righteous and unrighteous as to give no hope for the unrighteous to repent after the resurrection. One wonders how the WCG can reference such Scriptures to support its doctrine of postmortem evangelization when they so unequivocally teaches the opposite!

The next passage on the WCG list is Revelation 20:11-15, which we have already discussed at length. After that, they cite 1 Timothy 2:4-6: "who [God] desires everyone to be saved

and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God; there is also one mediator between God and humankind, Christ Jesus, himself human, who gave himself a ransom for all — this was attested at the right time."

We can only assume that the WCG includes these verses to try to support a line of reasoning like this: God desires everyone to be saved. Not everyone is saved in this life. Therefore, God must give them a chance to be saved after death. But since Feazell denies that the WCG teaches universalism,³¹ then it must be that the WCG believes that some people will not be saved, even after being given a chance in the judgment. And if some people are not saved, what is the difference between some people not being saved because they are not saved in this life, and some people not being saved because they are not saved in a supposed chance to be saved in the judgment?

Whatever way you look at it, some people are not saved. But the verse says that God "desires everyone [Greek: "*pantas anthropous*" — "all men"] to be saved" and that Jesus "gave himself a ransom for all." Commentators differ as to how this text should be understood. This writer agrees with some (those who say that "all men" is a reference to salvation being opened to the Gentiles — salvation to all kinds of men without discrimination based on race or nationality) and disagrees with others (especially those that rob God of his omnipotence or create a paradox). But however the text is to be understood, if it is to be consistent with the rest of Scripture, it cannot mean that God so desires to get as many people as possible saved that He will even give them a chance after death. Such an idea is foreign to the text, must be forced into it, and, as we have seen, contradicts other Scriptures.

The WCG lists 2 Peter 3:9 apparently because this verse could sound as if it is saying that God is so unwilling that anyone should perish that He will give people a chance to be saved after death. But, of course, it

doesn't really say anything about a chance to receive salvation after death. Looking at this passage in context, the surrounding verses reveal that Peter is writing about the second coming of Jesus Christ. Specifically, Peter is refuting those who were spreading the false teaching that things will always continue as they have (uniformitarianism) and Christ won't return (see especially verse 4).

In verse 9, Peter is saying that Christ promised to return, and He will fulfill His promise. Some people may consider that He is taking a long time. But what Christ is doing is showing His patience because He doesn't want "any" to perish, but "all" to come to repentance. Now, if this verse indicates a chance for receiving salvation after Christ's return, it would not show the Lord's patience at this time. It would, in fact, be in conflict with its context. If there is a chance for being saved after Christ's return, then why would there be a need for His patience now? So once again, we see that one of the verses the WCG uses to try to support its position on postmortem evangelism really does not support it at all.

Next, the WCG turns to Acts 10:43: "All the prophets testify about Him [Jesus] that everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins through his name." This is spoken by Peter as part of his presentation of the Gospel to the Gentiles at Caesarea in Cornelius' house. The WCG must have thrown this one in for good measure. It says nothing and hints nothing of an after-death chance to believe in Jesus and receive forgiveness.

The next WCG proof text is John 12:32: "And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." Jesus spoke this of Himself. The first thing to note about this verse is that the New Revised Standard Version inserts the word "people." This word is not in the Greek. Jesus simply says, "I will draw all to myself." As verse 33 explains, He is speaking of his crucifixion. The fact that He did not mean He would draw every individual to Himself is seen in

the fact that not every individual is drawn to Him and saved. Even the WCG admits to this in saying that it does not believe in universalism. That He would not draw every individual to Himself is also seen in the context.

This verse appears in a setting begun in verse 12 when Jesus rides into Jerusalem on a donkey as crowds with palm branches shout, "Hosanna!" This causes a great stir and attracts crowds and the troubled attention of the Pharisees, who say, "Look, the world has gone after Him!" (v. 19).

Of course, the entire world was not going after Jesus, but only large crowds in Jerusalem. But then, in the next verses, as if in further, deeper fulfillment of the Pharisees words, we read that some Greeks came to Jesus' disciples and asked to see Jesus. When told of this, Jesus' answer is, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified." Jesus knew that the coming of these Gentiles signaled that the time of His death was near. During the following discourse about His crucifixion and glorification, He prays and is answered with a voice from heaven and this eventually leads to the verse in question.

Judging from this context, it is evident that what Jesus was saying He would draw to Himself was not all people as meaning every single human, but rather all manner of people, not just Jews. Based upon this and upon the fact that the WCG says it does not teach universalism, it is difficult to fathom how the WCG imagines that this verse supports postmortem evangelism.

ROOTS IN ARMSTRONGISM

The last Scripture the WCG lists is 1 Corinthians 15:22-28:

"For as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. Then comes the end, when He hands over the kingdom to God the Father, after He has destroyed every ruler and every authority

and power. For He must reign until He has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. For 'God has put all things in subjection under his feet.' But when it says, 'All things are put in subjection,' it is plain that this does not include the one who put all things in subjection under Him. When all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subjected to the one who put all things in subjection under Him, so that God may be all in all."

The WCG's use of this Scripture is interesting as it helps to reveal how its doctrine of postmortem evangelism is founded in the church's roots in Armstrongism. These verses in 1 Corinthians 15, along with Revelation 20, were Herbert W. Armstrong's favorite proof texts for his teaching that there will be three resurrections. Armstrong wrote:

"In I Cor. 15:22-23, you will read: 'For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive [after death]. But every man in his own order.... The fifteenth chapter of I Corinthians is the 'resurrection chapter' of the Bible. Its subject is the resurrection to LIFE, *after death!* But there is, in God's Master Plan an *order* — or succession — of resurrections. Continue: 'Christ the first-fruits' — this occurred more than 1900 years ago — 'afterwards they that are Christ's at his coming. Then cometh the end...' (verses 23-24). Later in this chapter a great deal will be said about the resurrection of those 'that are Christ's' — Spirit-begotten Christians. But what of the *others*? The same ALL who die in Adam, it says, 'in Christ shall ... they be made alive' — by a resurrection from the dead. Verse 23 says, '...they that are Christ's [shall be resurrected] at his [second] coming' — now imminent — in our present generation. 'Then cometh the end' (verse 24) — but the details of the resurrection of others — the overwhelming majority

of all who ever lived — are recorded elsewhere. In Rev. 20 we find described two more resurrections."³²

The first resurrection, according to Armstrong, is the resurrection of those who are Christians in this life. It occurs at the return of Jesus Christ. The second resurrection takes place after Jesus' thousand-year reign on the earth. This is, wrote Armstrong, the resurrection of:

"the Great White Throne Judgment (Rev. 20:11-12). They will be resurrected mortal, once again in a flesh and blood physical body, just as before. In this judgment they will be 'called' — their eyes opened to God's truth."³³

This, of course, is what the WCG now teaches as the time of postmortem evangelism in the judgment. Armstrong continues,

"Then, finally, there will be a last resurrection (Rev. 20:13-15) of those who had been called by God in their mortal human life, but had rejected or turned from the truth. They, with those who reject it in the Great White Throne Judgment, will be in the lake of fire (II Pet. 3:10-11), which is the second death."³⁴

The WCG's postmortem evangelization teaching, with its emphasis of Revelation 20 and 1 Corinthians 15:22-28, springs directly from the teachings of Herbert W. Armstrong, the late WCG founder and self-proclaimed apostle. This was the man who, by the WCG's own admissions cited earlier, came in his Bible studies "to a number of unusual conclusions" and many of whose "doctrines were not biblical." But the WCG, while it no longer specifically teaches that there is a gap of time after Revelation 20:11-12 followed by another distinct resurrection in Revelation 20:13-15, as did Armstrong, still adheres to Armstrong's primary assertion in this regard that it is a "false teaching," as Armstrong termed it, "that ALL are automatically 'lost' unless they profess

Jesus Christ as Savior — and that now is the *only* day of 'salvation.'"³⁵

In an earlier article on the same subject, Feazell states, "The fact that our church holds a distinctive belief on a nonessential subject (in terms of salvation) does not mean that all members must hold the same position."³⁶ But this is small consolation when we consider that the WCG continues to promote this unbiblical doctrine in its publications.

We would also have to question Feazell's labeling this a "nonessential subject (in terms of salvation)." In doing this, he would appear to be downplaying its importance. But he cannot really believe this to be true, because it is Feazell and the WCG that continue to press their aberrant understanding on this topic despite the biblical facts and the witness of the Christian Church.

If Feazell doesn't consider this an important topic, why have at least three articles and a booklet on this subject appeared on the WCG web site in the space of about one year? If the WCG doesn't consider it important, why is it a part of their statement of beliefs? Why is the subject again brought up in even another booklet (*When a Loved One Dies*) on the WCG web site?³⁷ It is obvious that the WCG considers this an important topic. And it is important.

To say that people have a chance for salvation after death strikes directly at the Gospel, the very heart of the Christian message. It is a belief that can be maintained only by twisting Scripture and ignoring the many calls to repent and believe as well as the warning of what will happen to those who do not. It is a dangerous message of false hope that destroys the urgent call of the Gospel, a lie that is no doubt as well-loved by Satan as it was by Herbert W. Armstrong, and a heresy that a WCG that lays claim to orthodoxy should have renounced a long time ago.

Endnotes:

1. J. Michael Feazell, "No Other Name" (part two), *Worldwide News*, January 2001. Also published on the Worldwide Church

of God web site, http://www.wcg.org/wn/01january/no_other_name.htm.

2. "Worldwide Church of God statement of belief on Eternal Judgment," available on the church's web site at: <http://www.wcg.org/lit/AboutUs/beliefs/judgment.htm>. On the web site's summary, "Statement of Beliefs of the Worldwide Church of God," the entry similarly reads: "At the end of the age, God will gather all the living and the dead before the heavenly throne of Christ for judgment. The righteous will receive eternal glory, and the wicked will be condemned to the lake of fire. In Christ the Lord makes gracious and just provision for all, even for those who at death appear not to have believed the Gospel. (Matthew 25:31-32; Acts 24:15; John 5:28-29; Revelation 20:11-15; 1 Timothy 2:3-6; 2 Peter 3:9; Acts 10:43; John 12:32; 1 Corinthians 15:22-28)." (See: <http://www.wcg.org/lit/AboutUs/beliefs/default.htm>.)

3. "No Other Name" (part two), op. cit.

4. For readers unfamiliar with the early history and doctrines of Armstrong and the Worldwide Church of God, and the organization's recent move toward orthodoxy, see the PFO tract, "The Plain Truth of Herbert W. Armstrong." For a free copy, send your request along with a self-addressed stamped envelope to: PFO, P.O. Box 26062, Saint Louis, MO 63136-0062.

5. E-mail correspondence to author from Carmen Hosea of the National Association of Evangelicals, May 9, 2001.

6. Worldwide Church of God document, "Transformed by Christ, A Brief History of the Worldwide Church of God." Available at: <http://www.wcg.org/lit/AboutUs/history.htm>.

7. Worldwide Church of God document, "About Our Founder." Available at: <http://www.wcg.org/lit/booklets/welcome/welcome8.htm>.

8. "Transformed by Christ," op. cit.

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid.

11. Worldwide Church of God document, "Comments on Our History." Available at: <http://www.wcg.org/lit/AboutUs/comments.htm>.

12. For example, in 1997, the WCG's statement of beliefs as they appeared in Joseph Tkach's *Transformed by Truth* stated "that the Holy Scriptures, comprised of the Old and New Testaments, are the foundation of truth and the accurate and infallible record of God's revelation to humanity." By saying nothing about the Bible being divinely inspired, by saying nothing about the Bible being the inerrant Word of God, by labeling the Bible merely "the foundation of truth" instead of calling it in its entirety the sole authority for all Christian belief and practice, and by calling it "the accurate and infallible

record of God's revelation" instead of the revelation itself, the WCG was using the language of neo-orthodoxy, not orthodoxy (see Peter Ditzel, "Transforming the Truth," *The Quarterly Journal*, July-September 1998, pg. 11). But the WCG's statement of beliefs as it now appears on its web site does not improve anything. While it has added that the Scriptures "are the inspired Word of God," it continues to describe them as merely the "foundation of truth" and has removed the word "infallible" from its previous statement about the Scriptures being a record of God's revelation. So now, according to the WCG, even as a "record," they are not infallible. But the WCG now adds a new sentence in which "infallible" does appear: "The Holy Scriptures constitute ultimate authority in all matters of doctrine, and embody the infallible principles that govern all facets of Christian living." Notice in this sentence that it is the *principles* embodied in the Scriptures, not the *Scriptures*, that are infallible. These two concepts are far from equivalent. The WCG's stance on the Holy Scriptures leaves them open to believe much of the Bible is an accurate record of inspired myth given as a foundation of truth that embodies infallible principles by which

we should live. In other words, this leaves one to interpret the Creation, the Flood, the crossing of the Red Sea, the giving of the Law at Sinai, and even the Incarnation and the Atonement as not historical facts, but stories that teach us "infallible principles."

13. J. Michael Feazell, "No Other Name" (part one), *Worldwide News*, December 2000. Also published on the Worldwide Church of God web site, http://www.wcg.org/wn/00december/no_other_name.htm.

14. *Ibid.*, italics in original.

15. *Ibid.*

16. *Ibid.*

17. *Ibid.*

18. "No Other Name" (part two), op. cit.

19. *Ibid.*

20. *Ibid.*

21. *Ibid.*

22. *Ibid.*

23. *Ibid.*

24. C.S. Lewis, *The Last Battle*. New York: Harper Trophy, 1956, pg. 205.

25. "No Other Name" (part two), op. cit.

26. *Ibid.*

27. *Ibid.*

28. *Ibid.*

29. Peter Ditzel, "Are They Condemned

Because They Never Heard the Name of Christ?", *The Plain Truth*, October 1989, pg. 21.

30. Cited under the subheading, "Eternal Judgment" from the "Statement of Beliefs of the Worldwide Church of God," op. cit.

31. "No Other Name" (part two), op. cit.

32. Herbert W. Armstrong, *The Incredible Human Potential*. Pasadena, Calif.: Worldwide Church of God, 1978, pg. 162, italics, caps, ellipses, and brackets in original.

33. *Ibid.*, pg. 88.

34. *Ibid.*

35. Herbert W. Armstrong, *Mystery of the Ages*. Pasadena, Calif.: Worldwide Church of God, 1985, pg. 105, caps and italics in original.

36. J. Michael Feazell, "Only One Name," *Worldwide News*, February 2000. Also published on the Worldwide Church of God web site, http://www.wcg.org/wn/00february/only_one_name.htm.

37. See *When a Loved One Dies — Articles About Grief and Hope*, published on the Worldwide Church of God web site, <http://www.wcg.org/lit/booklets/loved/default.htm>. (Esp., Keith Stump, "Beyond Death," <http://www.wcg.org/lit/booklets/loved/loved7.htm>.)



EDITORIALS

(continued from page 2)

The sincerity of Grady's remarks may well be disputed by the fact that sprinkled throughout the same issue in which he offered his criticisms, one can find numerous advertisements for conferences, conventions, and revivals featuring Ken and Gloria Copeland, Tommy Tenney, Creflo Dollar, Mike Bickle, Joyce Meyer, Oral Roberts, and other questionable and controversial speakers.

For example, on page 36, "Prophet" Kim Clement is pitched as the keynote speaker at the "Apostolic & Prophetic Worship Training Conference." This gathering promised that attendees would "Learn how to Activate your Prophetic Anointing or give it an oil change and lube." It would also include "Prophetic Worship that will kick the devil's butt." A few pages earlier, the magazine advertised *Our God Is One*, a 283-page, \$24.95, hardcover book that promised to change "the way you view the Oneness Pentecostal movement."

Grady and the magazine he edits can continue to have their annual or periodic crisis of conscience, but until they stop promoting and advertising the very ones they criticize, their judgments — no matter how accurate — mean nothing.

—MKG

SUPERNATURAL MESSAGES FROM THE MUNDANE?

Modern-day prophets are an ingenious lot. When mundane circumstances are combined with their fertile imaginations, they come up with all sorts of supernatural interpretations and messages from the Divine. Few realize that what has invaded the Church are very old pagan practices in a new, more acceptable, outfit. There really is nothing new under the sun.

And if anyone surveys a current inventory of prophetic omens, he will be driven to the unmistakable conclusion that God is a big sports fan. Professional, collegiate, it doesn't matter, this new wave of prophets would have us believe that God is sending revelation through them all. Sporting events are not just "big business" for the Las Vegas oddsmakers, but for the Almighty and His Church.

Take for instance, Vineyard pastor James Ryle. Ryle claims revelation knowledge from a purported dream he said he had in 1989. He said the dream revealed to him that coach Bill McCartney and his Colorado University football team would be empowered by God's Spirit and would have a "golden season." And they did. However, when it came to their last game, played for the national championship, Ryle's dream no longer held significance. Ryle said he received a new and different omen from the Lord by way of the team's mascot and the Holy Spirit's prompting him to Isaiah 21:6.