

GRASSLEY EXONERATES TELEVANGELISTS

After more than three years, an investigation by the Senate Finance Committee headed by Sen. Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa) concluded with no fines or discipline for six prominent televangelists. The committee released its final report Jan. 6 and it was posted on Grassley's Website. Among those investigated were Benny Hinn, Joyce Meyer, Kenneth Copeland, Paula and Randy White, Creflo Dollar, and Eddie Long.

The report disclosed that during the inquiry, Joyce Meyer Ministries "responded fully" and Benny Hinn "also provided complete answers to all questions." However, the other four ministries "either did not provide any information or provided incomplete information." According to *Christianity Today*, the four televangelists refusing to cooperate with details as to their finances, "questioned whether Grassley had the authority to conduct the investigation." "Others accused him of violating their religious freedom," the magazine said.

The Associated Press reported, "Grassley's staff said in the report that they did not issue subpoenas to further the investigation because witnesses feared retaliation if they spoke out publicly and the Finance Committee did not have the time or resources to enforce the subpoenas."

Grassley has asked the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability to move forward in the evaluation process where his committee stopped. The ECFA Website says it "is an accreditation agency dedicated to helping Christian ministries earn the public's trust." Its members include a variety of Christian ministries, churches, and non-profit organizations.

Ole Anthony, president of the televangelist watchdog group Trinity Foundation, was not impressed with Grassley's findings and suggestion. He said he was "disappointed" with the proposal that the ECFA form a commission to further study issues raised by the committee. "The ECFA, he said, has no 'teeth' to compel the televangelists into greater accountability and transparency."

Benny Hinn immediately capitalized on Grassley's press release. He wrote to his followers, "We have a solid reputation of going above and beyond when it comes to our governance and compliance with governmental agencies. I'm glad this latest report from the Senate Finance Committee bears this out once again." However, a few days later, Hinn wrote that as a result of that three-year investigation, his ministry spent millions

of dollars in defending their name and innocence. "At the same time," he said, "we've lost millions in revenue, as some partners walked away, believing there was something financially wrong with our ministry." He stated that his "ministry is facing great financial danger," and that those who stand with him financially will experience "the greatest season of harvest and blessing" they have ever known. "2011 will be your year of recovery and supernatural abundance," he wrote.

—MKG

HAGGARD DEBUTS IN REALITY SPECIAL

Reality television seems to know no bounds. The more aberrant and dubious its protagonists, the better. Case in point: *The Learning Channel's* January broadcast of *Ted Haggard: Scandalous*. The one-hour special, produced by RelativityReal, was hoped to be successful enough to lead to an ongoing series. Haggard was the founder and pastor of the New Life megachurch in Colorado Springs before resigning in disgrace in 2006 after his drug use and involvement with a male prostitute was revealed.

The program detailed the chronicles of Haggard as he established a new church in Colorado Springs last June. His St. James Church, which meets at a local middle school, is said to be a nondenominational fellowship that attracts 300 worshippers at its Sunday morning services.

Haggard maintains, "I don't have any idea about a series." "After what I went through four years ago I'm just glad to be alive and in ministry," he told the *Denver Post*.

Haggard has appeared on another reality show, *Divorce Court*, and has been a featured guest on broadcasts such as *Larry King Live* when moral failure of pastors is the theme.

—MKG

JOHN PAUL II ON FAST TRACK TO SAINTHOOD

Pope Benedict XVI has set May 1 as the date for bestowing upon his predecessor Catholicism's highest honor: sainthood. The beatification of Pope John Paul II is unprecedented for a number of reasons. It will mark
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hands on and begins the massage, he or she can be joined by astral divine beings called Reiki guides who assist with the massage. Those receiving treatments have claimed distinct feelings of numerous hands on their bodies. The Reiki practitioner can pray for assistance from the Reiki guide before, during, or after the massage.

In Reiki literature, it is alleged that once the guides show up, they are with the person receiving treatment forever and will assist if called upon. Reiki was developed by a Japanese Buddhist in 1922. However, clinical studies conclude it has no real benefit except for a possible placebo effect. The forms of it promoting spiritual guides amount to historical spiritism. While some would argue it is just meaningless, imaginary bunk and a racket, others would insist it is a very dark force. Whatever it is, one should not toy with it. It certainly has no place around a church.

While Reiki is not an official part of The New Church, it has been embraced by Oz in addition to his other false beliefs. It was probably an easy transition because Swedenborg believed in the nearness of the dead.

So what does all this have to do with Rick Warren and his Saddleback Church? Recent headlines reveal the strange pairing of Warren (and his church) and Dr. Oz. Up until now, many people have tried to be gracious to Warren despite all his goofs, blunders, and questionable alliances — but apparently no more. Earlier this year, Warren engaged Oz to be his weight loss guru for the entire church. This certainly projects the message that Oz is an acceptable mentor spiritually, and worthy to be approved by the church as a teacher of some sort. It is certainly not a match made in heaven.

The Prophet Amos asked the relevant question, “How can two walk together except they agree? (Amos 3:3). The Apostle Paul asked the question, “What part has a believer with an unbeliever?” (2 Corinthians 6:15). Of course, Paul was not talking about witnessing, but yoking (v. 14) with unbelievers. This certainly means that we should not get entangled in alliances of any kind with cult leaders. They should be denounced and refuted, not promoted and encouraged.

Saddleback solicited in the “community blog” on its Website: “Be part of this transformational debut to be a healthier you! ... We’ll hear from world-renowned doctors on a plan to get healthy and stay that way in the new decade. Join Orange County in becoming the healthiest county in the nation on this one year plan that starts NOW!” And the megachurch pastor was out in front on this one. According to *Christianity Today* magazine, “Rick Warren pledges to lose 90 pounds during a 52-week church fitness plan, developed by Dr. Oz and two other medical experts.”

As the program kicked off, news reports about Saddleback’s “The Daniel Plan: God’s Prescription For Your Health,” began appearing in mid-January. And it was not just Oz, but a troubling trio of doctors. Saddleback advertised the “OC Health & Fitness Seminar

with Dr. Mehmet Oz, Dr. Daniel Amen, Dr. Mark Hyman, & Pastor Rick Warren.” One report, published on ChristianNewsWire.com, noted that, “All three [of the doctors] have Eastern spiritual connections.” Noting that Oz is a follower of Swedenborg, the report went on to state, “The other two speakers are Dr. Daniel Amen and Dr. Mark Hyman. Dr. Amen teaches tantric sex, a Hindu mystical approach to sex. He teaches Eastern religion meditation and energy-based Reiki, a New Age practice. Dr. Mark Hyman promotes mystical meditation based on Buddhist principles.”

According to Christian Investigator President Steve McConkey, “It is troubling for a top pastor in the United States to promote false teachers. We are living at an all-time low spiritually in the United States with weak leaders. We need to teach basic Bible principles without legalism.”

Warren, when pressed, might say he does not believe everything Oz and the others teach, but there is no disclaimer anywhere offered and no refuting of the teachings of Swedenborg, Reiki, or mysticism. This is more like one big happy family. Warren may say he is using this to evangelize Oz and the others, but one can witness to a person without inflicting that person on their entire church. The Apostle John, on the other hand, commands against such activity (2 John 10-11). And Acts 20 speaks of elders guarding the Church against wolves and false teachers who come in among the flock and from those among you who rise up (vv. 29-30).

This is yet another Saddleback disaster, one of huge proportion setting a course which will not only blur but also obliterate doctrinal lines and massively confuse. We were hoping for better from the one called “America’s pastor.” Warren is an embarrassment to thinking, discerning Christians. It would be a blessing if he just closed his mouth to food and to teaching. Because of him people are being led down a dark maze of error, confusion, and heresy. May God help us!

—GRF

NEWS UPDATES

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the fastest declaration of sainthood on record, surpassing Mother Teresa’s 2003 beatification by several days. It will also mark the first time ever in which a pope has beatified his immediate predecessor.

Just weeks following John Paul’s death in 2005, Benedict placed the late pontiff on the fast track to beatification by waiving the five-year waiting period required before beginning the process.

Benedict announced the date for the ceremony after it was declared that a French nun claimed she was healed of Parkinson’s disease because of John Paul, who himself

suffered for many years from the effects of the disease. The Catholic Church requires saints to have performed at least two miracles.

Upon his beatification, John Paul will receive the title of "blessed" and can then be publicly worshipped by those of the Catholic faith.

The beatification will result in large numbers making a pilgrimage to Rome for the ceremony, with numbers in the hundreds of thousands being projected. Tour operators in the late pontiff's native Poland are offering bus and airline transportation for the event.

John Paul II was born Karol Wojtyla in 1920. He was elected pope in 1978 following the death of his predecessor John Paul I, who spent only 33 days as pontiff. At age 58, John Paul II became the youngest pope in 132 years.

—MKG

ZODIAC STAR WARS

The signs, they are a-changing. At least that's the claim of one astronomy instructor who started a firestorm of discussion when he recently said that the stars — astrologically speaking — have shifted their alignment. In other words, one who was thought to be a Gemini their whole life may now, in fact, have been a Taurus all along.

Parke Kunkle, board member of the Minneapolis Planetarium Society and a teacher at its city's Commu-

nity and Technical College is at the epicenter of the controversy. The Minneapolis *Star Tribune* interviewed Kunkle and reported, "The ancient Babylonians based zodiac signs on the constellations the sun was 'in' on the day a person was born. During the ensuing millenniums, the moon's gravitational pull has made the Earth 'wobble' around its axis, creating about a one-month bump in the stars' alignment."

According to the Associated Press, "By the reckoning of Kunkle and other astronomers, astrologers are not only a month off in their zodiac signs, but they are neglecting a 13th constellation, Ophiuchus (Ooh-FEE-yew-kus) the Serpent Bear, for those born from Nov. 30 to Dec. 17."

But astrologers aren't worried by Kunkle's revelation, saying that they have long known of the argument. Shelley Ackerman, a spokeswoman for the American Federation of Astrologers, warns those devoted to astrology not to panic. "This doesn't change your chart at all," she said. She also cautioned, "Every few years, a story like this comes out and scares the living daylights out of everyone, but it'll go away as quickly as it came."

Astrologer Jeff Jawer also stresses that, "Astrology is geocentric. It relates to life on Earth to the Earth's environment, and seasons are the most dramatic effect, which is why we use the tropical zodiac." The tropical zodiac, used by Western astrologers, is fixed to seasons and deviates from the sidereal zodiac which is fixed to constellations and used by Eastern astrologers.

—MKG

PERSONAL FREEDOM OUTREACH — STATEMENT OF BELIEF

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