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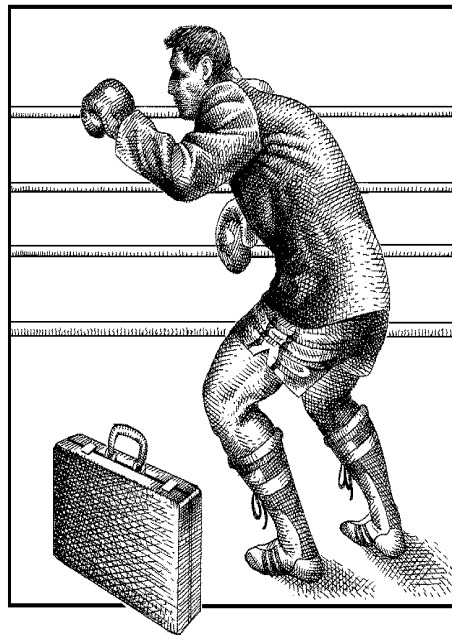
Rod Parsley: The Raging Prophet

“Breaking Through” His Unorthodox Doctrine and Practice

by G. Richard Fisher

It is hard to describe a “worship service” led by pastor and television evangelist Rod Parsley. Whether viewing at home by way of his popular daily television broadcast, *Breakthrough*, or as part of his 12,000-member congregation, his services could, perhaps, be described as a hybrid of pep rally, boxing match and professional wrestling with smatterings of Bible verses and hyped-up claims that take people over the edge of hysteria. It is primal scream set to spiritual aerobics. Parsley is the ultimate cheerleader and professional boxer combined. He deftly and quickly moves people into altered states of unreality. There is no question that he can be a compelling and convincing speaker. Neither does he have difficulty or qualms about hosting the worst of Word-Faith teachers and promoting their agendas.

Rodney Lee Parsley charges back and forth across the stage of his World Harvest Church in Columbus, Ohio, sweating profusely, railing against the devil in a demonstration of heart-pounding Christian calisthenics and his crowds love it. They follow his lead, bouncing, swaying and screaming. It is raw pandemonium. They repeat whatever mantras



he gives them to say, waiting to be smacked, pushed or pommelled to the floor by the “Raging Prophet.”

Though Parsley has difficulty, at times, pronouncing biblical names, his stride and jarring verbal onslaughts are unabated. He is definitely emerging as a key player and force to be reckoned with in the world of charisma. Parsley further demonstrates he has arrived among the rich and famous of the Charismatic world when he found himself featured in the cover story of *Charisma* magazine in March 1998. Parsley’s meetings are so out of control that he sometimes makes even faith healer Benny Hinn or Brownsville Revival evangelist Steven Hill appear tame.

His preaching style and intonations are well likened to R.W. Schambach but revved-up considerably. His preaching raps are reminiscent of pseudo-evangelist Marjoe Gortner and, at times, he chops his way across the stage with a grimace reminding one of the old professional tag team, the Bushwhackers. No doubt about it,

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Editorials

GOD'S SUPERSTARS

A few months ago I received a transatlantic phone call from a gentleman in the United Kingdom. This caller was provoked at the investigative research PFO had published about faith healer Benny Hinn. It was an interesting and lively conversation, and being it was his nickel (or more accurately, his *sixpence*) paying for the call, I was more than happy to respond to his complaints.

I reminded the caller of Hinn's false declarations and heretical theology under the guise of "revelation knowledge." It's one thing to issue a doctrinally inaccurate statement (even from a pulpit), it's quite another to maintain that the utterance was based upon divine intervention or inspiration. The latter assertion holds one to a completely different set of standards. Hinn had announced unequivocally during a watch night service on December 31, 1989 that, "The Lord also tells me to tell you in the mid-nineties, about '94 or '95, *no later than that*, God will destroy the homosexual community of America."

I was told that that was only *one* failed prophecy. Despite a litany of other false prophecies by Hinn, I inquired as to how many false prophecies it took to make a false prophet. Surprisingly (or maybe *not so surprisingly*), the transatlantic conversationalist announced that, "We would be in terrible shape if we thought it was one." I then asked him, "How many times would I have to steal before I was a thief?" He replied, "It depended

on whether or not I got caught." (No kidding, he really said that.) With such a senseless philosophy, any argument can be rational. Perhaps with such convoluted logic, another counterbalance to properly defining a thief would be what was done with the stolen goods.

While I finally got him to admit that it only took *one* lie to make a liar or *one* theft to make a thief, when we got back to the issue of failed prophecy, I was told, "Oh, that's different. We all make mistakes." But, again, we're not talking "mistakes," we were talking about claimed God-inspired revelation. The stakes are much higher.

Because I viewed with significant disfavor the doctrine and practice of present-day Charismatic icons (such as Benny Hinn, Joyce Meyer, Oral Roberts, Kenneth Copeland and others), he asked me who did I think were "God's superstars" on the Earth today. His inquiry was not an unusual question being that we are certainly in a day and age of "superstar worship."

As noted author Tony Evans points out in the Introduction to his volume, *Who Is This King of Glory?:* "We live in a day of celebrity worship. ... Celebrities grab our attention. People want to get close to them, to get an autograph or even a glimpse of the famous person." Within Charismatic camps, and now tragically even within some Evangelical circles, devotees swarm to get close to the superstars, not in an effort to obtain an autograph, but to obtain the "anointing" which is allegedly imparted by these Christian luminaries.

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GOD TELLS HINN TO RELOCATE MINISTRY

The ink had not dried on the last issue of *The Quarterly Journal*, which reported Benny Hinn's announcement that he and his family would be moving from Florida to Southern California but that his ministry would stay in Orlando, when it was announced that he would be moving his operation to the Dallas-Fort Worth area.

Hinn's organization made the announcement June 1. Just a few days later, Hinn told members of his congregation of the impending move during a Sunday morning service. Hinn changed his plans because "God has spoken," he told the members of his World Outreach Church. Evidently, God has also spoken with urgency. Details of the relocation called for the leasing of temporary offices in Dallas beginning Sept. 1 with new headquarters to be built and completed by June 1, 2000. The Orlando-based operations employed 370 persons, but initial remarks by ministry officials would not say how many would move to Texas.

A spokesman for Hinn's ministry initially told the *Orlando Sentinel* that Hinn would continue to preach at the church "as his schedule allows." Yet, apparently the news media no longer accepts with certainty such statements. "Whether Hinn will remain in his Central Florida pulpit, or for how long, is uncertain, he told the packed sanctuary," the newspaper reported. Presumably, Hinn's uncertainty is a result of God's reticence in disclosing plans. "When God talks to me about it, I'll let you know," he revealed to his congregation.

The *Sentinel* also reported on the future of the church founded by Hinn in the 1980s, saying that it "will be reconfigured to accommodate children, youth and adult programs," according to a church official. The Orlando congregation members "were uniformly supportive of their pastor." Obviously, when "God speaks" through Hinn, they're quick to listen and accommodate his revelations.

While Hinn claimed "one reason" for the move, information given to the news media indicates other considerations were instrumental. "We have outgrown our limited space in Orlando and for the ministry to accomplish what God has called us to in international evangelism; this is a move we must make," Hinn said in a prepared announcement. A *Dallas Morning News* article cited ministry spokesman David Brokaw as saying, "many of the church's partners and donors live around Dallas." Still others discern additional reasons.

Ole Anthony, a prominent figure in exposing the abuses and corruption of televangelists, offers another scenario. Anthony contends that "Hinn is moving to Dallas to be close to the ministry's law firm, Brewer, Brewer, Anthony & Middlebrook of Irving." This, according to Anthony, will allow Hinn's ministry to engage one of its lawyers as a business manager and invoke an attorney-client privilege to shield ministry business practices from investigators.

Anthony told the *Dallas Morning News* that, "Every purchase order, paycheck and aspect of the ministry's operation is handled through an attorney's office, so they claim privilege for even the smallest detail of the ministry. That provides another shield which keeps investigators from evaluating whether they're doing what they say they're doing."

"That's patently ludicrous. It discloses a complete lack of understanding of Pastor Benny, his ministry and what attorney-client privilege is," Hinn ministry attorney David Middlebrook said in response to Anthony's charge.

—MKG

MOSCOW COURT RULES AGAINST JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

The Watchtower Society suffered a setback from a June decision by a Moscow court, which came just a month after it was officially recognized as a religious denomination by the Russian government.

Late last year, the Moscow city prosecutor's office began trying to end the sect's activity in Russia's capital city. In March, a judge established a panel to review Watchtower literature for illegal content. The group was the third such body studying the organization's material. Two earlier panels reported finding no illegal content. Watchtower leaders had sought to have the current review halted. The petition was rejected by the Moscow court.

As the panel continues its review, the Watchtower Society in Moscow will be unable to rent facilities for worship services or renovate any of its property. If the court ultimately rules that the Watchtower is an illegal religious body, it would mean further restrictions, including the holding of any public services and

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DECEPTION:

The Legacy of the Mormon Prophets

by Stephen F. Cannon

One of the tactics of cultic groups that I perceived early in my research (now almost 30 years ago), was their ability and need to use certain communicative and psychological techniques to “spin” negative incidents in such a way as to give plausible deniability to these incidents. This seemed to be especially true when it came to the lives and actions of the leaders of most of these new religions: leaders most often characterized as prophets and apostles.

I found this strategy very disturbing. This type of truth-twisting is the stuff of politics, the maneuverings of proverbial smoke-filled rooms. What does this have to do with religion and truth? Jesus, the Apostles, and the Prophets never engaged in this type of semantic subterfuge.

Little did I realize then, the amount of time that I would spend “un-spinning” or exposing the carefully crafted contrivances of the new religious leaders. This has been especially true of the succession of Prophets, Seers, and Revelators of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and many of their followers.

AS THE PROPHET GOES...

In many of my past articles on the LDS church, I have made the statement, “as the Prophet goes, so goes the church.”¹ What I mean by that statement is that the Prophet, Seer and Revelator of that body has been invested with such absolute power

pertaining to things spiritual that he and he alone sets the tone for their church at large during his tenure. As stated by the late Mormon Apostle, Bruce R. McConkie:

“The President of the Church is the mouthpiece of God on earth. Thus saith the Lord: *‘Thou shall give heed unto all his words and commandments which he shall give unto you as he receiveth them, walking in all holiness before me; For his word ye shall receive, as if from mine own mouth, in all patience and faith.’* (D. & C. 21:4-5.)”²

As the mouthpiece for God, a prophet can be expected to speak the truth. LDS church doctrine places a great emphasis on being truthful. The 13th Article of Faith of the LDS church states, “We believe in being honest, true, chaste, benevolent, virtuous, and in doing good to all men; indeed, we may say that we follow the admonition of Paul — We believe all things, we hope all things, we have endured many things, and hope to be able to endure all things. If there is anything virtuous, lovely or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after all these things.”³

One has only to spend a few moments glancing at the writings of LDS leaders to glean public pronouncements on the importance of honesty.

President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency of the LDS church, gave these unambiguous statements in an address given at the Priesthood Session of the 166th Semiannual General Church Conference:

“Brethren, we all should be concerned about the society in which we live, a society which is like a moral Armageddon. I am concerned about its effect upon us as the holders of the priesthood of God. There are so many in the world who does not seem to know or care about right or wrong. ... We all need to know what it means to be honest. Honesty is more than not lying. It is truth-telling, truth-speaking, truth-living, and truth-loving.”⁴

Later in that address, Faust observes:

“There are different shades of truth-telling. When we tell little white lies we become progressively color blind. It is better to remain silent than to mislead. The degree to which each of us tells the whole truth and nothing but the truth depends on our conscience.”⁵

And then at the end of his address Faust quotes present Prophet of the LDS church, Gordon B. Hinckley:

“As President Gordon B. Hinckley has said, ‘Let the truth be

taught by example and precept—that to steal is evil, that to cheat is wrong, that to lie is a reproach to anyone who indulges in it.”⁶

In my day-to-day dealings with many Mormon people, I have found them to be, overall, a clean-living, hard-working, generally honest lot. But, strangely, when it comes to dealing with controversial aspects of their belief system, I have encountered obfuscation, half-truths and even deliberate mendacity. For a while I relegated this to just being doctrinally ill-informed. However, as I researched deeper into Mormon doctrine, I came to see that doctrinal and historical deception is a legacy that reaches all the way back to the first Prophet, Seer and Revelator: Joseph Smith himself.

POLISHING THE MYTH

This legacy of deceit in the history and doctrine of the LDS church is well-known to those who walk in Mormon circles. There are numerous articles in “alternative” Mormon periodicals that deal with the subject of “lying for the Lord.” One that strikes to the heart of the matter was published in *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*.

Frances Lee Menlove, an active Mormon with a Ph.D. in psychology and a manuscript editor for *Dialogue*, wrote “The Challenge of Honesty” that appeared in the first issue of *Dialogue* in spring 1966. The essay calls for Mormons to, “meet openly the challenge of honesty.” She further states that, “It is the purpose of this paper to lay some groundwork for this self-examination.”⁷

Not only does Dr. Menlove issue this challenge to individual LDS members, but she also speaks to the institutional deception within the LDS church leadership:

“The failure to realize that the Mormon Church in all its manifestations, both historical and contemporary, is an intermingling of the human as well as the divine, also puts some obstacles in the way of honesty with others. In the first place, we have a proud and courageous history. Every Primary child knows the

story of how our forefathers crossed the plains and made the desert bloom. Wallace Stegner calls the Mormon pioneers ‘...the most systematic, organized, disciplined, and successful pioneers in our history...’ But the story of Joseph Smith, the early Church, the hegira across the plains, and the consequent establishment of Zion is more than just history. It is the story of God directing His People to a new Dispensation. Perhaps because the history is so fraught with theological significance, *it has been smoothed and whittled down, a wrinkle removed here and a sharp edge there. In many ways it has assumed the character of a myth.* That these courageous and inspired men shared the shortcomings of all men cannot be seriously doubted. That the Saints were not perfect nor their leaders without error is evident to anyone who cares to read the original records of the Church. *But the myths and the myth-making persist.* Striking evidence for this is found in the fact that currently one of the most successful anti-Mormon proselytizing techniques is merely to bring to light *obscure or suppressed historical documents.* Reading these historical documents arouses a considerable amount of incredulity, concern, and disenchantment among Mormons under the spell of this mythological view of history. That individuals find these bits and pieces of history so shocking and faith-shattering is at once the meat of fundamentalistic heresies and an indictment of the quasi-suppression of historical reality which propagates the one-sided view of Mormon history. The relevance of this to honesty is obvious. The net result of mythologizing our history is *that the hard truth is concealed. It is deception* to select only congenial facts or to twist their meaning so that error becomes wisdom, or to pretend that the Church exists now and has existed in a vacuum, uninfluenced by cultural values,

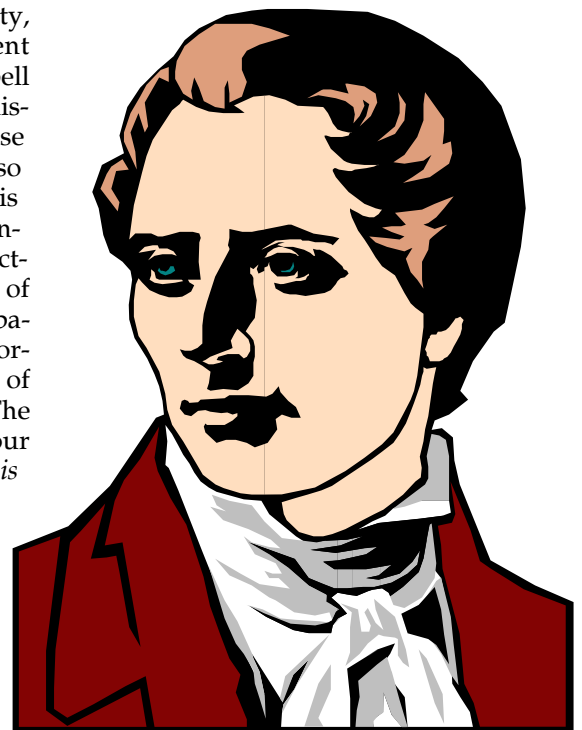
passing fashions, and political ideologies.”⁸

The sentiments expressed above, in 1966, were confirmed in August 1981 when LDS Apostle Boyd K. Packer gave an address to the Fifth Annual Church Educational System Religious Educators’ Symposium, in Provo, Utah at Brigham Young University.

In his talk titled “The Mantle is Far, Far Greater Than the Intellect,” Packer opines that there are events in LDS history that should be repressed, because they are not “faith-building”:

“You seminary teachers and some of you institute and BYU men will be teaching the history of the Church this school year. This is an unparalleled opportunity in the lives of your students to increase their faith and testimony of the divinity of this work. Your objective should be that they will see the hand of the Lord in every hour and every moment of the Church from its beginning till now.”⁹

“Church history can be so interesting and so inspiring as to be a very powerful tool indeed for building faith. If not properly written or properly taught, it may be a faith destroyer.”¹⁰



“There is a temptation for the writer or the teacher of Church history to want to tell everything, whether it is worthy or faith promoting or not.”¹¹

“Some things that are true are not very useful.”¹²

“That historian or scholar who delights in pointing out the weaknesses and frailties of present or past leaders destroys faith. A destroyer of faith — particularly one within the Church, and more particularly one who is employed specifically to build faith — places himself in great spiritual jeopardy. He is serving the wrong master, and unless he repents, he will not be among the faithful in the eternities.”¹³

Packer is obviously using his position as a leader of the LDS church to suppress the publication of any negative or controversial historical facts about that body. He and the church hierarchy that he is a member of want LDS history, “smoothed and whittled down, a wrinkle removed here and a sharp edge there.” He wants this mythical view of his church’s history to be propagated so that existing and potential members will “see the hand of the Lord in every hour and every moment of the Church from its beginning till now.” He clearly is supporting the ongoing legacy of deception.

A mythical view of LDS history is significant because the architect of the legacy of deception is none other than the very Prophet of the Restoration: Joseph Smith Jr.

ROOTS OF THE LEGACY

The capstone of the Mormon faith is Joseph Smith Jr. Without Smith, Mormons believe, the true church could not have been restored to the Earth. If the fullness of the Gospel had not been revealed through Smith, mankind would have only an apostate church to look to for guidance. One LDS scripture, supposedly revealed from God, states that, “Joseph Smith, the Prophet and Seer of the Lord, has done more, save Jesus only, for the salvation of men in this world, than any other man that ever lived in it.”¹⁴

Further, the God of Mormonism revealed to his church, concerning Smith, the members were to:

“...give heed to all his words and commandments which he shall give unto you as he receiveth them, walking in all holiness before me; For his word ye shall receive, as if from mine own mouth, in all patience and faith.”¹⁵

Not only was Joseph the official spokesman for God, but he was entrusted with the keys of salvation for all men. Bruce McConkie records:

“Joseph Smith’s greatness lies in the work that he did, the spiritual capacity he developed, and the witness he bore of the Redeemer. Since the keys of salvation were restored to the Prophet, it is in and through and because of his latter-day mission that the full redemptive power of the Lord has again become available to men. It is because the Lord called Joseph Smith that salvation is again available to mortal men. [Joseph Smith, the Prophet and Seer of the Lord, has done more, save Jesus only, for the salvation of men in this world, than any other man that ever lived in it. (D. & C. 135:3.)”¹⁶

The circumstance that contradicts Smith being such an exalted person unfortunately deals with character. The problem is one of honesty and, in my opinion, this flaw in Smith’s character is the root of the legacy of deception.

Critics of the LDS church have for years pointed out how Joseph Smith Jr. and many succeeding prophets had lied to cover up the practice of polygamy. It has only been recently, however, that public acknowledgement of these charges have been emanating from within the LDS church.

D. Michael Quinn, a recently excommunicated, recognized Mormon historian, has supplied both the LDS and the outsider with penetrating historical insight into early Mormon methodology. In an essay published in *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon*

Thought, Quinn disclosed the relative nature of truth held by Joseph Smith and other LDS Prophets:

“It is a commonplace saying that the first casualty when war comes is truth but amid the sectarian warfare involving Mormon polygamy, truth has often simply been a negotiable commodity. The illegality, secrecy, and self-protection of the individual and the institution all contributed toward the final complication in the history of polygamy among the Mormons: the meaning and application of ‘truth.’ In an 1833 revelation dictated by Joseph Smith, the Lord said: ‘All truth is independent in that sphere in which God has placed it, to act for itself...’ (D&C 93: 30). None of the official or semi-official commentaries on Joseph Smith’s revelations has pointed out the strong implication of these words that truth ultimately is relative, rather than absolute. But Joseph Smith’s own teachings in connection with polygamy in 1842 explicitly denied that there were ethical absolutes: ‘That which is wrong under one circumstance, may be, and often is, right under another. God said, ‘Thou shalt not kill;’ at another time He said ‘Thou shalt utterly destroy.’ This is the principle on which the government of heaven is conducted — by revelation adapted to the circumstances in which the children of the kingdom are placed. Whatever God requires is right, no matter what it is, although we may not see the reason thereof till long after the events transpire.’ Forty years later, Apostle Abraham H. Cannon gave some instructions about polygamy that indicated one dimension of this question: ‘It is good to always tell the truth, but not always to tell the whole of what we know.’ If failure of full disclosure were the only manifestation of relative truth in the history of Mormon polygamy, the problem would be comparatively simple. But the situation has been compounded by Mormons giving specialized

meaning to language that has a different (if not opposite) denotation in conventional usage and by instances of emphatic statements about historical events or circumstances which can be verified as contrary to the allegations. In 1886, a Deseret Evening News editorial presented a particularly significant argument in favor of a specialized approach to truth with regard to polygamy, and B.H. Roberts further popularized the argument in a biography of John Taylor published in 1892. Stating that the secret practice of polygamy was the context, both publications argued that if apostles (and by implication, any Latter day Saints) were under a divine command or covenant of secrecy which one of the apostles violated by telling others, that those who maintained the sacred covenant of secrecy would be justified in, even obligated to, denouncing the disclosures as false.¹⁷

In this writer's opinion, it is this relativistic view of truth buttressed by an entrenched subjectivism that gives LDS inner justification to the legacy of deceit.¹⁸ An examination of the facts surrounding Smith's denial of polygamy smacks of the moral relativism of today's political spin.

I CAN ONLY FIND ONE

Recounting some of the historical information may seem at first tedious, but dates are important to establish the pattern of mendacity.

Whether you believe that Joseph Smith was a prophet and actually translated *The Book of Mormon*, or whether he used other sources and wrote the book is irrelevant to our topic. The content of the book as it relates to our topic, however, is very important.

When *The Book of Mormon* was written, its position on the subject of polygamy was clearly negative (see for example, Jacob 3:5; Mosiah 11:2; and Jacob 2:24). Some time shortly after *The Book of Mormon* was published in 1830, Joseph had a change of attitude regarding plural marriage

and started talking about it to his inner circle.

In the Introduction of the fifth volume of the official LDS *History of the Church*, we read:

"But the climax in doctrine as in moral daring is reached in this volume by the Prophet committing to writing the revelation on the eternity of the marriage covenant, and, under special circumstances and divine sanction the rightfulness, of a plurality of wives. As the time at which this revelation was given has been questioned, and also the authorship of it, extended consideration is given to both these matters in the following treatise... Marriage Covenant, Including the Plurality of Wives [July 1843], notes the time at which of the revelation was committed to writing, not the time at which the principles set forth in the revelation were first made known to the Prophet. This is evident from the written revelation itself which discloses the fact that Joseph Smith was already in the relationship of plural marriage..."¹⁹

By way of introducing the subject, we quote the following from a communication written by former LDS President Joseph F. Smith and published in the May 20, 1886, issue of the *Deseret News*:

"The great and glorious principle of plural marriage was first revealed to Joseph Smith in 1831, but being forbidden to make it public, or to teach it as a doctrine of the Gospel, at that time, he confided the facts to only a very few of his intimate associates."

Even though Smith and some of his intimates knew the "principle" at this early date, there was still a public policy of denial.

Published in the first edition (1833) of the *Book of Commandments* (which would later become the *Doctrine and Covenants*) was a statement of denial of plural marriage. In chapter 52, we read:

"16 And again, I say unto you, that whoso forbiddeth to marry,

is not ordained of God, for marriage is ordained of God unto man: 17 Wherefore it is lawful that he should have *one wife*, and they twain shall be one flesh, and all this that the earth might answer the end of its creation; and that it might be filled with the measure of man, according to his creation before the world was made."²⁰

The point is that this citation was published in the *Book of Commandments* in 1833, approximately two years after Smith first received the "Polygamy Revelation" in or about 1831. While the LDS church at large may have believed the above statement (and those in *The Book of Mormon*), Smith knew different. He knew, and propagated to his inner circle, privately, the polygamy revelation, yet allowed the "one wife" revelation to be republished in the next edition (*Doctrine & Covenants*, 1835). He even allowed a controversial stronger denial to be included in that edition.

That Smith had received the polygamy revelation as early as 1831, almost all Mormon historians agree. Moreover, there seems to be ample evidence that Smith's first plural wife was Fanny Alger. Former Mormon historian Quinn fixes this marriage in early 1833.²¹

By 1835, the Mormons had settled in Kirtland, Ohio. Because Joseph had been receiving new revelations in the intervening years, it was determined to publish a new edition of the *Book of Commandments*. The name change to *Doctrine and Covenants* was due to a change in content. Some of the new revelations were added, some of the old ones were edited and two new non-revelatory articles were added. The article germane to my thesis was printed as Section 101 and known as the "Article on Marriage."²²

This article denies polygamy in emphatic terms:

"4. All legal contracts of marriage made before a person is baptized into this church, should be held sacred and fulfilled. *Inasmuch as this church of Christ has been reproached with the crime of fornication, and polygamy: we*

declare that we believe, that one man should have one wife; and one woman, but one husband, except in case of death, when either is at liberty to marry again. It is not right to persuade a woman to be baptized contrary to the will of her husband, neither is it lawful to influence her to leave her husband. All children are bound by law to obey their parents; and to influence them to embrace any religious faith, or be baptized, or leave their parents without their consent, is unlawful and unjust. We believe that all persons who exercise control over their fellow beings, and prevent them from embracing the truth, will have to answer for that sin."²³

Of the article on marriage, Joseph Fielding Smith, the tenth Prophet of the LDS church said:

"3. After this had been accomplished, Elder William W. Phelps arose and read an article prepared by Oliver Cowdery, on marriage. This was on vote ordered to be published also in the volume with the revelations. Then President Oliver Cowdery arose and read an article, 'Of Governments and Laws in General,' and this likewise was ordered by vote to be published with the book of the revelations. Neither of these articles was a revelation to the Church. They had not been prepared by the Prophet Joseph Smith. He knew nothing of them until he returned from Michigan, and they by the conference had been ordered placed in the volume. *This the Prophet permitted to be done*, although it is extremely doubtful that he would have done so in regard to the article on marriage had he been present at the time this was ordered published. It contained matters which were not given by inspiration but which were not in conflict with the practice of the Church at that time. The Church has been criticized by its enemies for removing this article at a later time when its teachings were discovered to be in conflict with the

revealed word of the Lord. This criticism was of course based on the false notion that this article was a revelation given to the Prophet Joseph Smith."²⁴

The important point of the above being, while Smith was allowing the original "one wife" statement of 1833, and allowing the new article on marriage denying polygamy to be added in 1835, he was already in a polygamous relationship! This is classical deception. As will be noted, this quiet deception shortly evolved into open hypocrisy.

It can be seen in the above quotation by Joseph Fielding Smith, that the inclusion of the anti-polygamy statement was "sort of" against the Prophet's wishes. The rationale for this line of apologetic is that: 1) the article was not a revelation; 2) Joseph was away on a mission while the vote to include was taken; 3) by the time that Joseph returned the inclusion was pretty much a "done deal"; and 4) once Joseph learned of the inclusion, he "was very much troubled."²⁵

We learn, however, that the Prophet and his Second Counselor were only on a short missionary journey. The marriage article mentioned was submitted to the Mormon General Assembly on August 17, 1835. Smith and Frederick G. Williams returned to Kirtland on Aug. 23, 1835. This was just six days after the article was voted on.²⁶

By no stretch of the imagination, could the book have gone to print in just six days after the vote. Smith would have had plenty of time to excise the article on marriage had he really wished to. Remember that Smith had total control over the church.

Removing Smith physically from the location of that General Assembly doesn't alter the fact that he allowed the statement to be published in the D&C of 1835 and to remain unchallenged there for the rest of his life. It wasn't removed and replaced with the 1843 polygamy revelation until 1876, 32 years after his murder! This gives rise to the question that I will repeatedly ask, are these deceptions the acts of a true prophet of God?

Also of utmost importance is the question of what Smith really believed at this point. Joseph Fielding Smith said that the prophet "was very much troubled" about allowing the marriage article to be included. Does this mean that he didn't believe the article to be true? Obviously not, since he was practicing polygamy at the time. If not true, then why allow it to be published, why leave it in the book for years, and most importantly if not true, why allow it to be used by others to deny the practice? Does the term "plausible deniability" resonate with anyone?

Modern-day LDS apologists often accuse Evangelical Christians of seeing only the black and white of the issue. They invite us to understand that Smith was given the revelation on polygamy, but was commanded by God to keep it secret until the time was right. Even though perfidious church members leaked the practice (and they were the ones who committed the most heinous sin), Smith had to keep the secret.

In reality, it's not just the "rigid" Evangelicals that see the deception of Smith. Several Mormon scholars have also discerned the legacy of deception. As D. Michael Quinn observes in his *Dialogue* article:

"The first significant and long lasting manifestation of this problem in the history of Mormon polygamy occurred in 1835 when an official statement on marriage was included as Section 101 in the first printing of the Doctrine and Covenants, a collection of Joseph Smith's revelatory writings and statements. Verse 4 states, 'Inasmuch as this church of Christ has been reproached with the crime of fornication, and polygamy: we declare that we believe, that one man should have but one wife; and one woman, but one husband, except in case of death, when either is at liberty to marry again.' In later years several members of the Church who were prominent in the 1830s would affirm that prior to the canonization of this state-

ment, Joseph Smith had already dictated a revelation authorizing plural marriage, had secretly explained that polygamy would one day become a practice of the Church, and had himself married his first plural wife. *This article on marriage became the focal point for a number of polygamy denials during the next fifteen years.*"²⁷

The clearest public denial of polygamy made directly by Smith is gleaned from a much longer address given by Smith to deny allegations leveled by dissenters in the church.

Because of the differing viewpoints and sometimes imprecise language on the two sides of the issue, it is necessary to "translate" the loaded language to clearly understand what is being said.

Polygamy advocates believed that Smith had received sanction from God to take multiple wives. Because of this belief, they did not see having more than one wife as committing adultery. Dissidents, on the other hand, saw having any marital relations other than with one's only wife as adulterous. Hence charges of adultery were made.

One of the Prophet's inner circle, William Law, had disagreed with some of Smith's doctrine. Chief among these was polygamy. Law threatened exposure and was excommunicated. He later became the president of a dissident church, and still threatened exposure. On May 23, 1844, Law filed a complaint with the circuit court that Smith was "living in open adultery with Maria Lawrence." Lawrence was Smith's foster daughter and plural wife.²⁸

It is against these events that Smith brought an address to the saints on May 26 to answer Law's charges. During the talk he made two of his most famous assertions. The first is the boast that he has done a feat that no one, not even Jesus Christ, has accomplished.

"God is in the still small voice. In all these affidavits, indictments, it is all of the devil — all corruption. Come on! ye prosecutors! ye false swearers! All hell, boil over!

Ye burning mountains, roll down your lava! for I will come out on the top at last. *I have more to boast of than ever any man had. I am the only man that has ever been able to keep a whole church together since the days of Adam. A large majority of the whole have stood by me. Neither Paul, John, Peter, nor Jesus ever did it. I boast that no man ever did such a work as I. The followers of Jesus ran away from Him; but the Latter-day Saints never ran away from me yet. You know my daily walk and conversation. I am in the bosom of a virtuous and good people. How I do love to hear the wolves howl!*"²⁹

The second assertion is the polygamy denial, sprinkled throughout several paragraphs. For want of space, I quote only enough to establish the context. I have emphasized the relevant passages:

"Another indictment has been got up against me. It appears a holy prophet has arisen up, and he has testified against me: the reason is, he is so holy."³⁰

"*I had not been married scarcely five minutes, and made one proclamation of the Gospel, before it was reported that I had seven wives. I mean to live and proclaim the truth as long as I can. This new holy prophet (William Law) has gone to Carthage and swore that I had told him that I was guilty of adultery. This spiritual wifeism! Why, a man dares not speak or wink, for fear of being accused of this.*"³¹

The church's history volume further states:

"*William Law testified before forty policemen, and the assembly room full of witnesses, that he testified under oath that he never had heard or seen or knew anything immoral or criminal against me. He testified under oath that he was my friend, and not the 'Brutus.'* There was a cogitation who was the 'Brutus.' I had not prophesied against William Law. He swore under oath that he was satisfied that he was ready to lay down his life for me, and he swears that I have committed

adultery. I wish the grand jury would tell me who they are — whether it will be a curse or blessing to me. I am quite tired of the fools asking me. *A man asked me whether the commandment was given that a man may have seven wives; and now the new prophet has charged me with adultery. I never had any fuss with these men until that Female Relief Society brought out the paper against adulterers and adulteresses.*"³²

The historical record continues:

"There is another Law, not the prophet, who was cashiered for dishonesty and robbing the government. Wilson Law also *swears that I told him I was guilty of adultery.* Brother Jonathan Dunham can swear to the contrary. I have been chained. I have rattled chains before in a dungeon for the truth's sake. I am innocent of all these charges, and you can bear witness of my innocence, for you know me yourselves. ... Be meek and lowly, upright and pure; render good for evil. If you bring on yourselves your own destruction, I will complain. It is not right for a man to bare down his neck to the oppressor always. Be humble and patient in all circumstances of life; we shall then triumph more gloriously. *What a thing it is for a man to be accused of committing adultery, and having seven wives, when I can only find one.* I am the same man, and as innocent as I was fourteen years ago; and I can prove them all perjurers. I labored with these apostates myself until I was out of all manner of patience; and then I sent my brother Hyrum, whom they virtually kicked out of doors."³³

At the time Smith made this denial he had not seven plural wives, but fourteen documentable ones in addition to Emma!³⁴

It is clear that Joseph and others in the inner circle needed to play games with words to be able to later deny that they were denying anything.

Here, he seems to be doing it with the words "seven wives." Technically he was right when he said that he didn't have "seven wives," he had fourteen!

The above is the equivalent semantic game President Clinton played when he was caught in a lie. When asked by an attorney during the Paula Jones investigation if he is currently having an affair, he responded in the negative. Later, when it was proven that he was having an affair at the time the question was asked, he was queried by the grand jury as to why he lied. Denying that he lied, Clinton quipped, "It depends on what your definition of 'is,' is." This type of prevarication is repugnant enough in a politician; it is even more abhorrent coming from one who claims to be speaking for God.

It is apparent that while Joseph Smith may have taught truth-telling by precept, he sadly missed out in instructing by example. The legacy of deception gives reason for the charge that the LDS church had/has one persona for public consumption, and an "in house" or private persona for the membership elite. An unmistakably clear example of this duality was provided to us by Smith himself and was recorded in the journal of one of his scribes:

"October 19, 1843. Thursday.] A.M. at the Temple Office comparing books and recording deeds. At 11 W[illiam] Walker came and said President Joseph wanted me to go to Macedonia. I went immediately to see him and he requested me to go with him. I went home and got dinner and got ready. He soon came up and we started out. After we had got on the road he began to tell me that E[mma] was turned quite friendly and kind. She had been anointed and he also had been a[nointed] K[ing]. He said that it was her advice that I should keep M[argaret] at home and it was also his council. *Says he just keep her at home and brook it and if they raise trouble about it and bring you before me I will give you an awful scourging and probably cut you off from the church and then I will baptise you and set you ahead*

as good as ever."³⁵

So much for the credibility of the Prophet of the Restoration.

All this deception so that Smith could secretly practice what he felt must be publicly denied. This included public excommunication that would later be reversed by secret agreement.

Are these actions the legacy of a true Prophet of God? This and other questions will be considered in a future issue in *The Quarterly Journal*.

Endnotes:

1. See further this author's article, "Behind the Deseret Veil," *The Quarterly Journal*, Vol. 14, No. 4, pg. 4.
2. Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966, pg. 592.
3. The Articles of Faith of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as recorded in *The Pearl of Great Price*.
4. This address is posted at the Deseret News web site. It can be obtained at <http://deseretnews.com/confer/96fall/talks.htm>. Emphasis added by author.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Vol. 1, No. 1, pp. 44-45. Quotations cited from "New Mormon Studies CD-ROM, A Comprehensive Resource Library," Smith Research and Associates, 1998 Edition. (Hereafter referred to as NMS CD.)
8. Ibid. pg. 49-50, emphasis added.
9. Elder Boyd K. Packer, *BYU Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 3, pg. 262, as published on the LDS Collectors Library '97 CD-ROM, 1996, InfoBase's Inc. (Hereafter referred to as LCL CD.)
10. Ibid., pg. 262.
11. Ibid., pg. 263.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid., pg. 266.
14. *Doctrine and Covenants* 135:3a.
15. *Doctrine and Covenants* 21:4-5.
16. *Mormon Doctrine*, op. cit., pg. 396.
17. D. Michael Quinn, "LDS Church Authority and New Plural Marriages, 1890-1904," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Vol. 18, No. 1, pg. 19, cited from NMS CD, op. cit.
18. See further this author's article, "Don't Confuse Me With the Facts... 'I Have a Testimony!'" *The Quarterly Journal*, Vol. 18, No. 4, pg. 1.
19. Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1978, Vol. 5, Introduction, pg. XXIX. Also there is indisputable evidence that the revelation making known this marriage law was given as early as 1831. That Smith had a polygamy revelation this early is corroborated by several historical citations from

- prominent Mormon authors, most notably, Andrew Jensen in his *Historical Record*, Vol. 5, pg. 219, 1886 edition. Photocopy on file.
20. *Book of Commandments*. Independence, Mo.: Herald House, reprinted 1972, pg. 117, emphasis added.
 21. D. Michael Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy: Origins of Power*. Salt Lake City: Signature Books in association with Smith Research Associates, 1994, pg. 45. See also Quinn's footnote 35, pp. 301-302.
 22. *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, Vol. 1, "Doctrine and Covenants Editions," cited from LCL CD, op. cit.
 23. *Doctrine and Covenants* (1835), Section 101:4, cited from NMS CD, op. cit., emphasis added.
 24. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Church History and Modern Revelation: Being a Course of Study for the Melchizedek Priesthood Quorums for the Years, 1947-1950*. Salt Lake City: The Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1946-1950, Vol. 3, pg. 63, emphasis added.
 25. See also, Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation* (compiled by Bruce R. McConkie). Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1956, Vol. 3, pg. 195.
 26. Hyrum M. Smith and Janne M. Sjodahl, *Doctrine and Covenants Commentary* (Revised Edition). Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1954, Section 134, pg. 852, cited from LCL CD.
 27. "LDS Church Authority and New Plural Marriages," op. cit., pg. 19, emphasis added.
 28. See further, *The Mormon Hierarchy*, op. cit., pg. 645.
 29. *History of the Church*, op. cit., Vol. 6, pp. 408-409, emphasis added.
 30. Ibid., pg. 410.
 31. Ibid., emphasis added. The conventional LDS historical explanation for these denials was that those involved were technically denying only any association with the corrupt "spiritual wifery" taught and practiced by John C. Bennett at Nauvoo in 1841-42, and therefore traditional Mormon apologists have followed the argument of Joseph F. Smith in 1886: "These seeming denials themselves are specific proofs of the existence of the true coin, the counterfeit of which they denounced." See further, *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Vol. 18, No. 1, pp. 21-22, cited from NMS CD.
 32. Ibid., pp. 410-411.
 33. Ibid., pg. 411, emphasis added.
 34. See *Historical Record*, op. cit., Vol. 5, pp. 233-234.
 35. George D. Smith, Editor, *An Intimate Chronicle: The Journals of William Clayton*. Salt Lake City: Signature Books in association with Smith Research Associates, 1995, pg. 122, cited from NMS CD, emphasis added.

he is a showman *par excellence* and he has the moves to prove it.

Parsley melds the antics and craziness of the Toronto revival, the Pensacola (Brownsville) outpouring and the laughing revival of Rodney Howard-Browne. He shakes in some Word-Faith teaching and then uses Jesus as a prop to try to legitimize the whole thing. His followers seem to reason that the wilder the time, the more evidence of the work of the Holy Spirit.

Even his Charismatic colleagues acknowledge his showman traits. *Charisma*, in its cover story, called him the "electric evangelist" and described him this way:

"Part warrior, part cheerleader ... Parsley's growing congregation and nationwide audience have come to expect both sass and savvy from this entertaining preacher. ... And he's not afraid of shock-value preaching. ... Parsley appears to be a good showman."¹

In actual fact, Parsley's preaching does not have the shock value that his antics have.

THE GENESIS OF A SHOWMAN

In Parsley's book, *The Backside of Calvary*, one can find within just two adjacent pages biographical information which is contradictory. However, while this segment of the book is not meant to be a detailed biography, tellingly absent is any reference to a conversion story. Moreover, it appears that Parsley has little, if any, formal ministerial training. He dropped out of school in his second year at Circleville Bible College.

The initial biographical information found in this volume states:

"Rod Parsley began his ministry as an energetic 21-year-old in the backyard of his parent's Ohio home. The fresh, 'old-time gospel' approach of Parsley's delivery immediately attracted a hun-

gry, God-seeking audience."²

Yet, on the very next page, we read:

"Rod Parsley began his ministry as an energetic 19-year-old, in the backyard of his parent's Ohio home."³

His family did not just provide a derivation for his ministry, but as we will see, Parsley's backyard preaching efforts have grown into a lucrative, family business empire.

Parsley was an assistant to Lester Sumrall. Sumrall, who died in April 1996, claimed his anointing from Smith Wigglesworth.⁴ In 1992, Sumrall supposedly passed his "sword of anointing" to Rod Parsley and his wife.⁵ The idea of a "sword of anointing" is resurfacing as the latest Charismatic cliché. In Pensacola, at the Brownsville Assembly of God, they have actually used real swords to dramatize such a passing.

Christian Research Institute has issued a warning about Parsley, which reveals his disdain for formal Bible training:

"Caution and discernment should be exercised when listening to Rod Parsley because he considers himself to be a disciple of Lester Sumrall, who promotes Word of Faith theology ... Also, his statement on TBN's 'Praise the Lord' that 'exegesis X's out Jesus' (6/26/92) demonstrates an irresponsible perspective toward the serious study of the Bible. This type of anti-intellectualism is dangerous because it can lead to a faulty interpretation of God's Word."⁶

ALL-POWERFUL

The Hawaiian-based apologetic group, Let Us Reason Ministries, reports in its web site article, "Rod Parsley's anointing," just how powerful the rising evangelist believes himself to be:

"Speaking about how the Lord told him people are bound, 'I'm about to set you free. Addictions that you had for years are about to fall off of you. I'm telling you, you don't have to do anything

but just receive, that's it. ... this is your night, this is your night as the high priest standing in this Holy place. I'm gonna put this shofar to my mouth and the moment I blow it every demon is coming off your shoulders, outta your mind, outta your finances. When I blow it I want you to shout like you never shouted a shout of victory and freedom that you will ... are you ready?' (He blows the whistle and everyone is screaming.) There is only one high priest and that is Jesus if it's Parsley we're in deep trouble. This is a perfect example of what Jesus warned about in Mt. 24, many will say they are Christ (anointed). This certainly implies him as our deliverer."⁷

Parsley was also so bold as to tell the Church of God's General Assembly in San Antonio that "I am superior to the forces of darkness."⁸ According to Jude 9, no one, not even the archangels of heaven, have the authority to speak this way. Jude goes on to say in verse 16 that false teachers use "great swelling words."

EASIER THAN YOU THINK

It takes no special gifts or talents to work people into a frenzy. What Parsley does can be done by anyone at all. These dynamics have been known for a long time; over 60 years ago, Elmer Clark explained how it all worked:

"The ground is laid for the gift of tongues by the well-known methods of revival evangelism. Pratt finds the explanation of successful revivalism in the laws of rhythm and crowd psychology. It is not to be supposed that evangelists know much about psychological principles in the technical sense, but by a process of trial and error many have become experts. Curiosity is subtly turned into expectancy; the advance publicity usually 'plays up' previous successes, and testimony figures prominently in sermons. The successful evangelist gets *en rapport* with his audience quickly; he is always a conserva-

tive in theology and sticks to themes on which the people are agreed. He never argues, but uses repetition instead of logic."⁹

Clark goes on to describe the other elements of mass manipulation:

"The denser the throng the more successful the revival. So much the better if people are packed closely together; evangelists always crowd them into a relatively small space, even if the room is only half-filled. Just as freedom of bodily movement enhances the feeling of independence, so the loss of such freedom in a dense crowd creates a sense of helplessness, which is conducive to the breaking down of inhibitions. This is not peculiar to revivals; cheerleaders know that there would be little rooting if the prospective cheerers were scattered about in a half-filled stadium. Then in a crowd one gains a sense of added power while the feeling of responsibility is weakened — 'Only the crowd is responsible and the crowd is big and strong and need not fear. Hence the ordinary inhibitions of prudence and propriety are thrown off, and the individual may act as a primitive being who has not reached the stage of reflection.' Autosuggestion operates powerfully under such circumstances, aided and abetted by suggestion from the platform. Coe tells of an evangelist who shouted, 'See them coming! See them coming!' when nobody had started forward, a premeditated and fraudulent device of suggestion."¹⁰

Our examination of Rod Parsley will be done against the backdrop of Scripture as we look at his checkered history, his crazed histrionics and his confused hermeneutics.

ALL IN THE FAMILY

First, we will consider the checkered history of the "Raging Prophet." In 1992, *The Columbus Dispatch* newspaper reported the filing of a lawsuit by 48-year-old Naomil Endicott against Parsley and his father, claim-

ing that the father had sexually harassed her and offered her money for sex with Parsley's knowledge.¹¹ The woman is Parsley's aunt and was an employee of his World Harvest Church.

A few months after the newspaper's report, the *Columbus Monthly* magazine provided more of the details:

"But there is trouble in Parsley's paradise. A church employee and Parsley relative is suing over what she claims were repeated incidents of sexual harassment by Parsley's father. She says she sued rather than complain to church officials because they punish boat-rockers. The Parsleys deny the claims of harassment. And the apparent financial success of the church, Parsley has acknowledged, has brought cries from members for a better accounting of how donations are spent, something Parsley adamantly refuses to provide."¹²

Tracing the twists and turns, the magazine further reveals:

"World Harvest is practically a family business. Parsley is president, and his mother, Ellen, is secretary of World Harvest Church Inc. His father, James, has worked in several capacities with the church since the 1970s, mainly overseeing construction. In the lower ranks are assorted in-laws, nieces and nephews of the Parsleys, with everyone helping each other out of difficulties and spending time together off work. That family unity ruptured in September when Parsley's aunt, Naomil Endicott, filed suit in Franklin County Municipal Court claiming James Parsley, her brother-in-law, had sexually harassed her while she worked at the church. Endicott has been with World Harvest Church from the beginning. Her brother, Ed Endicott, co-founded in 1977 the Sunrise Chapel with Rod and James Parsley, and Ms. Endicott says she began attending services regularly in 1979."¹³

Endicott was asking for compensatory and punitive damages claiming

to have secretly taped James Parsley twice making sexual comments to her. Damages could, it was reported, top \$1 million.

TAG TEAM

Endicott was not the only one in court because of the Parsley father and son team:

"Endicott's suit is one of two facing Parsley and his father. In a civil suit filed in Fairfield County Common Pleas Court, a former church member named Lewis Bungard claims that in September 1991, Rod Parsley choked him and James Parsley punched him in a dispute over some painting work Bungard had done at the Parsleys' homes. (Criminal assault charges were dropped against Rod Parsley, and his father pleaded no contest to an assault charge, was found guilty of disorderly conduct and fined \$100 plus court costs.) Bungard also charges that a \$7000 donation he made to the church to build a home for unwed mothers and a senior care center was used 'for the enrichment of Rodney Parsley, his parents and others so as to achieve an opulent lifestyle for themselves.'"¹⁴

Neither of the Parsleys would grant interviews in early April 1995 when *The Columbus Dispatch* reported:

"The pastor of the World Harvest Church and his father reached an out-of-court settlement yesterday in a civil lawsuit filed in September 1992, attorneys said. The terms of the settlement were not disclosed, said Columbus attorney Clifford O. Arnebeck, who represented Lewis Frederick Bungard of Westerville."¹⁵

It seems that a lot of Parsley's money has gone, not to the Gospel, but to lawyers and disgruntled, abused parishioners.

I DESERVE YOUR MONEY!

Parsley tells his people they should believe for millions. He makes no apology for being mercenary:

"Parsley is upfront with his congregation about the church's need for money. 'I just love to talk about money,' he told them. 'I just love to talk about your money. Let me be very clear — I want your money. I deserve it. This church deserves it.'"¹⁶

Yes, lawsuits can be costly. But there is more.

LIFESTYLES OF THE RICH AND SHAMELESS

Regarding Parsley's personal holdings, the *Columbus Monthly* magazine further discloses:

"Parsley, his wife, Joni, and their two young children live in a five-bedroom house they have built next to his parents' house on a 21-acre compound in northwest Fairfield County. The compound has an electronic gate at the road to discourage uninvited visitors, and stables and a corral have been built in one corner. Rod Parsley's home is worth \$857,090, say records at the Fairfield County recorder's office. His parents' home, also new, is valued at \$831,480. Each was built with a \$200,000 mortgage taken out in 1990. ... Parsley also owns a \$500,000 jet, a seven-passenger Hawker Siddeley 125."¹⁷

Now let us consider the histrionics of the "Raging Prophet." The Scriptures state, "The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. For God is not the author of confusion but of peace as in all the churches of the saints. ... Let all things be done decently and in order" (1 Corinthians 14:32-33, 40). Thus, according to Paul, order is a mark of God. James tells us that confusion is demonic (James 3:15-16).

Parsley flaunts his lack of submission to Scripture in his wild services. Viewing a Parsley meeting is more like looking at the scene in Exodus 32 when Moses came off the mountain to find the mob reveling and the people crazed and dancing. Decorum and order mark New Testament worship, not frenzy.

YEAR OF JUBILEE

Besides the general noise, screaming and general chaotic atmosphere of Parsley's meetings, Pentecostal minister and apologist Joseph R. Chambers describes, in his web site's article, other innovations of the "Raging Prophet" that add to the confusion and mass pandemonium:

"One of Parsley's main themes during 1998 has been the idea of 'celebration within the context of a church service.' He calls this the 'Year of Jubilee' and somehow ties the idea to a supernatural harvest. During these services he and the congregation put on their party hats and pull out their party whistles and hoop and holler just like they were at a carnival. The House of God becomes just as vile as a pagan temple celebrating the rites of fertility. Jesus spoke to the Jewish leaders of His day and soundly rebuked them for making the House of God a den of thieves. He would do the same today to those defilers of the House of God. I can envision Him saying, 'You have made the House of God a playhouse of entertainment and folly.' It is blasphemous. ... In listening to different messages and reading material from Rod Parsley, there is a constant sense of empty, noisy hype and fleshly manipulation. Everything is geared to creating an altered, highly emotional atmosphere. Individuals that think for themselves and reason from the Scripture would be totally out of place. The people are told when to shout and when to listen."¹⁸

Party hats and party whistles? Parsley has missed entirely the biblical setting of the event. The Year of Jubilee was a decidedly *Jewish* practice found in Leviticus 25 and 27. It had to do with the very complicated legal instructions for the 50th year and the Israelites' relationship to the land, debt and slaves. It has no parallel in the New Testament and only with a little imagination could we stretch it to prefigure the Millennial or eternal

scene.¹⁹ The jubilee teaching of Parsley, that we can believe and shout our way out of debt, is a scam and a sham, and does insult to the Word of God.

However, distorting God's Word does not stop there as the "Raging Prophet" employs a repertoire of confusing hermeneutics. Parsley is a Word-Faith teacher. The basic premise of the Word-Faith idea is that faith is a force that we can use in our speaking, to get what we want. We can and should use creative words just like God did, (as He created the world from nothing by simply speaking it into existence). It is a neo-gnostic and *Star Wars* mentality.

In typical Word-Faith fashion Parsley teaches:

"In the beginning, He *spoke the Word*, and out of the nothingness of space, there was suddenly — Life! Using just His *Word*, God invented the sun, the moon, and endless galaxies of stars. ... If the Lord and His *Word* never change, and if He created life with a spoken thought, then He is still able to speak into existence whatever you need today. Healing is not hard. It is as simple and easy as saying, 'I believe your *Word*, Lord. Now speak. Create new life in me.'"²⁰

GET WHATEVER YOU WANT

Note Parsley's view, "It is as simple and easy as saying... ." He will go on to say we can cause the impossible to happen everyday.

The power that is attributed to God is then attributed to us. Our major reason for reading the Bible, Parsley says, is so that we can speak Bible phrases and bring blessings in existence:

"Learning the Godly guarantees which deal with your situation and rehearsing them over in your spirit will help you, like Peter, to possess the kind of faith that makes the impossible an everyday occurrence. ... keep His *Words* of faith and healing always before you."²¹

Faith is not a force but is a word

meaning trust. The objects of our trust are to be God and His Word. Paul, in Romans 10:17, clearly speaks of the object of our faith and trust and it is God's Word. Believing what God has spoken and finding comfort in His promises is a far cry from taking what God has spoken and thinking we can create our own reality and get anything we want by just speaking it.

Henry Thiessen explains the components of biblical faith:

“(1) The Intellectual Element. This element includes belief in the revelation of God in nature and in the historical facts of Scripture, and the doctrines taught therein as to man's sinfulness, the redemption provided in Christ, the conditions to salvation and to all the blessings promised to God's children. ... (2) The Emotional Element ... We may define the emotional element of faith as the awakening of the soul to its personal needs and to the personal applicability of the redemption provided in Christ, together with an immediate assent to these truths. ... (3) The Voluntary Element. This element of faith is the logical outgrowth of the intellectual and the emotional. If a man accepts the revelation of God and His salvation as true and comes to assent to it as applicable to himself personally, he should logically go on to appropriate it to himself.”²²

To make faith mere conviction or to have faith be conviction without facts is to align with the likes of liberal rationalist Rudolph Bultmann.²³ Parsley's "faith" is not true biblical faith. It is whistling in the dark.

We are told that Scriptures can speak comfort to us (Romans 15:4) and are to reprove, rebuke, correct and instruct us (2 Timothy 3:15-17), as we respond in faith and obedience to it but nowhere in the Bible are we told that if we will just speak Scripture out we can get what we want or create our own reality. We find in Genesis 1 that God *finished* creating and rested on the seventh day from all His labors. Creation, in the strict sense, is not going on now.

Remember too, that we are not little creators. The distinction between the Creator and what is created is sharp and clear in the Bible. Adam's dominion over the Earth had to do with his ability and power to subdue animals and nature — not create. The Fall has limited our capacity to subdue as is evident in the number of deadly diseases and natural disasters that cripple us. But there is even a darker side to this.

The frightening aspect to all this is how close the Word-Faith definition of faith comes to the *credo of raw paganism*. Self-confessed killer, drug addict and would-be vampire Rod Ferrell, who was obviously delusional from drugs and occult reading, articulated his occultic belief and it parallels the illusions of the Word-Faith commitment.

Ferrell pontificated ideas that would be acceptable in any Word-Faith church when he said:

“You just have to believe it ... Anything you want to have happen, will happen, ... You just have to want it hard enough.”²⁴

The Word-Faith view is that faith as a force — that is, words being powerful missiles of that force — is more in line with an occultic world view than a biblical one.

CONQUER THE WORLD

Parsley is also a dominionist. This too, grows out of the Word-Faith error. Dominionism teaches that powerful anointed men will bring in all the benefits (healings and miracles) of the millennium, creating a Utopia to which Christ will return. Somehow they will reverse the consequences of the Fall and totally subdue disease and the hard circumstances of life.

This teaching is also identified as “Manifest Sons of God” doctrine. It confuses glorification by intermingling it into the sanctification process. One cannot take glorification and arbitrarily impose it on the sanctification process. It is a grave and fundamental error that produces chaos. Sanctification is growth while glorification is completion or perfection, which comes in resurrection and the

eternal state (Romans 8). Parsley no longer wants “a mansion over the hilltop,” he wants it here and now.

Parsley derives the dominion teaching not from Scripture but from a “prophecy” of the late evangelist-healer Tommy Hicks (1909-1973). Hicks held mass meetings in Argentina in the mid-1950s and was a friend of Juan Peron.²⁵ What should be alarming to any Christian is that Hicks seemed to be open to occultic phenomenon.

Hicks' so-called prophecy²⁶ referred to by Parsley is wild imaginings of science fiction. He claims to have seen in a vision on July 25, 1961, that a great anointed miracle army was then about to burst on the scene, healing multitudes and invulnerable to bullets and death. This unstoppable army would be miraculously transported from place to place. Hicks must have known about the occult phenomenon called astral projection.

Will man ever be invulnerable to death? According to 1 Corinthians 15, death will not be finally destroyed until Jesus comes. Here, almost 40 years later, Hicks' imminent army has not shown up.

In the May 28, 1999, installment of his daily program (filmed in a replica of the Upper Room in Jerusalem, Israel), Parsley predicted a new “wave” coming that would empty out hospitals and anoint seemingly ordinary believers. The new wave or as it is sometime called, “the new thing,” has been touted for over 50 years (over a decade longer than Parsley has been living) and goes back to the heretical Latter Rain Movement of the late 1940s,²⁷ which, by the way, was condemned by the Assemblies of God until recently.

On the program, Parsley appealed to the Hicks “prophecy” and added the twist that we are not to look to the Book of Acts, but to a far greater, future day of miracles. Parsley's claim is that there is an end-time Church coming greater than the Church of the Apostles, which will routinely heal the sick and raise the dead.

Telling people to turn away from the Bible, the Book of Acts and the

former Apostles and Prophets and to believe men's "prophecies" as Parsley does, is a major slide to error and deception. After all, if it is not in the Bible, how do we know it's true? End-time restorationism is a chimera and a myth.

Occult researcher Kurt Koch names Tommy Hicks as dealing in "psychic shock effects" and found that his claimed healings did not last.²⁸ Though Koch was open to the possibility of miraculous healing, he was convinced that men such as Hicks did not measure up and moved more in the realm of the psychic and suggestive.²⁹

Dominionism, with its new breed of prophets, is a convoluted postmillennial scheme that makes man the Messiah and focal point. Historically, postmillennialism taught that the universal spread of the Gospel along with Christian preaching and teaching would be the moral dynamic of bringing in the kingdom.³⁰ Historical post-millennialism is Word-centered and Gospel-centered, not man-centered. Dominionism is prideful and humanistic, centering on self-appointed "super prophets and super apostles" who bring in the Kingdom. It totally confuses Christ and the Church.

Albert James Dager, of the apologetic ministry Media Spotlight, says Dominion teaching is predicated on three basic beliefs:

"1) Satan usurped man's dominion over the earth through the temptation of Adam and Eve; 2) The Church is God's instrument to take dominion back from Satan; 3) Jesus cannot or will not return until the Church has taken dominion by gaining control of the earth's governmental and social institutions."³¹

Michael Moriarty further explains Dominionism and Parsley's connection:

"In any event, the new charismatics continue to stress the need for the church to exercise dominion over society. Power-packed conferences like Dominion '90 (July 29-Aug. 3, 1990), hosted by

Pastor Rod Parsley and World Harvest Church in Columbus, Ohio, serve to raise the consciousness of the church to the responsibility to take dominion over society. Some charismatics claim that 'God told them' that Jesus will return in our generation 'if' the church becomes more responsible in its dominion pursuit."³²

Since it will take the power and the mighty coming of Jesus to establish the Kingdom, dominionism is a figment of man's imagination though a lucrative one. It's a tired old hat that is preached *ad infinitum* by the likes of other Pentecostal superstars as well, including Benny Hinn, Kenneth Hagin and Rodney Howard-Browne. The "day of creative miracles" or "the day of dominion" is always just on the horizon, but it never seems to arrive. It is, in part, the bait which keeps the devotees of these Charismatic leaders perpetually nipping at their hooks.³³

So many of the "healers" have died of major illnesses (and the living ones have sicknesses) that their teachings are a joke to those who know better. A genuine and thorough reading of the Book of Revelation leaves no doubt that it is the "King of Kings and Lord of Lords" who will bring in the perfect and final Kingdom (Revelation 19:11-20:5). Man cannot miraculously recreate the earth and bring in heaven.

HOLY RAGS: THE NEW RELICS

Another staple of the Parsley ministry is the use of prayer cloths. Because this gimmick has become so widespread, Inner-City Christian Discernment Ministry has begun to catalog and collect prayer cloths from different healing ministries. Just the names associated with this outlandish fraud ought to make one leery: Robert Tilton, Marilyn Hickey, Peter Popoff, Rod Parsley, Jim Whittington and others. ICCDM describes Parsley's use of the relic:

"Rod Parsley is a fast rising star in Pentecostal/charismatic circles. ... sent right to my home is a glossy packet stating 'Release

the anointing ... Receive Your Miracle.' Lo-and-behold enclosed is a MIRACLE PRAYER CLOTH and I am supposed to: (1) **RECEIVE** this prayer cloth as your point of contact (2) **PLACE** this prayer cloth in the envelope provided and (3) **BELIEVE** God to receive YOUR miracle ... I am to do these 3 things and RUSH my MIRACLE PRAYER CLOTH back to Pastor Rod (hopefully with a donation) and wait for my miracle to manifest. 'As you send me your prayer cloth and your most generous gift toward our Breakthrough ministry, I will send you my 3-tape audio cassette series, "Releasing the Anointing ... Your Breakthrough to Victory."' **This is nothing but a shameless con to transfer dollars from the pockets of God's people who in many cases have a genuine need but lack biblical understanding and thus fall prey to ministers of this type.**³⁴

DOING THE TWIST

Parsley may make a weak appeal to Acts 19:12 but only serious Scripture twisting can make it fit. Verse 11 specifically says that this was unusual (as was the one-time event of touching the hem of Christ's garment or creating loaves and fishes). Paul did not send out cloths to have people send them back for a corporate anointing as described in the literature of Parsley. This unusual or extraordinary miracle was just that, a very uncommon occurrence.

Stressing the uniqueness of the Acts 19 event, Albert Barnes says:

"*Special miracles.* Miracles that were remarkable; that were not common, or that were very unusual (*ou tas tuchousas*.) This expression is classic Greek."³⁵

To further underscore the dramatic one-time nature of Acts 19:11-12, Thomas Edgar points out:

"The word for miracles (*dunamis*) occurs ten times and does not occur after Acts 19:11. ... The frequency of miracle-working seems to have been on a decline

during the lifetime of the apostles.”³⁶

Steve Febbraro, in an Internet article entitled “Rod Parsley and Acts 19 — ‘Send In The Cloths,’” concludes:

“Is the practice of sending prayer cloths biblical? No! Is the practice of praying over prayer cloths biblical? No! Does Acts 19, teach anything of a ‘corporate anointing?’ No! Instead of validating Parsley’s prayer cloth dictum, Acts 19 disproves his teaching on every point. This particular error is so glaring that anyone who takes the time to read Acts 19 will discover these errors for themselves. Folks, keep your cloths at home. Use them to dust furniture. Or if you have already sent a cloth in, maybe the next one you decide to send in should be used to dust off your Bible instead.”³⁷

Sir Robert Anderson so vividly reminds us:

“I may add that among Christians it is pestilently evil to make the exceptional experience of some the rule of faith for all. The Word of God is our guide, and not the experience of fellow-Christians; and when this is ignored the practical consequences are disastrous. The annals of ‘faith healing,’ as it is called, are rich in cases of mimetic or hysterical disease, but about the spiritual wreckage due to failures innumerable they are silent.”³⁸

In the popular film trilogy, *Back to the Future*, lead character Marty McFly goes back in time. The Church is going back in time to the Dark Ages in following the antics of Parsley and others. Philip Schaff recounts that in Europe, circulated pieces of linen were considered holy and miraculous because they had come into contact with the dead bodies of saints.³⁹ These relics and holy rags are no better than Parsley’s “prayer cloths” supposedly made holy by his touch and the corporate anointing of others. It is superstitious nonsense.

KILLING THE DEVIL?

Another misleading and dangerous

practice that Parsley promotes is the 40-day fast. He claims that the 40-day fast is going to become commonplace in the life of a believer. Parsley claims to have led 6000 people in a 40-day fast with the following benefits:

“... you kill Beelzebub, you kill the fly father, the cycle of the birthing process of the fly is forty days. That’s the reason stuff you got rid of comes back ... You didn’t kill the larvae. But God said you fast 40 days. When you spray a field, you spray it for 40 days. It not only kills the flies but the ones they were gonna give birth to.”⁴⁰

So here we have the teaching that we can kill Beelzebub (Satan) and his demon offspring (as if Satan gave birth to demons). Since Parsley and a cast of 6000 have accomplished such a pretentious effort, are not Satan and his offspring annihilated? Totally gone? Why would anyone else have to fast?

First of all, spirits cannot be killed (Luke 20:36). Secondly, the final end of Satan is recorded for us in the Book of Revelation. It will be accomplished by our all-powerful Savior Jesus Christ. The weapons of our warfare are described in Ephesians 6 and a 40-day fast is not there. In spite of Parsley’s rantings, Satan’s demons cannot be killed by believers.

DANGER AHEAD

The 40-day fast is a dangerous practice promoted in the *Dake Annotated Study Bible* (and by aberrant groups such as the End-Time Handmaidens). In a previous edition of *The Quarterly Journal*, PFO examined the numerous heresies promoted by the controversial *Dake Annotated Study Bible*. We noted that Finis Dake believed and taught that the prolonged fasts expelled all toxic poisons from the body and left the breath as sweet as a baby’s. We also noted that Jews fasted once a week with documentation that the Jewish fast was simply cutting down on amounts of food and was never understood to be total.⁴¹ Further, there were only five fasts commanded in the Old Testament. Colossians would militate against

required fasting.

Forty days of fasting was out of the ordinary, not normative. It was miraculous, not routine. Brad Young touches on the facts:

“Like Moses and Elijah, who fasted for forty days, Jesus abstains from both food and water, relying on divine sustenance during this period. ... Thus it was considered miraculous for someone to go without food and water for forty days. Only God could sustain Jesus for such a fast.”⁴²

In allowing this written record of the event, Jesus was showing His Jewish audience that He was at least on a par with the greatest of their Prophets. What would it show if everyone could do it? Apparently Jesus did this only once that we know.

SIN SICK BLOOD

Parsley also has a strange view of sin, human blood and the blood of Christ. Parsley teaches that sin is in the physical blood. He says of Adam: “That single exposure to Satan was all that was needed to transmit the communicable disease of sin into the bloodline of humanity.”⁴³

The Scriptures are silent as to exactly where sin and the sin nature is located. Christ spoke of sin coming out of “the heart of man” and meant man’s innermost being (Matthew 15:18-20). He did not say sin is in the blood. It is unwise to speak where Scripture is silent. Out of this first error Parsley builds his second error regarding sin in the blood of Jesus.

JESUS — SINNER OR SINLESS?

Parsley teaches that Jesus was “injected” with sin and that His blood once tainted by sin became immunized and then capable of giving us salvation and healing. At the outset he mistakes identification for identity.

As he puts it:

“The nails that pounded into Christ’s hands and feet that day ‘injected’ Him with every blatant

iniquity, every subtle sin, every vile act that mankind had ever or would ever commit."⁴⁴

The Bible never hints in any way that Christ's blood changed in composition. It is just called blood throughout the Scriptures. Peter called it "precious blood" (1 Peter 1:19) and Paul calls it God's own blood (Acts 20:28). In the resurrection it appears that the glorified body did not depend on a blood supply (Luke 24:39). That Christ *shed* His blood is the all important factor.

Yet Parsley says:

"Hanging from those nails, Jesus was also deliberately infected with all manner of sickness and sin, so to bring about salvation and healing, through His divine, immunized blood."⁴⁵

Parsley comes perilously close to saying Jesus became a sinner.

Though Parsley does not mention 2 Corinthians 5:21, he may be like other Word-Faith proponents confusing its meaning. Paul says: "For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us that we might be the righteousness of God."

How could Jesus "be sin for us"? This has always been understood by all major commentators and commentators to relate to the sin offering of the Old Testament. It means that Jesus became a sin offering for us, not that He had to become inherently sinful or carry sin in His blood. Nothing intrinsically changed in the sacrificial lamb. Isaiah 53:5 tells us that the chastisement of our peace was "upon" Him not "in" Him. Isaiah 53:6 says the Lord laid our iniquity "on" Him, not "in" Him. Blood that becomes infected with everyone's sin and disease and then is somehow immunized is a figment of Parsley's imagination.

J. R. Dummelow shares the sense of 2 Corinthians 5:21:

"**Made him to be sin for us**] Christ had to bear not the guilt, but the burden of sin. He bore its penalty not as a punishment, but as the innocent suffers for the guilty; feeling all its shame and

horror, but free from the sense of guilt and degradation. Hence St. Paul says not, 'He hath made Him to be a sinner' but 'He hath made Him to be sin.'"⁴⁶

Reminding us that 2 Corinthians also says, "He knew no sin," Albert Barnes notes:

"Literally it is, 'he has made him sin, or a sin offering,' ... Nor (2) can it mean that he was a *sinner*, for it is said in immediate connection that he 'knew no sin' and it is everywhere said he was holy, harmless, undefiled. ... if the declaration that he was made 'sin' (*hamartian*) does not mean that he was sin itself, or a sinner, or guilty, then it must mean that he was a *sin-offering* — an offering or a sacrifice for sin; and this is the interpretation which is now generally adopted by expositors."⁴⁷

Adam Clarke gets into the linguistics of 2 Corinthians 5:21:

"...it signifies a 'sin offering,' or 'sacrifice for sin,' and answers to the *chattaah* and *chattath* of the Hebrew text; which signifies both 'sin' and 'sin offering' in a great variety of places in the Pentateuch. The Septuagint translate the Hebrew word by *hamartia* in ninety-four places in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers, where a 'sin offering' is meant; and where our version translates the word, not 'sin,' but an 'offering for sin.' Had our translators attended to their own method of translating the word in other places where it means the same as here, they would not have given this false view of a passage which has been made the foundation of a most blasphemous doctrine; viz., that our sins were imputed to Christ, and that He was a proper Object of the indignation of divine justice, because He was blackened with imputed sin; and some have proceeded so far in this blasphemous career as to say that Christ may be considered as the greatest of sinners, because all the sins of mankind, or of the elect, as they say, were imputed

to Him, and reckoned as His own. Thus they have confounded sin with the punishment due to sin."⁴⁸

Jesus did not have to have His blood infected or immunized. All He had to do was *shed* it. Jesus Himself said: "This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is *shed* for you" (Luke 22:20).

Leon Morris rightly observes:

"When the evidence is surveyed as a whole, there can be no reasonable doubt. Blood points not to life set free, but to life given up in death."⁴⁹

HEALING ON DEMAND?

To say that Jesus had to suffer all our diseases on the cross is an old error referred to as healing in the atonement. While healing *is* in the atonement in the *ultimate* sense (Romans 8 and Revelation 21), the full benefits of glorified, deathless bodies will only be realized in heaven. We owe everything (all spiritual and physical blessings) to the atonement of Jesus but we do not receive all of those blessings right now. Scripture makes that abundantly clear.

Parsley has evidence in his own home that his teaching on healing is off-base — *his son Austin has been diagnosed "with Asberger Syndrome, a high-functioning form of autism."*⁵⁰ God has provided evidence of Parsley's own errors but for whatever reason he refuses to see it. It is sad that Parsley can so compartmentalize that he lays teaching on his followers but has a different reality at home. Parsley shared in a sermon televised last June 4 that his son was diagnosed at the Cleveland Clinic and reports while he is making improvement "we're not all the way out of the woods but we're on our way."

Added to that is the fact that as much as Parsley rants about God's Kingdom come in our body, he still has a deaf section and a signer in his church. As kindly as we can, we say, *physician heal thyself*.

Richard Mayhue, Dean of Master's Seminary in Sun Valley, California, dissects the false teaching of healing in the atonement (that is, that healing

can be claimed now just as forgiveness of sins is claimed) in his book *The Healing Promise*.

Mayhue carefully exegetes the Scriptures, especially Isaiah 53, to give us his views:

“Both Leviticus and Hebrews demonstrate that in God’s mind the atonement dealt primarily with sin, not sickness. It had everything to do with our sin problem and the redemption needed to remove sin so that we might stand eternally before a holy God. Christ’s atonement paid the due penalty for sin, which involved God’s wrath being poured out upon Jesus Christ. Clearly the major emphasis of Isaiah 53 centers on spiritual salvation.”⁵¹

Then Mayhue unpacks the word “iniquity”:

“Note that the word ‘iniquity’ is used four times in Isaiah 53 and identifies the passage’s major emphasis. In 53:5, Christ was crushed for our iniquities. According to 53:6, the Lord ‘has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him.’ He will bear our iniquities (53:11), and He Himself bore the sins of many (53:12; cf. Hebrews 9:28). *The primary thrust of Isaiah 53 is on the spiritual and the eternal effects of sin, not on its physical and immediate effects upon the body.*”⁵²

Further Mayhue shows:

“We could look at such godly examples as Abraham, Isaac, Daniel, Paul and Timothy to show that God’s greatest saints endured sicknesses and also eventually died. Therefore we can biblically conclude that while there is a related aspect of physical healing in the atonement, it won’t be applied until *after* death and the redemption of our bodies by resurrection (Romans 8:23).”⁵³

Mayhue then presents this summary:

“Isaiah 53 refers to the atonement and its redemptive value,

not its therapeutic effect in a physical sense. Four lines of evidence support this conclusion: 1. The idea of the atonement in Leviticus and Hebrews clearly applies to salvation. 2. The context of Isaiah 53 focuses primarily on the atonement’s provision for sin. 3. The theological context of Christ’s death and salvation centers on sin. 4. Matthew, Peter and the Ethiopian eunuch understood Isaiah 53 in reference to sin. All the scriptural evidence affirms that Isaiah 53 deals with the spiritual being of man. Its major emphasis is on sin, not sickness. It focuses on the moral cause of sickness, which is sin, and not the immediate removal of one of sin’s results — sickness.”⁵⁴

When it is all said and done, Parsley preaches a different Gospel. Paul clearly defines the Gospel in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4. Paul says in verse 1: “I declare to you the Gospel.” In declaring the Gospel, Paul then defines it “that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.” The objective side of the Gospel is all that Jesus purchased for us in His death and resurrection. The experimental side of the Gospel is that when we trust in Christ and Christ alone, all the eternal merits of Christ — sins forgiven, a place in God’s family, and an ultimate resurrection become ours.

Parsley, in his book, *Renamed and Redeemed*, asserts: “JESUS IS NOT SICK — I DON’T HAVE TO BE SICK.”⁵⁵ Yes, but Jesus is God — God immortal and glorified. I am not God — I am not immortal or glorified — yet. And I will never be God.

GOSPEL OF GOLD AND GREED

Parsley’s “gospel” is the gospel of prosperity. He claims that the Gospel is our ability to work miracles and be rich. It is a distortion of the worst kind. His “good news” is that the poor can be wealthy.

In *God’s Answer to Insufficient Funds*, Parsley affirms his false gospel:

“For you to sit in physical bondage is to deny the power of the gospel. ... Most people would have no trouble shouting whatsoever if I said, ‘To remain in the bondage of sin and death is to deny the power of the gospel.’ But if I said ‘What about healing for your body?’ the amens would not be quite so loud. If I said the same thing about poverty and financial bondage, it would get as quiet as a tomb. If I said that for you to live from paycheck to paycheck is to deny the power of the gospel, many of you would get angry. In Luke 4:18 ... Notice there was an anointing to preach good news to the poor. A lot of people don’t like to look at that because good news to a poor man is that he doesn’t have to be poor anymore. We have multitudes saved, delivered and filled with the Holy Ghost, and many are healed, yet over 90% of the church of Jesus Christ are living in absolute financial bondage. All the while, Jesus is saying, ‘I’ve been anointed to preach the good news to the poor.’ ... You have held back the flow. You have denied the perpetual propulsion of power that could deliver you from not only sin and sickness but from the horrible stench of poverty.”⁵⁶

So the Gospel in Parsley’s view is telling the poor man “he doesn’t have to be poor anymore.” Poverty is a stench. He is confusing gold with God. Jesus never said there was anything sinful about being poor. In fact, He warned that being rich may throw one into idolatry: “No man can serve two masters. ... you cannot serve God and mammon” (Matthew 6:24; Luke 16:13). We may seek to relieve poverty and improve our lot but Paul reminded us of the dangers and snares that accompany riches (1 Timothy 6:9-10).

Parsley teaches that the tithe and offering are “seed.” If we sow our seed, we can expect a huge financial return. In fact, we will not only

double and triple our money, we will get it back one hundred times:

"People have said that it's selfish to ask God to give a hundredfold return on the seeds sown in the financial realm. No it's selfish *not* to expect the hundredfold return. ... The anointing is on the seed. If you will divest, God will invest."⁵⁷

God is recast as almost a Wall Street broker.

This is a shocking example of blatant promotion of greed. Our prayer ought to be:

"Remove falsehood and lies far from me; Give me neither poverty nor riches — Feed me with the food allotted to me; Lest I be full and deny you, And say, 'who is the Lord?' Or lest I be poor and steal, and profane the name of my God" (Proverbs 30:8-9).

Did Jesus promise Paul material riches and health? In Acts 9:16, Jesus says: "I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake." Paul reminds us that we are "blessed with every *spiritual* blessing in the heavenly places in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3).

MISSING THE POINT

Parsley further misleads by improperly defining words. He claims that: "The Greek word translated salvation here [Romans 1:16] is the word 'sozo'. It means 'complete deliverance'.⁵⁸ The word salvation is actually the Greek word *soteria*.⁵⁹ *Soza* is translated "save" or to save, and like *soteria* can mean a number of different things depending on the context. It can mean deliverance from danger but William E. Vine lays out the primary usages of *soza*:

"(a) of material and temporal deliverance from danger, suffering, etc., ... (b) of the spiritual and eternal salvation granted immediately by God to those who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, ... (c) of the present experiences of God's power to deliver from the bondage of sin, ... (d) of the future deliverance of believers at

the Second Coming of Christ for His saints, ... (e) of the deliverance of the nation of Israel at the Second Advent of Christ, ... (f) inclusively for all the blessings bestowed by God on men in Christ."⁶⁰

After reading of the richness and fullness that Vine unfolds, we can see that Parsley has short-changed us to try to get across his limited view to bolster his false gospel of prosperity and healing on demand.

Parsley can scream, shout, stomp, prance, obfuscate and mislead but it is all noise and no substance. It is froth without real content which helps to pump money into his empire.

By contrast, Jesus was gentle and would not cry out nor lift His voice in the streets (Matthew 12:19-20). Jesus, as well, was *truth*. No one could be more unlike Jesus in his raging, his legal settlements, his false teaching, his lavish lifestyle and his false gospel than Rod Parsley.

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50. "The Electric Evangelist," op. cit., pg. 48.

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52. *Ibid.*, (emphasis in original).

53. *Ibid.*, pg. 120, (emphasis in original).

54. *Ibid.*, pp. 124-125.

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57. *Ibid.*, pp. 56-57, (emphasis in original).

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GOD'S SUPERSTARS

(continued from page 2)

Sadly, the Church has lost its will to discern. We accept, without a moment's hesitation, nearly every new fad or craze and become alarmed only by the hoaxes we should be ignoring. We hastily swallow the "signs and wonders" diet fed by the spiritual elite. We're all too eager to trust their extravagant (and even bizarre) declarations. There's no need to check out their claims — after all, they are the champions of the faith who personally dialogue with God Himself. Why would they lie to us?

While the caller classified Hinn and other notable Charismatic favorites as "superstars," others depict them similarly with designations of equal or greater stature. For example, Charismatic biographer Roberts Liardon dignifies many bygone divine healers and miracle workers into a prestigious class known as "God's Generals."

Liardon's roster is filled with scandalous and unsavory personalities — much like the modern-day healing evangelists. His list includes William Branham, Smith Wigglesworth, Kathryn Kuhlman, Aimee Semple McPherson, Charles Parham, A.A. Allen and several others. Liardon claims his research into the lives of these men and women was no less than a divine appointment. "Roberts Liardon was commissioned by the Lord Jesus Christ to study the lives of God's great 'generals,'" as boasted in his personal resume found on the series' back cover.

But has a new beginning come to the Church and has the world been affected by the lives and ministry of these "extraordinary men and women" as it is so boldly claimed? Robert Liichow, himself a former participant in hyper-Charismatic churches for 15 years, challenges such assertions.

On his Inter-City Christian Discernment Ministry's web site (<http://www.discernment.org>) he painfully points out that for all the hoopla generated by past and present

Charismatic superstars, "It's not working for them either!" In Liichow's insightful article, he reveals "the saddest 'cut' of all is the FACT that the majority of what the Word of Faith/Prophetic Movement charismaniacs teach does not even work in their own sorry lives."

Liichow catalogs the untimely deaths of prominent Charismatics and/or Pentecostals such as Word-Faith publisher Doyle "Buddy" Harrison (son-in-law to Kenneth Hagin), popular author Jamie Buckingham, Vineyard leader John Wimber and his son Chris, and Hobart Freeman. With the exception of Freeman, all these healing vanguards sought the counsel and treatment of medical professionals. This was in despite of all their "signs and wonders" and "positive confession" theology. The legacy of most of Liardon's erstwhile "generals" fares no better.

Liichow further outlines the faith-denying, yet life-saving medical treatment received by other celebrated leaders including Joyce Meyer (breast cancer), R.W. Schambach (heart bypass), Mack Timberlake (throat cancer) and others. Yet the confusion does not stop with these superstars not being able to practice what they preach. A life with high standards of morality and distinct biblical sanctification is in short supply in these superstars when one considers the divorces, lawbreaking and unabashed hustling of donations.

Moreover, while many lead lifestyles that equal or rival those of Hollywood or sport celebrities (like living in palatial mansions, being chauffeured in a limousine, jet-setting around the world and being worshiped by a myriad of fans), such prestige is certainly no indication of the status of "God's superstar." To think otherwise is nothing less than an illusion.

Stature with God is not based upon fame, a following, financial wealth, by way of best-selling books and tapes or in building a massive ministry. As with worldly celebrities, success is fleeting and temporary. Even for "Christian" superstars, fame is equally elusive. On the horizon, there will always be some innovative player who will eclipse one or more of the current superstars

with his (or her) new and improved “signs and wonders,” “creative miracles,” “anointing” or “last days revival” from God.

Whom do I view as the Christian “superstars?” Perhaps, if you’re looking for names associated with well-known ministries, I most likely would be able to compete name for name, pitting those whom I view as prominent, yet credible, ministers of the Gospel with those of dubious, yet illustrious, standing. However, this is not a child’s card game of “war” where my ten beats your eight or your ace beats my king. How then did I respond to the caller?

“God’s superstars,” if there were such a designation, would be the local pastor who works long, hard and diligently (as Scripture commands) in an effort to rightly divide the Word of Truth (2 Timothy 2:15). He does so to feed and protect the flock of God that has been entrusted to his care. He desires to see them mature in their faith and to grow in the process of biblical sanctification. He’s never the one who ensnares his people with heretofore unknown revelation or esoteric insights of Scripture — and then labels “immature” those who would question such teaching.

He’s the one who labors overtime to pray for and work with the couple whose marriage has gone sour. Realizing the divine origin and lifetime commitment of marriage, he counsels the couple to biblically confront and solve each problem. And then rejoices as God, through His Word, wonderfully guides the couple, to establish (or reestablish) discipline and patterns which cultivate and nurture love. He’s never the one who offers a quick fix to a marriage in trouble by “binding the spirit of divorce in the name of Jesus” or holds his hands to a television camera as a “point of contact” and offers a glib prayer.

He’s the one who consoles the parents whose son or daughter has just been shot to death by a deranged schoolmate. As they struggle with the pain and grief of such a senseless tragedy, crying to God for answers, he helps the couple face the paralyzing feelings of loss. He, through God’s Word and grace, provides solace to an otherwise crippling circumstance. He’s never the one who uses the tragedy to employ it as a “photo-opportunity” or other media conduit to bring even more prominence to his “ministry.”

Nor is he the one who shipwrecks the faith of the young couple who bring their severely brain damaged child to his jam-packed healing service. After he titillates the multitudes for hours and brazenly promises, “Everyone can be healed tonight!” he retreats back to his excessively plush hotel suite as the couple agonizingly leaves the crusade with their child in the same helpless condition.

Or just maybe “God’s superstar” is that saintly mother or grandmother who has persistently and steadfastly prayed for that lost family member, friend or neighbor and years later watches God answer those prayers as the

lost soul comes to faith in Christ. Perhaps she is the one who has, for decades, served God and His Church faithfully by employing the gifts and talents which He has entrusted to her (Ephesians 2:10, 1 Peter 4:10). She is never the one who flaunts her gifts or exercises them in order to draw attention to herself to establish an aura of spiritual elitism or superiority.

In fact, when you find one of “God’s superstars,” you’ll be hard-pressed to bestow just such a designation on him or her. For another crucial characteristic exhibited by “God’s superstars” will be their imitating the humility of Jesus Christ:

“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others” (Philippians 2:3-4).

—MKG

NEWS UPDATES

(continued from page 3)

distributing its books and magazines.

The court’s current ruling and any forthcoming decision, affects only Watchtower activity in Moscow. However, observers from other religious groups fear that a final ruling against the Watchtower could affect their missionary efforts as well. It could also prompt other Russian cities to follow the lead of the Moscow court and impose similar restrictions.

—MKG

O’HAIR MYSTERY THICKENS

Officials are for the first time saying that noted atheist Madilyn Murray O’Hair is dead. O’Hair vanished in August 1995 from her home in Austin, Texas, along with her son Jon Garth Murray, and granddaughter Robin Murray — whom she had adopted. Also missing was \$500,000 in gold coins. There is suspicion that the three were murdered by several men, including David Waters, O’Hair’s former office manager, in an effort to steal more than a half million dollars from an organization headed by O’Hair.

The Internal Revenue Service announced its findings based upon several pieces of circumstantial evidence and from information from confidential sources. Officials believe the bodies of O’Hair and her two family members were placed in barrels and buried on a ranch near San Antonio. However, two searches of the property by Federal Bureau of Investigation agents

yielded neither the barrels nor the remains. Waters has not been formally charged with murder in connection with the disappearances.

Waters, a murder convict, is on probation for embezzling over \$50,000 from O'Hair's atheist organizations for which he worked in 1993 and 1994. The IRS also named Danny Fry in the conspiracy. Fry's dismembered body was found in Texas two days after the O'Hair family's disappearance.

A third man, Gary Karr, a former cellmate of Waters, who is currently in a Detroit prison, is said to have confessed to his participation in the murders of O'Hair and her family. However, a news article in the *Dallas Observer* disputes that claim. "Karr's lawyer attacked this and other FBI statements about Karr implicating himself in four Texas homicides as exaggerations of the record," the Dallas newspaper reported. A fourth person also was named, but his suspected involvement in the murders was not detailed.

Waters, in an affidavit, also challenges the conclusions of the government authorities. "One fact that seems to have gotten lost in all this is that the O'Hairs have been sighted dozens of times since 1995. Considering the number of sightings involved and the odds against them all being cases of mistaken identity, I think it is more likely that the O'Hairs are alive and well and enjoying this immensely," Waters wrote in his declaration.

—MKG

TBN DENIED MIAMI TV STATION LICENSE

A ruling last spring by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) was a moral setback for Paul Crouch and his Trinity Broadcasting Network (TBN). According to an Evangelical News report, "the FCC found that TBN attempted to circumvent federal limits on TV station ownership by creating a sham minority-controlled company to hold the license."

The debate concerning WHFT, Channel 45, in Miami, Fla., had been raging for a number of years. In August 1994, a legal document before the FCC charged that, "Trinity Broadcasting Network abused the Commission's processes by using NMTV [National Minority Television, Inc.] as a vehicle to claim unwarranted minority and diversification preferences. The record clearly established that Trinity Broadcasting Network created NMTV for the purposes of seeking an anticipated low power minority preference as part of a plan for a network of stations designed to further Trinity Broadcasting Network's religious mission."

In the judgment, handed down April 15, the FCC determined that "TBN founder Paul Crouch was principally to blame for the creation of National Minority

Television as part of a plan to control more full-power stations than he was allowed under federal law."

Crouch is the president of TBN, which he founded in Southern California in 1973. It has grown to become the largest religious broadcaster with a worldwide network of more than 800 broadcast and cable outlets.

The FCC ruling will not affect any of the other stations under the ownership of TBN. An attorney for the religious broadcaster said that TBN "would continue to litigate and to vindicate itself, and eventually win the renewal of its Miami station."

—MKG

NO NEAR MISS FOR NOSTRADAMUS

The 16th century prophet, Michel de Nostredame, more commonly known as Nostradamus, has now unquestionably confirmed what critics have known for a long time: His claimed calling as a visionary of future events was not ordained of God. Yet there are some Christian doomsday-watchers, like Jack Van Impe, who give credence to this false prophet.

Most of the purported success of Nostradamus' predictions lies in the mind of the interpreter, as his revelations were written in ambiguous four-line verse forms known as quatrains. With his broad and sweeping statements, devoid of specifics, it is easy for the Nostradamus enthusiast to assign any number of successful meanings to his prophecies. This can be clearly seen in the way one of his predictions is now asserted to have foretold the assassinations of the Kennedy brothers. Prior to the murders of John and Robert Kennedy in the 1960s, this same exact prophecy was said to be a fulfillment of World War II events, including the "taking over of Czechoslovakia by [Adolph] Hitler."

Other of his predictions, said to be telling of coming events, are circumvented by being pushed further into the future when they do not come to pass as expected. Nearly all of Nostradamus' prophecies contain no specific month and date — and those with a timeframe are done so with astrological configurations. When the oracle does not come to fruition, it can be pushed to the next such astrological configuration, which may be centuries into the future.

However, July 1999 was for Nostradamus (and his modern-day devotees) a month and year with no equal. In a prediction known as Quatrain X:72, the prophet makes his only prediction that includes an exact date. The passage reads: "In the year 1999, and seven months, From the skies shall come an alarmingly powerful king, To raise again the great King of the Jacquerie, Before and after, Mars shall reign at will."

The quatrain was, in recent years, one of his most widely discussed prophecies and generated extensive speculation and enthusiasm among his followers. One interpreter defined the revelation as: "In this gloomy prediction, Nostradamus seems to foresee the end of the world at the Millennium, the year 2000." Another claims that, "A tremendous world revolution is foretold to take place in the year 1999, ... Nostradamus shows his mystic knowledge of the great secret of the book of revelations and solves for us the identify of the 'Beast of the Apocalypse' and the time of his arrival which John of Patmos (Rev. XIII:18) records."

Despite variation in the exact details of what was to occur as provided by his interpreter, one element was firm — the cataclysmic events would take place in July 1999. One writer even added to the mystique by noting that when one inverts the last three digits of the year (1999) it is "the number of the beast" (666) found in Revelation (13:18).

As is now known, July 1999 came and passed without the fulfillment of Nostradamus' prophecy. What did come to pass, however, was *once again* confirmation that his gift of prophecy was not from the Lord. "If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the Lord does not take place or come true, that is a message the Lord has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously. Do not be afraid of him" (Deuteronomy 18:22). July was not the crowning moment for Nostradamus, but yet another reason for Christians to avoid him and his prophecies and get back to the safe and sure Word of God.

—MKG

BOOKS IN REVIEW

(continued from page 24)

The three main sections of the book are: The Contemporary World of Witchcraft, The Biblical View of Contemporary Witchcraft and Philosophical Critiques of Witchcraft.

There is an index for persons, a subject index and a Scripture index, which make the book even more valuable. Hawkins has included helpful sections in the book on the motives for witchcraft and how the witches' world is set up — with its practices, calender and accoutrements.

This book is a well-documented "who's who" of contemporary paganism — an up-to-date handbook on witchcraft. Given the modern revival of interest in Wicca and attempts to make it respectable, this book is a must for anyone wanting a handle on our times. It could serve as an inoculation for our churches and young people.

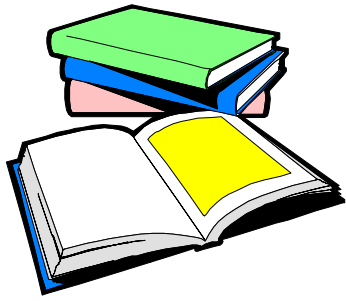
This book is scholarly but not technical. It will satisfy the student who wants insights into the Hebrew and Greek text but is written in such a way as to be easily grasped by the average reader.

We are grateful for Craig Hawkins, for his research and for his help in equipping the Church with tools and weapons for the contemporary battle. We need to see the gaping holes in the witchcraft worldview. This book helps us do that very thing.

—GRF

PERSONAL FREEDOM OUTREACH — STATEMENT OF BELIEF

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



Books in Review

KNOWING CHRIST IN THE CHALLENGE OF HERESY

by Steven Tsoukalas

University Press of America, 240 pages, \$24.50

It's not too unusual or difficult to find a good book that expounds on the deity of Jesus Christ. Since Christ's divine nature is the very bedrock of the Christian faith, it is a subject that has been thoroughly defended. However, the vast majority of these volumes establish only the biblical testimony for the doctrine, they do not specifically respond to heretical teachings surrounding the person of Christ.

As the Church enters a new millennium, polished campaigns against the deity of Jesus proliferate at an accelerated rate at the hands of cults and aberrant sects. With the body of Christ facing these new "challenges of heresy," volumes which answer the false christologies are not only welcome, but sorely needed.

The latest book by Steven Tsoukalas is one of the finest treatises of the subject for those wishing to study the deity of Christ by way of comparing what the Scriptures state against the backdrop of cultic teaching. Tsoukalas provides for the reader a virtual catalog of erroneous christologies. All the major challengers are detailed, such as the Latter-day Saints, Jehovah's Witnesses, The Way International and the New Age movement. Additionally, sometimes overlooked, sects also are examined because of their repudiation of the deity of Christ in less subtle forms. These groups include the Word-Faith movement, United Pentecostal Church, liberal Protestantism and others. Still other, non-Christian religious bodies, such as Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism are also briefly studied.

Tsoukalas examines not only the nature of Christ as the "Incarnate Deity," but explores the "Pre-existent Deity" as well. His is a volume packed to help equip every believer. One will even find a secondary wealth of information conveniently placed in many of his expounded footnotes. As in any scholarly treatment, Tsoukalas does not pass over citing New Testament Greek grammar. But when he does present it, it is done in a way that is not beyond the grasp of the lay person.

General (topical) and Scriptural indexes are provided and make for easy retrieval of the information.

In a day when the Church has lost a passion for doctrine and developed an attitude of apathy toward the cults, Tsoukalas reminds us that God can use heresy and challenges us with these words:

"I hope that the reader may know Christ better, as was the case with myself. I was challenged by heresy to formulate my understanding of Christ. As I searched the Scriptures to answer attacks, something much more than mere refutation occurred. I worshiped Him more adoringly. I grew to love Him more as I read about Him and studied the biblical passages."

—MKG

WITCHCRAFT

EXPLORING THE WORLD OF WICCA

by Craig Hawkins

Baker Book House, 226 pages, \$15.99

Christians looking for a resource to help them respond to witchcraft, Wicca and neopaganism now have one, thanks to a detailed, apologetic approach in apologist Craig Hawkins' thorough research.

His stated objectives in the Introduction are to:

- provide an understanding of contemporary witchcraft and clear up much of the confusion Christians have concerning what witches believe and practice;
- analyze and critique contemporary witchcraft from biblical, logical, metaphysical, epistemological, and ethical perspectives; and
- facilitate and encourage biblical and thoughtful evangelism of witches as well as other neopagans and occultists in general (pg. 17).

He succeeds admirably.

Most Christians mistakenly think that Satanism and witchcraft are the same thing. They also think that witchcraft is monolithic when in fact it is an eclectic bag of subjective and contradictory views. Those nuances are handled clearly and precisely by Hawkins. He helps us see the confusing and eclectic nature of modern witchcraft. This book is solid, not sensationalistic.

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Editor's Note: The publications featured in PFO's *Books in Review* section are available from **Personal Freedom Outreach** (P.O. Box 26062, Saint Louis, Missouri 63136). Please add \$1.75 to the price listed for shipping and handling. Due to occasional price changes by the publishers, the retail amounts listed are subject to change without notice. These publications are also available to those who help to financially support the work of PFO. Please see our funds appeal flyer for details.