



Media Spotlight

A BIBLICAL ANALYSIS OF RELIGIOUS AND SECULAR MEDIA

SPECIAL REPORT

WORD-FAITH/POSITIVE CONFESSION

ITS PHILOSOPHICAL ROOTS

by Albert James Dager

Kenneth Copeland, appearing on the Trinity Broadcasting Network's *Praise the Lord* program, was asked by host Paul Crouch, "What is faith?" After stuttering for a few seconds, his mind seeking an answer, Copeland stammered, "It's, uh, well, it's like a force. It's just out there, and you have to learn how to plug into it."¹ And on this concept of faith, the program attempted to educate viewers as to how, if they can learn to "plug into it," faith can be used for their benefit.

If it weren't so serious it would be amusing to see that Copeland, generally regarded as the premier spokesperson for the so-called word-faith movement, had to struggle to find a definition for something on which he is supposed to be an expert. But it amply demonstrated the fact that those who subscribe to the word-faith teachings (a.k.a., Positive Confession), don't really know what true faith is, or how it relates to our position in Jesus Christ.

To understand what faith is, it is helpful to know what it is not. And the most helpful source of information on what it is *not* is that which has duped many Christians into thinking that it offers understanding of what it is: the word-faith movement. This analysis, then, is not only intended to present what Scripture says faith is and how it is demonstrated, but what, in contrast, the word-faith movement says it is.

There are several elements of the word-faith movement which must be considered if we are to understand that contrast. And there are a few books available which treat these areas in greater detail than can be done in the space this report provides. But it isn't necessary to belabor every point in order to present the case for truth. The Holy Spirit will lead us into the truth if our hearts are in earnest for it. What we do with the truth once the Holy Spirit reveals it to us will depend upon our motives for seeking

the truth in the first place. Therein lies the determining factor as to whether we will apply the truth to our lives or, once having learned it, spurn it in favor of "greener pastures" offered by modern purveyors of deception.

FAITH WRONGLY DEFINED

Virtually all word-faith proponents agree with Ken Copeland's definition of faith, that it is a force into which anyone, believer or not, may tap for their personal benefit. Pat Robertson considers faith one of the "immutable laws" of the universe which must be mastered in order to receive from God. He, too, believes that anyone—believer in Christ or not—may tap into these "immutable laws":

Do the laws of the kingdom work, even if a person is not a Christian?

Yes. These are not just Christian and Jewish principles, anymore than the law of gravity is Christian and Jewish. We are talking about universal law. . . . The laws of God work for anybody who will follow them. The principles of the Kingdom of God apply to all of creation.²

Where do the Scriptures tell us that non-believers may use the principles of God's Kingdom? They are not in God's Kingdom but in the kingdom of Satan. Whatever "principles" they apply are not in harmony with God's laws, but with witchcraft in one form or another.

More specifically, where do the Scriptures tell us that nonbelievers may exercise faith as an immutable law to receive what they desire? The fact is that they don't. Pat Robertson is voicing a theosophic concept of God and creation when he tells us that the spirit realm operates on immutable laws that apply to everyone. This is a basic tenet of witchcraft, as demonstrated by this quote from Gavin and Yvonne Frost's *The Magic Power of Witchcraft*:

Just as the humble plowman seeing the giant turbines and the power lines for the first time had no concept of the benefits available to him, so very few people have any idea of the vast cosmic forces which they can tap. But the forces are there: they should be used, though they should be used in constructive ways to help you change your life and, if possible, to make the world a better place.³

But if faith is not a "force," or an "immutable law" of the universe, what is it? How do the Scriptures define faith? Hebrews 7:1 is used by most Christians—even some word-faith teachers—as a basic definition of faith:

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. (Hebrews 11:1)

Taking this verse out of context from the rest of the chapter, the word-faith proponents argue that faith is actually a substance, like energy, which cannot be seen; if one "plugs into" that energy, he will receive what he hopes for. This is done through positive confession and positive thinking. If one believes in and then confesses those good things for himself, he will receive those good things. If, on the other hand, he confesses negative things, he will be demonstrating a lack of faith and will reap negative consequences.

If this were true—if the principle upon which the word-faith tenets are based is an immutable law of nature—then *without exception*, every time someone said something negative (e.g., "I wish I were dead."), he would die. And, *without exception*, every time someone said something positive (e.g., "I have a million dollars."), he would receive the million dollars.

But, the word-faith teachers would say, this isn't enough; one must *believe* that what he says will come to pass. Yet if, in fact, belief and confession does put the "force" of faith into motion, the experience of word-faith practitioners overall does not confirm it.

The number is legion of former word-faith adherents who have been disappointed that what they believed for with all earnestness and spoke out loud to confirm never materialized.

Experience proves conclusively that this approach to faith is not true faith at all, but presumption upon God's Word. And it has resulted not only in people leaving the word-faith movement, but many have lost confidence in Jesus Christ and made their

