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PERSONAL FREEDOM OUTREACH



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## The Road Not Traveled

### Unveiling the Bizarre Beliefs of M. Scott Peck

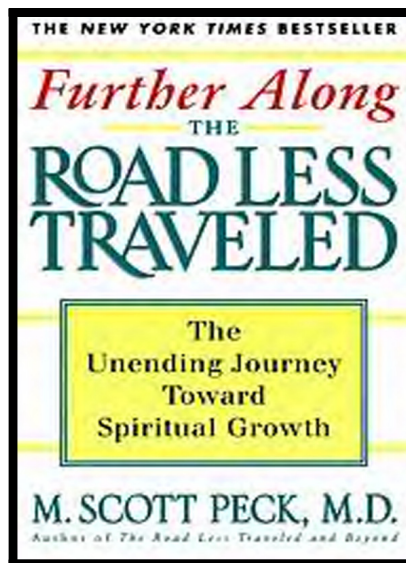
by G. Richard Fisher

"The way is broad that leads to destruction and many are those that enter by it. ... the way is narrow that leads to life, and few are those that find it." (Matthew 7:13-14)

"When I was finally drowned March 9, 1980, it was by a North Carolina Methodist minister at the chapel of a New York Episcopal convent in a deliberately nondenominational party. And I have very jealousy guarded my nondenominational status ever since. For one thing it was good for business" (M. Scott Peck, *Further Along The Road Less Traveled*, pg. 165).

Life is confusing! Conservative Christians are confused by the writings of M. Scott Peck. His blockbuster best-seller, *The Road Less Traveled*, has remained on The New York Times bestseller list for over 520 weeks or 10 years! As late as this past fall, it held the No. 1 position. During a recent installment of her show, Oprah Winfrey noted: "In 10 years, 'The Road Less Traveled' has been sold to an unprecedented four and a half million readers, a record that's been compared to that of the Bible. In fact, The New York Times just celebrated the book's incredible 500 weeks on the best sellers list, which actually puts it in 'The Guinness Book of World Records' for book sales" (July 14, 1993).

Peck's other books, *People Of The Lie*, and *The Different Drum*, also continue to sell briskly. He also has published a book for children and a mystery novel. Peck is read and quoted by Christians and non-Christians alike. His newest



offerings are *A World Waiting To Be Born* and *Further Along The Road Less Traveled*.

M. Scott Peck is a master of catchy and compelling opening lines. In *The People Of The Lie*, he opens the book by saying "This is a dangerous book." In *The Road Less Traveled* he begins, "Life is difficult." In one of his latest books, *A World Waiting To Be Born*, he starts by asserting, "There is an illness abroad in the land." You can't help but like him. His style is readable, practical and interspersed with illustrations from his experiences at home and in the counseling room. He is very practical and very quotable and at times profound.

Yet, Peck can also make unguarded and ridiculous statements. He recently told Katie Couric on the "Today Show," "I don't think I am an alcoholic, but I love my alcohol" (Oct. 19, 1993).

The confusion comes because Peck talks about God, morality, prayer, love, civility, ethics, sin, reconciliation and in many ways says things that are right and biblical. However, all of what he says is not "nourishing" and one must "feed" carefully and discerningly. We would advise a child to "watch for the bones" in a fish dinner. Similarly we must advise young Christians to do the same as they digest the writings of Peck. There are major problems.

One cannot argue with Peck's view that love is willful caring, not infatuation, or that courage is not the absence of fear but the capacity to go on in spite of the fear, or that everything that happens to us has been designed for our spiritual growth. We need to hear more of that. The things that Peck writes touch a chord in the life of a committed Christian.

Peck claims a conversion to Christianity in 1980 after searching into Buddhism and mysticism. Some would say that scrutiny shows a move toward and an orientation toward Christianity but not a wholehearted commitment to Christ as Savior from sin. Peck uses profanity in his books, which certainly leaves one wondering. He also professes to be an "agnostic" on the question of reincarnation. However, he is more sure about

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# Editorials

## CHECK YOUR BRAIN AT THE DOOR

To keep the rank and file Jehovah's Witnesses in line, Watchtower leadership continually stresses "separation from the world."

While Christians believe that separation from the world is a valid principle, their emphasis is different.

Jesus admonished believers to serve Him with a "whole mind." God has endowed each person with the capability of making choices. It is not evil to think, but it is evil not to allow someone to think.

Cults characteristically stifle thinking by inspiring fear in their adherents. They commonly corral their members away from former friends and relatives, assuring them that they have a "new" family, and that they are their true brothers and sisters.

A major factor in the Watchtower Society's control is the constant supply of literature it distributes to its members. All Jehovah's Witness "meetings" consist of studying nothing other than Watchtower literature.

An article in the Aug. 1, 1993, Watchtower magazine is an example of Watchtower mind control. The article, called "Let No One Spoil Your Useful Habits," gives guidelines for associations that are proper, and warns the membership of the dangers of associating with anyone else.

As a Jehovah's Witness of twenty-eight years, if I heard it quoted once, I heard it a thousand times: "Bad associations spoil useful habits" (1 Corinthians 15:33, NWT).

Witnesses are told that they alone are "true Christians," that all others are of the world and are evil and haters of God, even if they appear nice. Because of this thinking, the only reason a Witness would have any contact with someone on the outside, is for making converts.

The Watchtower says: "Christians want to be friendly with workmates, and many experiences bear out how effective this can be in opening the way for giving a witness."

Yet, while they are instructed to be "friendly," it is only for the purpose of "witnessing," not to inaugurate a non-Witness friendship. The Watchtower continues: "A fellow worker could misinterpret friendliness, however, as inviting association in order to have a good time together. He or she might extend a casual invitation to lunch, to a brief stop after work for a drink, or to some recreation on the weekend. The person might appear kind and clean-cut, and the invitation might seem innocent. Yet, Paul advises us: 'Don't be misled.'"

The message is clear: Any non-Witness who is exceptionally kind, friendly or nice is a demonic plant, put there to deceive one into leaving the organization. A Jehovah's Witness who takes these ideas to heart and is approached by a friendly workmate will think, "Satan's agent! Wow, I'm glad the Watchtower cleared this up! I thought that there were some pretty nice people outside the organization. I'm glad that the Watchtower set me straight, I won't fall for Satan's trap."

According to Watchtower counsel, the unsuspecting Witness can also be subtly trapped by evil friendly neighbors. The article states: "In some communities it is normal to be quite friendly and supportive of neighbors. In rural areas neighbors may rely on one another because of isolation. Family ties are particularly strong in some cultures, giving rise to many invitations to meals."

Not only is association with outsiders forbidden, so is the use of computer bulletin boards. The article warns:

"Modern computers have opened other avenues to bad association. Some commercial firms enable subscribers using a computer and a telephone to send a message to electronic bulletin boards; a person can thus post on the bulletin board a message that is open to all subscribers. This has led to so-called electronic debates on religious matters. A Christian might be drawn into such debates and may spend hours with an apostate thinker who may have been disfellowshipped from the congregation."

What Watchtower leadership fears is any thought that might cause the  
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# News Updates

## TILTON LEAVES THE AIRWAVES

There was a time when evangelist Bob Tilton could be seen on television anywhere in the United States. Not any more.

Tilton's *Success-A-Life* television program, once broadcast several times a day on cable and local stations across the U.S. and Canada, was aired for the final time on Oct. 29.

The beginning of Tilton's downfall can be traced to a November 1991 expose' on ABC's *PrimeTime Live*, which included allegations that Tilton's staff handled its mail by removing donations and trashing accompanying prayer requests. Lawsuits accused Tilton of, among other things, continuing to send promises of divine intervention to dead followers. One Dallas woman has filed a \$50 million lawsuit against Tilton and his church.

At its peak, Tilton's ministry handled about 10,000 pieces of mail a day and aired in 235 television markets. According to Tilton's attorney and top legal advisor, J.C. Joyce, donations over the past two years had dropped drastically. At the end, his show was being broadcast in only 26 markets and monthly support had fallen from \$7 million to \$2 million. The ministry staff had been reduced by 750 people to 32.

Donations to the ministry not only supported Tilton and his staff personally, but also a network of media-oriented businesses based in Tulsa, Okla. The enterprises included Joyce's law firm, a downtown Tulsa bank, direct-mail printers, a computer-based donor-tracking firm and a television booking agency.

Other woes also plague the minister. Last Aug. 16, Tilton filed for divorce from his wife of 25 years, Marte. The divorce request cited "discord or conflict of personalities" as the reason for the split. Affected too is Tilton's Word of Faith Church. Little or no activity has been observed at various church properties, including an empty six-story office building, a renovated warehouse-production studio and several strip shopping centers. The ministry's real estate is valued at more than \$40 million. Property originally marked for church expansion now is up for sale or lease.

—AMG

## BLESSED BE THE TIE . . .

Evangelist W.V. Grant is offering those on his mailing list one of his neckties for a \$91 donation. In a recent appeal letter, Grant wrote:

"... you are one of 120 people that I am bringing one of my neckties that I have worn while the anointing of the Holy Ghost was upon me."

Grant claims that one of these "anointed neckties" healed a Dallas man who was in "intensive care in Methodist Hospital. ... The doctors said he would be dead in three days. However, the anointing on my necktie was so strong that he was up and walking around within three days."

Grant also wrote that a man "wore the necktie to his next job interview, and received the best job he has ever had in his life." To ensure that women on his mailing list don't feel left out, Grant has written, "In this

day and age both men and women wear neckties as an accessory to their clothing."

—PRB

## THEORIES OF RITUAL SACRIFICE DISMISSED

When the bloodless body of 40-year-old Frank Zuczek, Jr. was found on Oct. 3, floating in Colorado's Roaring Fork River, speculation gave rise to tales of vampires or the occult. Upon the discovery, local media reports indicated that Zuczek may have been the victim of a bloodthirsty satanic cult. After all, a body devoid of blood is just the evidence needed to support the claim of widespread satanic slaughter conspiracies.

However, Kirk Ring, an investigator from the Eagle County Sheriff's Office, reported that there was little unusual about the condition of the body. Bacteria were responsible for the absence of blood, not vampires or satanists.

Zuczek turned up missing in July. His body had been in the river for weeks. Although Zuczek had a broken neck, an autopsy was unable to determine the exact cause of death. "We can't say what killed him. That's where it stands now," Ring reported.

—MKG

## THE WAY ON THE RISE

Prior to its founder's death in 1985, the Ohio-based sect, The Way International is said to have had some 100,000 members. Since the passing of Victor Paul Wierwille those numbers have steadily declined under the leadership of its second president L. Craig Martindale. Now, according to the cult watchdog group, Cult Awareness Network, membership in the sect is growing. While declining to provide specific numbers, CAN said The Way currently has about 20,000 members.

"They're not as big as they used to be but they are still quietly recruiting. They have a pretty tightknit internal structure that really draws you into a very time consuming and financially consuming commitment," said Cynthia Kissler, executive director of the cult awareness organization.

Last summer The Way held its 23rd annual Rock of Ages festival on its 300-acre headquarters site in New Knoxville. The gathering claims to have attracted more than 12,000 members from all 50 states and 47 foreign countries. The assembly also marked a milestone for Martindale, the release of his first book, **The Rise and Expansion of the Christian Church in the First Century**.

The Way International was founded in 1942. It denies the historic orthodox doctrines of the Trinity, the deity of Jesus Christ, the personage of the Holy Spirit and other tenets of the Christian faith. Way spokesman, Bill Greene says criticism of the group is unfair and that the sect, for years, has denied that it is a cult.

—MKG

# Words of Knowledge

## Mystical or Statistical? The Truth Behind the Sham

by G. Richard Fisher  
with M. Kurt Goedelman

There are strange goings on in the world of televangelism. One of those things is speaking forth "words of knowledge." Some in the world of televangelism claim to hear directly from God and on the spot they are able to call out certain sicknesses, declare people healed, and alert believers to new and upcoming enterprises elected by God. Many would challenge this practice as a cruel hoax and, in some situations, it has been uncovered for just that. The untaught and naive wonder how the televangelist knew about their illnesses and they believe in his powers.

There is no disputing that the Bible puts forth a grace gift called "the word of knowledge" (1 Corinthians 12:8). However, upon careful examination, that gift may be more common and less spectacular than people have realized. Let's first look at the way that the so called "word of knowledge" has been abused, exploited and employed to dig into people's pockets.

### WAYS IT IS USED IN DOWNRIGHT FRAUD

There are three ways shrewd men manipulate others into believing they are receiving direct messages from God about other people's illnesses. One is technological, one personal, the third is statistical. We will explain all three, give examples and then look at the Bible for the real answer as to the "word of knowledge."

Peter Popoff is the clearest example of the technological. Popoff commanded a religious empire from Upland, Calif., and, in his crusades, called out names and diseases (sometimes addresses and phone numbers!) claiming to receive the information directly from God.

It was discovered that Popoff's wife had gathered and processed the information while circulating in the audience hours prior to the

meeting and then during the service secretly transmitted the data to Popoff through a tiny radio receiver earpiece. (See further, **The Faith Healers** by James Randi, Chapter 9, for this and others scams pulled off by Popoff.)

Dallas-based evangelist W.V. Grant's "words of knowledge" are gathered by staff members who circulate among people arriving early at the crusades. As his workers gather the names, addresses and sicknesses, the information is placed on crib sheets that Grant studies before going onstage. These pages have been found and collected by debunkers who were out to expose the trick. (See **The Faith Healers**, Chapter 8, for this and Grant's other scams and schemes.) Steve Martin utilized both the above gimmicks in his motion picture, **Leap Of Faith**, which depicted a phony faith healer, Jonas Nightingale.

Another strategy is the application of a "word of the Lord" for personal ventures or convictions. A leading example of this type of scriptural abuse is Oral Roberts. Roberts has repeatedly used a "word of the Lord" to fund his own special aspirations. For example, Roberts said on Jan. 2, 1983, that "This is not Oral Roberts talking, but the Spirit of God through him." He said he was told by God, during a seven-hour revelation, that he was to expect "a supernatural breakthrough for cancer" at his City of Faith. Today, it is the City of Faith which is defeated, not the disease.

Roberts also has used divine revelation to expound on his own, however erroneous, conjectures. When the 1987 disclosure of Jim Bakker's moral failure first came to light, Roberts, with a "word of the Lord," rushed to Bakker's support. He harshly rebuked Jimmy Swaggart, the Assemblies of God denomination, and the

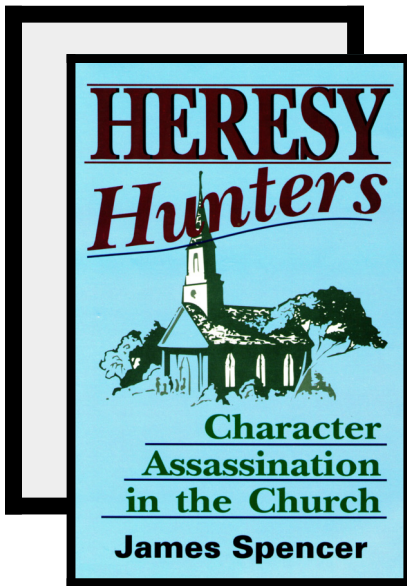
*Charlotte Observer* newspaper. Roberts, during a national television broadcast, admonished:

"And the Word of the Lord in my mouth is to you, my brother, who we all love, you're sowing discord. And the Lord said discord will come back to you. Flee my brother, repent. ... And the Word of the Lord is saying to those people in the headquarters of that denomination, where Jim out of graciousness turned in his ordination papers because they wanted him to, and you've not accepted it. You've said, 'No we're gonna strip him. We're gonna strip him. We're gonna crush him.' ... The Word of the Lord is coming to you from Oral Roberts' mouth today, if you strip Jim Bakker, you've touched God's anointed, you've harmed God's prophet. And the Word of the Lord says, 'Touch not my anointed, do no harm to my prophets.' ... I beg you, headquarters of a great denomination, one that we respect and love, desist, move back, and treat Jim Bakker as what he is, an anointed man, a prophet of God. And the hand of the Lord will not fall upon you. ... And to that great newspaper... The Word of the Lord comes to you from my mouth. And the Lord says that He'll create great dissension in your ranks. You'll have such dissension that it'll spread across the news media of America and you will not know what you're doing."

However, when the facts all confirmed the allegations and vindicated Swaggart, the Assemblies of God denomination and the *Charlotte Observer*, Roberts admitted:

"Out of this experience I went on nationwide television and preached a message of forgiveness and that after a period of time, there should be restoration. I also said some harsh words about a great church, the Assemblies of God, and a fellow brother, Jimmy Swaggart. At that time, I did not

(continues on page 12)



# Charged with Character Assassination

## PFO Responds to *Heresy Hunters* by James R. Spencer

by M. Kurt Goedelman  
with G. Richard Fisher

Former Mormon bishop turned Christian apologist James R. Spencer has stepped forward, claiming to be an upholder of doctrinal truthfulness and personal integrity with his publication, **Heresy Hunters**. Unfortunately, his work comes to the defense of those with questionable character and theology.

Huntington House, publisher of **Heresy Hunters**, has a poor track record as a bastion of orthodoxy or truthfulness. Among its past publications were the nonsensical ramblings of Constance Cumbey, self-proclaimed New Age expert, and the spurious testimony of Troy Lawrence, purported New Age initiate.

Spencer's book comes to the defense of men such as Benny Hinn, Kenneth Copeland, Bob Larson, Robert Tilton and Mike Warnke while impugning the research of ministries such as Personal Freedom Outreach, Christian Research Institute and *Cornerstone* magazine. These ministries are characterized, by Spencer, as "misguided critics" guilty of "ungodly activity." While the author maintains he is "not 'after' anybody in [his] book," his work is by no means a balanced, objective examination. The comments and observations in **Heresy Hunters** are just as "rabid," if not more so, than any criticism published by the targets of his attacks. Spencer, in effect, picks up the smoking gun he accuses the heresy hunters of using and fires back.

Some of the more prominent weaknesses of his paperback critique will be the subject of this article. They include:

### CONVOLUTED INTERPRETATION

From the title of Spencer's publication, the

reader would properly think that a clear and precise explanation of heretical teachings would be set forth. Yet, with all the author's attention to "heresy" and "heresy hunters," one will be surprised to learn that Spencer contends that the exact meaning of "heresy" is hard to find. Spencer offers the following softened and snarled understanding of heresy:

"One of the first things you discover when searching for a precise definition of the word *heresy* is that no commonly accepted definition exists. The word is used only a very few times in the Bible, and the original meaning of the word was not particularly negative. It simply expressed the idea of 'choosing.'" (pg 43).

However, two pages later, Spencer appears at odds with his own diluted explanation of the word when he appeals to theologian Harold O.J. Brown for "The Definition of Heresy." A "precise" or "commonly accepted" definition for the term does exist. Brown's cited definition for heresy is worthy of our attention:

"In Christian usage the term *heresy* refers to a false doctrine, i.e. one that is simply not true and that is, in addition, so important that those who believe it, whom the church calls heretics, must be considered to have abandoned the faith" (pg. 45 quoting *Heresies*, pg. 1).

Accurate descriptions and definitions of heresy do exist and are readily found. For example, in **Selected Shorter Writings II**, Benjamin B. Warfield, the former Princeton theologian, offered a "precise definition" for "heresy" when he wrote:

"The very essence of 'heresy' is that the modes of thought and tenets originating elsewhere than in the Scriptures of God are given decisive weight

when they clash with the teachings of God's Word, and those are followed to the neglect or modification or rejection of these" (pg. 677).

Most importantly, is what Scripture has to say on the subject.

Spencer incorrectly suggests to his readers on page 43 that "Matthew employs the Greek word for heresy when he writes of the beginning of Jesus' earthly ministry." He certainly implies that the Greek word *hairesizo* (chosen) is, throughout Scripture, rendered as "heresy." However, Spencer fails to disclose that another Greek word, *hairesis*, is used for "heresy." This latter word is much more severe and consequential. Consider the following examples:

"A man that is an **heretic** (*hairesis*) after the first and second admonition reject" (Titus 3:10).

"But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in **damnable heresies** (*hairesis*), even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction" (2 Peter 2:1).

"Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, **heresies** (*hairesis*), envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (Galatians 5:19-21).

Spencer fails in not having a solid, biblical understanding of the meaning of heresy. Many of his subsequent arguments, too, lack sound reasoning, leaning more on conjecture rather than

logic.

## CIRCUMVENTING THE FACTS

A major flaw of Spencer's is his constant deviation from the hard, documented facts. In his criticism of PFO's analysis of faith healer Benny Hinn, Spencer cites, as his sole primary example, the commentary on Hinn's supposed supernatural encounter with God by way of radio. First, the episode was not a major focal point of the article from which it was extracted. PFO's use of this "radio revelation" incident was only to demonstrate Hinn's practice of mysticism and how this disparages the written Word of God. Mysticism has spawned numerous cultic and aberrational teaching and sects. Most notable, to one of Spencer's background, is the mystical experience of Joseph Smith Jr., founder of the Mormon Church.

Christians are never instructed to determine God's will or plan for their life by way of a mystical experience with a radio. The Bible is the only reliable counsel for the life course of the believer, not extraordinary mystical experiences. Nonetheless, Spencer would desire his readers to believe that PFO's criticism and conclusions of Hinn is based solely upon a single example. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Spencer refuses to disclose or tackle the exhaustive, heavily documented, fact-buttressed criticisms made by PFO. He ignores the documents and documented evidence uncovered by PFO with regards to Hinn's fraudulent pedigree, his deception and overstatements of his claims of the miraculous, and his three contradictory accounts of his conversion to Christianity. If Spencer desires to validate Hinn as "one of [the Church's] most effective evangelists" (Spencer's words), he will need to answer the massive and factual complaints against Hinn's credibility.

Robert Samuelson, addressing the frustrations many are feeling toward the Clinton presidency, wrote in the September 1993 edition of *Reader's Digest*: "No single incident is critical, but the cumulative impression forms of a man who must forever explain himself because he's temperamentally incapable of starting with the unvarnished truth. The President thinks he can talk his way around almost any problem or inconsistency. Believing this, he often says one thing and does another. Sooner or later the inconsistencies are discovered and turned against him. He retreats, and no one is sure what he stands for" ("Please Tell the Truth Mr. President," pg. 48).

Samuelson's comments, too, are a vivid and accurate description of Benny Hinn. They can be

applied effortlessly to him. If there existed only a single issue of a spurious claim of the miraculous by Hinn, or if there were only a lone account of his fictitious pedigree, certainly Hinn would not have attracted the watchful discerning eye of PFO and others. However, the distinct unorthodox doctrines and untruths promoted by Hinn under the guise of "revelation knowledge," along with imagined assertions of the miraculous, assorted fantasies regarding his pedigree and varied conversion accounts must be addressed.

Spencer's selective use of research enables him to accuse PFO and other apologetic researchers of "flimsy allegations and suspicions [which] excite them in the same way the smell of blood excites sharks." He further concludes that, "Once they 'determine' that a ministry needs to be taken out, they abandon reason (and very often scripture) and set about to bring down the Christian ministers they judge to be unworthy."

His judgment of such ministries as PFO, Christian Research Institute, *Cornerstone* magazine, Witness Inc., and a host of others indicted is remarkably flawed. PFO, and others, always have dealt with the facts. While Spencer and others may try to define our research as "yellow" or "attack journalism," PFO repeatedly has solicited the facts directly from Hinn and others whose claims PFO has called into question. PFO always has published the information as accurately as possible. Repeated requests for proof to the contrary have gone unheeded.

## CONSTRUCTS STRAW MEN

Spencer creates one straw man after another in an effort to demonstrate his perception of just how widespread the "ungodly activity" of the "heresy hunters" has become.

His accusation of "ungodly activity" fails in the light of Scripture, for it is a biblical mandate to expose error and false doctrine. Both the epistles of Paul and the general epistles are all replete with admonitions to expose publicly teachings and teachers not in harmony with Scripture. There are even those whose names are recorded in the Bible, not because of any honorable activity, but because they erred concerning God's Word (2 Timothy 2:17-18; 3:8; 4:14-15; 3 John 9-10).

Spencer writes, "... the modern rise in heresy hunting constitutes a new Inquisition." This is a gross overstatement. To call a search for the truth as an inquisition makes no more sense than calling his attack on apologetic ministries a "Holocaust."

On page 36, Spencer writes, "Heresy hunters

jump to conclusions: 'No one,' they say, 'with a bouffant hair style, who wears sharkskin suits, and blows on people so they are 'slain in the spirit' can be a man of God!'" Even a superficial reading of the PFO reports on Hinn will find no criticism of Hinn for his flamboyance.

One more example of a straw man must be noted. Spencer writes: "One of the biggest complaints I have with the heresy hunters is their propensity to focus on minute slivers of a preached message. Focusing on irregular words or phrases, they enlarge them and pass them around in Church like candid, uncomplimentary photographs" (pp. 59-60). He asserts that the complaints against Hinn "are based on a handful of statements made in his books and television sermons that his critics have taken out of context" (pg. 19). He also called this practice the use of "the thirty-second sound bite."

Are those who criticize Hinn and the word-faith teachers, in fact, guilty of using "thirty-second sound bites" to unfairly characterize those with whom they disagree? A review of the entire message surrounding one of the most famous "thirty-second sound bites" of Benny Hinn will disprove Spencer's conjecture.

Any Christian who has shown even the slightest interest in the various exposes of Benny Hinn, would have, at one time or another, come across the declaration made against the evangelist's critics: "Sometimes I wish God would give me a Holy Ghost machine gun, I'll blow your head off!" This, in and of itself, is a shocking statement for a man of God to publicly make on national television. Nevertheless, if one invests a full hour to consider the entire message from which the "Holy Ghost machine gun" sound bite was extracted, they will find the Hinn's sermon was as scripturally unsound as his desire to kill his critics.

Hinn's 1990 TBN "Praise-A-Thon" message, which included the "Holy Ghost machine gun" statement, also covered Christ's return:

"The Lord is really coming back, I'm telling you. I'm gonna prove to you from the Word tonight that we have less than two years. And I'm not saying I'm 100% sure, but that thing is getting so close it's scaring the life out of me and shaking my bones. Yes sir, there are Scriptures to prove it. ... Israel is God's time clock. When you see what's happening there, you know something is happening in the Body of Christ. Let me take you back real quickly. [In] 1917, when Israel became a nation, Paul, the Bible says in Deuteronomy 32 that what happens in Israel

affects the nations of the world. Look back in 1917 when Israel signed, or I should say, when Britain signed the Balfour Declaration, which declared Israel a nation on paper. Following that what happened? Azusa Street. All right? What happens in Israel is always followed by a move of God in the Church. [In] 1948 Israel becomes a nation. What happen in the Church? The healing voice, the voice of healing, the great healing movement. [In] 1967 Israel takes Jerusalem back. What happened in the Church? The Charismatic movement. [In] 1973 the Yom Kippur war takes place in Israel. What happened in the Church? The Word movement came on the scene."

Hinn then calculates how man's timetable along with the world events, current in 1990, are suggesting Jesus will return very soon.

"God made the world in how many days? Six days, not seven. Six days, on the seventh, He took a vacation. Six days. How long did Jesus hang on the cross? Six hours. There will be 6,000 years of history. All right, between Adam and Jesus, 4,000 years. Between the Lord and now, 1900 and 90 years. There's four years missing, Paul. This may be 1986 or '94. Let's say this is 19—Let's say 1990 is correct, all right? Correct. By '93 leaves us seven years. I'm not saying Jesus is coming in 1993. But brother if you just start thinking about this stuff, okay? From Adam till the Lord, 4,000 years. From the Lord till now, 1900 and 90 years. Ten years left. '93, take those three years out, seven years left—tribulation."

Hinn's skewing of Bible interpretation, history and chronology is outrageous. Nowhere in the pages of Scripture will any Bible student find the premise that an occurrence among the Jewish people or their nation initiates an incident or spiritual awakening within the Body of Christ. His "I'm not saying I'm 100% sure" attempts to evade accountability and is equally disturbing. He may as well have prefaced his remarks by saying, "I'm only guessing, but..." His statement is really an oxymoron. How can one not be 100% sure when "there are Scriptures to prove it?" Could a Christian say: "I'm not 100% sure Jesus is God. Yes, sir, there are Scriptures to prove it"?

Further, Hinn's distortions of dates and events are incredible! Israel did not become a nation in 1917, not even on paper. On Nov. 2, 1917, the British Government issued the Balfour Declaration pledging support for the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people. It gave Jews and Arabs equally the right of settlement but did not make Israel a state. Moreover, Hinn incorrectly applies the 1917 date

to the Azusa Street Revival. The dates of the events ascribed to this "revival" ran from 1906 to 1913. Hinn needs a basic course in Church History.

The 1948 "voice of healing" comparison is evidently a reference to "The Voice of Healing" magazine which first appeared in April 1948. It was the product of William Branham. Hinn's selection of Branham to exemplify a crucial manifestation within the Body of Christ is a remarkably poor choice. Branham denied the biblical doctrine of the triune Godhead, calling it "gross error." And as a prophet of God, with a "Thus saith the Lord," he revealed that "trinitarianism is of the devil." Branham's major doctrinal aberrations, combined with his many false prophecies, certainly disqualified him from being esteemed by the Church.

Hinn's 1967 date for the birth of the Charismatic movement is equally wrong. Modern historians among the movement settle the beginnings eight years earlier. The **Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements** writes: "Dennis Bennett is an Episcopal clergyman prominently identified with the charismatic renewal from the beginning. The movement is usually dated from the Sunday morning in 1959 when Bennett announced to his congregation in Van Nuys, Calif., that he had been baptized with the Holy Spirit and had spoken in tongues" (pg. 53).

Even Spencer agrees. On page 74, he writes: "However, events in the 1950s introduced the modern Charismatic Movement to the Body of Christ when Pentecostal manifestations such as speaking in tongues began to break out within mainline churches like the Episcopal Church pastored by Dennis Bennett in Van Nuys, Calif."

The next date association is between the Yom Kippur war and the genesis of the Word Movement. This connection is even more astounding in light of Hinn's recent statements that "the Faith message doesn't add up" and "I don't believe confessing the Word works the way I taught it in the past." Moreover, the 1973 date for the Word Movement is yet another gross historical error. Word-faith theology is more correctly traced to the inspiration of E.W. Kenyon (1867-1948). Further, the views cultivated by Kenyon can be followed all the way to the New Thought philosophy of the early 19th century.

Finally, Hinn's endtime calculations for six thousand years of human history look a lot like the Watchtower Society's doomsday prophecy for

1975. The major difference being the Watchtower appeared much more authoritarian and rational when making their prediction.

Hinn's "Praise-A-Thon" sermon contained further disclosures and visions, some of which are now disputed and contradicted by his more recent revelations. Even without further evaluation, one can readily understand how those critical of Hinn's teachings need not rely upon "out-of-context" quotations or "thirty-second sound bites." Hinn's "divine revelations" keep changing.

### CALCULATING MOTIVES

Spencer is quick to point out that "I am not 'after' anybody in this book." He also contends: "I do not know all of the motives of the heresy hunters. I can't see into their hearts." Still, his book appears to draw definite conclusions.

A prime example of the calculating of motives by Spencer is found on page 27, where he writes: "It turns out that 'Prime Time Live' [sic] was led to the Tilton story by a man named Ole Anthony, an outspoken 'minister' who has a *personal vendetta* against televangelists in general and Tilton in particular. ... Anthony gathered mountains of information on Tilton, including many pieces of Tilton's direct mail advertising. It is probable that it was the mail that wound up being photographed in the 'Prime Time' [sic] report" (emphasis added).

For a man who is not "after" anybody, Spencer levels some powerful indictments against Rev. Anthony and the Trinity Foundation. In just a few short sentences, he charges them with conducting personal vendettas, fabricating evidence, staging news footage and participating in a conspiracy with ABC News to defraud the American public.

In an Oct. 30 letter, Anthony addressed Spencer's accusations: "You instead wrote and caused to be published a book that is filled with factual errors, erroneous assumptions, conclusions and accusations. Your uninformed pronouncements of so-called 'fact' are harmful to all involved and may well constitute slander and libel. By these actions you are misleading your readers, setting an inappropriate example and deceiving yourself."

Anthony continued: "In your newsletter, you proudly say that Paul Crouch of TBN described your book as 'classic journalistic excellence.' What hypocrisy. What was your so-called research on chapter two? On what basis do you say ABC staged the news? How do you defend your claim that I have a 'personal vendetta' against televangelists? You have never so much as spoken

to me. What evidence do you have to support your claim that Trinity Foundation falsified the material presented by **PrimeTime Live?**"

Anthony also noted in his letter to Spencer that "Billy Graham said of Tilton and his ilk, 'They are hurting the Kingdom of God... and they are hurting the cause of Christ.'" Therefore it would appear, by Spencer's standards, Billy Graham has fallen into the category of being a "heresy hunter."

The vast majority of Spencer's judgment of motives is not as finely tuned. The greater part are generalized incriminations. A sampling includes:

"The current environment allows nit-pickers and bean-counters to masquerade as scholars. It allows men and women of partial vision to move into arenas beyond their wisdom" (pg. 16).

"The heresy hunters possess a vision so

narrowed to their own brand of Christian experience that they cannot recognize the difference between heretics and fellow ministers" (pg. 17).

"Heresy hunters who blindly attack their fellow ministers strike at the central unity of the Body of Christ. In so doing, they may become the real heretics themselves" (pg. 23).

"Giving a printing press to the immature is like

# Characteristics of a Heresy Hunter

## Observations of James R. Spencer

by Edgar L. Havaich

While reading **Heresy Hunters** by James R. Spencer, I was surprised at the number of times it referred to "heresy hunters." Yes, I realize that it is the name of the book and that heresy is the theme being discussed, but the term seemed overused. So many references to "heresy hunters" created an unflattering profile of such people. It is not clear from the book if one must fit all the criteria Spencer puts forth or fitting just one qualifies a person.

Here are some of the terms Spencer used to characterize "heresy hunters" and their actions:

1. "...does not really hunt heresy; he hunts people" (pg. 11).
2. "...ungodly activity" (pg. 11).
3. "...stalk the modern revival the way their forefathers did the Great Awakening" (pg. 16).
4. "...self-appointed watchdogs" (pg. 16).
5. "...nit-pickers and bean-counters" who "...masquerade as scholars" (pg. 16).
6. "...possess a vision so narrowed to their own brand of Christian experience that they cannot recognize the difference between heretics and fellow ministers" (pg. 17).
7. "...divide the Church by defaming legitimate brothers and sisters in Christ" (pg. 17).
8. "...first identify those they believe are not worthy to minister and then mount public relations campaigns to remove the unworthy ministers" (pg. 17).
9. "...firing indiscriminately at 'friendly' troops" (pg. 19).
10. "...smear[ed] ...the life and ministry of Mike Warnke" (pg. 20).
11. Heresy hunting is a "phenomenon" (pg. 20).
12. "...well-intentioned zealots who moved without biblical wisdom" (pg. 20).
13. "...attack non-Pentecostals too" (pg. 21).
14. "...are determined to take the 'heretical' brethren out of ministry for good" (pg. 21).
15. "...scrutinize the flamboyant, messy, emotional, hyper-spiritual atmosphere which has characterized not only the

recent Charismatic Renewal but also much of the ministry of Christian television. They do so with apparent revulsion" (pg. 22).

16. "discipline... through public censure" (pg. 22).

17. "...constitutes a new Inquisition" (pg. 23).

18. "...blindly attack their fellow ministers" (pg. 23).

19. "...strike at the central unity of the Body of Christ" (pg. 23).

20. "...they may become the real heretics themselves" (pg. 23).

21. "...sloppy, irrational disrespect for reasoned truth" (pg. 34).

22. "...strike out in unreasonable ways against Christian ministries who are 'different'" (pg. 35).

23. "...are often unable to understand that being different is not the same as being wrong" (pg. 35).

24. "...jump to conclusions" (pg. 36).

25. "...have been over-influenced by the world" (pg. 37).

26. "...have fallen into the feeding frenzy mentality" (pg. 37).

27. "Flimsy allegations and suspicions excite them" (pg. 37).

28. "...they abandon reason (and very often scripture) and set about to bring down the Christian ministers they judge to be unworthy" (pg. 37).

29. "...have abandoned the rule of reason and scripture to participate in the ungodly feeding frenzy which has been such a detriment to the Body of Christ" (pg. 39).

30. "...not only have difficulty differentiating between heresy and heretics, they also confuse heresy with sin" (pg. 49).

31. "...want to demonstrate that those men [Benny Hinn, Robert Tilton, Kenneth Copeland, and Mike Warnke] are heretics" (pg. 50).

32. "self-appointed" (pg. 50).

33. "...are prejudiced by their own personal Christian experience" (pg. 56).

34. "...delight in quoting out-of-context statements" (pg. 59).

35. "...propensity to focus on minute slivers of a preached message. Focusing on irregular words or phrases, they enlarge

handing a loaded revolver to a child. In other cases the ungodliness stems from root problems such as pride and bitterness" (pg. 38).

"When the authors assert that Hinn claims to hear God through a radio not tuned to a station, they—in my opinion, are guilty of ignorance, prejudice, or plain fraud" (pg. 57).

"[John] MacArthur, in many ways, typifies the anti-Charismatic bias of much of the Evangelical

community. That bias drives much of the heresy hunting activities" (pg. 75).

"Today's heresy hunters, though they think of themselves as scholars, are really more like vigilantes. They search out those who look guilty and carry out 'justice,' not at the end of a rope but at the tip of a pen. They are not simply investigators, nor do they stop at being prosecutors; they see themselves also as judges and executioners" (pp. 136-137).

"The heresy hunters seem to lack an important quality — the fear of God. They take the mantle of ministry too lightly" (pg. 138).

Space prohibits printing all the citations. For one who claims he cannot see into the hearts of those he designates as "heresy hunters" he makes a commendable effort.

Despite all the indictments by Spencer, it should be stated that PFO is not anti-charismatic, nor

*them and pass them around in the Church like candid, uncomplimentary photographs" (pg. 60).*

36. *"... are willing to grab one or two sentences or paragraphs out of a sermon, tape, TV show, or off-the-record interview and attempt to hang a person making the comments" (pg. 61).*

37. *"A rush-to-judgment mentality is common among heresy hunters" (pg. 62).*

38. *"...seem to labor under the idea that only fully educated, perfectly sound theologians are used by God for the work of the ministry" (pg. 62).*

39. *"...seize upon mistakes he [Benny Hinn] would otherwise be forgiven of if his style were different" (pg. 64).*

40. *"...try to find things wrong with those they deem unworthy for ministry" (pg. 64).*

41. *"...are motivated by a basic theological difference between themselves and those they attack" (pg. 71).*

42. *"...those who believe the manifestation of certain spiritual gifts has ceased" (pg. 71).*

43. *"...most of those under fire from modern heresy hunters are Charismatics" (pg. 72).*

44. *"...the heresy charges against them usually involve some aspects of Pentecostal/Charismatic thinking" (pg 72).*

45. *"...think God is without emotion, but they see Him as primarily rational" (pg 72).*

46. *"...deny that they are motivated in the ways I have described" (pg. 72).*

47. *John MacArthur's "challenge is different from the other heresy hunters in that he does not limit his criticism to those he views as individual misfits within the movement" (pp. 81-82).*

48. *"...self-appointed critics who attack" (pg. 83).*

49. *"...can do great damage to the Body of Christ" (pp. 92-93).*

50. *"...hindered the work of several valuable ministries" (pg. 93).*

51. *"They confused the real issue and took people away from the real work of winning souls to answer ridiculous and frivolous accusations" (pg. 93).*

52. *"Stirring up contention and creating division in the body of Christ is the poisonous fruit of heresy hunting" (pg. 93).*

53. *"...fail to balance their remarks" (pg. 115).*

54. *"...are willing to 'kill the messenger' to prevent the spread of his message" (pg. 117).*

55. *"...are convinced that Satanism, while it may exist, is not a serious problem" (pg. 117).*

56. *"...at least agree that an occasional 'satanic' murder occurs" (pg. 118).*

57. *"...by and large, are in complete agreement that private confrontation does not have to occur when one criticizes public ministries or Christian books" (pg. 129).*

58. *"When they determine a man is a heretic, they seem to think it is all right to slap him repeatedly and publicly" (pg. 133).*

59. *"...forget that ministry is about people" (pg. 134).*

60. *"...have failed to follow some legalistic requirement (such as meeting personally with him in advance of publishing their story)" (pg. 135).*

61. *"...their real motivation is to end the ministries of certain individuals" (pg. 135).*

62. *"...have missed the real heart of the genuine apologists" (pg. 136).*

63. *"...though they think of themselves as scholars, are really more like vigilantes" (pg. 136).*

64. *"...seem to lack an important quality — the fear of God" (pg. 138).*

65. *"...do not walk with fear when it comes to laying hands on men and women of God" (pg. 138).*

66. *"...lack...mercy" (pg. 138).*

While Spencer indicates responding to "heresy hunters" has been difficult for him, he has, as shown above, gone to great lengths to characterize the "heresy hunter." Nonetheless, Spencer takes consolation that one day both he and the "heresy hunters" will sheathe their swords for good.

On page 32 of his work, Spencer makes the following observation: "Our basic problem is that we have stopped thinking clearly. We no longer know how to arrive at truth." After reading **Heresy Hunters** I can certainly vouch for the statement that at least some of us have "stopped thinking clearly." It is my perception that Spencer is the one who has sacrificed reason and logic to make an emotional point. As for not knowing how to "arrive at truth," if this is "true," how then can we be sure that even his statement is true. Truth is not a relativistic notion subject to the evaluation of the beholder. I cannot deny something simply because I don't like it.

have the authors of its articles ever sought to place themselves into a position of judge and executioner. The desire of PFO's staff, throughout the numerous research articles presented in our journals, has been a "buyer beware" methodology. PFO wants Christians to be aware of Benny Hinn's makeup and character before buying one of his books or attending one of his crusades.

PFO never has told anyone not to buy a book or attend a meeting. This policy holds true for not only the writings of Benny Hinn, Rebecca Brown and other "Christian" notables, but for Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons and other doctrinally deviant groups.

### CONFUSING THE ISSUES

Spencer, on page 102, demonstrates a lack of competence regarding Church history. He asserts that the "ransom theory" of Christ's atonement "was held by the entire Church during its first thousand years." The "ransom theory" mandates that a ransom was paid to Satan by way of the death of Christ. He cites **The Evangelical Dictionary of Theology** to support his declaration.

Spencer, by his citation of the **Evangelical Dictionary**, confuses the very issue promulgated by the Word-Faith teachers. According to the Word-Faith interpretation of Scripture, much more happened during Christ's crucifixion and death than is usually taught. On the cross, the plan of redemption merely began. It was there that Jesus took on the nature of Satan, lost his divinity, became a mortal man, and went to hell. There, Christ suffered torture at the hand of Satan. Three days later, God the Father said: "Enough!" At that point, Jesus' spirit was recreated, He again had the divine nature and was born again. The Word-Faith teachers go a lot further than the ransom theory.

The fact is that the "Atonement-Ransom" theory was *not* held by the entire Church. Spencer's statement is dead wrong. This concept was introduced by Origen [c. 185-254 A.D.] and was formerly labeled as "the Ransom-to-Satan theory."

Charles M. Horne, in his work, **The Doctrine of Salvation**, writes that the "view was held in one form or another by a number of the early church Fathers..." Yet, he does not concur with Spencer's notion that it was held by the "entire Church." Horne writes:

"Origen, who was a well-known exponent [of the ransom theory], wrote, 'A ransom for many. To whom was it paid? Certainly not to God; can it

then be to the evil one? For he had power over us until the ransom was given to him on our behalf, namely the life of Jesus.' How may we evaluate this view? It would seem best to understand the biblical term *ransom* as a figure of speech indicating that our redemption is costly. We sometimes speak of the price which a mother pays when she brings a child into the world, but it would be absurd to ask to whom she pays the price. Likewise, it is meaningless to ask to whom the ransom is paid that effects our redemption" (pg. 18).

Reformed theologian Louis Berkhof agrees and writes:

"In connection with the idea of man's redemption from the power of the devil, Origen introduced a new idea, namely that Satan was deceived in the transaction. Christ offered Himself as a ransom to Satan, and Satan accepted the ransom without realizing that he would not be able to retain his hold on Christ because of the latter's divine power and holiness" (**The History of Christian Doctrine**, pg. 166).

Berkhof further elucidates the Ransom-to-Satan Theory:

"This is based on the singular notion that the death of Christ constituted a ransom paid to Satan, in order to cancel the just claims which the latter had on man. Origen, one of the chief advocates of this theory, held that Satan was deceived in the bargain, since the outcome proved that he could not stand in the presence of the holy Christ, and was not able to retain his hold on Him. This theory found favor with several of the early Church Fathers, though they did not always state it in exactly the same form. It proved to be rather tenacious, for the echo of it was still heard in the days of Anselm. Yet it was found to be so incongruous that it gradually disappeared for lack of intelligent support. Mackintosh speaks of this theory as the exoteric theory of the early Church" (**Systematic Theology**, pp. 384-385).

Moreover, for Spencer to even hint that this "ransom theory" was espoused by the "entire Church" he must ignore the testimony of many early Church Fathers. Consider the following examples:

**Irenaeus** [c. 130-202 A.D.], "stands mid-way between the East and the West, agrees with the Apologists in contemplating man as enslaved by the powers of darkness, and looks upon redemption partly as deliverance from the power of Satan, though he does not look upon it as a satisfaction due to Satan. His idea is rather that

the death of Christ satisfied the justice of God and thus liberates man" (**Christian Doctrine**, pg. 165).

**Athanasius** [c. 296-372 A.D.] "The first systematic treatise on the work of the atonement was Athanasius' **De Incarnatione**. ... The incarnate Logos is also represented as man's substitute, who pays his debt for him by enduring the penalty of sin. The necessity of this satisfaction is based on the veracity rather than on the justice of God. It is not said that the price was paid to Satan" (*ibid.*, pg. 166).

**Gregory of Nazianzus** [c. 330-390 A.D.] "repudiates with scorn and indignation the idea of a ransom paid to Satan" (*ibid.*, pg. 167).

**Augustine** [c. 354-430 A.D.] "is far removed from [the] Greek theology" of "the notion that Satan has a claim on man, complemented, however, by the thought that the claim of Satan was annulled by the death of Christ" (*ibid.*, pg. 169).

While traces of the "ransom theory" can be found throughout the first millennium of the Church's history, principal Church Fathers rejected the concept. Therefore, it is confusing and erroneous to claim that this view "was held by the entire Church." Moreover, Anselm, the great theologian of the eleventh century, finally put to rest this spurious interpretation of Christ's atoning work.

Henry Clarence Thiessen, in his **Introductory Lectures in Systematic Theology**, notes:

"Anselm's exposition put an end to the theory that Christ paid a ransom to Satan" (pg. 319).

Berkhof agrees and writes in **The History of Christian Doctrine**:

"The alpha and omega of the position of Anselm is the absolute necessity of the atonement for the redemption of man. He deliberately rejects as unsatisfactory the Recapitulation Theory, the Ransom-to-Satan Theory and the idea that the death of Christ was merely a manifestation of the love of God to man, since these do not explain the necessity of the atonement adequately" (pg. 172).

Church reformers were in "fundamental agreement" with Anselm, as are contemporary theologians. Lewis Sperry Chafer, founder of Dallas Theological Seminary, writes: "Most certainly there is no basis for the notion that Christ paid a ransom to Satan for the redemption of lost men" (**Systematic Theology**, Vol. 3, pg. 136).

To restate, the Ransom theory was not held by the entire church and was a minority view for only a thousand years. Secondly, it never suggested that Jesus went to hell and was born again. On this point Spencer is confused and confusing.

### CARELESS RESEARCH

In addition to Spencer's confusion on the crucial doctrinal issues, he also is guilty of the very thing he accuses his so-called "heresy hunters" of, that is, careless research.

The scope of Spencer's errors range from minor flaws to more serious inaccuracies. Items such as the listing of *Cornerstone's* 1992 expose' of the life and ministry of Mike Warnke as a "1991 smear" and his statement that Benny Hinn "was saved" during a Kathryn Kuhlman crusade could easily be labeled as incidental, yet they demonstrate the absence of attentive and accurate reporting, as well as faulty research.

Yet, there are more serious flaws. Above was shown his careless research involving the Greek word for heresy. Additionally, his listing of the controversy surrounding the Resurrection theology of Dr. Murray J. Harris as a "disagreement exist[ing] over Harris' opinions" does not fall into the incidental category. The physical, bodily Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ is the very foundation of the Christian message. Harris denies the biblical account. His defective theology cannot be so lightly dismissed as a "disagreement" over "opinions." Perhaps a closer study by Spencer of the record surrounding the Harris debate would have kept him from consolidating this as an example of "heresy hunting."

Another specimen of Spencer's faulty analysis is his assertion that the *Cornerstone* expose' of Mike Warnke is "probably the saddest example of heresy hunting." Spencer concludes because the Christian comedian has been married four times, "his marital instability, the heresy hunters decide, is proof that his theology on Satanism is wrong and that he doubtless fabricated his testimony of involvement in the occult." This statement is so ridiculous, it's difficult to even justify with a response.

Nowhere in *Cornerstone's* original 11-page magazine article and subsequent 476-page book is that supposition ever suggested. Both the original article and ensuing publication are replete with evidence documenting the fact that Warnke "fabricated his testimony of involvement in the occult" and that his "theology on Satanism" is suspect. How one could read either the magazine

or the book and draw the conclusion that Warnke's lies and fabrications was based solely upon "his marital instability" is beyond comprehension.

A similar example of Spencer's neglect to ascertain and deliver the real facts are his comments involving the Benny Hinn infamous "nine of them" statement concerning the Godhead. Spencer labels the Hinn declaration as "remarkable and ill-conceived" and in his opinion, "it is wrong." PFO thinks it is more than wrong and that it is blatant polytheism. Spencer argues the statement resulted from Hinn's "naiveté." He then writes that the very next week Hinn apologized for the declaration, adding that while the "heresy hunters" were quick to expose the statement, Hinn's "correction, however, was not soon reported by the heresy hunters." The reality is that there was no correction to report.

Spencer's assessment of Hinn's debacle is invalid on two counts. First, the "nine of them" statement was delivered as an oracle from God. The disclosure was claimed to be of divine origin. Hinn preceded the declaration with "I feel revelation knowledge already coming on me" and concluded with "You can't argue with the Word, can you? It's all in the Word." According to Hinn's own statement, there was no allowance for human *naiveté*.

Further, Spencer's condemnation of the heresy hunters for failure to report Hinn's repentance (supposedly the following week) also is groundless. The reason why the "heresy hunters" were not quick to report a "repentance" is because one was never issued seven days later as Hinn contends. Spencer has been duped by Hinn into thinking that a retraction of the "revelation" was made. It was not. Besides, why would God change His mind and contradict Himself?

Had Spencer been diligent in his research, properly securing and viewing copies of the two sermons in question, he would have learned what the apologetic ministries have been declaring all along. The "nine of them" Godhead proclamation was put forth as "revelation knowledge" and the following week's sermon contained not only no retraction, but a further heresy as Hinn instructed his congregation to chant along with him, "I am a God-man."

A final example of Spencer's carelessness is his charge that "Heresy hunters should address the real issues; they should not have a hidden agenda. If, for example, the heresy hunters have a problem with the fact that Benny Hinn blows on

people and they fall over, they must address that. If the real problem is that Hinn claims people are healed when they are not, then address that issue." It seems hard to believe that anyone who has read PFO reports on the faith healer could make such a pronouncement. PFO has always done just that, addressed the issues. The real issues such as his multiple conversions stories, his embellishments of facts, the discrepancies in his personal history, his claims of the miraculous are all addressed. There is no "hidden agenda." It's all there, clear and definitive. It appears Spencer's reading of PFO's material has not been careful. His representation of that material is less than factual.

Spencer also addresses, by extension, the need for ministries to approach their accused prior to publication of their findings. This is certainly a valid point and worthy of consideration. However, a fact evidently unknown by Spencer is that PFO made several honest attempts to contact Hinn through his church and his publisher prior to the publication of the findings concerning the fabrication of his pedigree. Hinn's organization lied, stalled and never fulfilled promises. Efforts to contact someone in Hinn's bureaucracy always ended in stonewalling and failure. Others, including secular writers, have experienced the same frustration. One need only recall the scene caused by Hinn and his ministry personnel when the television news show *Inside Edition* tried to interview him at the Philadelphia airport.

However, most disturbing about Spencer's call to approach the accused is the violation of his own rule. He has now become the inquisitor.

Spencer did not approach any director from PFO in regard to the complaints issued against this ministry. Further, he did not contact the other groups he was quick to indict. Ministries such as Jesus People USA (*Cornerstone* magazine), Eastern Christian Outreach, Witness Inc., Trinity Foundation and others all are the subject of Spencer's denunciations without prior benefit of pre-publication consultation. Spencer makes rules he does not keep himself. Had he bothered to consult with those he denounces, he would have known that many of us have tried to establish dialogue with Hinn and other word faith teachers. To date, PFO has been rebuffed with statements to the effect that "we don't have time to talk about those insignificant things," "we are too busy ministering" and "touch not the Lord's anointed."

Spencer's failure to communicate with those he accuses makes the call that others do it sound hypocritical. He has degraded ministries for the

actions he himself has failed to make. In No. 19 (no date given) of his "Through the Maze Newsletter," Spencer wrote: "I was particularly disappointed that the Tanners would go public with such vehemence without first giving us a chance to dialogue with them. Especially since we had, at last summer's Capstone Coalition Meeting, agreed that no ministry would publish about another without first fulfilling the biblical responsibility of personal confrontation" (pg. 3).

Spencer's *modus operandi* apparently is "do as I say, not as I do."

PFO doesn't believe that communication with Spencer prior to publication of his book was necessary. PFO's articles were public and anyone has the right to publicly challenge them. There is no confusion here between Matthew 18 and Galatians 2. PFO asks only that objections be aired fairly, not by circumventing the facts, constructing straw men, calculating motives and confusing issues.

## CODDLING QUESTIONABLE MINISTRIES & MEN

After reviewing Spencer's flawed work, one pattern is readily discernible. Spencer has worked overtime defending questionable men and their theology and ministry techniques. While he tries to disavow the judgmentalism he accuses "the real heretics" of using, his verdicts reverberate throughout the book. It is difficult to fathom why he spends time trying to exonerate men such as Kenneth Copeland, Robert Tilton, Mike Warnke and Bob Larson.

Saddest of all is that he concludes with a call for repentance by the "heresy hunters." To the men and women of God who desire to "hold fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching that they may be able to both exhort sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict," Spencer desires repentance. Yet to those who have fabricated testimonies, claimed revelation knowledge to promote their damnable heresies, and bilked unsuspecting Christians out of

fortunes, no repentance is sought.

Spencer's work will, without doubt, be received gladly within some charismatic circles. Those looking for any response, however faulty, to the criticism directed at their icons will not be disappointed. Nevertheless the Church will continue to challenge those who twist the Scriptures and see godliness as a form of gain. These men and their actions should not be of surprise to the Church, for we are told in Scripture that they would come (Acts 20:28-31).

Even though Spencer's publication is riddled with error, its theme is obvious. No ministry should ever attack, poke fun, or use insulting language in critiquing another person or their views. It is possible to evaluate a man and his teachings without being mean-spirited. PFO is aware that some have gone over this line. ☐

*Editor's note:* PFO Directors Edgar L. Havaich and Stephen F. Cannon also contributed to this article.

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## WORDS OF KNOWLEDGE

(continued from page 4)

have all the information that they possessed and I did not perceive that they were ever going to forgive Jim Bakker in their hearts. I also did not understand their full procedure for withdrawing ordination papers and working to restore a minister. Also, at that time I didn't know the full story about the finances and other alleged irregularities" (**Abundant Life** magazine, September-October 1987, pg. 9).

Roberts' confession is revealing indeed, for the apology invalidates the divine origin of the declaration. If Roberts genuinely had "the Word of the Lord" in his mouth, he would not have had to "possess all the information" and "know the full story." He also would have been able to "perceive" that forgiveness to Jim Bakker would be extended. Roberts, without question, is guilty of concealing his own ill-conceived conclusions and attributing them to God.

And then there's Robert Tilton. Few are as crass when it comes to getting into a person's bank account in the name of God. Consider the following solicitation for support:

"I know this is a powerful anointing. 'So Bob, I want to give a hundred' or 'I want to give a - I want to give a two hundred and fifty.' Nope. Nope. Let me tell you something, if you don't have faith to make a vow of faith for a thousand

dollars and believe that He's going to show you where to get the seed to pay on it or pay it off as best you can, it won't work today. 'Why Bob? That's strange.' Because that's what God told me and I just - I'm just wild enough to do what God said, that's why."

So we have men who deceive, being "prophets of profit" and who use personal revelation to satisfy their own personal convictions. Their fraud can be by technological or personal means. And they use it to empty people's pockets and to confirm their own corrupt declarations.

## STATISTICAL, NOT MYSTICAL

How does it work when, without benefit of a radio transmitter receiver or crib sheet, a man can call out a disease and declare it healed? It is easier than it looks and, the fact is, anybody can do it. One of the more popular media ministers to utilize what is called the "shotgun" effect is Pat Robertson. The technique has been picked up and blatantly used by other prominent televangelists, including Robert Tilton and Benny Hinn. Robertson has, on a regular basis, named diseases and declared them healed. (See further, **Salvation For Sale** by Gerard Straub, page 40.)

That Benny Hinn is employing this gimmick is obvious from his daily television broadcasts of "This Is Your Day." A classic case in point is the Aug. 6, 1993, installment of the program. On that show Hinn promised "words of knowledge," if the

people would stay tuned till the end.

After a pitch for money and a sampling of one of Hinn's Miracle Crusades, he finally delivered the "words of knowledge" reminiscent of Pat Robertson. Hinn intoned: "I command sickness to go. God is healing many. I rebuke every sickness. I rebuke the demon of cancer, the demon of arthritis, the demon of sickness. There is no place in their body. Cancer has been healed. A spine is being healed. Eyes are being healed, headaches are being healed, ears are opening up, leukemia is being healed. Miracles are happening so fast—a neck injury is healed, a back injury is being healed. I am calling words of knowledge. Stretch your hands. I rebuke pain and sickness, migraine, pinched nerves, a heart condition." Moreover, Hinn would be hard pressed to prove from Scripture that these sicknesses are demons as he alleges.

This is a cruel hoax. Anyone (who was without conscience) could do it. This only works on television or in crowded auditoriums away from any viable objective proof. Robertson, Tilton, Hinn and others never have been able to perform the same within the corridors of a hospital. It is not mystical, it's statistical.

It is a carefully crafted charade. There are potentially millions of television viewers and thousands of crusade attendees, so the probability of hundreds or even thousands having those diseases is very, very high and in fact just about

guaranteed. Even if there weren't, who would know? The faith healer calls out and predicts the cure and if the person naturally (or even medically in some cases) recovers, the faith healer receives a substantial amount of the credit.

If no one gets "healed" (even if the audience believes so), who is the wiser? If the person dies days or weeks after the healing is proclaimed, who is to know? This method almost ensures that there is no way to objectively check anything.

What some call "words of knowledge" (supernaturally knowing someone's heart, mind, and body condition) sounds more cultic, occultic and Gnostic than Christian. We are warned about divination in Scripture. The current "words of knowledge" practice smacks of divination. In Acts 16, the demon-inspired girl at Philippi had powers of divining and oracular utterance as did the ancient pagans.

Divination is defined as: "a phenomenon of paganism and involves the art of obtaining clandestine knowledge" (**Baker's Dictionary of Theology**, pg. 169). Where the divining of secret knowledge is not a fake or a fraud it may be demonic! The early Church Fathers saw the divining of secret information as heathenism and demonism. Divination is incompatible with the true knowledge of God (Deuteronomy 18:10-14).

#### THE WAY IT WAS USED IN THE BIBLICAL WORLD

Most televangelists either do not know or reject sound principles of hermeneutics, the science of biblical interpretation and its principles and rules. Without these we are on a sea of subjectivism and false interpretation. Subjective interpretation is the reason Jim Jones and David Koresh could do what they did. Subjective interpretation is why there are so many false calls on the Second Coming.

One of the crucial and foundational principles of hermeneutics is the *usus loquendi*. This is explained by Milton Terry as having to know the primitive meaning. That is, how did the people of that day understand the word or concept and how was it used by them? We cannot give an alien 20th century meaning to a first century word. We cannot take a first century concept and redefine it in circus trick terms.

Terry puts it this way: "Hence the importance of attending to what is commonly called the *usus loquendi*, or current usage of words as employed by a particular writer, or prevalent in a particular age. It often happens that a writer uses a

common word in some special or peculiar sense, and then his own definitions must be taken, or the context or the scope must be consulted, in order to determine the precise meaning intended" (**Biblical Hermeneutics**, pg. 181).

Many fine scholars have labored long and hard to reconstruct the *usus loquendi*. When it comes to the "word of knowledge" we can determine its meaning without falling into divination, occultism, Gnosticism or magic.

Charles Ryrie, a respected, conservative, researcher and Bible scholar tells us in his *Study Bible* (pg. 304), that the "word of wisdom" is the "communication of wisdom" and that the "word of knowledge" is "the communication of practical truth."

So it is not the divining and calling out of diseases, but a practical gift from our practical God. Communicating the Word of God in such practical terms that it can be applied and lived out. Perhaps every week preachers and Sunday School teachers are exercising this gift and have not been aware of it. In our teaching and preaching and writing, and in our counter-cult and apologetic ministries, we are closer to this gift than the manipulators on television.

Some are called by God and gifted to dispense practical truth from the Scriptures. Playing games with people's emotions and diseases seems cruel and inhuman. We should call for an end to this blatantly false practice.

Even the **Dictionary of Pentecostal And Charismatic Movements** is leery of this mystical and continued revelation idea: "Fears motivating such arguments are real, since the understanding of this charism as a form of prophetic speech must include the claims of Mormon Prophet Joseph Smith who allegedly received a word of wisdom in 1833 on the evils of tobacco, wine and hot drinks such as coffee" (pg. 892).

Their warning should be heeded, since historically these gifts (wisdom and knowledge) have been linked in orthodoxy to the illumination and application of the completed Canon.

Gerhard Kittel's **Theological Dictionary of the New Testament** is exhaustive and true to first century context. The work examines "word of knowledge" in Volume 1. The *usus loquendi* is far removed from Popoff, Grant, Hinn and others. It demonstrates that the modern practice is more akin to Gnosticism and magic. First century usage is more along the lines which Charles Ryrie describes.

Kittel demonstrates that the ideas of secret

knowledge conveying supernatural powers actually derives from the mystery religions and magic. The actual Old Testament and New Testament ideas were: "When the Rabbis speak of knowledge in the absolute they mean knowledge of the requirements of the law. ... In the liturgy the Jewish community praises God for endowment with knowledge, and this custom is taken over by the Christian Church" (pg. 701).

"Word of knowledge" in Greek is *logos gnoseos*. *Gnoseos* in popular usage also meant "to learn." It is easy to understand and accept that God may give some teachers and preachers a gift to learn Scripture and doctrine and the ability to communicate such. God motivates and stimulates some with a hunger and thirst for truth and biblical studies. These in turn become teachers, apologists, preachers and writers. They are a needed gift to the Church.

Further words from Kittel are helpful in this regard: "In other passages, however, we clearly see the OT view that knowledge is insight into the will of God in command and blessing. It is primarily acknowledgment and obedient and grateful submission to what is known. ... The Christian view of knowledge is thus largely determined by the OT. An obedient and grateful acknowledgment of the deeds and demands of God is linked with knowledge of God and what He has done and demands. It is in keeping that this Christian knowledge is not a fixed possession but develops in the life of the Christian as lasting obedience and reflection. For this reason *gnosis* is regarded as a gift of grace which marks the life of the Christian by determining its expression" (pp. 705, 707).

So, just declaring that one has "words of knowledge" does not make it so. We have seen that people have used these claims fraudulently. They have used these claims to make themselves appear supernaturally powerful while bilking the naive. The claim of "words of knowledge" can be used as a con or as a statistical illusion.

No one but God has supernatural knowledge of the affairs of others. Those with "words of knowledge" should step forth and diagnose and heal the sick, saving people some medical bills. Christians need to warn against and avoid any practices that reflect divination and occultism. We need to expose claims of the mystical. We need to reaffirm and encourage the gifts of wisdom and knowledge in the lives and ministries of faithful pastors and teachers who labor faithfully week in and week out in our local churches. ✨

purgatory and sees it as an elegant, well-appointed psychiatric hospital. Peck rejects the concept of the resurrection of the body and calls the idea "distasteful." He also rejects the biblical doctrine of Hell and says that people can walk right out if they choose to! As far as heaven – all we can do is speculate (**Further Along**, pp. 168-174).

Former Christian Research Institute researcher Howard Pepper says of Peck:

"Peck is perhaps the most widely and enthusiastically read of recent writers on psychology and religion (particularly psychotherapy, group process, and spiritual growth). His readership includes both Christian and non Christians. Because of his crucial subject matter and broad influence, it is important that Christians thoughtfully analyze and discuss his material. There is so much to learn from Peck and there is much of which to beware. A further look at Scott Peck the person will help us understand his writings. Ever heard of a scientific mystic? Although it may sound impossible, like Kipling's 'pushmepullyou,' it's a term that seems to fit Scott Peck: the mixture of a scientific mind with a spiritually sensitive one. Overall, Peck's philosophical, mystical side seems to predominate" ("The Works Of M. Scott Peck – A Summary Critique," *Christian Research Journal*, Winter/Spring 1988, pg. 28).

Pepper considers Peck a pluralist who offers a syncretism of Christian terms, mysticism, psychology and idealism.

The key to Peck is to try to understand what he really means by the terms he uses especially when he uses religious words and statements. A Roman Catholic who heard the word "faith" would accept and understand it perfectly. Or would he? A "fundamentalist" hearing the same word would accept and understand it just as perfectly. However, the two would have their own understanding of the word. The Catholic might think of belief in the Institutional Church and to the pronouncements of the Pope and tradition. The fundamentalist would bring all of his biblical preconceptions and think of trust in God and His Word. A Word-Faith adherent might think of faith in his faith.

One cannot assume Peck means what we mean when he uses certain words. He uses common parlance, but has his own dictionary.

The Bible is clear that the Scriptures are

essential and adequate for Christian growth and that the "promises" of the Bible are sufficient for "life and godliness" (1 Peter 1:3-4). Jesus taught forcefully that Christian growth and sanctification come through the Scriptures (John 17:17, "Sanctify them through the truth, thy Word is truth"). Furthermore, Paul tells us that "faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17). Psalm 1 commands us not to walk in the counsel of the ungodly but to follow God's dictates so that we can increase our fruitfulness.

It is clear that Peck does not believe that our fulfillment and growth as Christians can be realized just through Scriptural precepts and principles. He is a great exponent of the "efficacy of psychotherapy," though he is not clear as to which particular psychotherapy (**The Road Less Traveled**, pp. 310-315). In Peck's most recent book, **Further Along The Road Less Traveled**, he says "Life has no road signs" (pg. 13). So much for Jesus and the Scriptures!

On close reading of **A World Waiting To Be Born**, he is very clear as to his "definitions." In some cases they are "daffynitions" and biblically inaccurate. As we look at what he says about various religious and theological issues we can see that he has departed from the orthodox, historical, generally accepted definitions of Christian doctrines. Some of his views are shallow and miss the mark. It is obvious that he is not in sync with historical orthodoxy and does not travel the road of the Apostles and Reformers.

Consider Peck's views on the following from his recent work, **A World Waiting To Be Born**:

GENESIS: "The first three chapters of Genesis, along with their other insights, constitute a surprisingly accurate account of evolution" (pg. 15).

SALVATION: "Becoming the most we can be is also the definition of salvation" (pg. 12).

JESUS: "Jesus was an example of the Western mystic. He integrated himself with God" (pg. 21). "Jesus took pains to make it clear that he was no great family man" (pg. 174).

DIVORCE: "Just because your marriage was wrong for you at fifty doesn't mean it wasn't right for you at thirty. Don't you think it is possible for God to have called you into married life twenty-five years ago and now decide it is time to call you out of it?" (pg. 71). "Still there is no question in my mind that God calls some people to divorce" (pg. 111).

HOMOSEXUALITY: "But we cannot neglect the fact that God also calls us through our genes. ... Sometimes it is the task of psychiatrists to assist homosexuals to come out of the closet in relation not only to others but also to themselves – to not only accept their calling to homosexuality but, insofar as possible, to rejoice in it. God loves variety; in variety he/she delights" (pg. 77).

PARENTS: "Honor your father and mother that your days may be long upon the land. From the standpoint of psychiatry, it is probably the only thing in the entire Bible that needs rewriting. Radical rewriting. For the most part children naturally want to honor their parents" (pg. 175).

The above is amazing and awful stuff but worse is the fact that Peck has discovered Process Theology and proposes a God in process. He suggests that God is "becoming" just like us.

Process Theology, or processianism, is the brainchild of Alfred North Whitehead. In Process Theology, experience is the ultimate court of appeal. Process teachers say that God is a changing God and that earthly relationships (which are unfixed, changing and in flux) are part of God's identity.

Dr. Robert Morey explains: "Process Theology teaches that the infinite God of historic Christianity is a myth. In its place is erected a finite god who is incapable of knowing or controlling the future because he is not omniscient, omnipresent, perfect, immutable, or, in some cases, omnipresent. The finite god of processianism is trapped in a chance-driven universe that is out of control. He himself is caught in an on-going process and is evolving in his nature toward an unknown future. Only time will tell what this god will end up being" (**The Battle Of The Gods**, pg. 9. See also **Process Theology** by Ronald Nash, **The Inexhaustible God** by Royce Gordon Grunler, and **Dictionary of Christianity in America**, article Process Theology, pp. 945-947).

Classical Theism presented a biblical picture of a perfect God who knows the end from the beginning. Malachi 3:6 says "For I am the Lord, I change not." God is not limited by time and space as neo-processionists affirm.

Look at Peck's view of God:

"We can ask help of the force in our lives that we recognize to be greater than we are. A force that we all see differently" (**Further Along**, pg. 14).

"But God does not always speak. Often she is a silent God. While meditation and other forms of

contemplative prayer will increase the frequency with which we hear her, they never guarantee it" (**World Waiting**, pp. 89-90).

"A strange fantasy, come to think of it. Maybe God puts on five pounds, I explained to her, and then has to take them off. Only he doesn't make a big deal out of it, which is perhaps why he's God. That's how I stumbled onto process theology" (*ibid.*, pg. 360).

"And we think God is as God was and will always be. But it's not the way I think anymore. And increasingly it's not what the theologians are beginning to think. Thank God! If there is anything that characterizes life, it is change. As already mentioned, what most distinguishes the animate from the inanimate is irritability. Something that's animate moves when you poke at it. It doesn't just sit there. It's alive. It goes this way and that way. It grows, it decays, it gets reborn. It changes. All life is in process. And since I choose to have a living God, I believe that my God is in process, learning and growing and perhaps even laughing and dancing" (*ibid.*, pg. 361).

Isaiah would disagree. He saw an incomparable God: "I am God and there is no one like me, declaring the end from the beginning" (Isaiah 46:9). The term "living God" does not mean that God has an existence and limitations like His creatures. The term means that He is self-existent, independent, absolute and immutable. All of life is dependent on Him. He is the same yesterday, today, forever. James 1:17 affirms that with God there is no variation, or change, or shadow of

turning. Process Theology, unfortunately, tries to make God in the image of man.

Peck's view of salvation (be all you can be) makes sense in his world, since you have a God who is like you! One would hardly expect a God that is limited to be able to save those like Himself. This kind of an anemic God would have to use all His energies being all He can be!

The scriptural record (of the nature and attributes of God) is quite different from Peck's view:

God is holy (1 Peter 1:15-16); this being God's central moral attribute.

God is eternal (Psalm 90:1-2); He has no beginning and no ending. He is the author and ruler of time.

God is spirit (John 4:24); He is incorporeal.

God is omnipotent (Job 42:2); He is able to do all things that are consistent with His nature and character.

God is omniscient (Job 37:16); His knowledge is all-inclusive and pertains to all things past, present and future.

God is omnipresent (Psalm 139:7-10); He is everywhere present in the fullness of His person.

God is love (1 John 4:7-10); God's love is voluntary, righteous, everlasting, and is the ultimate motive for all of God's goodness toward men.

Some used to think of Peck as one who could link the secular man with the evangelical Church.

The secular man was listening. Unfortunately, Peck lost the opportunity. The bridge is broken. His own words make it clear that he is eclectic and grossly ecumenical:

"There are an infinite number of roads to reach God. People can come to God through alcoholism, they can come to God through Zen Buddhism as I did, and they can come to God through the multiple New Thought Christian Churches even though they are distinctly heretical. For all I know, they can come to God through Shirley MacLaine. People are at various stages of readiness, and when they're ready, virtually anything can speak to them" (**Further Along**, pg. 155).

Peck is ambiguous about being born again: "When people ask me whether I've been born again, I say well maybe so" (**Further Along**, pg. 159). And he has a troubling confusing view of the human Jesus: "I believe that Jesus was an androgynous figure" (**Further Along**, pg. 161).

If Peck was ever on a biblical road he has surely detoured. He offers us a new definition of evil. He says it is "militant ignorance" (**Further Along**, pg. 26). His writings demonstrate that very "evil," that is, an ignorance of or rejection of biblical Christianity. It is obvious that he no longer travels the scriptural path. He just is not traveling that road. His books in fact are touting and promoting strange and false teaching as well as rank heresy. His Process Theology and major denials of Christian doctrine put him on a broad road with other false teachers. For the Christian, his writings should be a road not traveled. ✱

## EDITORIALS

(continued from page 2)

Jehovah's Witness to doubt, which they know will lead to an exodus from the organization.

All this brings to mind a question I often have pondered. What is the real reason Jehovah's Witnesses do not celebrate holidays? Jehovah's Witnesses say all holidays are connected with paganism, but there is another reason, known only to the leadership: It is to keep the rank and file separated from family, friends and others who may cause them to think for themselves.

Years ago, Jehovah's Witnesses celebrated Christmas and other holidays. But in the mid-1940s this came to an abrupt halt. Messages came down "from on high" — that is Bethel in Brooklyn, N.Y. — that it was no longer an acceptable practice. At the same time, other issues that had not even been considered in the past, became Watchtower doctrine: not saluting the flag, not voting, or having anything to do with the government. No personal freedom of thought or choice was allowed. Watchtower policy was

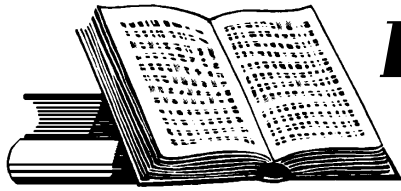
and is: "We speak for God, therefore, follow our commands."

I remember hearing the boast, "Wherever you go in the world, Jehovah's Witnesses all think alike." Under the guise of theocratic unity, they live under absolute mandates from headquarters.

Watchtower leadership knows that the organization is a house of cards that would come tumbling down if doubts were allowed to grow in the minds of its members. Thus, "apostates," or those who have seen flaws in the organization and have spoken out, must be promptly "disfellowshipped" and shunned by Jehovah's Witnesses.

When I left the Watchtower, I found true freedom in Jesus Christ. Freedom in Christ has allowed me to read, think and ponder the great questions of life. Unlike the house of cards of the Watchtower, true Christianity can withstand any question, and any critical examination. It will never fall. Yes, we Christians are not "of the world" but we are in this world as "salt" and "light," influencing people to come to Jesus Christ, who brings true freedom.

—PRB



# Books in Review

## SELLING SATAN

**The Tragic History of Mike Warnke**  
by Mike Hertenstein and Jon Trott  
Cornerstone Press, 476 pages, \$12.95

This book is a fascinating and compelling read. I could not put it down. Our "hats are off" to the authors for creating such an intense and interesting book. It is not just about Warnke (although he is the major focus). It is about truth in advertising and ministry. It is about hard Christian investigative reporting. It's about greed and deception and the financial "bleeding" of churches and Christians by men who lack integrity. The book gives us insights into the market-driven and sometime corrupt world of "Christian" recording, "Christian" publishing and the "Christian" music industry.

Hertenstein and Trott walk us through the 1960s. They draw us in to relive the early warning signs in Warnke's multimillion-dollar scam. They get our blood pumping as they take us through the meetings and contacts to finally unearth the real truth about the Warnke "ministry." It is an amazing chronicle as to how it all came down. We see inside Warnke's bogus degrees and ordination and into his surreal rituals and dress up in his pseudo-church, "The Holy Orthodox Catholic Church," which for all intents and purposes was a tax dodge.

We also learn about Warnke's three divorces and four marriages. Warnke's tall-tale telling and fascination with fantasy are all laid out methodically and with meticulous documentation.

How so many could have been scammed for so long is mind-boggling. There is advice all through the book about how we can avoid scammers, for instance in the forward: "The answer offered by this book, believe not every spirit, but look for evidence, awaken your God-given power to reason, and suspect the sensational." Great advice!

My only wish is that this book was published by a major publisher so as to give it a wider market. Everyone should read it.

—GRF

## REASONING FROM THE SCRIPTURES WITH THE JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

by Ron Rhodes  
Harvest House Publishers, 437 pages, \$10.99

In 1985, the Watchtower revised and upgraded its collection of corrupted proof texts under the title **Reasoning from the Scriptures**. This publication is a "new and improved" version of its predecessor, **Make**

**Sure of All Things**, and gave Jehovah's Witnesses new arguments in defense of their unorthodox doctrines. Christians stumped by the Watchtower's **Reasoning** book now can turn to Ron Rhodes' book.

Rhodes tackles the crucial arguments of Watchtower theology, with an extensive study of the person of Christ, the person of the Holy Spirit, salvation, soul sleep and the failed prophecies of the Watchtower. Secondary issues, such as blood transfusions, birthdays and the cross as the instrument of Christ's death also get attention.

Rhodes meticulously compares Watchtower and orthodox Christian doctrines and provides questions to use in discussions with Jehovah's Witnesses.

This work can be used as a crash course or ready reference. Adding to its value are extensive endnotes, a bibliography, and Scripture and subject indexes.

This book gets our highest recommendation as a serious examination of Watchtower teachings.

—MKG

## FAKES, FRAUDS AND OTHER MALARKEY

**301 Amazing Stories and How Not to be Fooled**  
by Kathryn Lindskoog,  
Zondervan Publishing House, 288 pages, \$12.99

This delightful and informative book introduces readers to scammers and fakes in religion, education, medicine, science, literature and art, and surveys the history of fraud in the United States.

Lindskoog is right when she observes, "Everything human is apt to go awry, including creative make-believe. That's the human condition, ever since Eve's big mistake" (page 15).

The chapter on the religious hoaxers, called "Holy Hoaxers," includes the stories of the "rogue Rabbi" (Michael Esses), Mike Warnke, Laurel Wilson (Lauren Strafford) and others. One also will be surprised to find well-known people guilty of plagiarism.

The book offers itself to "Those who enjoy a good yarn, thinkers concerned about the ethics crisis in our society, speakers in search of sparkling illustrations and anyone who wants to avoid being fooled."

It also provides illustrative material for those on the lookout for new hoaxes and frauds. It has a unique recommended-reading section which lists 62 books and a three- or four-line synopsis of each one.

In a world of doublespeak and deception we need more of this kind of material.

The major *faux pas* in the book is Lindskoog's statement that the Murray Harris/Norm Geisler debate over Christ's resurrection is only a "slight difference of opinion among conservative Christians" (pg. 243). Anyone familiar with the debate realizes it is far more serious than that. On that one issue the author seems to have been "faked."

—GRF

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