

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.

Ryle says the Colorado mascot, Ralphie the buffalo, had a broken horn, which symbolized the Holy Spirit's departure from the team. The interpretation was that it would lead to the team's downfall in the national championship game. And the team did in fact lose to the University of Notre Dame by a score of 21-6. (See further, Hank Hanegraaff, *Counterfeit Revival*, pp. 70-71.)

And then there's the absurd and frivolous "visions" of Bob Jones of Kansas City Prophets fame. Jones apparently sees his omens and recognizes "prophetic" truth from post-season ballgames. Fellow prophet Rick Joyner describes the Jones revelation, adding to it some of his own observations:

"In the spring of 1995, Bob Jones, a prophetic friend, told a number of us that the Atlanta Braves baseball team was going to win the World Series that year as a message for the church in America. This prophecy was fulfilled, and there indeed was a message in it. ... I think it was also significant that it was David Justice who hit that home run. He is a black man, and I do expect young, black 'Davids' to arise and slay the spiritual Goliaths who have been intimidating and holding back the armies of God in America. ... In the spring of 1996, Bob Jones received a word that the Braves would not win the World Series again that year and that this would be a message. When I was offered tickets to go to Game Five of the 1996 World Series in Atlanta, I knew that the Lord was going to show me something important. I was not disappointed" (Rick Joyner, *A Prophetic Vision for the 21st Century*, pp. 34-36).

Apparently, Joyner loves to use Jones' prophetic glimpses as a springboard for his own impressions. In an article entitled, "Shepherds Astray," Joyner wrote:

"Bob [Jones] was also given a vision of a bridge collapsing in North Carolina. A few days later it happened. As people were walking over a bridge to the Charlotte Motor Speedway, it collapsed, injuring over one hundred people. When the Lord reveals something like this prophetically it is because there is a message in it. In dreams and visions cars often represent ministries because they are 'vehicles' for carrying people. NASCAR is now called the number one spectator sport in America; but there is one bigger — the church in America where millions go each week to watch a few people 'minister.' Like a NASCAR race, these ministries are consuming a lot of energy going nowhere fast. They do not really have a destination, but are just going in circles, competing with each other trying to stay in front, banging into each other and running into walls. As the saying goes, 'the only way you can win a rat race is to be a rat,' and that is what the modern form of ministry does to people."

Well, being faced with the obvious that Ryle, Jones, Joyner, and their prophetic friends can all decipher great

spiritual messages from sports events, this author just keeps wondering what great spiritual significance was meant by, that at the close of the millennium, the New Jersey Devils won the Stanley Cup in hockey. Then, in an effort to repeat in the new millennium, they tried to win hockey's top prize for a second straight year, before losing to the Colorado Avalanche in seven games in the 2001 playoff finals.

For weeks I petitioned God for the answer — what does it mean? I struggled and prayed for answers. It had to have some meaning of great spiritual significance. It just had to!

Was it to be interpreted as a revelation of increased activity among the "devils" which would close out the millennium — so that it appears they're coming out on top? Were the teams that lost to the Devils on their way to the 2000 Stanley Cup symbolic of the Church's failure to overcome or stop the devils? Was the Colorado team symbolic of an "avalanche" of God's purity and holiness defeating the "devils" in this new millennium? What does it all mean?

Well, I finally got the answer. Here's what it means: It means that the New Jersey Devils won the Stanley Cup in 2000 and were the best team in the National Hockey League that year. This year, it means that the Colorado Avalanche played harder and with more spirit and came out on top. That's it. Nothing more. No esoteric meaning of demonic activity; no clandestine promise of God's power to overcome evil. There is humor and sadness in the above as we realize that this is the way some try to arrive at truth.

Deciphering supernatural wisdom and predictions from the mundane may be intriguing and entertaining, but it is really nothing more than subjective guesswork and forced interpretation. As shown above, anybody can do it and make it sound quite plausible. Consider yet another creative example; this one gleaned from a Hollywood major motion picture.

In 1992, Paramount Pictures released *Leap of Faith* starring Steve Martin in the leading role as faith healer Jonas Nightengale. Nightengale is described as "a slick-as-oil flimflam man who'll trade salvation for a donation to his touring ministry." Martin's character portrayal in the film was strongly based on the stage practices and dubious strategies of Benny Hinn, Peter Popoff and other popular spurious faith healers and evangelists.

As the film draws to a close, Nightengale, having been challenged and exposed for the con man he is by the local sheriff, hitches a ride with the driver of a tractor trailer rig. As the truck heads down the road taking Nightengale to new adventures, he asks the truck's driver, "Where you headed?" The driver responds, "Pensacola, Florida."

Pensacola, Florida?! Rewind the videotape and let me hear that again.

Based on the film's climactic concluding dialogue, could we not draw from this Hollywood motion picture a supernatural forecast? Why couldn't one suppose this a prophetic word and that the exaggerated claims of divine impartation, spurious signs and wonders, and financially motivated and humanly orchestrated revival aptly demonstrated by the Nightengale character would literally and actually locate in Pensacola? After all, less than three years after Martin's role hit the big screen, the so-called "Pensacola Outpouring" began at the Brownsville Assembly of God with, like Nightengale, grandiose claims of God's miracles and wonders. It all fits so well — nearly perfectly.

You see, like the quatrains of Nostradamus, we can see whatever we want in interpreting a personal dream, a major sporting event, or a dramatic scene from a feature motion picture. However, we have a Bible that lays such teaching and insight all out clearly and perfectly for us. We have no need to look for truth in such ambiguous places as a College Bowl game, World Series games, NASCAR, Stanley Cup playoffs, or Hollywood. Peter's second epistle assures us that all we need for life and godliness is found in Scripture. Some biblical writers may have gotten good illustrations from first century sports, but never omens and prophecies. Theater and Greek sports were ignored, if not condemned, by the early Jews as well as Hebrew Christians.

Subjectively creating after-the-fact prophecies and meanings — all just derived from an overactive imagination — is not much different than the ancient pagan societies' obsession with divination from arrows and entrails of animals. When the Word of God is ignored, people become crazed with their own imaginations and imaginary meanings in things. Any guessed meaning could have any other number of unlimited possibilities or interpretations.

In his classic, *Biblical Demonology*, Merrill F. Unger discusses occult practices that began in Babylon, passed into Greece and Rome, and are still fashionable today in parts of Africa, Burma (Myanmar), and Borneo among pagan tribes. Meaning is imagined and interpreted from looking into various parts of an animal's liver for divine revelation and the will of the gods.

Unger says further: "Belomancy, or divination by arrows is represented by Ezekiel as being practiced in Babylon. ... (Ezek. 21:21). ...augury was deduced by the way they fell to the earth" (pg. 132).

A neater, cleaner, more sanitized version of augury is practiced by today's "prophets." It is not as disgusting as poking around in the bloody entrails of a dead animal and certainly sports themes sell well with the sports crazed American public. But what is the real difference? It is still fallen subjective imagination hard at work. On what basis could we be sure that the imaginings and interpretations are not given by demonic suggestion? After all, they are never brought to the Word of God for verification. Certainly our minds could be better used in a study of God's Word.

Christians need to retreat from the foolishness of such mysticism, paganism, Gnosticism, and subjectivism and get back to the objective Word of God. It has been said many times before, but bears repeating: "The Bible: Nothing more, nothing less, nothing else."

"And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts" (2 Peter 1:19).

The Bible is sufficient. We need not look for supernatural messages from the mundane or the bizarre.

—MKG

NEWS UPDATES

(continued from page 3)

Dake first published his *Dake Annotated Reference Bible* in 1963. The Bible contains the authorized King James text with extensive notes and commentary written by Dake. It has been hailed as "The Pentecostal Study Bible," but critics, including PFO, have labeled the work dangerous. The volume's explanatory notes are seedbeds for all types of heretical teaching, including an unscriptural view of God, open theism (or finite theism), a distorted Christology, corrupt views of salvation and faith, racism, and foundations for Word-Faith teaching. Some of faith healer Benny Hinn's most provocative theological declarations have been derived from Dake's writings.

Other prominent Charismatic and Word-Faith proponents have likewise expressed praise for the Dake Bible. Joyce Meyer said the Dake Bible "has made it easier for [her] to teach God's Word," and Pastor Rod Parsley calls the work "one of the greatest literary works ever made for Pentecostal and Charismatic believers." Similar acclaim for the Dake Bible comes from Creflo Dollar, Marilyn Hickey, and Ralph Wilkerson.

Following several significant criticisms of the Dake Bible in the 1990s, the publishing firm began quietly changing the Bible's commentary thereby modifying the very notes which were cited in the critiques as unorthodox, but claimed by Dake Publishing as within the realm of orthodoxy.

—MKG

CATHOLICS DISAVOW LDS BAPTISM

The Vatican has announced that Roman Catholics will no longer accept as valid, baptisms performed by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. According to a news report posted on the Eternal Word Television