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2012: A Spaced-Out Oddity What's the Big Fuss About the Year 2012?

by J. Greg Sheryl

"The world, as we know it, will soon come to an end." This solemn announcement is given by the United States President played by actor Danny Glover at a G8 Summit conference in the ultimate disaster movie — one dealing with the end of the world — entitled *2012*, which made its debut in theaters nationwide in November 2009. Its title and some of its themes reflect a fear on the part of some in our world and a *certainty* on the part of others that the year 2012 — specifically, December 21, 2012 — will mark the end of the world. During the movie several reasons for the world's demise that have been given by 2012 doomsayers are either stated or suggested.

OF MICE AND MAYANS

The primary force behind these fears is the fact that the 5,125-year Maya Long Count calendar cycle is due to end on December 21, 2012.¹

One Christian author and publisher writes:

"This brings us to the central focus of this book — *December 21, 2012*. What does the Mayan long-

count calendar have to say about this date, and on what is this conclusion based? December 21, 2012, is the final day of the Mayan calendar — the end of time and possibly the end of the world. The Mayans regard this day as the point when human history could come to a close."²

Although it is doubtful that the Maya looked upon the end of this calendar cycle as representing the end of the world, this author has accurately presented how some people *believe* the Maya viewed this date.

Another Christian source notes:

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Editorials

WHY ALL THE RELIGIOUS CONFUSION TODAY?

Many are curious about all the religious confusion today. Others are baffled by the proliferation of self-taught, self-sent Bible teachers with extreme views and bizarre interpretations of biblical passages.

It is not hard to figure out the confusion when one looks at the world of philosophy and understands how philosophical views have infiltrated the Church. Knowing where philosophy has taken us in the last 150 years helps us understand and make sense of the explosion of cults and cultic teaching that is swamping the churches today. So-called "Christian" radio, television, and bookstores have added to and, in fact, helped spread the confusion.

Understanding recent history will also help us comprehend why more churches are having "discussion groups" while downplaying teaching and preaching, and are having "facilitators" rather than teachers or preachers. Preaching and teaching is neglected and even demeaned, while group sharing — which in many cases is a pooling of ignorance — is praised and promoted.

It was under the radar at first. A philosopher named Søren Kierkegaard in the mid-1800s dreamed up and constructed what is now called "Christian existentialism." We pick up in the word "existentialism" the idea of our personal existence or personal experience.

Kierkegaard proposed that the individual person was central and that the individual's existence and personal experiences were paramount. Our personal experiences were more important than rules, doctrines, or precise theology. When Kierkegaard died in 1855, no one would have guessed the revolution that his ideas would create.

It took about 60 to 70 years for existentialism to be revived. It was rediscovered and devoured by European theologians and philosophers. Kierkegaard was the new Protestant "saint."

No one realized at the time that existentialism would infiltrate orthodoxy and create a new kind of evangelicalism. If experience was king, the eventual ramifications could hardly be foreseen and measured. If truth is subjective and a product of one's own experience and interpretation of that experience, objective truth and commitment to doctrine begins to die.

In the 1950s and into the 1970s, we all knew for what certain churches believed and stood. One could go to most evangelical churches and be sure of certain standards, practices, and beliefs. No longer is that true. The Church at large is a crazy smorgasbord of experience-oriented people with evolving doctrines and practices.

Television is full of "evangelists" with private interpretations of Scripture. Benny Hinn taught that Pharaoh's army did not drown in the Red Sea, but was crushed by ice. "It's in the Word. It's in the Hebrew," he said. Hinn also taught that each member of the Trinity was a trinity

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MEMORIAL NUMBERS PROBLEMATIC FOR WATCHTOWER

Jehovah's Witnesses have always been proud of escalating figures: annual membership increases and the number of copies and translations of books and magazines they print, to name a couple of examples. During the past four years, however, there is one figure that has shown a consistent increase against all logic: the number of partakers at their annual "Lord's Evening Meal" memorial.

Once a year, on the date designated as Nisan 14, Jehovah's Witnesses gather around the world to celebrate "The Lord's Evening Meal." Last year, in 2009, the Watchtower recorded its highest figure ever with 18,168,323 reportedly attending the service. According to the Watchtower's two-class system, only those who have a heavenly calling are permitted to partake of the bread and wine at this service. The Watchtower teaches that only the 144,000 (of Revelation 7:14), also known as "the little flock," will live in heaven. The millions of other Jehovah's Witnesses, who are designated as "the great crowd," will live in an earthly paradise. The remnant of these 144,000 spiritually elite members — the "joint heirs with Christ" who are presently alive on earth — are the ones permitted to receive the elements at the service. Everyone else can only observe.

The Watchtower's second president, Joseph F. Rutherford, said that in the 1930s, the number of heaven-bound Witnesses — the 144,000 — was fulfilled. In 1995, the Watchtower maintained, "Logically, the calling of the little flock would draw to a close when the number was nearing completion, and the evidence is that the general gathering of these specially blessed ones ended in 1935" (*The Watchtower*, Feb. 15, 1995, pg. 19). As the members of this closed class grow older and many of them are now approaching the century mark, it is logical that they would be dying off and the number of memorial partakers decreasing every year. Between 1992 and 2004, however, the figure of those who took the bread and wine held a steady course from year to year, hovering between 8,795 (in 1997) and 8,570 (in 2004).

In 2005, the number reached its lowest total ever: 8,524. Then, in 2006, there were 8,758 partakers reported; in 2007, the elements were received by 9,105; in 2008, a reported 9,986 took the bread and wine; and last year the number of memorial partakers worldwide was said to be 10,857, the highest total in more than 40 years.

Yet for all the Watchtower inconsistencies, there is one constant the Society has been known for: changing doctrine. As the Watchtower leadership faced figures that remained steady and which long should have been on a substantial decline, and now are confronted with numbers rivaling an earlier generation, the organization has been forced to state, "Thus it appears that we cannot set a specific date for when the calling of Christians to the heavenly hope ends" (*The Watchtower*, May 1, 2007, pg. 31). So the gates to heaven, once closed in 1935 by Watchtower leadership, have been reopened as a result of additional Jehovah's Witnesses who lay claim to a future heavenly existence.

As the Watchtower grapples with facts and figures that demonstrate the incongruity of its beliefs, Jehovah's Witnesses will continue to suffer the consequence of being blown about by every wind of doctrine.

—MKG

ORAL ROBERTS DIES AT 91

Oral Roberts, the televangelist and faith healer who attracted adoration, controversy, and ridicule, died last Dec. 15 of complications from pneumonia. He was 91.

Roberts said that when he was 17 years old, he was healed of tuberculosis at a revival meeting. From that experience came his own healing ministry. He was ordained by the Pentecostal Holiness Church in 1936 and pastored several churches between 1941 and 1947. In 1947, he founded the Oral Roberts Evangelical Association and took his healing revival campaigns across the United States and later around the world.

In the mid-1950s, Roberts raised his public profile when he began a weekly television broadcast that exposed millions of viewers to his healing messages. Roberts made a further name for himself when, in 1965, he launched Oral Roberts University, a coeducational liberal arts college. The school was built on a 500-acre plot of land in Tulsa, Okla., and was officially dedicated by Billy Graham in 1967.

This university eventually caused Roberts his most notable failure. Despite fierce opposition, Roberts pushed forward with his plans to build the City of Faith, which included a 60-story medical clinic, a 30-story, 777-bed hospital, and a 20-story research tower on the university's campus. The complex was completed in 1981 at a cost of about \$150 million, but it was never anything more than a façade. Only four floors of the hospital were

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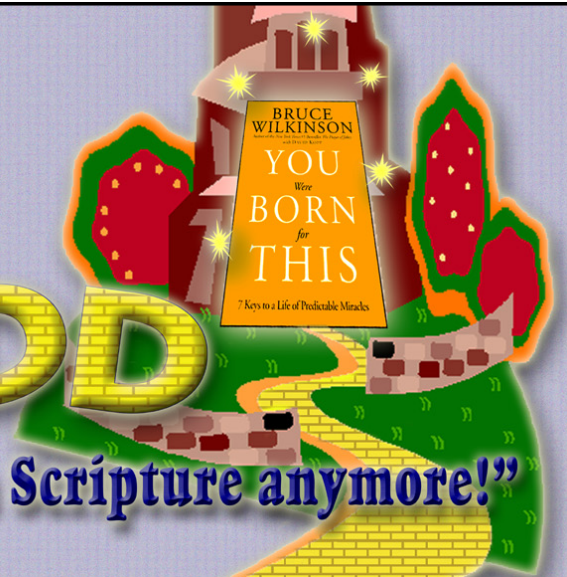
Bruce Wilkinson as

THE WIZARD of ODD



“Toto, I have a feeling we’re not in Scripture anymore!”

by G. Richard Fisher



In 1976, as a weekend hobby, Bruce Wilkinson began to offer classes on how to read and study the Bible. He titled his seminars “A Walk Thru the Bible.” As his endeavors met with great response and success, he founded Walk Thru the Bible Ministries, which grew into a multi-million dollar organization. More recently, however, those who read his books will no longer find themselves walking on the lighted path of Scripture, but rather on Wilkinson’s yellow brick road of miracles and money. For example, Wilkinson tells us, “God loves to initiate miracles with money. ... I want to introduce you to one of my favorite practical tools for inviting financial miracles.”¹ Yet the Apostle Peter said, “Silver and gold have I none” (Acts 3:6).

Wilkinson is probably best known for his book, *The Prayer of Jabez*. It was a publication that was packaged, re-packaged, and marketed in a variety of ways — from a teen version to a devotional to a Bible study. The popularity of *Jabez* merchandise soared like a rocket before falling like a rock. It is not uncommon to see a stockpile of the small original hard-back volume, which originally sold for \$10, at the local dollar store.

Working off the success of *Jabez*, Wilkinson then, along with co-author David Kopp, offered us a way to find and fulfill our dreams in their book, *The Dream Giver*.² This was, in fact, a

self-help book lifted straight from the ideas of secular self-help guru Tony Robbins. The verbiage was identical to Robbins’ writings. PFO spoke to Kopp by phone and asked him about the resemblance between the two. Kopp attributed any similarity in it to common language in the world of self-help books and the life coach fad. Kopp’s admission affirmed that the book’s contents did not really come from the Bible, but from the secular world and what was popular at the time. Currently, people are not so much looking for a life coach, but rather a spiritual formation coach. It is sort of the same fad with a few Bible verses attached to it.

Ironically, these two books (*The Prayer of Jabez* and *The Dream Giver*), while earning their authors and publishers a hefty profit, did not appear to provide a scenario which personally worked for Wilkinson. He lost friends, funds, and reputation in his failed “Dream for Africa” scheme in 2005. Reports appeared in various news sources and magazines telling about the unraveling plan that crashed and burned:

“Early in July 2005, after three years based in Johannesburg, South Africa, well-known American author and theologian, Dr. Bruce Wilkinson, moved to the land-locked kingdom of Swaziland, a former British colony, to give practical expression to his

‘Dream for Africa.’ ... As a very able, influential and wealthy man, Bruce decided to lend a helping hand and soon devised a grand scheme for the upliftment of destitute communities and individuals on the underdeveloped continent. He had a dream, a vision, an ambitious plan, to channel vast humanitarian aid from the US to communities in Africa where it is most needed. He selected the poverty-stricken, former British colony, Swaziland, as a role model for the rest of Africa on how to successfully change lifestyles and eradicate poverty and suffering. ... Bruce secured an extensive support-base among private companies and churches, and also received a large grant from the US government to combat AIDS in Africa. ... What went wrong? On 19 December 05 the *Wall Street Journal* published a lengthy article on how the African dream of Bruce turned into a nightmare. The article is titled: ‘Unanswered prayers: In Swaziland, US preacher sees his dream vanish.’ In this article it is also related how Bruce acted against the advice of the US ambassador to Swaziland.”³

Wilkinson, against U.S. Ambassador Lewis Lucke’s advice, proposed what he called Dream Village. He wanted large tracts of land from the local

government which did not sit well with the ruling body of Swaziland, and he also proposed moving orphans out of their villages into the yet-to-be Dream Village. Disconnecting the orphans from their social network, kinships, and community was deemed unwise by both the U.S. Ambassadors and local officials. Communities there care for their orphans, unlike those in other parts of the world. Wilkinson pulled up stakes, leaving many in the church and local pastors in trauma because of the unfulfilled grandiose promises. The scars remain.

BORN FOR THIS?

Now Wilkinson and his co-author, Kopp, have risen again with the new book, *You Were Born for This, 7 Keys to a Life of Predictable Miracles*. The title itself is a contradiction because for a miracle to be a miracle it cannot be programmed, predicted, orchestrated, or scheduled. God is never on our timetable.

Wilkinson's latest book reads like "Jabez meets Norman Vincent Peale" or "The Dream Giver meets Benny Hinn and Joel Osteen." *You Were Born for This* is just another self-help book coupled with positive wishful thinking, personal revelations, and watered down Word Faith teaching packaged in a single volume. Wilkinson and Kopp (and their publisher) certainly know what Americans want and what they will buy. The marketing of miracles is becoming a worn out but lucrative occupation.

Wilkinson clearly states the thrust and goal of the book:

"Are you beginning to see why you can be a part of as many miracles for God as you want? ... you'll find helpful teaching on miracle-specific signals from God, from others, and even from yourself. By learning to read the signs effectively, you'll learn to be a living link between Heaven and earth, recognizing a miracle opportunity right in front of you where others see nothing at all."⁴

So there it is — "as many miracles from God as you want." This is snake

oil and delusion in a small but expensive package.

SOME WHEAT AND LOTS OF CHAFF

It's not that everything Wilkinson says is wrong. It could be helpful for some to know God is at work in the mundane areas of our lives, even when we don't know it. The questions Wilkinson suggests to ask others may be helpful in some situations to open a conversation for witnessing. However, any element of truth suggested by him is layered with so much error that the truth gets buried and lost. It is good that he urges good works and the doing of good things — that is, to be other-focused — but one must filter out a lot of error in the process.

For example, in the opening pages Wilkinson describes what he calls "a mysterious encounter."⁵ He then says he "felt unexpectedly nudged by Heaven"⁶ to give a waiter named Jack \$100 and later \$200 more. Jack had been praying about his depleted alimony account (so Wilkinson says) and was asking God for \$100.

In Wilkinson's universe, giving people money qualifies as our and their miracle. He claims it was "clearly miraculous to everyone involved."⁷ A careful and close examination peels away the claims of miraculous. Many who are waiters and waitresses are dependent on tips and most probably struggling financially. They are one group of people who quite often earn only minimum wage. It takes no nudge from God to realize that. Tips are their life's blood. And we have ample Scriptures about helping the poor or those in need (Proverbs 3:27-28; 14:21, 31; 19:17; 22:9; 28:27; James 1:27; 2:15-16). We do not need theatrics and dramatic stories to embellish what Scripture commands and we should be doing routinely. Obedience, not nudges, is what is required. In other words, just do it and without fanfare.

STORIES AND SECRET KEYS

One thing Wilkinson has in abundance in the book is stories — more specifically, stories about himself. These stories always turn out well

and have a happy ending even though in real life Swaziland did not. Wilkinson presents himself as the lead actor in a cosmic drama and for the price of \$22.99 (\$27.99 in Canada) he will let readers in on the secret of how he does it and in turn how they can do it. Wilkinson says that his ideas are "based on the teaching of Scripture,"⁸ which really is not true. He has some misinterpreted verses, taken out of context, with no real biblical exposition. What is true is his admission that his teaching also comes out of his "own ministry experience."⁹ It is his own experience and his interpretation of his experiences that he relates in the various personal stories in the book. It is a stacked deck from the very start. His stories are selective, may be embellished, and are taken in the direction he desires, and there is no real verification or documentation of any of the details or if these are real people.

Wilkinson appears to believe and teach an almost Gnostic or Mind Science concept in that he has embraced a formula that anyone can use to create everyday miracles. He tells his readers about "four keys to a life of miracles."¹⁰ These four keys are: "make a very specific, urgent request; understand and accept His miracle agenda for you; know how to partner with an unseen power; take a promising but life-changing risk."¹¹

There is a major problem with Wilkinson's premise of four keys. His reference to God as "unseen power" is troublesome enough, but his formula leads toward creation of a false God. Approaching God in this way is like approaching a vending machine. Put in the right coins, press the right buttons or pull the right levers, and we get what we want. The formula promises always getting results of some sort if it is done right. Wilkinson assures us:

"All seven miracle keys I talk about in *You Were Born for This* describe specific actions that unlock the miraculous in our lives. ... Taken together, these first four keys unlock a life of miracles. And by the time you combine these principles with the practical

advice of parts 3 and 4 of this book, you'll have everything you need to begin delivering personal miracles."¹²

Any discerning Christian should always be leery of any person (or group) who makes claim to special insights and the assertion that they have found keys or secrets that finally unlock special truth or new insights. Inside information is one of the hallmarks of a cult and special discoveries a mark of the occult. Dave Breese was spot-on when he wrote:

"The careful teacher of sound doctrine is rarely as electrifying as the mysterious religious promoter who usually for a price, will let us in on his 'secret.' Under the spells he casts, we are often tempted to forget that the best things in life are not only free, but they are usually obvious."¹³

The "secret" of the Gospel has been out for a long time. The key to salvation is clearly Jesus. The miracle of the new birth (the greatest miracle) is for all who receive it.

Wilkinson and Kopp may need to be reminded that God is the Almighty Creator God and not a delivery boy who produces on demand. They also may need to be reminded that creating false images of God's character and work is frightening business. Exodus 20:2-3 warns, "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before Me."

Another faulty aspect of Wilkinson's teaching is the idea that *anyone* can work the formula and produce miracles. In 1 Corinthians 12, the Apostle Paul asks the Corinthians a number of rhetorical questions. These are questions that do not require a verbal response and the answer is so obvious everyone knows it. As Paul deals with the Holy Spirit's distribution of various gifts to various individuals, he establishes that this distribution is sovereign and that not all are gifted alike. He asks, "Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of

miracles?" (v. 29). The expected answer is a resounding *No, No, No!* Does Wilkinson know better than the Apostle Paul? He says all his readers can work the formula and "begin delivering personal miracles."¹⁴ Our response to Wilkinson's claim should be a loud, "No, I really don't think so."

Scripture is clear (Wilkinson notwithstanding) that not all are workers of miracles, and neither are they expected to be. In fact, one of the most outstanding men in Scripture, John the Baptist, the forerunner of Jesus, did no miracles. As Jesus went beyond the Jordan to where John was baptizing, "many people came to Him. They said, 'Though John never performed a miraculous sign, all that John said about this man was true.' And in that place many believed in Jesus" (John 10:41-42, NIV).

It is hard to see any real distinction between what Wilkinson is promoting and what Word Faith teachers encourage. It all boils down to what people want on demand. "On demand" may work with satellite television, but not with God.

PUTTING WORDS IN GOD'S MOUTH

Another critical flaw of the book is the cavalier use of Scripture. In one instance Wilkinson goes beyond even paraphrasing Scripture, and in many other cases he uses Scripture out of context for his proof texts. He ultra-paraphrases and renders Mark 16:15 ("Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature") as "*Go into all the world for Me ... and do the impossible.*"¹⁵ Jesus did not say "go into the world and do the impossible." How can Wilkinson put words in Jesus' mouth and not tremble at commands such as Deuteronomy 4:2 and Revelation 22:18 and the judgment attached to tampering with God's Word? Moreover, further demonstrating his sloppy handling of Scripture, he wrongly attributes the words to Matthew.

Wilkinson consistently distorts verses and makes them say whatever he wants or needs them to say regardless of context. He misleads readers

by citing the story of Isaiah in Isaiah 6 as if it backs up and lends credence to his premise of miracles through formulas. Isaiah's narration is an account of deep brokenness and repentance. It is about the prophet's willingness to serve God even though his ministry will be difficult, unrewarding, and even heartbreaking. Isaiah did no miracle, but was faithful in his preaching even when his people would not respond. Isaiah had to minister in a very dark period of Israel's history and many of his messages were about judgment. The book of Isaiah is about perseverance and long-suffering, not the miraculous. It really shows the opposite of what Wilkinson is alleging.

WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?

Wilkinson degrades miracles by making everything a miracle. For example, he paid tow truck fees for a man in a turban whose van had broken down on the freeway. He says it was a "miracle appointment."¹⁶ One can't help but wonder if the man needed the Gospel or a solid witness, along with the financial help. In another story Wilkinson advises a man on a plane regarding his construction company. These are normal everyday occurrences, so it strains the imagination to label such routine events as miracles. If everything is a miracle, then nothing is a miracle. God may be in what we think are chance encounters, but these events cannot technically be defined as miracles.

What then is the problem? The reason for Wilkinson's confusion is that he is mistaking providence for miracle. According to one Bible encyclopedia, "providence" concerns:

"God's support, care, and supervision of all creation, from the moment of the first creation to all the future into eternity. Jesus Christ said, 'My Father is working still, and I am working' (John 5:17). Providence is God's activity through His unlimited power and knowledge to fulfill His purpose for the whole creation, including man. ... Two points are to be observed in the study of providence. God's control is all-

inclusive and certain, yet God does not violate the freedom of rational and moral creatures. It may be hard to understand how this can be because there are no personal experiences to which one can compare God's providential working, but the Scriptures clearly teach both these points. Joseph insisted that God had sent him to Egypt, and indeed this confidence had doubtless supported him through all his adversity. Yet he said 'I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt' (Gen 45:4). ... Very specifically Peter said that Christ 'being delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men' (Acts 2:23)."¹⁷

Every believer can and should find opportunity for witness or good deeds all around us in everyday life. Each day we can find opportunities to help those in need. God allows these opportunities and situations because of His *providence*. To refer to them as a miracle is to evidence fundamental confusion and a misunderstanding of biblical categories and doctrines. Wilkinson does not know or does not care to distinguish absolute miracle from that which is providential. This important distinction apparently eludes him. *True miracles had a time, a place, and a purpose*. They were extraordinary manifestations of divine power given to a select few in order to attest, confirm, and mark out that which God was doing. A survey of the whole counsel of Scripture reveals they were primarily used to manifest direct divine revelation in establishing the Law (Moses), the Prophets (Elijah), and the New Covenant and the Church (Jesus and the apostles).

The details of these divine inbreakings are recorded in Scripture. Miracles such as stilling the storm, raising the dead, turning water to wine, or healing a leper were brought about by the immediate agency and intervention of God and superseded all natural law. As Paul stated in Corinthians, and as the Bible clearly

shows, miracles were not for all. However, God's providence is at work for all and comes through secondary causes. All of Wilkinson's stories may show providence, but not necessarily miracles even though that is the way he wrongly interprets them.

Theologian Charles Hodge eloquently describes God's providence in the world today:

"The Bible, however, clearly teaches, and all men instinctively believe in a special providence. That is, that God uses his control over the laws of nature, to bring about special effects. Men in sickness, in danger, or in any distress, pray to God for help. This is not irrational. It supposes God's relation to the world to be precisely what it is declared to be in the Bible. It does not suppose that God sets aside or counteracts the laws of nature; but simply that He controls them and causes them to produce whatever effects He sees fit. The Scriptures and the history of the world, and almost every man's experience, bear abundant evidence to such divine interpositions. We should be as helpless orphans were it not for this constant oversight and protection of our heavenly Father. Sometimes the circumstances attending these divine interventions are so unusual, and the evidences which they afford of divine control are so clear, that men cannot refuse to recognize the hand of God. There is, however, nothing extraordinary in the agency of God. It is only that we witness on these occasions more impressive manifestations of the absolute control, which He constantly exercises over the laws which He has ordained."¹⁸

F. E. Hamilton and R. L. Harris concur and inform us:

"The Scripture speaks of 'signs and wonders and mighty works' (2 Cor 12:12), which may be classed under the term 'miracles.' Strictly speaking, however, it seems better to limit the term 'miracle' to the *change in the mode*

of God's activity apart from means."¹⁹

But why is it so important that we distinguish miracles from providence? Isn't that just splitting hairs? It may seem unimportant to some, but imprecision is often the beginning of heresy. To confuse any aspect of Scripture starts us down a road where we can define anything in the Bible in any way we want. A clear example of this is Gregory Boyd, whose ambiguous understanding of why evil is permitted to exist helped lead him down the path into open theism. Clark Pinnock, John Sanders, Bart Ehrman all have taken similar drifts into heresy. To create one's own subjective dictionary for Bible terms is the epitome of pride and the path to cultism:

"One of the very fascinating characteristics of the cults is the interesting and sometimes hilarious changes of doctrine through which they pass. Their doctrines are being continually altered in order to adapt themselves to new situations, arguments, or the whims of their leaders. They know nothing of the command of Scripture, 'That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the slight of men and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive' (Eph. 4:14). Scripture is clear that craftily changing doctrine is a cunning device used by those who prey upon the unwary. ... The Word of God is therefore very careful to avoid ambiguity."²⁰

GETTING A NUDGE

Creating "miracles," according to Wilkinson, is based on inclinations, or more specifically what he labels as "Heaven's nudge."²¹ Wilkinson never quite fully explains the concept, but it appears to mean a feeling or subjective urge in a certain direction, or something like that. In one of his appearances, Wilkinson asks a man named Owen (part of the audience) if anything unusual is going on in his life. Owen replied, "No," but Wilkin-

son relates that he received another “nudge” regarding Owen.²² Wilkinson tells Owen that he was not telling the truth and Owen then confessed to being on the verge of quitting his ministry because he was \$16,000 in debt in efforts to keep the ministry afloat. According to Wilkinson, Owen decided to stay in ministry and all the attendees at the conference then gave Owen money to the tune of \$16,000.²³ Happening the way Wilkinson describes is certainly wonderful and unusual, but not a miracle. Providential yes, but for it to be a true miracle it would be Wilkinson changing blank white copy paper into 160 genuine \$100 bills.

Some may say that if the story is true and Wilkinson had no awareness of Owen’s difficulty (and original lie) that Wilkinson might be psychic, or he is just playing the law of averages by doing cold readings as most anyone at a seminar could say that something unusual was going on in their lives. Such prophetic words usually are generic enough that they will describe almost anything in our experience. Another concern that may be argued, however, is that Wilkinson is clairvoyant and involved in something that might be occultic. Clairvoyance is an occult power claimed by some. So-called fortune tellers claim this ability and allege they are able to divine people’s thoughts and futures. Wilkinson may try to sanitize it by calling it a “nudge” from God, but the New Testament offers no such psychic or revelatory gift.²⁴ So at best this whole practice is guess work, a shot in the dark, or cold reading; and at worst, fortune-telling.

Wilkinson says that while he was stuck in traffic in route to the airport, his prayer delayed his departing flight. Along with that, he claims to have known he would be seated next to a certain lady whom he engaged in conversation before they boarded.²⁵

ON THE DARK SIDE?

An earlier generation of Christians knew exactly what clairvoyance was and with what it is associated. Merrill Unger, over 50 years ago, defined it as:

“A whole complex of phenomena, purportedly tried and proved, was advanced as the result of the widespread activity in psychical research and experimentation with mediums: such as telepathy, spirit-rapping, trances, luminous apparitions, automatic writing, inspiration, clairvoyance, oral and written spirit communications, mediumistic drawings, materializations, levitations, physical healings, and others, and these form the basis of the new belief in spirits.”²⁶

Wilkinson tries to employ artful language when he says, “We don’t have to look inside for a special emotion or inner voice.”²⁷ Yet this is hard to square with what he calls “nudges.” When he speaks of sensing things or trusting the nudge,²⁸ it sounds as if he is exercising special emotion or an inner voice or prompting. His disclaimer is hollow.

Wilkinson quotes Psalm 32:8, “I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with My eye,” as if it supports his premise of nudges. The basic question which must be asked is: How does God guide us? Guiding us with His eye means His eye is always on us, but He obviously instructs us and guides us through the clear teaching of Scripture, not inner urges and nudges. Psalm 1 speaks of the man who delights in the law of the Lord, assuring that if we meditate on God’s Word we will prosper. Psalm 32 is not addressing subjective, inner guidance. Many other psalms, including Psalm 119, make clear that objective guidance is through the Word.

THE FORCE OF FAITH

God is the initiator of miracles. They are sovereignly dispensed. To the contrary, Wilkinson teaches, “I hope you are beginning to grasp the indispensable part you and I play in whether or not a miracle will happen. The amount of our faith — and the actions we take as a result — can either limit or release God to act in a miracle situation.”²⁹ Such a premise is directly out of the Word Faith handbook. To say that we can “limit or

release God” makes us in one sense as powerful as (or even more powerful than) God. It sounds like God is putty in our hands. It is a jarring and shocking statement.

God is unlimited and there is nothing that can thwart His ultimate purpose and plan. Wilkinson has lost an understanding of God’s omnipotence and all that it means. Henry Thiessen instructs:

“By the omnipotence of God we mean that He is able to do whatever He wills ... God can do what He wills to do; but He does not necessarily will to do anything. That is, God has power over His power.”³⁰

God’s sovereignty and omnipotence are expressed throughout the Bible. Even a pagan king realized this: “All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; He does according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. No one can restrain His hand or say to Him, ‘What have You done?’” (Daniel 4:35). The Apostle Paul assures us that God is the One “who works all things according to the counsel of His will” (Ephesians 1:11). One could not imagine, for instance, God waiting on Moses to release Him so He could deliver the children of Israel from Egypt. God used Moses, not the other way around. It is foolish and mistaken to think that we can “limit or release God.”

Even a first-year Bible student would be familiar with the doctrine of God and His omnipotence. William Evans writes:

“The Omnipotence of God is that attribute by which He can bring to pass everything which He wills. God’s power admits of no bounds or limitations. God’s declaration of His intention is the pledge of the thing intended being carried out. ‘Hath he said, and shall he not do it?’”³¹

INSIDE LANGUAGE

Cults thrive on inside information and esoteric vocabulary. Wilkinson creates his own lingo and promises miracles if we can recognize the “five

miracle-related signals."³² No one would ever find these just by reading the Bible. No one has suggested them throughout the history of the Church, that is, until now. Wilkinson does not elaborate on where and how he found these "miracle-related signals," but he does admit that they "will probably be a new experience for you."³³ Wilkinson specifies his five "miracle-related signals" and their importance:

"... a nudge, a cue, a bump, a prompt, and an alert. ... Once you put them to work in your partnership with God, your success rate as an agent for the miraculous will rapidly increase."³⁴

Wilkinson's ideas mirror the teaching of an organization founded in 1929 in Idaho by Frank B. Robinson. He called the religion Psychiana. It is reported that over a period of 15 years, Robinson had a million people reading his books and lessons. The *New 20th Century Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge* reveals:

"Robinson's was the typical New Thought emphasis on health, prosperity, and happiness. He stressed the theme of the availability of God's power to every man. There is nothing needed by a person, he declared, which the power of God cannot bring if one will meet the conditions."³⁵

The entry level for miracles is the nudge, which is defined by Wilkinson as "an inner push that directs us toward a person, a place, or an action. ... On rare occasions He also uses dreams, visions, angels, and other individuals."³⁶ The best we can understand is that a nudge is an interruption to our regular train of thought and is "something you don't want to do."³⁷ All in all, it is not very clear but we move on to the next signal, which is a cue. A cue is "a signal that comes from another person. It is communicated, often unknowingly, by someone's words or body language."³⁸ All of this sounds more mundane than miraculous. Wilkinson admits that we can practice and improve the skill of reading body language and advises that we "practice reading cues anytime you're around other people."³⁹

To the critical reader, the book sounds less and less miraculous as one goes on. The next signal then moves onto the bump which is defined as "something you do to another person to surface or confirm a need. ... the purpose of a bump is to help us gain more insight into a person's need. We gently gather the needed information by asking the right questions."⁴⁰ Perhaps a more honest and less spectacular way to describe it would be information gathering or getting a person to open up. Wilkinson spends a few pages trying to train us in asking the right questions, which makes his claim of miraculous seem even more hollow. He further suggests questions to try to get the bump underway. All of this instruction appears more about human skill and maybe even manipulation.

The prompt comes next. This is said to be "sudden insight about the person you are seeking to help."⁴¹ With all the body language clues and all the probing questions that we are asking, it would only follow that we would form some conclusions about the person with whom we are interacting. One keeps asking, "What is so miraculous about this?"

Wilkinson is not selling inside information about miracles; he is *selling techniques*. He admits that fact when he states:

"I said, no previous experience was required. No special degree, talent, or qualification either. But for that to be true, wouldn't there have to be skills we could learn and an approach that would bring success — not just once but regularly — in our new life in Everyday Miracle Territory? Of course, Heaven's part in delivering miracles would still be full of mystery, just as you'd expect, but our part would have to be very down-to-earth. Thankfully, a simple, self-evident approach to delivering miracles does exist. In fact, the ideas can be understood by a ten-year-old. ... In the next section of the book, which deals with three special delivery miracles, the sequence of the steps becomes even more impor-

tant. When taken in order, they will help you guide a conversation toward a specific, known miracle outcome."⁴²

That is not exactly what Paul told the Corinthians. He never gave out keys, steps, and techniques for miracles, but did remind them that God sovereignly distributes gifts according to His will. If Wilkinson were honest, he would title his book, *Techniques and Keys To Manipulate God and People — Cold Reading Made Easy*.

TRYING TO KEEP TRACK OF THE KEYS

The last miracle-related signal is the alert, which Wilkinson labels a "fear alert," defined as "a signal you receive from yourself."⁴³ The fear alert seems to be one questioning himself and the signals he is getting. In the end, Wilkinson admits that reading these signals is "a natural and immediately usable skill."⁴⁴ That should really seal the deal, but as television marketing pioneer Ron Popeil always said, "But wait! There's more!" Wilkinson presses on to elaborate on "Five Steps That Lead to a Miracle Delivery."⁴⁵ He will then move on to "Three Keys To Special Delivery Miracles."⁴⁶ Wilkinson and Kopp have more keys than a locksmith. This system becomes so complex and wearisome, it makes the Bible seem all the more simple and refreshing.

Everything is orchestrated, even to the point of doing certain things to "Open the Heart," that is "preparing another's heart to receive what God wants to do."⁴⁷ This is done with various techniques including: "Maintain eye contact. ... Soften and lower your voice. ... Slow down and practice pausing. ... Relax your posture. ... Invite more heart sharing. ... Practice empathy."⁴⁸ However, we're not quite done yet. Wilkinson has a further list of seven leading questions to ask the person,⁴⁹ and then introduces another set of "keys" for special delivery miracles. These are "The Money Key ... The Dream Key ... The Forgiveness Key."⁵⁰

Wilkinson's system becomes so cumbersome, so dense, so detailed, that the average person will surely get bogged down with keys, nudges,

bumps, prompts, body language, and questions to ask — all to the point of total confusion. Rather than trying to remember and employ all these signals, the Christian would be better served using the time and energy to memorize Scripture.

THE GOD POCKET AND PHARISEES

Next, the reader is introduced to “the God pocket,”⁵¹ which is a place in the wallet or purse where money is kept that is to be given away. This would exclude a large number who live paycheck to paycheck, but perhaps could include those who have made hundreds of thousands of dollars (perhaps even millions) from royalties of best-selling books like *The Prayer of Jabez*.

Wilkinson writes of the various episodes where he gave money to people out of his God pocket. Wilkinson discusses Matthew 6:1-4, regarding a believer doing charitable deeds in secret, but he never quite sees or understands the relationship to himself.⁵² Exalting and memorializing what one has given away by writing a book about it is one of the very things Matthew 6:1-4 is addressing. Wilkinson zeros in on the verses with fancy footwork:

“Aren’t we supposed to give money in secret, not in public as with the God Pocket? I applaud people who are honestly trying to live by Jesus’ words in Matthew 6:1-4 about giving in secret. But this advice was aimed at people who were selfishly motivated to get the most public recognition possible for their giving. Jesus was confronting the prideful model offered by the religious sect known as the Pharisees, who were deliberately ostentatious in their giving.”⁵³

Wilkinson tries to shift this precept onto the Pharisees and suggests that to publicly display giving (as he does) only speaks to motive. He is wrong. The prohibition about public recognition may speak to motive by extension, but Jesus is speaking to the *practice* of the public display of giving and amplifies His intent by adding

“that your charitable deed may be in secret” (Matthew 6:4). Not parading our piety is the obvious point, and it is not limited to the Pharisees. This specifically has to do with publicly viewed alms-giving, which is the kind of giving described by Wilkinson with his God pocket. We know that another biblical category of giving is the weekly offerings at Church (1 Corinthians 16:1-2). That is another way we give and is obviously public to a degree and technically not covered in Matthew 6 because the Church and its structure would be years away when Jesus delivered the Sermon on the Mount.

Charles Ryrie adds another very interesting point regarding alms giving and Matthew 6:

“Jewish tradition said that there was in the temple a ‘chamber of secrets’ into which the devout used to put their gifts in secret so that the poor could receive support therefrom in secret.”⁵⁴

Many do not have money to throw around. Even fewer can afford to give waiters or waitresses hundreds of dollars. When Wilkinson is asked about the wisdom of just giving money away and the reality that it may be used for drugs or alcohol or wrong things, he seems unaffected. He says “it’s much rarer than you might fear.”⁵⁵ How does he know that? Wouldn’t that depend on the area where the money is being distributed? There are some parts of some cities where one could almost guarantee the wrong use of the money. It is not unheard of for con artists, drug addicts, and others with dishonest motives to exploit churches and their members. While the Bible does declare, “blessed is he who is kind to the needy” (Proverbs 14:21, NIV), it nowhere affirms a “God pocket.” In fact, the Word advises wisdom and serious thought as far as giving, “A good man deals graciously and lends; he will guide his affairs with discretion” (Psalm 112:5).

The word *discretion* carries the idea of managing with judgment and being wise in the use of money. We need to be sure that people are really

needy and that we are not endorsing and supporting their sin or addictions.

DREAMS AND DELIVERIES

Wilkinson moves on to his “Dream Key.”⁵⁶ This chapter is the “Reader’s Digest version” of Wilkinson and Kopp’s *The Dream Giver* book. It combines positive thinking with wishful thinking. Somehow when one pursues a big dream God does miracles, or so Wilkinson says. The authors wrongly quote Ephesians 2:10 — which has nothing to do with dreams or miracles. To suggest it does is a gross distortion. The verse reads that “we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works.” Those good works are laid out clearly all through the Bible. They are practical things as clearly enunciated in Ephesians and the other Epistles. Things such as working on one’s marriage, separating from evil, redeeming the time, not grieving the Spirit, putting away bitterness and evil speaking, forgiving one another, and demonstrating kindness (Ephesians 4-5) are all clearly laid out. And that is only the beginning. Nothing about miracles, but a lot about how to live a life God’s way is described in the Epistles. Delivering a dream is very complex and hard to follow, but Wilkinson plows on and lays out another “five-step delivery process.”⁵⁷

The next key is “The Forgiveness Key.”⁵⁸ This chapter is a dense conglomeration of steps to follow and questions to ask to help deliver people from their unwillingness to forgive. It is an exercise in the old Rogerian techniques of non-directional and non-confrontational counseling. The larger question that is never dealt with is — can we forgive others even if they have not asked us to forgive them? This is something that even God does not do. The belief of God forgiving without repentance is called “Universalism” and rightly labeled heresy.

The Scripture is clear, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9,

emphasis added). If someone does not ask our forgiveness, in the true biblical sense of forgiveness, we cannot and need not forgive them (send away their sin) and reconcile with them. However, what we can do is not dwell on their transgression, give up bitterness, and be willing to forgive if ever asked. Dealing with and vanquishing our bitterness and thoughts of revenge or vengeance is necessary for our own well-being. Jesus made it clear, "Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day he returns to you, saying 'I repent,' you shall forgive him" (Luke 17:3-4, emphasis added).

Linguist W.E. Vine probes the depths of the Greek word for forgiveness:

"APHIEMI ... primarily, to send forth, send away ... Human forgiveness is to be strictly analogous to Divine forgiveness, e.g., Matt. 6:12. If certain conditions are fulfilled, there is no limitation to Christ's law of forgiveness, Matt. 18:21, 22. The conditions are repentance and confession, Matt. 18:15-17; Luke 17:3."⁵⁹

Wilkinson's version of forgiveness without any repentance or condition opens a number of interesting questions. What do we do about church discipline and unrepentant church members in gross sin? Do we just forget about it and look the other way? What about a pedophile who has abused a child in a local church? Do we just "forgive"? Forgiveness is a transaction, something that Wilkinson apparently misses. And it is not as simplistic as he makes it.

NOT CORRECTABLE

Apparently Wilkinson is not open to correction or adjustment on anything he has written. He is bold to say, "Some may debate the terminology in the book or take exception to my interpretations. But that doesn't bother me much."⁶⁰ He already knows some will rightly object to his unbibli-

cal terminology but he says in effect, "Who cares." His pride is also staggering:

"I used to see *myself* as someone who might experience a miracle someday. Now I see that God is ready to do miracles through me regularly to meet important needs for others. (And I'm on Heaven's list of reliable miracle delivery agents)."⁶¹

Wilkinson addresses pastors and asks them to "consider preaching through these topics to further equip your congregation to live in a miraculous partnership with the Spirit."⁶² He teases ministers by suggesting if the pastors get the people into his miracle program, their "church would be bursting at the seams with people who have witnessed what God can do through them and who can't wait to learn more."⁶³ He does not mention that the cost is really high and is a lot more than just the \$22.99 spent to purchase his book. The cost is standing in the pulpit without the Bible and preaching Bruce Wilkinson and his experiences and stories. In effect Wilkinson is saying, "Preach me and my undocumented stories, not the Scripture, for church growth."

While reading through *You Were Born for This*, one might hear the words from the old Superman television program: "Faster than a speeding bullet, more powerful than a locomotive, able to leap tall buildings in a single bound. ... It's Superman!" Yet one may more suitably recall Dorothy's disappointment that the Wizard of Oz turned out to be a mere fallible man behind a curtain operating levers and not a miraculous wonder worker. And then there was also Professor Marvel, the Wizard's pre-Oz character back in Kansas, who in Wilkinson-like fashion "nudged" young Dorothy Gale to go back to her home to Auntie Em and Uncle Henry with cold readings and information gleaned from mundane and underhanded means.

The knowledge that God is somehow at work in all the events of our lives, however mysterious, is a comforting thought (Philippians 2:13). That we know God is working all

things together for our good to conform us to Christ's image (Romans 8:28-29) is doubly comforting. That His plans and purposes will never be thwarted is an antidote to discouragement (Isaiah 46:10).

But in Wilkinson's parallel universe, the English language is made to stand on its head. Human techniques that anyone can learn and use are called miracles and everything is ratcheted up to amazing extremes. Wilkinson looks more like the man behind the curtain when put under biblical scrutiny. In his world, giving away money is deemed miraculous. Cold readings (and perhaps clairvoyance) are characterized as miraculous. Words are coined and called part of the miracle process. A maze of contrived "keys" are constructed and taught and called mechanisms for miracles. No believer should ever be misled like this. We were not born for miracles, but born to know God and Christ, serve Him, and bring glory to His name (Ephesians 3:21), whatever our individual calling.

When Wilkinson and Kopp turn water into wine, raise the dead, still a storm, heal a leper, walk on water, are unaffected by a poisonous serpent bite, or give sight to the blind, then perhaps Christians can accept and acknowledge them as modern miracle men. Until then we should remain skeptical and guarded.

Endnotes:

1. Bruce Wilkinson, *You Were Born for This*. Colorado Springs, Colo.: Multnomah Books, 2009, pp. 158, 159.
2. See further, G. Richard Fisher, "The Christianizing of Human Potential Philosophies - Is Bruce Wilkinson's Dream Giver a Borrowed Daydream?," *The Quarterly Journal*, April-June 2004, pp. 1, 15-24.
3. Prof. John Malan, "Wilkinson's Dream For Africa Shattered," ellipsis and italics in original. Document available at: <http://www.discernment-ministries.org/AfricaDreamShattered.htm>. See also, "Dream Taker?," *The Quarterly Journal*, April-June 2006, pp. 3, 27.
4. *You Were Born for This*, op. cit., pg. 41.
5. *Ibid.*, pg. 4.
6. *Ibid.*, pg. 5.
7. *Ibid.*, pg. 7.
8. *Ibid.*, pp. 50-51.
9. *Ibid.*
10. *Ibid.*, pg. 16.
11. *Ibid.*
12. *Ibid.*, pp. 49, 51.

13. Dave Breese, *Know The Marks of Cults*. Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1975, pg. 69.
14. *You Were Born for This*, op. cit., pg. 51.
15. *Ibid.*, pg. 26, ellipsis and italics in original.
16. *Ibid.*, pg. 54.
17. F.E. Hamilton and R.L. Harris in Merrill C. Tenney, *Zondervan Pictorial Bible Encyclopedia*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing, 1976, Vol. 4, pg. 920.
18. Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1999, Vol. 1, pg. 609.
19. *Zondervan Pictorial Bible Encyclopedia*, op. cit., Vol. 4, pg. 921, italics in original.
20. *Know The Marks of Cults*, op. cit., pp. 58-59, 63.
21. *You Were Born for This*, op. cit., pg. 45.
22. *Ibid.*, pg. 21.
23. *Ibid.*, pg. 23.
24. New Testament passages which list or name spiritual gifts are Romans 12:6-8, 1 Corinthians 12-14, Ephesians 4:11, and 1 Peter 4:10-11. None of these passages indicate a spiritual gift of "nudging."
25. *You Were Born for This*, op. cit., pp. 93-94.
26. Merrill F. Unger, *Biblical Demonology*. Wheaton, Ill.: Scripture Press, 1952, pg. 161.
27. *You Were Born for This*, op. cit., pg. 87.
28. *Ibid.*, pg. 20.
29. *Ibid.*, pg. 103.
30. Henry C. Thiessen, *Introductory Lectures in Systematic Theology*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1973, pg. 126.
31. William Evans, *The Great Doctrines of the Bible*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1976, pp. 31-32.
32. *You Were Born for This*, op. cit., pg. 108.
33. *Ibid.*
34. *Ibid.*, italics in original.
35. J.D. Douglas, Editor, *New 20th Century Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1991, pg. 682.
36. *You Were Born for This*, op. cit., pp. 113, 114.
37. *Ibid.*, pg. 114.
38. *Ibid.*, pg. 115.
39. *Ibid.*, pg. 117.
40. *Ibid.*, pp. 117-118.
41. *Ibid.*, pg. 122.
42. *Ibid.*, pp. 131, 133.
43. *Ibid.*, pg. 126.
44. *Ibid.*, pg. 129.
45. *Ibid.*, pg. 131.
46. *Ibid.*, pg. 147.
47. *Ibid.*, pg. 137.
48. *Ibid.*, pp. 138, 139, italics in original.
49. *Ibid.*, pg. 145.
50. *Ibid.*, pg. 150.
51. *Ibid.*, pg. 159.
52. *Ibid.*, pg. 168.
53. *Ibid.*
54. Charles C. Ryrie, *The Ryrie Study Bible*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1976, note for Matthew 6:4, pg. 1453.
55. *You Were Born for This*, op. cit., pg. 169.
56. *Ibid.*, pg. 171.
57. *Ibid.*, pg. 184.
58. *Ibid.*, pg. 193.
59. W.E. Vine, *The Expanded Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament*. Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1984, pg. 452.
60. *You Were Born for This*, op. cit., pg. 213.
61. *Ibid.*, pg. 215, italic in original.
62. *Ibid.*, pg. 220.
63. *Ibid.*



2012: A Spaced-Out Oddity

(continued from page 1)

"The newest band of [doomsday] soothsayers is telling us that the world is going to end on or about December 21, 2012. ... The New Age promoters of the 2012 doomsday prophecy got it from their interpretation of the Mayan calendar. Among their other achievements, the Maya — native Americans whose ancestral lands are in Guatemala, Belize, the Mexican states of Tabasco and Chiapas, the Yucatan Peninsula, and the western regions of Honduras and El Salvador — developed a calendar which could accurately track the movements of the sun and the constellations over thousands of years. *Supposedly* (according to the Long Count of the Mayan calendar), the present world cycle, the Age of the Jaguar, began on August 13, 3114 BC, and is due to end on December 21, 2012."³

Christian pastor and author Mark Hitchcock explains: "The Maya weren't just interested in time, they

were obsessed with it. ... The Mayan calendar keepers painstakingly charted the cycles of the moon, the sun, and Venus."⁴ Further, "The Mayan obsession with time can be seen in the fact that they developed approximately 20 different calendars."⁵

Maya expert Mark Van Stone notes:

"Just as we do, the Maya had *several calendars* to record time. The Maya had very complex and interlocking calendar systems, which were as precise as modern day calendars. In the same way our Gregorian count ties to an important event, —the birth of Christ— the Maya calendar also counts forward from an important 'Creation' date, 11 August 3114 BCE. The Maya recorded time mainly using 3 interconnected calendars — the *Tzolk'in*, the *Haab*, and the *Long Count*. Like us, they kept track of other cycles, but these only appeared in special circumstances."⁶

Van Stone also says:

"...the *Long Count* (the calendar which reaches a critical number in 2012). This is a number, used

similarly to our numerical 'year 2008,' counting 'years' and days since the last Creation in 3114 BC. (The 'years' here counted, called *Haabs*, are only 360 days long.)"⁷

He further observes, "Immediately after the Long Count is the *Tzolk'in* date. This is a divinatory calendar of 260 days."⁸ And that "**the ancient Maya were fanatical about situating their events in time.** Often the date on a monument will occupy more space than the event that it features."⁹

2012: DOOMSDAY ARRIVAL OR PARADISE REGAINED?

One source has correctly noted:

"All [the 2012 doomsayers] agree that terrible things will happen to the Earth in 2012, but many also assert that this will be the beginning of a new age of happiness and spiritual growth for the survivors."¹⁰

Indeed, some who believe that December 21, 2012 is significant believe that this date will bring the end of the world. Whereas, others believe that this date will bring about "an era of quantum transformation" and a

“new age of human consciousness.” And still others believe that somehow both of these things will occur — for example, that after a global catastrophe occurs, a “New Age” will dawn for the survivors.¹¹ This latter “both/and” scenario was portrayed in the film *2012*.

One article names several of the key proponents and popularizers of some sort of special significance about December 21, 2012, based on the Maya calendar: José Argüelles, Terence McKenna, John Major Jenkins, Whitley Strieber, Adrian Gilbert, Daniel Pinchbeck, and Lawrence Joseph.¹² There are, of course, others as well, including Patrick Geryl, Gregg Braden, and Graham Hancock.

While it is true, as mentioned above, that some sources have an optimistic view of 2012, the focus of this article will be on the doomsday view.

One source who deserves special mention is José Argüelles. Mark Hitchcock explains:

“The man who put 2012 ‘on the map’ is José Argüelles, who authored a book in 1987 titled *The Mayan Factor*. He also established the Harmonic Convergence in 1987. It was a peace initiative that occurred on August 16-17, 1987. People all over the world gathered at allegedly sacred sites to awaken the ‘energy grid’ and bring in a 25-year era of spiritual growth that will culminate in 2012. For Argüelles, ‘2012 is a marker, a wake-up call in our DNA,’ and the cycle will culminate during June-December 2012. After the Harmonic Convergence, the 2012 apocalyptic subculture began to emerge. They began a 25-year countdown to 2012. The 2012 movement has remained under the radar for almost 20 years, but has suddenly exploded into the mainstream.”¹³

As a result of researching for this article, it is difficult to determine whether José Argüelles is delusional,

a clever although unscrupulous businessman, or both. One 2012 researcher states, for instance:

“An unnerving development of late is that Argüelles has begun referring to himself as ‘Valum Votan,’ the reincarnation of the great [7th-century A.D.] Maya king of Palenque [called Pacal Votan].”¹⁴

Although the *basis* for predicting the end of the world on December 21, 2012 is that the Maya Long Count calendar ends its cycle on that date (or, according to others, on December 23, 2012), a host of other supporting reasons are usually brought to bear in order to bolster this theory. Two kinds of reasons are given: “prophetic” and “scientific.”

VARIOUS “PROPHECIES”

On the back cover of one Christian book dealing with 2012, prophecies from a number of sources are listed, including the Bible, Judaism, Islam, the Web Bot Project, the Q’ero Inca shamans, the Toltecs and Aztecs, the Book of Changes (also known as the I Ching), the Hopi Indians, the Cherokee Indians, Merlin the Magician, Mother Shipton, Nostradamus, Roman Catholic prophecies, including the “Last-pope Prophecy” (of St. Malachy — not to be confused with the biblical prophet Malachi), Hindu, Buddhist, and Zoroastrian expectations.¹⁵

We will examine four of these here.

1. The Bible. — There is certainly no Bible verse that specifically says the world will end in 2012. In fact, according to Bible prophecy, it seems that some things would need to occur first. Many believe that the rapture of the Church needs to occur first. And many believe that the Bible teaches that the reign of the Antichrist and the Second Coming of Christ need to occur before the world can end. Doomsday concerns over 2012 seem to be largely silent about Jesus, or even about God; or at least about any major role for them regarding 2012. The 2012 doomsday scenario is a “Christ-less apocalypse.”

Although there are some appeals to biblical passages — in Revelation or in Isaiah — the primary support seems to be mystical: the so-called “Bible code.”¹⁶ Bible prophecy teacher Mark Hitchcock explains how the “Bible code” operates:

“The basic tenet underlying the whole Bible code phenomenon is that there are hidden, cryptic codes in the Hebrew text of the Old Testament — ‘a Bible beneath the Bible’ — that can be discovered by using computers to search for the letters of specific words that occur at a specific interval or spacing. The process is referred to as ‘equidistant letter sequencing’ (ELS), or the ‘skip’ process. ... In other words, the sequencer finds a Hebrew letter, skips ten letters, finds the next Hebrew letter, then skips ten more letters, and continues this process until the ‘hidden’ word is revealed. The skip can be of any length as long as the skips are equal, and the word can be spelled forward, backward, vertically, horizontally, or diagonally.”¹⁷

Using the “Bible code,” its popularizer, “[Michael] Drosnin points specifically to 2012 as an ominous, even terminal year. According to Drosnin, the words *earth annihilated* correspond to the year 2012.”¹⁸

Hitchcock gives seven reasons for rejecting the “Bible code,”¹⁹ including examples of past failed prophecies based on it.²⁰ Among the reasons is:

“...there is absolutely no biblical support for the practice of finding codes hidden in the Bible. Neither Jesus nor the apostles ever did such, even though they quoted or alluded to the Old Testament hundreds of times.”²¹

Concluding his discussion of the subject of the “Bible code” theory, Hitchcock states:

“Bible codes are totally unreliable for predicting the future, including any events related to 2012 or the end of the world. If you search long enough and

make the skips between letters far enough apart, you can find just about anything you want to find."²²

2. The Papal Prophecies of St. Malachy. — St. Malachy (1094-1148) was a 12th-century Roman Catholic bishop of Armagh, Ireland. He was a friend of the monastery abbot and hymnist Bernard of Clairvaux. Bernard wrote the "Life of St. Malachy."

Regarding his supposed "papal prophecies," one Roman Catholic source says:

"But Malachy is better known today for the alleged prophecies about those who would be Pope from the time of Celestine II, who died in 1144, to the end of the world. According to the alleged list, which was not discovered until more than four centuries after Malachy's death, there would be 112 Popes after Celestine, ending with Peter the Roman, 'who will feed his flock amid many tribulations, after which the seven-hilled city [Rome] will be destroyed and the dreadful Judge will judge the people.' Peter the Roman is the only Pope listed by name; the others are described by short phrases that lend themselves to varied interpretations."²³

Of the 112 popes listed in the prophecy, the current pope is number 111. Therefore, it is speculated that the next pope, called "Peter the Roman" in Malachy's list, is the last pope before the end of the world. In other words, if the current pope, Pope Benedict XVI, dies prior to December 21, 2012, then the next pope, whose actual or symbolic name, according to the prophecy, is Peter the Roman, could be head of the Roman Catholic Church at the end of the world, which the 2012 prognosticators believe will be December 21, 2012.

Many contend that the prophecies are a forgery, not written by St. Malachy at all. One contemporary Roman Catholic dictionary says:

"[The prophecies of St. Malachy are] falsely attributed to St. Mal-

achy, Bishop of Armagh (d. 1148); [instead they are] actually forgeries by an unknown writer in the sixteenth century. The first seventy-five 'prophecies' are fairly accurate because they were actually history, but from then on the list becomes vague, fanciful, and subject to wide interpretation."²⁴

Except for the 112th "prophecy" about Peter the Roman, the other 111 so-called "prophecies of Malachy" simply consist of a short Latin phrase, supposedly descriptive in some way, of each pope.²⁵ But as contemporary Roman Catholic educator James Drumme has noted, "the prophecies are so vague, and require such imagination to fit them to modern-day Pontiffs, that they are probably spurious."²⁶ Furthermore, some have suggested that it is possible that there might be an indeterminate number of additional popes between the 111th pope on the list and Peter the Roman.²⁷ Nevertheless, some today still regard the prophecies of St. Malachy as worthy of belief. Doubtless they will be eagerly watching for the next pope, whose papacy will supposedly signal the end of the world.

3. Nostradamus. — Nostradamus, whose name was Michel de Nostredame (1503-1566), is one of the most famous seers in Western history.²⁸ He was both an astrologer and a physician. He seems to be referenced whenever prophecies of doomsday are discussed, because his prophecies are filled with themes of gloom and destruction.

One source analyzing his work says:

"By 1550 Nostradamus had become fully engaged in the prophecy business. ... he soon embarked upon a project with far-reaching implications — the *Centuries*. Composing prophetic four-line verses [called quatrains], he arranged them in ten books of one hundred verses each — hence the name *Centuries*. Nostradamus's fame rests upon this volume, which contains prophecies from his time to 3797. The

quatrains are not in chronological order. They jump back and forth through history, allegedly prophesying events at different points in time. Moreover, Nostradamus's predictions are couched in obscure, ambiguous symbols — and can thus be interpreted in many ways.²⁹ To further complicate matters, he does not date his prophecies. Nostradamus's vagueness can in part be attributed to the threat of persecution; it may also be that he enjoyed being mysterious."³⁰

The same author notes:

"Nostradamus is notable for having furthered a different approach to doomsday. Nearly all previous end-time thinkers had expected God to bring an end to the world. ... [But] Nostradamus advanced the notion of a secular end of the world. He saw the apocalypse as a political event; the world would end as a result of secular causes. Accordingly, Nostradamus never spoke of a divine judgment or a future paradise."³¹

Likewise, those who predict a 2012 doomsday also tend to portray a secular apocalypse, rather than one brought about by God.

Nostradamus was a Roman Catholic. However, the Roman Catholic Church has distanced itself from his prophecies. *The New Encyclopedia Britannica* notes, for instance:

"The subject of many commentaries, Nostradamus' prophecies were condemned in 1781 by the Congregation of the Index, the body set up by the Roman Catholic Church for the examination of books and manuscripts."³²

Roman Catholic educator James Drumme, wrote:

"The [Roman Catholic] Church made clear its attitude toward Nostradamus in 1781 when it put his works on the Index of books that Catholics were forbidden to read without ecclesiastical

authorization. That Index no longer exists, but the reasons why the Church included the unreliable writings of Nostradamus on it are just as valid today."³³

His prophecies' vague, obscure, and ambiguous nature guarantees the highest possible chances of at least some of them seeming to be fulfilled. Nevertheless, *The Encyclopedia Americana* states that, "Although his predictions were often wrong, Nostradamus' reputation as the greatest Renaissance seer appears unshakable."³⁴ Christian investigative reporter Richard Abanes notes:

"In truth, Nostradamus may actually be history's *worst* prognosticator. According to well-known illusionist/magician James Randi (famed debunker of fraudulent faith healers and psychics), an investigation of one hundred three prophecies by Nostradamus that specifically mention a date, place, or person yielded an amazing discovery: none of them came true! ... How could a prophet so inaccurate gain such widespread notoriety?"³⁵

Those who believe in Nostradamus' prophecies at times do ingenious word juggling and twisting to make it appear that some of his prophecies that failed actually came true. But their efforts sometimes fall apart upon closer examination.

Christian author B.J. Oropeza gives a fitting summation:

"Finally, Nostradamus's means of prophesying conflicted with Scripture. He went into trances, consulted horoscopes and used other forms of divination (Deut 18). By Scripture's standards, his false prophecies make him a false prophet."³⁶

4. The Web Bot Project. — Synthia Andrews and Colin Andrews have this to say about the Web Bot Project:

"This project has been underway since the late 1990s. The person who originated it prefers to remain anonymous and just calls

himself 'Cliff.' It relies on a system of 'spiders' that 'crawl' the Internet, much like a search engine, looking for particular kinds of words. According to Cliff, the spiders, 'target discussion groups, translation sites, and places where regular people post a lot of text. No, we don't do e-mail scanning: that's what we have the government for.' ... Whenever the spider finds a keyword, it takes a small 2,048-byte snip of the surrounding text and sends it to a central collection point. Over a period of time the 'chatter points' concentrate, revealing a spike in intensity. Like the Bible Code, the technology doesn't come out with direct messages. It gives words or phrases that reflect people's thought processes. Web Bot technology appears to tap into preconscious awareness, or the collective unconscious. It finds patterns before events occur."³⁷

And the pair further note:

"When the Mayan calendar end date is used as a keyword, there is only one Web Bot prediction. It predicts a pole shift in 2012. Since this is a main theme people are discussing, you may wonder what use it has. The interesting fact is that the spikes arrive before the events, not after."³⁸

The authors list three events that the Web Bot Project seemed to have some success predicting.³⁹ On the one hand, they suggest that the Project taps into a sort of collective ESP that mankind supposedly has.⁴⁰ On the other hand, they appear to imply that perhaps people are magically creating things by thinking about them!⁴¹ This is very reminiscent of the philosophy contained in the contemporary New Thought/New Age book *The Secret*,⁴² as well as the idea of modern-day Word Faith teachers who teach that a person's spoken words create realities.⁴³

It should be obvious that the only thing the Web Bot Project is capable of revealing is what people are currently discussing. It is utterly inca-

ble of predicting the future or of *creating* the future.

Secondly, to attempt to use the Web Bot Project, the Bible Code, or some other means of predicting the future is to involve oneself in the practice of divination — a practice clearly forbidden in the Bible:

"When you come into the land which the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not learn to follow the abominations of those nations. There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, or one who practices witchcraft, or a soothsayer, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, or one who conjures spells, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. For all who do these things are an abomination to the LORD, and because of these abominations the LORD your God drives them out from before you. You shall be blameless before the LORD your God. For these nations which you will dispossess listened to soothsayers and diviners; but as for you, the LORD your God has not appointed such for you" (Deuteronomy 18:9-14).

APPEALS TO "SCIENCE"

The 2012 doomsday advocates don't just appeal to various mystical and occultic prophecies to argue for a supposed Maya-predicted end of the world in 2012. They also try to enlist science — actually, *pseudo-science* — to support a 2012 apocalypse. Various scenarios are projected that might end most life on earth. One popular theory that has made the rounds is that there is a "Planet X," sometimes referred to as "Nibiru" (or "Eris"), heading toward earth. David Morrison, a NASA astrobiologist, has received many questions about this "planet." He explains:

"Although the name of the Sumerian god Nibiru is most often given to this object, I quickly learned that some Web sites were also calling it Planet X or Eris. Planet X is a generic term used

by astronomers over the past century for any unknown or hypothesized planets beyond Pluto. Eris is an actual, newly discovered dwarf planet, a little larger than Pluto but much farther away. By conflating these, some were claiming that NASA had found Nibiru or that Eris was going to fly past Earth in 2012."⁴⁴

In a follow-up article about Nibiru, Morrison catalogs other dangers, supposedly based on science, that might happen on December 21, 2012:

"As the [Planet X/Nibiru] story grows in complexity, many more doomsday scenarios are being suggested, often unrelated to Nibiru. These include a reversal of the Earth's magnetic field, severe solar storms associated with the eleven-year solar cycle (which may peak in 2012), a reversal of Earth's rotation axis, a 90 degree flip of the rotation axis, bombardment by large comets or asteroids, and bombardment by gamma rays or various unspecified lethal rays coming from the center of the Milky Way Galaxy or the 'dark rift' seen in a nearby galactic spiral arm. A major theme has become celestial alignments, which fascinate laypersons. Supposedly, the Sun will align with the galactic center (or maybe with the Milky Way Dark Rift) on December 21, 2012, subjecting us to potentially deadly forces."⁴⁵

One exponent of a 2012 doomsday is Lawrence Joseph, about whom one article reports:

"Lawrence Joseph, author of *Apocalypse 2012*, summarizes almost every available path to global disaster to make the case that the world is about to end, and that the Maya predicted it. ... He says that on December 21, 2012, at 11:11 pm Universal Time [Greenwich Mean Time], the solar system will eclipse the view from Earth of the center of the Milky Way, 'disrupting whatever energy typically streams to the

Earth' from the center of our home galaxy. This will 'throw out of kilter vital mechanisms of our bodies and of the Earth.' (To inject a note of realism here: the center of our galaxy is 26,000-28,000 light-years from our solar system. One wonders what real energy flow could be disrupted.) Meanwhile, all those who have ever lived on the Earth will have been reincarnated by 2012, in order to 'fulfill the sacred mission of that year.'"⁴⁶

David Morrison has received questions about reports submitted to him at NASA's "Ask An Astrobiologist" website (<http://astrobiology.nasa.gov/ask-an-astrobiologist>). In two articles written for the *Skeptical Inquirer* magazine, he gives the substance of some of the questions he has received, along with his responses to the questions. Given below are his responses (or excerpts from some of his responses) to inquirers, gleaned from his first article in the *Skeptical Inquirer* about these matters:

"The bottom line is that Nibiru is a myth, with no basis whatever in fact. To an astronomer, persistent claims about a planet that is nearby but invisible are just plain silly."⁴⁷

"Please don't be scared; the entire Nibiru story, as well as any concerns about Eris threatening Earth are a hoax, nothing more."⁴⁸

"There is no planet alignment in 2012 or any other time in the next several decades. As to the Earth being in the center of the Milky Way, I don't know what this phrase means. If you are referring to the Milky Way Galaxy, we are rather far toward the edge of this spiral galaxy, some 30,000 light-years from the center."⁴⁹

"Quite a few people have been asking me about the danger of a polar shift. ... 'Polar shift' seems to have become a buzzword on websites that promote catastrophist ideas and various con-

spiracy theories, and so this phrase gets passed on from one blog to another without ever being defined. If this means some sudden change in the position of the pole (that is, the rotation axis of the Earth), then that is impossible. There is no point in speculating about the consequences of something that has never happened and never will. ... The bottom line is that there is no possibility of a 'polar shift' and no danger associated with one."⁵⁰

"The magnetic pole is different; it regularly shifts position by a small amount, and ... the polarity of the Earth's magnetic pole reverses roughly once per million years (on average). This magnetic reversal appears to be generated internally and not to be influenced by any outside events. There is no indication that it will happen anytime soon, but more to the point, a magnetic reversal would not cause any of the horrible consequences that you find associated with 'pole shift' on the catastrophist Internet sites."⁵¹

Near the end of this article, Morrison writes:

"Some even accept ... that the world is 'turning upside down.' They also accept that we will be in the center of the Milky Way Galaxy, 30,000 light-years away, in 2012. The fact that none of this is being reported in newspapers or on television is simply accepted as evidence of a grand conspiracy. Do they ever ask themselves why governments are pursuing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, worried about global warming, and conducting an energetic presidential election in the U.S. if they all know the world will end in four years? It has been a revelation to me to glimpse this underworld of conspiracy theories and doomsday predictions."⁵²

Some people have predicted a catastrophic "solar maximum" for the

year 2012. One source notes:

“There’s always some type of sunspot activity happening on the sun’s surface. However, every 11 years there’s a surge of activity, called the solar maximum. Five to six years after the surge, or maximum activity time, there is a minimum activity period, called the solar minimum.”⁵³

Later, this same source says, “The next solar maximum will be in 2012 and is expected to produce severe storms and electromagnetic disruption.”⁵⁴

However, in a section of his evangelistic website “Reasons To Believe” that deals specifically with the 2012 hype, Christian astronomer and author Hugh Ross states:

“While it’s true that the Sun will be at sunspot and flaring maximum in 2012, such a solar event occurs every eleven years. The worst case scenario for a solar maximum is that a few giant solar flares could temporarily disrupt satellite and radio communications. Some GPS satellites could possibly be knocked out, but certainly life on Earth would not be threatened. So far, sunspot monitoring indicates that the 2012 solar maximum will likely be moderate to minimal.”⁵⁵

The website also assures readers:

“From an astronomical perspective, no one should be particularly concerned about December 21, 2012. Dire warnings about Venetian gravity, Planet X, and solar flaring spring from misinformation and distortion, not on fact. From a biblical perspective, we all would do well to heed the words of Jesus: ‘Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come.’”⁵⁶

NASA astronomer David Morrison, mentioned above, writes:

“While I hope that many people who read my replies are pleased

to learn that the world is not about to end, I am surprised at so many angry responses. These come from people who seem to want the world to end in 2012, who are upset to be told that this catastrophe will not happen.”⁵⁷

DON’T BLAME IT ON THE MAYA

Although the December 21, 2012, doomsday date is based on the Maya Long Count calendar cycle end date, the previous “prophetic” and “scientific” warnings (and more besides) have been used to add support to the theory that the world will end at that time. So everything about this theory really depends on the meaning of the 5,125-year Maya Long Count calendar cycle that purportedly began on August 11, 3114 B.C.⁵⁸ and ends on December 21, 2012 (or, according to some, on December 23, 2012 — although it seems that most of the attention has been given to the former ending date rather than to this latter one). The start date and end date of this Maya Long Count calendar cycle are *both* written as 13.0.0.0. It is this date which supposedly correlates with the Gregorian calendar date of December 21 (or 23), 2012.

However, it does not appear that the Maya really believed that the end of their Long Count calendar cycle signified the end of the world.

Maya scholar Mark Van Stone wrote:

“Maya Scholars, in Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, Honduras, El Salvador and North America have been watching with amusement and dismay as self-styled experts proclaim that ancient Maya prophets foretold an earth-shattering happening to occur December 21, 2012. This predicted phenomenon gets described in contradictory but often cataclysmic fashion — as an ecological collapse, a sunspot storm, a rare cosmic conjunction of the earth, sun, and the galactic center, a new and awesome stage of our evolution, and even a sudden reversal of the Earth’s

magnetic field which will erase all our computer drives. ... In sum, the world as we know it will suddenly come to a screeching halt. These predictions are alleged to be prophecies by so-called ‘Ancient Mayans’ whose ‘astronomically precise’ calendar supposedly terminates on that date. According to such accounts, these mysterious Maya geniuses appeared suddenly, built an extraordinary civilization, designed in it clues for us, and then suddenly, inexplicably, vanished, as if they had completed their terrestrial mission. These same experts claim special credibility for the Maya prophecies by asserting that these historic sages, with their possible extraterrestrial origins, had tapped into an astonishing esoteric wisdom. ... First, let me affirm that the year 2012 does hold particular significance in Mayan scholarship. Those of us who study the ancient and modern Maya ... have been anticipating the end of the Maya Great Cycle for some time. ... We have known for half a century that this date probably correlates to December 21 (or December 23) in the year 2012 in the Gregorian calendar.”⁵⁹

In another article elsewhere on the same website, Van Stone states:

“There is nothing in the Maya or Aztec or ancient Mesoamerican prophecy to suggest that they prophesied a sudden or major change of any sort in 2012. The notion of a ‘Great Cycle’ coming to an end is completely a modern invention. *Maya inscriptions that predict the future consistently show that they expected life to go on pretty much the same forever.* At Palenque, for instance, they predicted that people in the year 4772 AD would be celebrating the anniversary of the coronation of their great king Pakal.”⁶⁰

He further notes:

“Even if we were to find evidence of actual Maya prophecies about 2012, that doesn’t make them true. Ap-

parently all of Christendom expected Jesus to return in the year 1000, for example.⁶¹ And maybe the most important question to ask was voiced to me by Bill Saturno, discoverer of the San Bartolo murals. If the Maya were such skilled prophets, how could they have missed the [Spanish] Conquest? 'Didn't see that one coming, did they?' The single most devastating disaster to befall the peoples of the Americas of all time, and not a word about it in the entire corpus of Mayan prophetic literature."⁶²

When discussing whether or not the Maya calendar was more accurate than our own — a common claim made in reference to the Maya — Van Stone says it:

"Depends how you define 'accurate.' ... Although it is technically incorrect to say the ancient Maya had a 'more accurate calendar than we do,' one must respect that the precision of their observations and their astronomical recordkeeping were astonishingly accurate. However, they were no more precise than the ancient Greeks, and considerably less accurate than our modern measurements. Claiming that the Maya calendar was 'more accurate' than the Gregorian implies, of course, that they had access to knowledge superior to our own, knowledge of a highly esoteric or even extra-terrestrial nature. This is simply not true. They simply used the tools they had at hand, and their penetrating, persistent intelligence to do the best they could. An advantage they possessed was a clearer, darker sky than we of the Industrial Age will ever see again."⁶³

In her book, *2012: Science or Superstition*, author and researcher Alexandra Bruce states:

"The Maya Long Count calendar had fallen out of use hundreds of years before the Spaniards arrived in Mesoamerica [where the Maya lived]. ... Technically, 2012

is NOT the 'end of the Maya calendar' because the Long Count is linear and theoretically infinite, with the ability to express any date in the past or future, much like the calendar used in the West. Also, there are many ancient Maya inscriptions with dates beyond 2012, notably one with a date that corresponds to October 21, 4772 ... December 21, 2012 does correspond to the end of the current World Age and the beginning of the next World Age, as described in the ancient Maya creation myth, the *Popol Vuh*. ... While it is true that the 2012 date marked the end of a World Age for the ancient Maya, most modern-day Maya do not believe that this date is particularly significant."⁶⁴

Another source notes:

"But for all the hype, there is little evidence the ancient Maya ever intended for the end of their calendar to be read as a portent for disaster. 'These prophecies of doom really don't have any basis in what we know about the Maya,' said Stephen Houston, a professor of anthropology at Brown University and a specialist of Maya hieroglyphic writing. 'The Maya descriptions barely talk about this event.' Instead, Houston said, the Maya saw their 'long count,' the longest of their cyclical calendars, coming to an end in 2012 but also beginning anew on that date, without disastrous consequences."⁶⁵

One final source makes a good segue into what will be said afterward:

"But scholars are bristling at attempts to link the ancient Maya with trends in contemporary spirituality. ... 'For the ancient Maya, it was a huge celebration to make it to the end of a whole [calendar] cycle,' says Sandra Noble, executive director of the Foundation for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Studies in

Crystal River, Fla. To render Dec. 21, 2012, as a doomsday or moment of cosmic shifting, she says, is 'a complete fabrication and a chance for a lot of people to cash in.' Part of the 2012 mystique stems from the stars. On the winter solstice in 2012, the sun will be aligned with the center of the Milky Way for the first time in about 26,000 years. This means that 'whatever energy typically streams to Earth from the center of the Milky Way will indeed be disrupted on 12/21/12 at 11:11 p.m. Universal Time,' [Lawrence] Joseph writes. But scholars doubt the ancient Maya extrapolated great meaning from anticipating the alignment — if they were even aware of what the configuration would be. Astronomers generally agree that 'it would be impossible the Maya themselves would have known that,' says Susan Milbrath, a Maya archaeoastronomer and a curator at the Florida Museum of Natural History. What's more, she says, 'we have no record or knowledge that they would think the world would come to an end at that point.' University of Florida anthropologist Susan Gillespie says the 2012 phenomenon comes 'from media and from other people making use of the Maya past to fulfill agendas that are really their own.'⁶⁶

THE UGLY TRUTH

New York Magazine reported on a promotional event for the movie *2012*, which took place in a ballroom at the Four Seasons at a city in Wyoming. Featured at the event were three "2012ologists" (a term that seems to refer to students and/or exponents of various theories about the year 2012 holding some special significance): Daniel Pinchbeck, John Major Jenkins, and Lawrence Joseph. All three are big names in the "2012ology" world, and all three have authored books championing some sort of significance associated with 2012. The words and attitudes of these famous 2012 authors regarding that year as reported are interesting:

"2012 is also the name of a big-budget disaster movie based on the Mayan scenarios depicted in [Daniel] Pinchbeck's books. To promote the film, Sony Pictures sponsored this junket, featuring the stars and director of the movie; three 2012ologists, including Pinchbeck. ... But nobody in the Four Seasons seemed to believe that the end was near, least of all Pinchbeck, who was once described in the *Times* as 'equal parts Jesuit and Jim Morrison' and is known for ingesting psychedelics in the Amazon. 'I'm not a fundamentalist about the date,' Pinchbeck said, and his fellow 2012ologists nodded in agreement. ... 'Two thousand twelve is this date, you know, which there's a lot of ideas about,' said the [movie's] director Roland Emmerich. ... 'And we chose the destructive one.' After giving PowerPoint presentations, the 2012ologists were ... subjected to a gauntlet of five-minute television interviews. They were asked countless variations on the same question: 'Will the world really end in 2012?' The 2012ologists answered, patiently at first, 'Actually, the Maya never predicted any doomsday scenario,' [they said]. ... By the time the 2012ologists sat down with me, off-camera, they looked beaten down. 'I think the real story is that 2012 is not about doomsday,' John Major Jenkins said. At some point, each of the 2012ologists used the word *counterproductive* to describe the film's catastrophic vision. So why were they there? 'That's a good question,' said Lawrence Joseph. 'I got a message today that the tuition for my kids' private school's going up. And what does that mean? That means I've got to sell *x* number of more books to pay it. And as true to my principles and beliefs as I'd like to be, you know, I've got to come up with another ten grand next year above what I expected. There's a certain level of compro-

mise that is indefensible but, to me, unavoidable.' While I talked to Jenkins and Joseph, Pinchbeck hunched over his BlackBerry and pounded out e-mails with his thumbs. When I asked the 2012ologists how they planned to sell books in 2013, Pinchbeck glanced up from his screen and offered, with a glint of hope, '[The George Orwell book] 1984 still sells well.'"⁶⁷

SO WHAT IF THE MAYA CALENDAR CYCLE ENDS IN 2012?

However, let's suppose for a moment that the Maya *had* actually prophesied the end of the world in 2012. Christians need to first put their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and in the words of the living God as given in the Bible. It is His recorded Word (the Bible) that is true and holy; not words from pagan or occultic sources; nor the words of New Age hucksters. Nor are these pagan prophecies on a par with God's Word.

The prophet Jeremiah noted the difference between the words of God and the prophecies of men:

"I have heard what the prophets have said who prophesy lies in My name, saying, 'I have dreamed, I have dreamed!' How long will this be in the heart of the prophets who prophesy lies? Indeed they are prophets of the deceit of their own heart, who try to make My people forget My name by their dreams which everyone tells his neighbor, as their fathers forgot My name for Baal. The prophet who has a dream, let him tell a dream; and he who has My word, let him speak My word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat?' says the LORD. 'Is not My word like a fire?' says the LORD, 'And like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?' ... 'Behold, I am against those who prophesy false dreams,' says the LORD, 'and tell them, and cause My people to err by their lies and by their recklessness. Yet I did not send them

or command them; therefore they shall not profit this people at all,' says the LORD" (Jeremiah 23:25-29, 32).

And the Lord told Isaiah the prophet:

"And when they say to you, 'Seek those who are mediums and wizards, who whisper and mutter,' should not a people seek their God? Should they seek the dead on behalf of the living? To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isaiah 8:19-20).

And again, Isaiah the prophet testified of God's words to him:

"For the LORD spoke thus to me with a strong hand, and instructed me that I should not walk in the way of this people, saying: 'Do not say, "A conspiracy," concerning all that this people call a conspiracy, nor be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled. The LORD of hosts, Him you shall hallow; let Him be your fear, and let Him be your dread'" (Isaiah 8:11-13).

Part of this latter passage is reminiscent of the words of Jesus to His disciples in the Upper Room on the night before His crucifixion, when He told them:

"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me" (John 14:1).

And also:

"These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

SUMMING UP

Christian astronomer and author Hugh Ross has written:

"The Mayan 'end' date is also said to align with Incan and Egyptian calendars, as well as with the prophecies of Nostradamus, Edgar Cayce, and I Ching.

Perhaps few people realize that doomsayers for over a hundred years have been alleging that the Mayan, Incan, and Egyptian calendars predict a specific, imminent date for the end of the world. In my lifetime, over half dozen such dates have come and gone without incident. A closer look explains why: these calendars and prophecies are so esoteric, so vague, that one can pull almost *any* doomsday date from them."⁶⁸

Christian pastor and Bible prophecy teacher Mark Hitchcock hits the nail on the head when he says the December 21, 2012, date has been nicknamed (among other things), "A Y2K for the New Age."⁶⁹

The Y2K reference is to the turn-of-the-millennium from 1999 to 2000, which was prophesied by many — including some Christian authors — to bring worldwide disaster, due to the millennium computer bug for which there wasn't adequate time to address. This "problem" would supposedly cause computers to malfunction when January 1, 2000, arrived, creating worldwide catastrophe. Nothing catastrophic happened.

As Hitchcock notes, the "Maya 2012 end-date" is truly the New Age movement's end-of-the-world scenario. Says Hitchcock:

"The 2012 phenomenon is the New Age eschatology.⁷⁰ It's their answer to how the world will end, or at least how the world as we know it will end and usher in a new stage of collective consciousness. ... The New Age movement has adopted the Mayan calendar as the centerpiece for its view of how this world will end and the next one, if there is one, will begin. The startlingly unique feature of the Mayan doomsday prophecy, and the New Age eschatology, is that it names the specific date for the end: December 21, 2012."⁷¹

As we have seen in this article, the Maya apparently *didn't* believe that December 21 (or December 23), 2012,

would usher in the end of the world. However, some people who saw a chance to make a quick buck from peoples' gullibility — or else, some sincerely misled people — have promoted this erroneous notion about the Maya and their Long Count calendar cycle.

We agree with Mark Hitchcock, who, after surveying several different views regarding the meaning of this supposed "Maya doomsday," says:

"[The view] I hold, is that 2012 will bring neither global catastrophe nor global enlightenment. ... The vast majority of scientists, archaeologists, and anthropologists reject the 2012 doomsday theory. ... End date 2012 simply doesn't hold up to serious scrutiny. Anne Pyburn, an anthropologist at Indiana University who studies the Maya, says bluntly, 'I don't pay any attention to this stuff because it's bunk.'"⁷²

The year 2012 will undoubtedly hold its share of surprises, but don't get caught up in the end-of-the-world hysteria or panic. Even the committed 2012 followers can't agree on what's going to happen. Their theories range from the end of the world to some new plane of awareness. There's a big difference between apocalypse and a new spiritual awareness. Any prediction with such a wide range of possible scenarios should be viewed with skepticism and caution.

When Jesus gave His final great discourse to His disciples in Matthew 24-25, He listed many of the key signs of the end times, and the very first thing He said was, "See to it that no one misleads you" (Matthew 24:4). The chief sign of the times is surging deception. The New Age 2012 eschatology is a part of this deception.

Endnotes:

1. Alternatively, it could end on December 23, 2012. "Scholars propose several *correlations* between the Maya and modern calendars; the two most-accepted differ by two days." The GMT Correlation has the end date of the Maya calendar as Decem-

ber 21, 2012. The GMT+2 Correlation has the end date as December 23, 2012. Mark Van Stone, "Part IV — Appendix: Technicalities of the Calendars." Document available at: www.famsi.org/research/vanstone/2012/2012Part4.pdf. Slide #39, italics in original. Most material I have seen regarding the Maya end date simply *assumes* the December 21, 2012 (i.e., the GMT Correlation) end date.

2. Lloyd B. Hildebrand, 2012: *Is This the End?* Alachua, Fla.: Bridge-Logos, 2009, pg. 5, italics in original. This book is written by a Christian author and publisher, and is well-designed and well-written and makes for interesting reading. However, I regret that I can only recommend it for knowing *what various popular theories* are regarding 2012 being the end of the world. Several things make this book an undesirable choice for *evaluating* 2012 doomsday theories: The book seems too credulous regarding popular theories about a 2012 doomsday event. It also seems to repeat popular theories uncritically, passing along some inaccurate information in the process. Very importantly, the author also seems to regard the Bible as only slightly more authoritative than prophecies given by various non-Christian cultures, pagan religions, occultic sources, and prophecies of questionable origin. Finally, the author doesn't give a clear answer to the question posed by the book's title.

3. Lee Penn, "The Mayan Apocalypse of 2012," *SCP Journal*, Vol. 32:4-33:1, 2009, pg. 5, italic in original.

4. Mark Hitchcock, 2012, *The Bible, and the End of the World*. Eugene, Ore: Harvest House Publishers, 2009, pg. 31. This is unquestionably the best book I have seen on the possibility of a 2012 doomsday given from a sane, Christian perspective. I heartily recommend it.

5. *Ibid.*, pg. 32.

6. "Part IV — Appendix: Technicalities of the Calendars," *op. cit.*, Slide #1, italics and bold type in original.

7. *Ibid.*, Slide #6, italics and bold type in original.

8. *Ibid.*, Slide #7, italics and bold type in original.

9. *Ibid.*, Slide #22, italics and bold type in original.

10. David Morrison, "Update on the Nibiru 2012 Doomsday," *Skeptical Inquirer*, Vol. 33, No. 6, pg. 57.

11. 2012, *The Bible, and the End of the World*, *op. cit.*, pp. 15-16, 61-62.

12. "The Mayan Apocalypse of 2012," *op. cit.*, pp. 5-10.

13. 2012, *The Bible, and the End of the World*, *op. cit.*, pg. 16. See Synthia Andrews and Colin Andrews, *The Complete Idiot's Guide to 2012*. New York: Alpha Books, 2008, pp. 153-154, where the words and phrases that

Hitchcock has in quotation marks (as well as some of the information he gives) seems to have come.

14. Alexandra Bruce, *2012: Science or Superstition*. New York: The Disinformation Company Ltd., 2009, pg. 157.

15. *2012: Is This the End?*, op. cit., back cover.

16. For more on the Bible code, see G. Richard Fisher, "The Bible Code: Prophetic Insight or Fertile Imagination?," *The Quarterly Journal*, January-March 1998, pp. 4, 9-13.

17. *2012, The Bible, and the End of the World*, op. cit., pp. 81-82. Hitchcock references Michael Drosnin, *The Bible Code*. New York: Touchstone, 1997, pp. 153-154.

18. *Ibid.*, pg. 83, italics in original.

19. *Ibid.*, pp. 84-86.

20. *Ibid.*, pg. 88.

21. *Ibid.*, pg. 85.

22. *Ibid.*, pp. 88-89.

23. James J. Drummey, *Catholic Replies*. Norwood, Mass.: C.R. Publications, 1995, pp. 77-78, brackets in original.

24. Rev. Peter M.J. Stravinskis, editor, *Catholic Dictionary*, revised edition. Huntington, Ind.: Our Sunday Visitor, Inc., 2002, pg. 619, s.v. "Prophecies of St. Malachy." Except for space constraints, other contemporary sources, both Roman Catholic and secular, could be cited here supporting this same view that the prophecies are "forgeries."

25. Interested readers can check out the so-called "prophecies of St. Malachy" for themselves in *The Prophecies of St. Malachy: Introduction and Commentary by Peter Bander*. Rockford, Ill.: TAN Books and Publishers, Inc., 1973. Originally published in 1969 by Colin Smythe, Ltd., Gerrards Cross Buckinghamshire, England under the title, *The Prophecies of St. Malachy and St. Columbkille*.

26. *Catholic Replies*, op. cit., pg. 78.

27. *Ibid.*

28. For more on Nostradamus and his prophecies, see M. Kurt Goedelman, "The Tarnished Prophet of the 16th Century: The Legacy of Nostradamus," *The Quarterly Journal*, July-September 1998, pp. 4, 13-17. An older, shorter article, also from PFO, is Keith A. Morse, "A 20th-Century Look at Nostradamus: Was He God's Prophet During the 16th Century?," *PFO Newsletter*, Vol. 3, No. 2, pp. 5, 7.

29. A very useful trait for a would-be prophet.

30. Richard Kyle, *The Last Days Are Here Again*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1998, pg. 63.

31. *Ibid.*, pg. 64.

32. *The New Encyclopedia Britannica*. Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., 1993, Vol. 8, pg. 803, s.v., "Nostradamus."

33. *Catholic Replies*, op. cit., pg. 425.

34. *The Encyclopedia Americana*, Interna-

tional edition. Danbury, Conn.: Grolier, Incorporated, 1997, Vol. 20, pg. 484, s.v., "Nostradamus," emphasis added.

35. Richard Abanes, *End-Time Visions: The Road to Armageddon?* New York: Four Walls Eight Windows, 1998, pp. 188-189, italic in original. For the source of the remarks made by James Randi, Abanes cites "James Randi, interview on *Larry King Live*, September 21, 1990; cf. Russell Chandler, *Doomsday*. Ann Arbor, Mich.: Servant, 1993, pg. 67." Abanes' book devotes an entire chapter to Nostradamus and to debunking his prophecies.

36. B.J. Oropeza, *99 Reasons Why No One Knows When Christ Will Return*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1994, pg. 131. The Scripture reference that Oropeza partially gives is Deuteronomy 18:9-14.

37. *The Complete Idiot's Guide to 2012*, op. cit., pg. 161.

38. *Ibid.*, pg. 162.

39. *Ibid.*, pg. 161.

40. *Ibid.*

41. *Ibid.*, pp. 161-162. For further evidence of these authors' magical view of thinking, see pg. 253.

42. For more information on *The Secret*, see J. Greg Sheryl, "Do You Want to Know The Secret?," *The Quarterly Journal*, October-December 2007, pp. 1, 11-21.

43. See Gary E. Gilley, "The New Look of the Prosperity Gospel - Joel Osteen Offers You Your Best Life Now," *The Quarterly Journal*, January-March 2010, pp. 1, 16-21.

44. David Morrison, "The Myth of Nibiru and the End of the World in 2012," *Skeptical Inquirer*, Vol. 32, No. 5, pg. 51.

45. "Update on the Nibiru 2012 Doomsday," op. cit., pp. 57-58.

46. "The Mayan Apocalypse of 2012," op. cit., pg. 9, italics, bold type, and brackets in original. Penn references the book, Lawrence E. Joseph, *Apocalypse 2012*. New York: Broadway Books, 2008. The quotations he references above from that book are, in order, pp. 32-33, 33, and 35-36. He gives "The Milky Way Galaxy" as his source for the distance to the center of our galaxy (i.e., 26,000-28,000 light-years). Document available at: <http://seds.org/messier/more/mw>.

47. "The Myth of Nibiru and the End of the World in 2012," op. cit., pg. 52, quotation in source rendered in italics.

48. *Ibid.*, quotation in source rendered in italics.

49. *Ibid.*, pg. 54, quotation in source rendered in italics.

50. *Ibid.*, quotation in source rendered in italics.

51. *Ibid.*, pg. 55, quotation in source rendered in italics.

52. *Ibid.* Concerning some of the events he mentions here, bear in mind that he wrote this article in 2008.

53. *The Complete Idiot's Guide to 2012*, op. cit., pg. 85.

54. *Ibid.*, pg. 86.

55. Hugh Ross, "Response to 2012 Prophecies." Document available at: www.reasons.org/response-2012-prophecies.

56. "RTB Response to the Motion Picture '2012,'" emphasis added. Document available at: www.reasons.org/2012.

57. "The Myth of Nibiru and the End of the World in 2012," op. cit., pg. 55.

58. "or August 12 [3114 B.C.], or August 13," as stated in *The Complete Idiot's Guide to 2012*, op. cit., pg. 74.

59. Mark Van Stone, "It's Not the End of the World: What the Ancient Maya Tell Us About 2012." Document available at: www.famsi.org/research/vanstone/2012/index.html. This website contains much extremely helpful information regarding the Maya and the 2012 doomsday issue.

60. Mark Van Stone, "2012 FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions)," emphasis added. Document available at: www.famsi.org/research/vanstone/2012/faq.html.

61. Whether or not the Christian world at large expected Jesus to return in A.D. 1000 is a matter of some scholarly disagreement. For a discussion of this debate, see *End-Time Visions: The Road to Armageddon?*, op. cit., pp. 170-174.

62. "2012 FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions)," op. cit., emphasis added.

63. *Ibid.*

64. *2012: Science or Superstition*, op. cit., pg. 12, capitalization and italics in original.

65. Christine Brouwer, "Will the World End in 2012?," article dated July 3, 2008. Document available at: <http://abcnews.go.com/print?id=5301284>.

66. G. Jeffrey MacDonald, "Does Maya calendar predict 2012 apocalypse?," article dated March 27, 2007. Document available at: www.usatoday.com/tech/science/2007-03-27-maya-2012_n.htm.

67. Andrew Marantz, "How to Sell an Apocalypse," article dated November 1, 2009, italics in original. Document available at <http://nymag.com/news/intelligencer/61745/>.

68. "Response to 2012 Prophecies," op. cit., italic in original.

69. *2012, The Bible, and the End of the World*, op. cit., pg. 15. Hitchcock here references Lisa Miller, "2012: A Y2K for the New Age," *Newsweek*, May 11/May 18, 2009, pg. 12, (see pg. 175, note #6).

70. One definition of "eschatology" is "the branch of theology dealing with the end of the world or of humanity," *The American Heritage College Dictionary*, 3rd edition, s.v. "eschatology."

71. *2012, The Bible, and the End of the World*, op. cit., pg. 80.

72. *Ibid.*, pg. 63. The quotation Hitchcock cites here is from Lisa Miller, "2012: A Y2K for the New Age," op. cit., pg. 12, (see pg. 180, note #44).

in Himself and that “there are nine of them” — “them” being members of the Godhead.

In years gone by, words had specific meaning and when people approached the Bible it was with the understanding that grammar, cultural and historical setting, and the intent of the author really meant something.

Emil Schürer reminded us in his *History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ* that, “No incident in the gospel story, no word in the preaching of Jesus Christ, is intelligible apart from its setting in Jewish history, and without a clear understanding of that world of thought-distinction of the Jewish people” (Vol. 1, pg. 1). That world of thought is now totally ignored and only my subjective world of thought matters. Existentialism is alluring because it is so compatible with the old self-esteem ideas and humanism (that man and not God is central in the universe). People love to be the center and central actor in their own cosmic drama with God only having a bit part that always enhances them.

R.C. Sproul explains the meaning and ramifications of existentialism. After explaining the grammatical-historical method of finding the meaning of the text by studying the historical setting and properly defining the words used, he informs us that existentialism “says that God speaks through the Bible to each person directly, regardless of what the text actually says and meant when it was written. This completely relativistic approach denies all absolutes and abiding principles” (*Before the Face of God*, pg. 249).

So it is not all so mysterious after all. People are exchanging the truth of God for a human philosophy. Those who were born and grew up in the 1980s do not even know what happened. They have been nurtured on existentialism and self-centeredness, thinking the Bible only means what it means to them. It is a terrible loss as so many twist the Scriptures to their own destruction (2 Peter 3:16).

—GRF

NEWS UPDATES

used and the typical patient load was 75-85 people. It was a financial disaster and drain on the school, despite Roberts’ claim that God personally told him to build it.

In spring 1986, Roberts needed \$8 million to keep the medical program solvent. After raising only half that amount by the end of the year, Roberts took to the airwaves and said God had told him unless he raised the remaining \$4.5 million, his death would be imminent.

“Please help extend my life,” Roberts begged in January 1987. A Florida dog track owner donated the money, but those funds kept the City of Faith going only briefly. It closed in 1989 and sat vacant for several years before being sold to a group of commercial real estate investors.

Roberts is said to have written more than 130 books, including *The Miracle of Seed Faith*, which has more than 8 million copies in circulation. The book’s thesis — sow a financial seed out of your own need to experience a miracle harvest — has been used by many Charismatic and Pentecostal evangelists.

Roberts is preceded in death by his wife, Evelyn, who died in May 2005, and a daughter, Rebecca Ann Nash, who died in a small-plane crash in February 1977. He is survived by a son, Richard, and a daughter, Roberta, as well as by several grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

—MKG

MOON PASSING TORCH TO CHILDREN

The Rev. Sun Myung Moon, 90, recently announced he will give four of his children responsibility for day-to-day operations of the Unification Church.

Three sons and a daughter will inherit various duties in the worldwide church, whose operations include a New York City hotel and a Washington, D.C., newspaper. All three sons, Hyun Jin Moon, 40, Kook Jin Moon, 39, and Hyung Jin Moon, 30, hold degrees from Harvard University. Hyun Jin Moon will manage the theological and business aspects of the church within the U.S. and South Korea. Moon’s daughter, In Jin Moon, will carry on the church operations in America. Worldwide, day-to-day, church functions are reportedly now being handled by Hyung Jin Moon.

Despite the announcement, the elder Moon says he remains in charge. Moon founded the church in May 1954 in Seoul, South Korea.

Hyung Jin Moon has a goal of increasing church membership. He also expresses a desire to be transparent as to the fund raising activities of the church. In the 1970s and 1980s, Moon’s church found itself a target of persistent and harsh criticism for its proselytizing and fund-raising efforts, which some called “heavenly deception.”

While Moon claims his church is Christian, its primary message is that Jesus Christ failed in His messianic mission and that God sent Moon to finish the job. Moon practices spiritism and other occult activities and claims that he has direct and repeated communication with the “spirit world.”

In spite of unbiblical beliefs and practices, Moon is regularly honored by religious and political leaders. On several occasions, the late Jerry Falwell spoke at events sponsored by Moon. In March 2004, Moon was crowned

“King of America.” The ceremony took place in the Senate Dirksen Office Building with a dozen members of Congress taking part in the event. Other political leaders, including former President George H.W. Bush and former Secretary of State Alexander Haig, have given speeches at Moon-sponsored events.

—MKG

CAMPING TRIES AGAIN

The doomsday prophets pointing to the end of the world on Dec. 21, 2012, have nothing on Harold Camping. The founder of Family Radio Network is claiming that Jesus Christ is set to return, and God’s Judgment Day to begin, on May 21, 2011.

Camping has long been a fountainhead of false prophecies and unorthodox teaching. In 1992, he published a 550-page book in which he wrote, “When September 6, 1994, arrives, no one else can become saved. The end has come” (1994?, pg. 533). More recently, Camping announced that “the church was dead,” and that his Family Radio ministry was the agent to send the true Gospel into the world. His followers have withdrawn themselves from the leadership and authority of local churches and meet in homes to listen to his messages.

Camping’s programs are broadcast on 55 radio stations in America, as well as being heard on shortwave overseas. His messages are translated into 48 languages.

—MKG

BOOKS IN REVIEW

(continued from page 24)

program in which a journalist was interviewing a scientist about the coming ‘end of the world’ in 2012. ... It immediately became clear to me that I needed to understand what all the hoopla is about — why December 21, 2012 has been targeted as earth’s expiration date, and what people are expecting to happen. This book is the fruit of that search” (pg. 9).

Later, he says, “As the title suggests, my focus is to examine the 2012 phenomenon from a biblical perspective, primarily from the vantage point of end-time Bible prophecy. ... While many other 2012 books mention the Bible or Bible codes, they don’t look at 2012 through the lens of Scripture; rather, they look at Scripture through the lens of 2012” (pg. 24).

This book admirably succeeds in Hitchcock’s intentions. Despite his academic background, it is both interesting and easy to read and understand, as well as being fairly brief and inexpensive. In the first part of the book, the author clearly explains the significance of 2012 in the minds of those who believe it portends earth’s doomsday. In the second part of the book, he unfolds biblical prophecy regarding the end-times from a pretribulational perspective. Consistent with his Christian calling, Hitchcock’s volume reflects a reassuring pastoral tone and perspective. If you or someone you know wants a clear, sane Christian book regarding a supposed 2012 apocalypse, this is definitely the one.

—JGS

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

THIS LITTLE CHURCH HAD NONE

by Gary E. Gilley with Jay Wegter

EP Books, 236 pages, \$14.95

PFO director Gary Gilley has written his third in a series of books reviewing the dangerous situation of evangelicalism. This meticulous study shows the road now being traveled by the 21st century “new paradigm church.” The reader is first introduced (or reintroduced to those who have read his earlier books) to the seeker-sensitive movement (e.g., Willow Creek Community Church, Saddleback Community Church) and how its pragmatic approach of “doing church” has produced few mature and growing Christians. Rather, this success-driven model has yielded a breed of evangelicals who mirror the unsaved in morals, ethics, and values. Gilley also shows that while this market-driven movement has admitted its weaknesses, the solutions being tried are equally disturbing.

Gilley shows those espousing the “emergent conversation” are also in the “process of metamorphosis” into what some label “Ancient-Future faith.” But here too, it is a further drift from — not toward — Scripture. As this adjustment moves its followers to “Rome” and mysticism, Gilley points out that “the A-F movement sees the Reformation as an unnecessary schism perpetrated by Protestants” (pg. 43).

The mind-over-matter world of Rhonda Byrne (*The Secret*) and the “invasion of paganism” are also explored. While one might ask why such subject matter is germane to a discussion of evangelicalism, Gilley writes, “the concepts behind *The Secret*, and similar ‘new spirituality’ and Eastern teachings, have been making the rounds throughout various segments of Christianity for years” (pg. 77). The most prevalent component has been the prosperity gospel of Word Faith adherents. Popular pastor and best-selling author Joel Osteen is presented as the man responsible for taking the “name-it-and-claim-it” theology and making it palatable to the mainstream.

In the first section of the volume, Gilley also surveys the challenge of pragmatism and the onslaught of the new atheism against the Church.

While the first part of the book describes the “obstacles to truth,” the reader is not left without remedy. The second part is a call to a renewed confidence in the Word of God and to godly leadership. The final part, written primarily by Jay Wegter, focuses on evangelism. Wegter speaks to “the power of a Christian worldview in evangelism,” “sharing the Gospel in a culture of truth-suppressors,” and “recovering the neglected elements of the biblical Gospel.” His four “worldview questions” (pg. 186) are an excellent technique “to bring a person’s worldview to the surface so that it can be discussed” (pg. 185) and contrasted with God’s Word. Also provided are the biblical responses to these four questions (pg. 187). These are pages that should be read, reread, memorized, and put into frequent application by Christians.

This Little Church Had None is a proficient examination written by two men who are like unto the “sons of Issachar” (1 Chronicles 12:32). They have an understanding of the times and know what we ought to do. It is a perceptive and captivating analysis of the plight of the Church. It is a book, not just for concerned leadership of the Church, but for any Christian who desires “a church in search of the truth.”

—MKG

2012, THE BIBLE, AND THE END OF THE WORLD

by Mark Hitchcock

Harvest House Publishers, 184 pages, \$12.99

The recent disaster film *2012* popularized the beliefs that some in our culture, especially within the New Age movement, hold a 2012 world apocalypse. How widespread are these notions and why do some people believe them?

Mark Hitchcock is well-suited to explore this popular theory of a possible 2012 doomsday for the earth. Not only is Hitchcock a pastor and a Bible prophecy teacher, he also holds an earned Ph.D. from Dallas Theological Seminary. He has authored numerous books on Bible prophecy, including *The Complete Book of Bible Prophecy*.

In the book’s Introduction, Hitchcock explains how he came to write this book: “In 2007 I was watching a news

(continues on page 23)

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